The Virtues of Men: An exploration of virtue ethics and its application to masculinity

JPT Koen

orcid.org/0000-0002-2387-8823

Thesis accepted as fulfillment of the degree *Magister Philosophae in Philosophy* at North West University

Supervisor: Dr Louise Mabile

Co-supervisor: Prof AH Verhoef

Graduation: June 2022

Student Number: 27315037

Foreword and Acknowledgements

The pursuit of happiness has been at the forefront of human endeavours. Whether it is through the pursuit of pleasure directly or through the pursuit of excellence as in the traditions of Aristotle and Aquinas, human beings have always been searching for happiness. My hope is that through this thesis, another step on our journey to true and lasting happiness can be taken.

I would like to thank the following people for their contributions to this thesis:

My parents, Fanie and Anne-Lise Koen. Through their constant support this thesis would not have been possible.

My friends, Jurec Mulder, Pierre le Roux and Karnu van Heerden. Without their advice, encouragement and listening ears, I would not have been able to develop this thesis as I have.

My mentor, Simon Brace, who have had a tremendous amount of influence on my general development during my time at the North-West University. Without him, I would not be the person I am today.

My supervisors, Anne Verhoef and Louise Mabille. Without their knowledge and guidance, I would not have been able to formulate this thesis as well as I have.

To Amanda Kruger for her help in editing the language and other technical details of this thesis.

Lastly, I wish to thank my creator for the wisdom, knowledge and clarity of thought that He has given me.

Abstract

The modern era has been an era of progress and innovation. It has also been an era of rapid change where old ideas and traditions were substituted for new and modern trends. While the consequences of these changes have been mostly positive, in the rejection of old wisdom some of its foundational ideas, which are essential to human flourishing, have been lost. This loss is discernible mostly in the field of ethics. Its base assumptions of human nature and the existence of good as part of lived experience has been ruthlessly undermined, if not completely abandoned. The resultant nihilism has led to an ethic that is too impotent to distinguish between actions that ought to be permissible and those that ought to be prohibited.

Masculinity has been similarly devastated. The old roles according to which men defined and measured themselves have been stolen from them and consequently they have no real place left to express their masculinity. This has been the result of historical events, specifically the phenomenon of women moving into the formerly male-dominated spheres of work and leadership. However, of greater concern is the contemporary move to describe any inherited traditional idea of masculinity as toxic and harmful. Moreover, the feminist movement's attack on the concept of gender itself has obstructed any attempt to construct any kind of masculine identity.

Consequently, there are three questions to be asked here: What is goodness, what is a man, and what is masculinity. To determine the correct construction of proper masculine identity, it is imperative that its constituent parts are correctly understood.

To this end, virtue will be discussed through the lens of ethics. Since its conception, ethics have attempted to determine how life ought to be lived. In the tradition started by Aristotle, a thing's goodness was determined by the actualisation of its final end or purpose. In humans, this purpose is *eudaimonia* or a life well-lived. Aquinas would later develop this further by associating the good life with a relationship with God, who is the source of all goodness. In both cases, virtue is indispensable. Aristotle taught that to live a good life, the character that facilitates that life needs to be developed. This can only be done through the inculcation of virtue. Even in Aquinas, the virtuous life is the best that can be achieved by humans.

In men, an additional purpose flows from their potential for fatherhood (which is what distinguishes them from women). This purpose is the act of fatherhood, whether in the form of literal fatherhood or the spiritual sense of mentorship. In both cases, it deals with preparing others for the life ahead.

While this obviously involves a man instructing those younger than him in the necessary knowledge, such as knowledge of virtue, it also involves encouraging his peers and learning from his predecessors.

For the sake of practicality, an appropriate masculine model is necessary. Fortunately, such a model has been left behind by history. In the chivalric ideal, we find the ideal model of mentorship and the pursuit of virtue combined into a single package. By encouraging the pursuit of this ideal, a new kind of masculinity may be constructed, one that is not bound by the possibilities of the society that a man finds himself.

Key Words

Virtue, ethics, virtue ethics, *eudaimonia*, masculinity, chivalry, feminism, gender theory, nihilism, utilitarianism, deontology

Table of Contents

Table of Contents (continued)

Introduction

‘And if you think tough men are dangerous, wait until you see what weak men are capable of.’

Jordan B. Peterson

Modernity is notoriously resistant to definition. A significant number of thinkers, such as Karl Marx, George Simmel, Max Weber and Charles Baudelaire trace the roots of modernity to changes in materialist conditions in contemporary urban society. Others point to the influence of scientific progressivism. The apotheosis of modernity is generally associated with eighteenth-century Kantian optimism, famously captured by the dictum *sapere aude!* Think for yourself! Few would reject this notion outright, and even the later Foucault expressed appreciation for the Enlightenment project. However, a less salutary aspect to the desire for rational autonomy was the ever-growing hostility to tradition, custom and inherited knowledge, a hostility which, as Nietzsche has demonstrated culminated in the death of God. This skepticism soon turned against the Enlightenment project itself, with hermeneuticians of suspicion – Nietzsche, Marx and Freud – demonstrating the difficulty of relying on a fully rational foundational subject. The late modern – or postmodern – cynicism soon spread towards almost every aspect of Western life, eroding several key truths which have been accepted as foundational at least since the ascent of the Greeks.

The consequences of this erosion are most keenly felt in the field of ethics. The base assumptions of a human nature and the existence of good as an actual reality has been severely undermined, if not completely abandoned. The idea of goodness and virtue has been replaced by cultural interpretation. What may be prohibited in one culture may be perfectly acceptable in another. While it is the case that there are cultural differences that may reasonably differ from place to place, without the notion of principles upon which ethics can be based, no progress can be made in this science.

Secondly, the notion of masculinity has been devastated. Men seem to have no real place left to express their masculinity. The old roles that they were expected to perform, and according to which they measured their masculinity, have been taken from them. Generally, this has been the result of historical events, with women moving into the formerly male-dominated sphere of work and leadership. However, there has been a move to describe any inherited or traditional idea of masculinity as toxic and harmful. This leads to the question of how this should be dealt with. While

there is no inherent problem with women playing a larger role in society[1], it is not clear where men are to go now that the things according to which they had defined themselves, are no longer exclusive to them.

Similarly, there has been a rise of a distinct hostility towards inherited notions of gender. While the early feminist movement has made significant contributions towards redressing genuine injustices suffered by women, latter-day preoccupations with gender and gender identity have become a major socio-political force in its own right. It will be argued that it has had a devastating effect on masculine identity, and a negative impact on society as a whole, including our conception of femininity. Laureen Snider (1998:24) praised the attack on traditional notions of masculinity as 'a source of hope'[2]. Yet, at the same time, she admits that the loss of traditional masculine roles has resulted in men becoming more violent and aggressive (Snider, 1998:24). How is this paradox to be solved? The assumption that she makes is that traditional norms of masculinity are inherently violent and destructive. The solution offered is that men ought to become gentler in some vague way. It is unlikely that she is completely wrong. Although it may be a stereotype, men are generally more known for enjoying and glorifying violence. David Benatar (2012:82) points out that men are believed to be more aggressive and violent. Furthermore, they are expected to endure hardships without complaint or objection, which may facilitate the idea that men ought not to show emotion. Thus, some change in how men see themselves and how they act in society is merited. The question that is ultimately at stake here is: What is a good man? There are two aspects to this question, namely goodness and masculinity. To fully understand the concept of a 'good man', we must explore both the notion of what is good and what is masculine.

Neither notion is a given. No man is respected for simply laying back and being served – instead, he is praised for his achievements. This is best exemplified in ancient legends. Heracles performed his twelve tasks, Odysseus tricked the Cyclopes, and Saint George is known for slaying the dragon, for example. These heroes are revered for the things that they had done. History has similar examples, with men like William Wilberforce, Martin Luther King Jr, and Nelson Mandela being legends in their own right. Furthermore, these men are known for their moral victories, with each one fighting

[1] It may be that their role is simply different rather than larger. The traditional feminine role of mother is no less important than the role of provider. It is possibly even more important, for it is through the mother that a child is introduced to the world.

[2] Merav Perez and Orna Sasson-Levy (2015:464) uses the Israeli military as an example of the close identification between masculinity and military service. Brenda R. Weber (2013:684) claims that voluntary castration is indicative of greater masculinity than would ordinarily be supposed. According to her, the idea of masculinity is predicated on bodily control. By castrating themselves, these men believe that they are somehow able to achieve greater control over their own bodies than would otherwise be possible.

against great injustices. Thus, there seems to be a relation between goodness, masculinity, and achievement. Both are earned, and not received.

To explore the concept of goodness requires a return to its roots in Aristotle. His notion of goodness as a habit and character may be useful in discovering what makes for a good person. a man is not simply a man in a single instance but must live his life as one. For this reason, Aristotle's work is more relevant than the single-action orientation of Utilitarianism and Deontology. However, he will not be the only ethical thinker that will be considered in this study. His thoughts were developed through the work of Aquinas and contrasts greatly with modern ethical systems. This development and contrast will therefore also be considered in the study of the notion of goodness.

The notion of masculinity will be considered as well. As pointed out above, the concept of masculinity as such is problematic, as it is viewed as something toxic. However, it needs to be asked whether this is necessarily the case. To determine the answer, the essence of a man as distinct from a woman must be determined. Does such a concept exist? If it does, how must it be understood? Some would dispute the idea of masculinity and manhood. Gender theorists, who have been greatly influenced by Judith Butler, would argue that masculinity and femininity are mere cultural constructs. According to them, all conceptions of gender, gender roles and even sex are infinitely malleable, manifesting only in actions and cultural habits, with the result that these concepts have no existence outside of it. Consequently, if the cultural habits surrounding the idea of sex or gender can be changed, the sex itself can be changed. While this is a contentious statement, it also leads to another important question: How must a man act? Regardless of masculinity's ontological status – that is, whether it exists as a real thing or simply as a cultural artefact – it does not merely exist in word but also in deed. Thus, we must also discover or describe a model of behaviour that men can follow and emulate. This model will provide the basis for the combination of goodness and masculinity. In both cases, a mode of behaviour is being described, along with habits that are formed and those that should be formed for the life that a good man ought to live.

To this end, this thesis will be divided into six chapters:

- Chapter 1: The Aristotelian Origin: The *Vir* of Virtue

This chapter will explore the origin of virtue ethics, focusing specifically on Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics*. This chapter explores the origin of virtue and its pursuit of the good life

- Chapter 2: The Aquinian Transformation

In this chapter, the changes that virtue ethics underwent under Thomas Aquinas will be considered. Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologica*, of which the central theme is the transformation of a classical ethos into a Christian one, - will be of significance for this discussion.

- Chapter 3: Modernity and its Projects

In this chapter, I will explore the rise of distinctly modern moral ideals like deontology and utilitarianism and the distinctly modern environment which gave rise to their development. This will be placed in contrast with the virtue ethics explored in the preceding chapters.

- Chapter 4: Modern Man and the Decentring of Masculinity.

This chapter discusses the demise of the traditional masculine virtues, the erosion of masculinity and the factors which gave rise to the problem, such as the emasculation implied by industrialisation, urbanisation, new gender ideals, and the bland universalism of the global era.

- Chapter 5: The Virtue of Men Revisited

This chapter will illustrate the viability of virtue ethics as an alternative and possible counter to the problems outlined above.

- Chapter 6: Virtue Ethics As Playfield of a Viable Male Identity

A case is made for a viable male identity informed by a healthy, life-affirming teleology.

In a final concluding chapter, all the above chapters will be linked together. If this thesis is successful, it could serve as a launchpad for the reinvention and reestablishment of virtue and masculinity within modern society. It is not necessary to exclude either virtue or masculinity from modernity. Indeed, its inclusion may lead to the flourishing of both femininity and society as a whole, because a more holistic approach becomes possible.

Chapter 1

The Aristotelian Origin: The *Vir* of Virtue

‘Men acquire a particular quality by constantly acting a particular way’
Aristotle

If an attempt to give an account of the development of virtue in Western thought, there is probably no better place to begin than Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics (EN)*[3]. His work on ethics may be one of the most influential works on the subject, forming the thoughts of thinkers such as Aquinas, Nietzsche and Alasdair MacIntyre, among others. His work may be notable for another reason as well: he may have been the first to treat ethics as a distinct subject (Kraut, 2018). That alone makes him a key figure in the development of ethical philosophy, even though he is not the founder of ethics as a discipline. He had a way of observing the world around him and illustrating his arguments with everyday examples that make his work accessible for the philosophical layman as well as the expert.

Aristotle’s Greece

It may be objected that the idea of virtue did not originate with Aristotle. Virtue has been present within the Greek mind, and therefore the Western mind since the pre-Socratics. This is one Hellerstedt’s (2018:23) objections against MacIntyre. To trace the development of virtue, it therefore appears that it would be more prudent and fruitful to study them rather than Aristotle. Indeed, Aristotle did not invent ethics – in fact, *EN* seems to assume that its audience already had experience in cultivating virtues (Kraut, 2018). This indicates that the virtue was already established in the foundation of the Athenian ethical vocabulary at the time of its compiling, if not an element of Greek Antiquity in general. Despite this, tracking of the development of virtue will start with Aristotle because he is a foundational thinker on the subject, who transcended his predecessors. A more thorough account of the origin of virtue as a concept may be useful, but it falls beyond the scope of this thesis and thus will not be attempted here.

Before continuing, it is necessary to consider the context in which *EN* was written. The works of Aristotle cannot be treated as if they were written by our contemporaries. He lived in a culture that is distinct from modern Western culture in nearly every conceivable way. This requires a discussion

[3] The Nichomachean Ethics will hereafter be shortened to *EN*, short for *Ethica Nichomachea*. (Eliasson, 2018:37).

of key differences between Ancient Athenian culture and modern Western culture before addressing the core of Aristotle's ethical thought. To properly understand his writings, it is essential to first understand the world in which he lived.

The first aspect to keep in mind is that Ancient Greece was not an egalitarian society. In modern society, it is taken for granted that the voice of each individual must be heard; that everyone's input is considered valid. It is a world where every individual is included and subject to the same law. This is a uniquely modern line of thought. It is characteristic of Kant's Categorical Imperative, where he attempts to formulate a moral rule that applies to everyone. This was unthinkable for the Ancient Greeks. Those outside of the *polis* (city) – the slaves and barbarians – were excluded from the body politic of the polis because they did not participate in the Greek Ethos, the unique guiding characteristic of their society. They did not engage in that characteristic element of the Greek political life, namely speech. Inside the *polis* decisions were made based on words and persuasion rather than force and violence. To Greeks, to motivate people through violence, to use speech to command rather than persuade, and to coerce followers were elements of lives lived outside the *polis,* and elements of lives which did not engage in politics. This, according to the Greeks, indicated a depravity in those outside the *polis*. Their lives were the kind where violence and coercive force determined daily affairs. They were not deprived of speech as such, but their speech was inextricable from force and violence. Hannah Arendt (1998:27) describe that in the Greek view the lives outside the *polis* were the kind that were not deprived of speech as such but rather of the kind of lives where speech was inextricable from the coercive force and violence that characterises the pre-political realm.

The divide between those within and without the *polis* was not limited to those within Greek society. There existed an internal divide between the household, or the private realm, and the *polis* as well. The Greeks viewed the common realm of the *polis* as sharply distinct from the private realm of the family and the household or *Oikos*. According to Arendt (1998:28), all ancient political thought rested upon this division as axiomatic. In contrast, she describes the modern body politic as 'a family whose everyday affairs have to be taken care of by a gigantic, nation-wide administration of housekeeping'. This results in a blurring of the distinction between the private and public spheres of life. Things that are inextricably linked to politics in the eyes of modern audiences, such as economics, were non-political to the Greeks (Arendt, 1998:29). To understand the extent of this, requires an understanding of the place of the household in Greek thought.

Firstly, one must understand that the creation of a public sphere likely occurred at the expense of the private realm of the household. It may have been inevitable, as the only way an individual could interact with those outside himself and his household, was by stepping outside that private sphere and into the common realm shared by all members of the public space. However, the public realm did not absorb the private realm in ancient Greece as it is the case in modernity. Somehow, the Greeks maintained the age-old sanctity of the home. According to Arendt (1998:29), 'what prevented the *polis* from violating the private lives of its citizens and made it hold sacred the boundaries surrounding each property was not respect for private property as we understand it, but the fact that without owning a house a man[4] could not participate in the affairs of the world because he had no location in it to call his own'. The Greeks understood that a man needed a home before he could enter the political realm, for it is only within the home that the pre-political needs of the political actor could be provided for. In the Greek mind, the distinctive characteristic of the home is 'necessity'. Men and women came together not merely out of desire, but because of shared needs. The driving force is life itself – both in terms of individual survival and the survival of the species. At the time it was taken for granted that it was the responsibility of the man to provide for nourishment and consequently maintain individual survival. In turn, it was the responsibility of the woman to provide for the survival of the species. To the Greeks, this division of responsibility seemed only natural. A man cannot give birth and thus he is unable to maintain the human species on his own. Similarly, a woman cannot become pregnant of her own volition. She must be intimate with a man for a child to be conceived. During the pregnancy, the woman will be vulnerable and unable to provide for her own needs. Thus, she needs someone to provide for her. Therefore, it fell to the man to provide for the needs of not only himself but also the woman and whatever children she bore.

From this, it may be clear why the distinctive characteristic of the home in the Greek mind was necessity. Mastering and overcoming this necessity was the condition for the freedom that characterized the *polis* (Arendt, 1998:30). What a modern reader may will find objectionable is the method used to master necessity. To the Greeks, the only way to master this necessity was through force and violence. It was taken for granted that this was the only means for a person to liberate himself from the bonds of life's necessity and enter the freedom of the *polis*. The creation of the polis already implies an act of violence upon nature: the polis is an artificially created space which places a certain degree of distance between the human being and nature. They held this view because that is what they saw in nature around them: the strong dominated the weak. That is why it

[4] The term *man* here is generally used as a shorthand for person or humanity in general rather than specifically a male member of the human species.

seemed only natural that the household head held power akin to that of a despot: uncontested and unquestionable. Thus, the private realm was marked by the strictest inequality in addition to necessity. Yet, this necessity was not viewed as something great. Rather, it was considered something shameful. Fredrich Nietzsche (2006:166) writes:

'However, when the compelling force of artistic inspiration unfolds in him, he has to create and bow to the necessity of work. And as a father admires his child's beauty and talent but thinks of the act of creation with embarrassed reluctance, the Greek did the same. His pleased astonishment at beauty did not blind him to its genesis – which, like all genesis in nature, seemed to him a powerful necessity, a thrusting towards existence. That same feeling that sees the process of procreation as something shameful, to be hidden, although through it man serves a higher purpose than his individual preservation: that same feeling also veiled the creation of the great works of art, although they inaugurate a higher form of existence, just like that other act inaugurates a new generation. Shame, therefore, seems to be felt where man is just a tool of infinitely greater manifestations of will than he considers himself to be, in his isolated form as individual'.

This is not to say that the Greeks felt that necessity was something bad, but rather that it was a recognition of how little choice they had in the matter. Like a slave, they could not disobey the orders from the source of this necessity, be it nature or the gods. No matter how good the products of following these orders are or how pleasurable the process, the fact remains that the individual is required to bow to a force much greater than himself. To do so is to be like a slave. Any Greek would despise such circumstances, to the extent that even a poor man would prefer the insecurity of the job market to the ignominy of being a slave – for no matter how well the slave was cared for, no matter how much better of he was based on material standards, he was still not free. He was unable to do as he pleased, and in that sense he was inferior to even the poorest Greek (Arendt, 1998:31).

In contrast, the public realm of the *polis* was one of freedom and equality. According to Arendt (1998:32), the *polis* was distinguished from the household in that it only knew equals. In the *polis*, one was not only not subject to the necessities of life, but also one was neither subject to the will of another nor subjecting others to one's own will. To enter the *polis* meant that one neither ruled nor was ruled by another. In this lies the core of the Greek conception of 'freedom'. Freedom did not exist outside of the *polis*. The closest one got was the freedom to leave the household, a freedom that was only accessible by the head of the household. In doing so, he would enter the political realm where all were 'equals'. However, this is very different from the modern view of 'equals'. In the modern view, equality is associated with justice, but to the Greeks, this was not the case. To

them, the ‘equality’ of the *polis* meant dealing only with one’s peers. It presupposed the existence of ‘unequals’ outside of the *polis*. These unequals usually consisted of the majority of the population of a city-state. This would be an unthinkable state of affairs in modernity. The modern embrace of universal equity and equality would decry any state of affairs where a minority can rule over the majority. This is, in part, due to the blending of public and private affairs. What the Greeks considered to be fundamental to politics (action, thought, and speech) is now considered a superstructure built around social interests. In this view, politics cannot be separated from personal interest, that is to say, ‘the household’, because it is the household that determines politics.

Arendt (1998:33) writes that ‘the two realms [public and private] indeed constantly flow into each other like waves in the never-resting stream of the life process itself’. For better or worse, matters that were once only of private concern, such as economics, have been elevated to the public realm. This may be a positive development because, In theory, fewer people will be left behind due to circumstances beyond their control. The collective pulling of the yoke of necessity by society is supposed to compensate for unfortunate circumstances. However, a problem has arisen with this: as the private realm was elevated to that of the public, the public realm has been dragged down to that of the private realm. There is no longer a separate space for people to interact only as equals. As it stands, the majority of interactions will be among people who are unequal in, among other things, ability, means and rank. This imbalance of power opens up the interaction to the possibility of force and violence. While this undoubtedly happened in Ancient Greek society, it is unlikely that it would affect politics directly, because there was an impassable gap between the public and private realms. The merging of the private and political realms has bridged this gap, meaning that politics are open to contamination by what the Greeks considered to be ‘pre-political’. In this state, speech can no longer be completely separated from violence and force.

Philosophers like Fredrich Nietzsche therefore considered modern society as a society run by slaves. He views modern democracy not as something that pulls disaffected groups of a population to the dignity of the public sphere, but rather as something that drags the dignified and excellent groups of a population out of the public sphere and down into the private one. To him, ‘the democratic movement counts not just as a form of decay of political organization but as the form of decay, namely diminution, of man, as a way of levelling him down and lowering his value’ (Nietzsche, 2006:152). He laments the loss of a certain type of excellence in politics. From experience it is known that the average individual only lives from day to day, his mind preoccupied with only his needs and wants in the here and now. Nietzsche is not convinced that this type of man – the man who is not concerned about things beyond his own survival, who has neither need nor

want for art – can enter the political sphere. Rather, only those who have overcome the struggle of existence, what he calls an 'artists', can cross over into the realm of politic, which is why he laments that in modernity 'it is not the man in need of art, but the slave who determines general views' (Nietzsche, 2006:165). The views in question are ones that are held as sacred by modern society, namely that of human rights, universal equality and the dignity of man. According to Nietzsche (2006:165) the slave created, or were told, these fictions to prevent them from realizing at what stage 'dignity' can even be mentioned. He claims that that stage is reached only when an individual has transcended necessity, meaning that he has reached a position in life where he 'no longer has to procreate and work in the service of the continuation of his individual life'. This will be a person who has both the wealth and ability to satisfy his needs and will inevitably be a member of a very specific and very small socio-political class. According to Aristide Tessitore (1992:201), this class of people were Aristotle's first audience.

Aristotle's Audience

In the *EN* Aristotle uses a Greek phrase that roughly translates to 'gentlemen' (*kagoi kagathoi*) (Tessidore, 1992:201). Modern usage of this term is very different from how Aristotle used it. Today, the term has several different uses. In its most basic form, it refers to any man of any social standing. At public events where the audience is referred to as 'ladies and *gentlemen*', the term is used without regard for the social standing of the audience. Compare this with two other common meanings: firstly, in its singular form, the term 'gentleman' refers to a chivalrous man, a man of virtue; and secondly, the term refers to a man of high or noble birth. A form of this term combines the previous two definitions. It is possible for a 'gentleman' to be of both high birth and of noble character (Merriam-Webster, Inc, 2020a). It is possible that the previous definitions may be a watering down of the final one. This is evident in the dual definition of the word 'noble' when applied to humans. For a man to be 'noble' can mean to be either of high birth or of high morals or virtue (Merriam-Webster, Inc, 2020b). Thus, there seems to be an association in the English language between being in a high social class as well as being of a virtuous character. Of course, experience has shown that a noble birth does not automatically guarantee a noble character. The rich are infamous for being petty and self-interested. This is especially evident in fiction. It is rare for modern fiction to portray rich characters as anything other than corrupt or otherwise wicked[5]. But this is the opposite of Aristotle's audience. Tessitore (1992:201-202) describes his view of the 'gentleman' as follows:

[5] Notable examples from classic literature include *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald and *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens.

‘The way of life of gentlemen connotes both social-political status and a certain level of moral excellence. The gentleman is a citizen in the fullest and best sense of the word, one who embodies the highest aims of the polis. He acts with a view to the noble, i.e., he both possesses and acts in accordance with those virtues which are generally regarded by decent human beings to be praiseworthy for their own sake. The gentleman is bound to a certain social and political class because his way of life requires both economic well-being and the presence of others in order to practice those virtues which are constitutive of his character.’

It is for this reason that Aristotle did not feel it necessary to defend the goodness of virtue. He believed that his audience implicitly already accepted it. Rather, he worked within this understanding to clarify and expand an already established code of decency (Tessitore, 1992:203). Due to the structure of Greek society, this audience would have been one with life experience as one could not enter the *polis* without first mastering the household. Consequently, the gentleman would have had to reach some level of maturity before entering the *polis*. According to Tessitore (Tessitore, 1992:203) it is at this point that his audience stands to benefit most from Aristotle’s work. Thus, they should be seen as the primary, though not exclusive, audience of the *EN*. In the time of ancient Greece these gentlemen would also have formed the majority of the body politic of Athens and other Greek city-states. As such, they were bound to the socio-political landscape as well of their respective city-states, in addition to moral conventions. This is in stark contrast to the life of a philosopher. Unlike a gentleman, the life of a philosopher is neither bound to a social class nor is it defined in relation to moral excellence. Rather, it is defined by its search for truth. This places it in direct conflict with the life of a gentleman. The characteristic philosophical action of questioning all conventional beliefs and opinions, regardless of how praiseworthy they are in reality, goes against the political pursuit of the gentleman, which consists of maintaining the socio-political and moral status quo (Tessitore, 1992:202). Conflict between these two ways of life seems inevitable.

An example of this conflict can be seen in the trial and execution of Socrates, an event with which Aristotle was familiar. Thus, it is unsurprising that Aristotle subordinates ethics to politics. He writes that it is good to secure the good for an individual, but it is even better to do so for a group of people or a city as a whole. According to Aristotle, a decent legislator wishes to and legislates in a way that helps citizens become good. He does so by framing laws in a way that allows citizens to form habits that cultivate virtue (Tessitore, 1992:204). In this, the goals of legislators and those of Aristotle overlap. Thus, the conflict mentioned above can be avoided. However, Aristotle is not

content to simply provide clarification and codification of a practical ethic. Later in the *EN* Aristotle makes a case for the fuller and more satisfying life of contemplation that characterizes that of a philosopher. In doing so, he opens the door for those in his audience who have the talent and potential for the philosophic life (Tessitore, 1992:204). One may ask why he does not make a case for this better way of life earlier in the EN. Doing so might have been detrimental to his goal of helping citizens cultivate good habits. After all, a portion of his audience were not only disinterested but were very suspicious of the philosophical life. By front-loading the *EN* with practical and politically applicable principles, he was able to placate and advise this section of his audience in achieving a shared goal. In doing so, he prepared the proverbial soil to sow the seeds of the philosopher's life in the minds of his most gifted students. Consequently, the audience of the *EN* can be divided into two broad groups: non-philosophers and potential philosophers. Whatever else they might be – gentlemen and legislators in the case of the direct audience – Aristotle had to find a way to cater to both groups when presenting his work on ethics.

A Multitude of Sources

It should be noted that the *EN* is not the only ethical treatise attributed to Aristotle called the *Eudemian Ethics*[6]. Of course, Aristotle refers to neither of these texts as they are called today, although he refers to one of them as *ta êthika*. Their names were presumably added later in reference to their editors, namely Eudemus (Aristotle's friend) in the case of the latter and Nicomachus in the case of the former. Regardless, the two texts discuss similar topics, namely the elements that comprise the best life a man can lead. It may be asked, then, why the *EN* should be examined rather than the *EE*? There is a difference between them in both organisation as well as content, indicating that one is a revision of the other. There is no clear indication of the order in which these texts were produced, but it is thought that the *EN* was produced after the *EE* because the *EN* discusses topics which do not appear in the *EE*. Thus, the *EN* will be examined rather than its (presumed) predecessor (Kraut, 2018).

A third text has been attributed to Aristotle named the *Magna Moralia*. However, its authorship has been disputed. While it discusses topics that are more fully discussed by the two aforementioned texts and shares their points of view, few authors in antiquity refer to the text by this name or attribute it to Aristotle. Neither is it mentioned by ancient authorities like Cicero and Diogenes Laertius – people who would have known about this text (Kraut, 2018). Thus, like the *EE* above, this text will not be taken into account either. With that being resolved, we can finally move on to

[6] Hereafter *EE*.

the central topic of this chapter, namely an examination of the *EN*. It is the most complete, and least disputed work of Aristotle on the topic of ethics.

Aristotle's Ethics

Aristotle starts by attempting to set the scope of his work. He begins by saying that all human activities and actions aim at some good and that for this reason it has been said that all things aim toward the good. It should be noted that he is not trying to define 'The Good' as 'that which all things aim for'. Rather, he is saying that something which is sought by all things must be good, because there is no other reason for it to be sought After this statement, he makes a distinction between ends: some ends are found within the activities themselves while others are products produced by activities. In the case of the later, any activity that produces a product, is inferior to the product that is produced, because it is for the sake of the product that the activity is performed. In the case of activities where the end lies within the activities themselves, things get a bit more complex. There are as many ends as there are activities, with each activity pursuing its own end, such as the end of medicine being health. However, some activities fall under the umbrella of other overarching activities, such as military action, all of which fall under the umbrella of 'strategy'. In such cases, all the activities under the umbrella are subordinate to the activity itself, because it is for the sake of the umbrella that the other activities are pursued (Aristotle, 2009:1094a1-17).

What Aristotle has done here is set up a hierarchy of ends that are being pursued. He is saying that there are ends that are subordinate to others: this means that some ends are being pursued for the sake of other ends. He posits that there is some final end that is being pursued by all activities, lest we fall into an infinite regress by pursuing ends for the sake of other ends ad infinitum (Aristotle, 2009:1094a19). It may be objected that a single unified 'final end' does not exist. Even if one accepts the premise that we cannot fall into an infinite regress of ends built upon other ends, it may still be possible for multiple sequences of activities and ends to end in multiple different 'final ends' distinct from each other. A way must then be found to determine whether there is a unified end or not. Aristotle proposes that the political sciences can serve as a guide and suggests that 'the human good' must be found, for it is the science that organises and directs human activity. Thus, he suggests that the end of man is the same as the state. Therefore, while it is good to attain the end for a single man, it is much greater ('finer and godlike') to attain it for a nation (Aristotle, 2009:1094a27-1094b11). This might seem strange to a modern audience, who know only of politics as it relates to the rule of some men over others, and in practice that has often been the case. However, this is not how politics were viewed in the Greek mind, to which the politician was a

gentleman. In theory, he was an exemplar of virtue, not unlike the saints of Medieval Christianity. As mentioned above, their goal was to create an environment in which virtuous habits are inculcated. This goal requires a certain type of person – not everyone can or should be in a position to create this environment. A man must already by schooled in virtue before he can properly appreciate the teaching Aristotle aims to give in the *EN* (Aristotle, 2009:1095a1, 2009:1095b1-9).

What Aristotle is trying to teach, is what the best kind of human life is. The identifying feature is to him *eudaimonia*[7], a term which is often translated as 'happiness', but it is not that simple for Aristotle. To him, a life of *eudaimonia* is a life well lived (Aristotle, 2009:1095a18). He identifies three kinds of lives that serve as candidates for a life of *eudaimonia*: a life of pleasure, a life of politics and, lastly, a life of contemplation (Aristotle, 2009:1095b18). He rejects the first kind of life on the basis that it is fit only for beasts (Aristotle, 2009:1095b21), for like animals, people who live this kind of life simply follow their appetites. To the Greeks, this would have been a disgraceful kind of life. To them, those who lived such a life were incapable of participating in higher activities found in the members of the *polis*. The second kind of life, the political life, is one of activity and is characterized by an individual's participation in the *polis*. In this kind of life, *eudaimonia* is thought to manifest itself in the form of honour. Yet, Aristotle rejects honour because it depends on those who bestow honour on the individual, rather than the individual receiving it. Furthermore, men pursue honourable lives in order to be recognised by their peers and superiors on the basis of their virtue. Thus, virtue outranks honour as a requirement for *eudaimonia*. Yet, Aristotle views this kind of life as insufficient still, for the mere possession of virtue does not guarantee *eudaimonia*. It is compatible with sleep, inactivity and, worst of all, suffering and misfortune (Aristotle, 2009:1095b22-33). One cannot be 'living well' if one is suffering from misfortune. Thus, virtue cannot be sufficient for *eudaimonia*. What remains then? Aristotle is not willing to discuss the topic at this point in the text. Rather, he satisfies himself by deferring this discussion to a later point in the *EN* (Book 10) and continues on a discussion on what 'The Good' is. This is not to be confused with Plato's 'Form of the Good'. Aristotle rejects it on the basis that there are as many forms of 'good' as there are 'beings' and thus there cannot be a single unified 'Form of The Good' as in Plato's metaphysics (Aristotle, 2009:1096a24)[8].

Aristotle returns to his discussion of ends by restating that different actions have different goods that are being pursued. Of these goods, some are being pursued for the sake of others and therefore

[7] The term *eudaimonia* will be used throughout this text rather than the cited text's translation of happiness. This is because Aristotle's use of the term refers to a state of being that the modern use of the term 'happiness' is insufficient to properly convey.
[8] For a more detailed discussion on the subject, see John L. Akrill's *Essays on Plato and Aristotle*, chapter 12.

they cannot be the 'final good'. Whatever it is, it is something that is pursued for its own sake. It must be something that is desirable because it is thought to exist for its own sake rather than for the sake of something else: in short, it is self-sufficient. Aristotle takes this self-sufficient good to be *eudaimonia* (Aristotle, 2009:1097a35). The details of this kind of life remain unclear, however. Aristotle attempts to associate *eudaimonia* with the function[9] of human beings. He does this by identifying something unique to human beings, namely reason (Aristotle, 2009:1098a4). Thus, to him, a life of *eudaimonia* is one that fully incorporates reason. He takes it for granted that this means that one acts in accordance with virtue. Combining these notions, he concludes that to achieve *eudaimonia* one must live in accordance with both reason and virtue (Aristotle, 2009:1098a6-17). However, this is easier said than done – neither virtue nor reason comes naturally to men. Anyone who has dealt with children knows this. They must be schooled in both to even have a chance at *eudaimonia*. Here, Aristotle's view of politics play a role. In his mind, it is responsible for producing a society dedicated to training its citizens for virtue (Aristotle, 2009:1099b25-34). Yet, even if politics were to be successful in producing this society, then misfortune may bar the way to *eudaimonia*. One may be born ugly, or with a weak immune system, or sterile, or otherwise solitary. It would be hard for an individual such as this to 'live well'. It may be even harder for one who had suffered tragedy, such as one who had lost children or a good friend (Aristotle, 2009:1099b1-10). Thus, even if one has been trained in these arts and exercised them faithfully, misfortune may still rob one of the chance to obtain *eudaimonia*. Should it then be assumed, like the writer of Ecclesiastes, that the dead are happier than the living for they are beyond the misfortunes that life may bring (Bible, 1983)? Aristotle disagrees, because he believes that a noble soul will shine through misfortune (Aristotle, 2009:1100b25-35) and that the virtuous man will be able to recover any happiness lost through misfortune (Aristotle, 2009:1101a10-15).

Here, Aristotle has laid the groundwork for the rest of the text. What he is attempting to do in the *EN* is to determine and articulate the best kind of human life. He believes that he is able to do this through the political sciences, which in the time of Greek antiquity was geared towards training and schooling citizens in virtue and reason. It is through the application of these arts that Aristotle believes that men will reach 'happiness', more fully expressed in the term '*eudaimonia*'. In the next section, Aristotle expands on what he believes to be the acquisition and nature of virtue.

The Nature of Virtue

[9] Aristotle does not mean that something with a purpose has been designed. Rather, the key concept to keep in mind here that is that 'function' refers to what a thing 'ought to do'. For example, an oak tree ought to be sturdy and produce acorns in the summer.

Aristotle starts his discussion on the acquisition of virtue by distinguishing two kinds of virtue: intellectual and moral. The former is characterised by philosophical insight, understanding and practical wisdom while the latter is characterised by temperance and liberality (Aristotle, 2009:1103a5-7). Aristotle does not believe that either of these kinds of virtue arises from nature[10]. Rather, he believes them to be the result of habit and training. In the case of intellectual virtues, it requires teaching, requiring experience and time for proper function. In contrast, moral virtues require the formation of habits (Aristotle, 2009:1103a13-17). A single act cannot make one virtuous. Right action may be taken under the direction of another or otherwise without virtuous motivations, such as paying a debt simply to avoid a lawsuit (Aristotle, 2009:1105a28-29). In addition, knowledge of virtuous actions does not guarantee that a man will perform them. A scoundrel may know what the right action is to take but may nonetheless choose to perform a wrong action. Therefore, it is not enough to simply know what virtuous action is. Rather, it requires the formation of a certain type of character: one that has knowledge of the virtues and chooses virtuous acts for their own sake (Aristotle, 2009:1105a29-32). The only way this character can be formed is by the formation of habits, which are formed by repeatedly acting as a virtuous man would (Aristotle, 2009:1103b1, 2009:1105b4-6). Aristotle creates something akin to a paradox here. Performing a virtuous act does not make one virtuous, but the only way one can become virtuous is by repeatedly acting in accordance with virtue. However, one must recognise that becoming virtuous is similar to learning to play an instrument: one cannot become a musician by learning a single song. A man must train his appetites and feelings, that is the non-rational part of the human psyche, to act in accordance with virtue. According to Aristotle (2009:1103b24), this makes all the difference in the world.

The question now is what exactly virtuous action constitutes. Aristotle admits that he cannot give a precise answer (Aristotle, 2009:1104a1-9). However, he does not leave his audience floundering in uncertainty. He makes the observation that certain things are destroyed when they in either excess or defect. Too much or too little exercise will destroy the strength of a body. Similarly, a person who eats too much or too little, will not be healthy. He sees the same thing in the virtues. A coward runs from all danger while a reckless man plunges into danger without paying proper attention to his own safety. Thus, he concludes that in order to correctly develop virtue, one must find a ‘middle ground’ excess and defect, which Aristotle (2009:1104a26) calls the ‘mean’. Notably, the examples

[10] It should be noted that Aristotle does not seem to imply that virtue is a human invention. Rather, he seems to imply that virtue originates in the non-rational part of the human psyche (Aristotle, 2009:1103a3). The moral virtues specifically, as shall be indicated below, are concerned with the passions, appetites and emotions of the human psyche. They seem to fall into the same category as the passions in that they are human in origin, but in a different sense than human inventions like language and the sciences.

that he uses are not universal. It is well known that in order to maintain a healthy body, one must exercise and eat right, but the specifics of diet and exercise routines are determined by the individual in question. A healthy diet for one man may make another fat. Similarly, the mean must be determined relative to the individual in question (Aristotle, 2009:1106b36). This would require individuals to know themselves well enough that they would know where the mean in terms of specific virtues lies for them. Not all passions or actions that men may pursue are subject to this principle, however. Some actions (such as murder, adultery, and spite) are in and of themselves vices and must never be pursued (Aristotle, 2009:1107a8-25). Even without this exception, attempting to live by the standard of the mean is not a simple thing, for the line between excess and defect is a thin one. There are times where an individual falls short of this standard and is still praised, for he deviates from the mean to such a small degree that it is imperceptible to an external observer (Aristotle, 2009:1109b13-18). Another difficulty lies in the fact that humans are generally attracted to specific excesses and deficiencies. It is far easier to indulge in pleasures and become decadent than it is to become a boor that rejects all that is enjoyable.

Even with this difficulty, Aristotle places a great emphasis on a man voluntarily choosing virtue or vice. He starts off this discussion by addressing the idea of voluntary and involuntary acts, for it is on that basis that praise, blame, pardon or pity is given (Aristotle, 2009:1109b30-32). The nature of a voluntary act is rather obvious: it is an act that is done without outside forces influencing the decision to do or not do something (Aristotle, 2009:1110a15). It is in the case of involuntary acts where the discussion becomes more complex. Aristotle distinguishes two kinds of involuntary acts: those done through force and those done by reason of ignorance (Aristotle, 2009:1109b36). The first kind of involuntary act is one that is done without a man willing the act, such as being in an accident or acting under direct threat to his life (Aristotle, 2009:1110a1-3). Aristotle mentions a debate about whether it should be considered an involuntary act if a man performs an act to avoid a greater evil for a noble object (such as preventing the death of loved ones at the hands of a tyrant). To him, these acts bear a resemblance to a voluntary act because the man still chooses to perform the act, but in an abstract sense, the act is involuntary since the man has been coerced into performing the act and would never have chosen to be in that situation if it were in his control (Aristotle, 2009:1110a16-17). Aristotle avoids this debate by saying that the status of voluntary or involuntary should be applied according to the moment that the action is performed and not the circumstances surrounding the action (Aristotle, 2009:1110a8). This does not mean that someone cannot be blamed for acts that would otherwise be unvirtuous. Praise or blame or pity can only be bestowed once the circumstances of the involuntary act have been examined.

The second kind of involuntary act is one that is done out of ignorance. Aristotle describes it as something done without knowledge of the particulars of the action. From the examples he uses – such as a doctor giving a man a medicine that ends up killing him (Aristotle, 2009:1111a13) – the main idea here seems to be unintentionality rather simple ignorance. The idea seems to be that if the man had full knowledge of the circumstances, he would have acted differently. Thus, some form of regret seems to form part of this kind of action (Aristotle, 2009:1111a19). To Aristotle, the man who does not feel regret at this belongs to some different category entirely, for his ignorance of the circumstances preclude him from acting voluntarily, yet his lack of regret means he did not act involuntarily in the sense that Aristotle is thinking of. He may have still performed the act if he had known all of the circumstances involved. Similarly, Aristotle considers acting *in* ignorance a different kind as well. A man who is drunk or enraged, does not act out of ignorance of the circumstances, but due to the aforementioned states (Aristotle, 2009:1110b26).

With the difference between voluntary and involuntary delineated, Aristotle moves on to discuss choice. To him, it is closely related to a voluntary act, but not identical to it. He argues that both children and animals act voluntarily and not out of choice (Aristotle, 2009:1111b8-10). An act in the spur of the moment may be voluntary, but he does not consider it a choice because while such an act may involve only internal forces, which would make it voluntary, it does not involve reason. That seems to be the distinguishing factor between voluntary actions that are chosen and voluntary actions that are not chosen. Reason is necessary for an action to be chosen (Aristotle, 2009:1112a17), because of the two parts of making a choice: the desired end or goal and the means of reaching said goal. Often the desired end is predefined by the man in question – for example, a doctor seeking to heal his patients. The question then becomes one of means. There may be multiple methods for reaching an end, which necessities deliberating which one ought to be followed (Aristotle, 2009:1112b16). What is important, here is that the objects of choice must be reachable. It is pointless to deliberate the means to reach a goal if the goal cannot be reached (Aristotle, 2009:1112b24). Thus, a man can only choose things that are within his own power to reach, which includes the help of friends and other helpers, because their efforts in reaching the desired goals are, in Aristotle's mind, set in motion by the individual in question (Aristotle, 2009:1112b26).

The chief elements of choice may then identified as an end or goal that is desired, a means through which to reach that end and a man to set events in motion that will lead to that goal. For this reason, Aristotle can rightly call choice a 'deliberate desire for things within our power' (Aristotle, 2009:1113a9). He does not simply talk of political power here, but rather that which is within a man's reach, that is, his potential. It is in the means through which an end is reached that virtue is

obtained (Aristotle, 2009:1113b4-6). Virtue lies in action, and it is only through repeated acts of virtue that the virtuous habits necessary for a virtuous character are formed (Aristotle, 2009:1114a8-9).

The moral virtues are in Aristotle's mind something practical, something that must be acted out in reality. It is situated, rather than foundational. It is not enough to simply *know* the right thing to do, the knowledge must be put into practice. His emphasis on finding the intermediate between virtue and vice makes for a more complex system of ethics than one based on rules. It stresses the need for self-knowledge, for otherwise, a man will not be able to find the correct midpoint between vice and virtue. In doing so, Aristotle allows a man to take his situation into account and make adjustments based on that. Yet, he does not deny that there are things that are abhorrent regardless of the situation involved. Acting is only one part of the ethical equation, however. Aristotle views right reasoning to be an indispensable part of being virtuous (Aristotle, 2009:1106b35-1107a1). Thus, it is necessary to examine reason and the role of the intellect in the development of virtue.

Intellectual Virtue

In addition to moral virtue, Aristotle also identified a second kind of virtue, which he called 'intellectual virtue'. As stated above, reason is indispensable for becoming virtuous. It is through reason that we can determine the intermediate between virtue and vice (Aristotle, 2009:1128b18). Knowing that reason determines this is not enough, however. We must also know what correct reason is and the standard that accompanies it (Aristotle, 2009:1128b34). In the course of discovering what correct reason is, he makes the observation that the rational part of the mind, the intellect, is concerned with two aspects. The first aspect it is concerned with is 'necessity' - the 'things whose originative causes are invariable' (Aristotle, 2009:1139a7). The other aspect is concerned with the things that are variable (Aristotle, 2009:1139a8). Aristotle calls the former the scientific part of reason, and the latter the calculative part (Aristotle, 2009:1139a12-13). Aristotle believes that in both cases the aim is truth (Aristotle, 2009:1139a25-30). However, there are two ways truth can be used by the intellect. The first is contemplation. It is neither practical nor productive (Aristotle, 2009:1139a27), and when functioning properly, it simply perceives truth as it is. Yet, on its own, the intellect can do nothing save observe truth and falsehood. It is only once it is aimed toward a specific end that it can become practical. This is the distinguishing factor between the contemplative intellect and the practical intellect. The latter manifests in combining truth with 'right desire' (Aristotle, 2009:1139a29). This is important for Aristotle because he believes that 'moral virtue is a state of character concerned with choice' (Aristotle, 2009:1139a22). For a choice to be good, the 'reasoning must be true and the desire right' (Aristotle, 2009:1139a23-24), because

the efficient cause of action is choice, a combination of desire and reasoning toward an end. That is why reason is an indispensable part of being virtuous. One cannot perform good actions or its opposite without a combination of intellect and character (Aristotle, 2009:1139a27).

In both the above forms of the intellect, the central element is truth. Aristotle recognises five ways the intellect can possess truth, namely art, scientific knowledge, practical wisdom, philosophical wisdom, and intuitive reason (Aristotle, 2009:1139b16). These can be thought of as the intellectual virtues. Like before, these virtues can be divided into two groups: virtues dealing with necessities and those dealing with variable things. In the first group, there are scientific knowledge, philosophical wisdom and intuitive reason. In the second, we find art and practical wisdom. These groups will be examined below.

According to Aristotle (2009:1139b24-32), scientific knowledge deals with things that can be taught, as ‘every science is capable of being taught’. Teaching starts from that which is already known, either through induction or deduction. Induction is considered the starting point which knowledge of even universals presupposes. In contrast, deduction proceeds from the knowledge of universals. This means that some of the starting points of deduction are the result of induction, meaning that knowledge from deduction and knowledge from induction cannot be of the same kind. Aristotle believes that scientific knowledge lies within the ability to demonstrate (Aristotle, 2009:1139b32), meaning that deduction forms the essence of scientific knowledge. This broadens the scope of scientific knowledge beyond that of modern science, which seems to have limited itself to that which is demonstrable through experimentation rather than anything demonstrable through deductive argumentation.

It may be asked where this leaves inductive reasoning. As stated above, it is through induction that the starting points of reasoning are reached, or what Aristotle calls first principles (Aristotle, 2009:1140b32). Because they are the starting points of demonstration, first principles cannot form part of scientific knowledge. Similarly, it cannot form the core of philosophic wisdom, for it too requires philosophers to demonstrate certain things (Aristotle, 2009:1141a1). Nor can first principles be considered as art or practical wisdom, for they deal with things that are variable and therefore fall outside the realm of inductive reasoning (Aristotle, 2009:1140b36). Thus, it must belong to some other category than those mentioned above. Aristotle calls this category intuitive reason (Aristotle, 2009:1141b7).

The third kind of knowledge that deals with necessity is what Aristotle calls philosophical wisdom. Unlike wisdom in a specific field, which was how Greeks described expertise, this kind of knowledge refers to a more general kind of knowledge, the kind that is not limited by a particular field or some other aspect (Aristotle, 2009:1141a12). For this reason, Aristotle calls it the most complete form of knowledge (Aristotle, 2009:1141a16). It requires one to know both first principles as well as knowledge that are deduced from those first principles. It is a combination of intuitive reason and scientific knowledge – specifically knowledge of 'the highest objects' (Aristotle, 2009:1141a19). Aristotle seems to limit philosophical wisdom to this kind of knowledge because other kinds of knowledge – such as politics or practical wisdom, which will be discussed below, - are concerned with things that are variable (Aristotle, 2009:1141a21-34). Because they change and vary depending on the circumstances, he considers them 'lower' than the things that are invariable.

The second group of intellectual virtues are those that deal with variable things. Aristotle defines 'art' as the 'reasoned state of capacity to make'(Aristotle, 2009:1140a9). This may seem strange to a modern reader, because the modern view of art and artists is an irrational one. Some undefined muse drives the artist to create their work; yet any artist knows that great technical skill is required to create their art. Writers must know and understand the rules of the language in which they are writing. Painters must know and understand how colours interact with one another and he must understand how the paint/materials he uses will influence his piece. Sculptors must similarly understand the materials they are using to create their sculptors. Yet, that is only the basics when it comes to creating their works. They all must understand the things that they are trying to depict. Hours of practice are required to develop the skills required to create their work, to learn and master the techniques that separate the amateur from the professional artist. A reader may have noticed that Aristotle called art the 'reasoned state of capacity *to make*'. That broadens his view of art beyond that of the modern view, for many modern non-artists create things. Smiths, carpenters, bricklayers, engineers, architects and others also make things. According to Aristotle's definition, they would also be artists, and rightly so, for the Greeks made a sharp distinction between acting and making (Aristotle, 2009:1140a6). The core of the distinction lay in the fact that when acting, as argued above, the motivating factor is the end goal itself. However, when making something, the end goal is the thing that is made, and not simply the act of making the thing.

The other variable virtue is practical wisdom. Aristotle says that is the 'mark of a man of practical wisdom to be able to deliberate about what is good and expedient for himself [in terms of] what sorts of [things lead to] the good life in general' (Aristotle, 2009:1140a24-28). Deliberation separates practical wisdom from the intellectual virtues that deal with necessity, for it is not possible

to deliberate about that which is necessarily the case. It can only be demonstrated. In contrast, practical wisdom deals with things which have variable starting points (Aristotle, 2009:1140a30-34). Similarly, it is distinct from art because art is concerned with making, while practical wisdom is concerned with acting. As stated above, the difference is that the end of making is the product being produced while the end of acting is the act itself (Aristotle, 2009:1140b1, 2009:1140b6). Another contrast exists in how mistakes are treated. In art, intentionally breaking the rules is praised as a show of knowledge and technical prowess; but intentional mistakes in the field of practical wisdom are condemned (Aristotle, 2009:1140b21-23). In this sense, practical wisdom is very similar to the moral virtues discussed in the previous section. Combine this with Aristotle's belief that the proper end of the intellect is truth, and it seems reasonable for him to define practical wisdom as 'a true and reasoned state of capacity to act with regard to the things that are good or bad for man' (Aristotle, 2009:1140b4).

There appears to be a similarity between this and the moral virtues. In both cases, the defining factor lies in the acting out of the virtues. This is a major topic in Aristotle's ethical work. Knowledge of virtue must be accompanied by action. It has already been stated that knowledge alone is impotent, but knowledge without virtue can be disastrous. For a historical example, one needs only to point to Germany in the 1930s and '40s. At the time, they were considered the smartest and most intelligent society in the world. Yet, they committed what is considered to be one of the worst atrocities in modern history. For this reason, Aristotle can rightly say that 'if the [goal] is noble, the [intellect] is laudable, but if the [goal] is bad, the [intellect] is mere smartness' (Aristotle, 2009:1144a26). Knowledge must be combined with virtue before it an action can be called good, which is why Aristotle can say that Socrates was on the right track when he claimed that virtues were forms of practical wisdom. He thought that Socrates went too far in unifying virtue and practical wisdom, however. In his view, virtue means acting in accordance with practical wisdom (correct reason), which does imply the presence of reason in the virtuous man (Aristotle, 2009:1144b20-25).

Thus, a connection has been established between moral virtue and reason. The intellect is necessary to direct and shape the virtues. Without truth to guide it, virtue becomes unintelligible at best. At worst a man can be led from the path of virtue by falsehood: this phenomenon of falling short of virtue will be discussed below.

Those Who Fall Short

Aristotle identified three kinds of men who fall short of virtue: the self-indulgent, the continent and the incontinent. The worst of these three is the self-indulgent (Aristotle, 2009:1150a29). Such a man is characterised by an excessive pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain, because this excess is by choice – meaning that he pursues the excess for its own sake and not for a result distinct from them. Thus, Aristotle considers the self-indulgent man beyond saving, for because the excesses are chosen, he is without regret and a man without regret cannot be convinced to change his ways (Aristotle, 2009:1150a15-20).

The two remaining kinds of men, the continent and incontinent are similar with regard to reasoning, but differ in terms of choice (Aristotle, 2009:1152a13). The main difference lies in a man's ability to conquer his appetites (Aristotle, 2009:1150a39). The incontinent man is unsuccessful in conquering his appetites, be it through a habit of indulging them or some more inherent defect of character (Aristotle, 2009:1152a28-30). In simple terms, the continent man is more successful in following through on resolutions and choices that go against his appetites than the incontinent man (Aristotle, 2009:1152a26). Aristotle associates the continent man with practical wisdom, stating that 'the same man [cannot] have practical wisdom and be incontinent' (Aristotle, 2009:1152a6). Yet, even if an incontinent man is unsuccessful in acting out the resolutions he has made, thus precluding him from possessing practical wisdom, he still has attempted to do so, successful or otherwise, and that still makes him better than the self-indulgent man.

With the three types of men who fall short of virtue broadly described, all the tools are now available to describe what Aristotle felt to be the best life.

Eudaimonia

This chapter has been dedicated to Aristotle's search to discover and articulate the conditions for *eudaimonia*. Throughout the *EN* he describes how a life of virtue – good action reinforced by true ideas – is superior to a life of self-indulgence. Thus, it seems curious that he does not consider this kind of life a viable candidate for *eudaimonia*. Rather, he considers the activity of contemplation as a necessary as well as sufficient requirement for reaching *eudaimonia* (Aristotle, 2009:1177a17). This is because, like virtue, he considers *eudaimonia* an activity (Aristotle, 2009:1176a36), one that he believes is in accordance with 'the highest virtue', that which is 'the most divine element within' man (Aristotle, 2009:1177a11-16). He believes contemplation to be most divine because reason, the faculty of contemplation, is the best thing within man (Aristotle, 2009:1177a19-21). Additionally, he believes that a man can contemplate more continuously than he can do any other activity (Aristotle, 2009:1177a21-22). Lastly, he considers it to be the 'most self-sufficient' activity

(Aristotle, 2009:1177a26), meaning that a man does not need outside forces for the activity to take place. Indeed, a man does not need another to contemplate, and a lifelong hermit can also contemplate the world around him. In contrast, the virtuous life (which Aristotle considers to be the 'second-best life' (Aristotle, 2009:1178a8)) is dependent on opportunity (Aristotle, 2009:1177a27-31). Courage requires a danger to be faced, generosity requires both those in need of help and the means to provide it, and honesty a truth to be told or a lie to be avoided. This contrast elevates contemplation in the mind of Aristotle above virtue, even if he grants that a man may be able to contemplate better in the presence of others (Aristotle, 2009:1177a33) for contemplation is an activity available for any man, no matter his stance in life.

Yet, there is a difficulty here. Not all men are interested in a life of contemplation, even though all men desire *eudaimonia* or happiness in its broadest sense. Is it truly possible for true happiness to only be accessible to those with an interest in contemplation, those who Aristotle calls philosophers? It seems strange that something sought by all men can only be reached by the handful of men with an interest in philosophy. Aristotle seems unable to answer this difficulty. For that, his intellectual descendants must be discussed. In the next chapter, I will discuss how Aristotle's ethics were combined with Christian metaphysics through the work of Thomas Aquinas.

Chapter 2

The Aquinian Transformation

‘But life at its best is a creative synthesis of opposites in fruitful harmony.’

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Aquinas’s role in the development of virtue ethics is one of synthesis. At the time of his birth, the rediscovery of Aristotle’s texts sharply divided the Medieval European world. He was pivotal in reconciling the newly discovered texts with Christian thought and sending Medieval Europe in a new direction. He is renowned for ‘Christianizing Aristotle’ (Eco, 1986:85). According to Peter Kreeft (1990:13), he created a singular ‘Camelot-like moment’ where a synthesis between various Classical and Medieval thinkers was possible. Yet, this moment did not come without difficulty. The world that Aquinas was born into was a world divided, torn between the mysticism of the past and the discoveries from all over Europe. In addition, the world had changed since the *EN* was written. Thus, before an overview of Aquinas’s ethics can be given, it is necessary to consider the changes since Aristotle, as well as the divide into which Aquinas was born.

A Changed World

More than a thousand years passed between Aristotle’s death in 322BC and Aquinas’s birth in 1225. The Roman Empire rose and fell, leaving the desperate fragments of the dominated tribes and civilization to fend for themselves. This resulted in what is colloquially referred to as the ‘Dark Ages’. It should be noted that this period is not equivalent to the Medieval Era. The term refers only to the first half of the period, stretching from circa 500 to 1000 AD, after the loss of Roman culture and knowledge. In its place, Christianity rose, spreading far beyond the borders of the old empire. The church, broadly speaking, acted almost like a true empire itself, binding the various nations of Medieval Europe together under its collective banner. However, unlike a real empire, there was no true emperor to lead this ‘empire’. Unlike the Roman emperors, the leaders of the church had limited official power, and the only true political power they wielded was derived from the idea that they served God directly, with the implication that that granted them some sort of special authority.

European society also changed during this time. The gap between the *Oikos* and the *Polis* discussed in the previous chapter shifted during the medieval period, in both character and location. According to Arendt (1998:34), the church offered men a substitute for the citizenship that was offered by a local government under the Romans. The Medieval tension between the 'darkness' of everyday life and the splendour of the sacred, and the accompanying rise from the secular realm to that of the religious, mirrored that of the rise from the private to the public in antiquity. The important difference, however, was that no matter how 'worldly' the church became, it was always concerned with otherworldly affairs. Thus, it cannot comfortably be equated with the public realm of antiquity and its focus on worldly affairs. Yet, the church did retain some elements from the public realm, a chief example being the equality that existed within the Greek public sphere. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul (Bible, 1983) said that it does not matter whether one is a Greek or a Jew, a free man or a slave, a man or a woman, because all is one within Christ. This is often interpreted as an argument for equality. According to Francis Fukuyama (1992:56) it was the Christians that first introduced the idea of equality to the world. Regardless of a man's rank outside of the church, within the church, he is equal to his fellow believers, regardless of whether those fellow believers are kings or slaves. In contrast, the secular realm under feudalism can be equated with antiquity's private realm. Arendt (1998:34) claims that the hallmark of the feudalist secular realm is the absorption of all activities into the sphere of the household[11]. Consequently, no true public realm exists, despite the elements that are retained in the sacred realm of the church.

Similarly, there was a shift from the empirical and external world to the mystical and internal world of the human spirit. The rise of Christianity occurred during the same period as the development of Plotinus's Neoplatonism, which was an early attempt to synchronise Platonic and Aristotelian philosophies. John Kok (1996:67) considers it a rival to Christianity; yet it had such a great influence on the faith that when Augustine (as cited by Kok, 1996:67) said that 'There are none nearer to us [Christians] than the Platonists' he was referring to the Neoplatonists. This pushed Medieval thought away from the material realm, instead, the intellect searched for a mystical experience of the divine. All elements of the human mind were to be harnessed to help reach that goal. That is not to say that humanity ignored the exploration of the material realm, however. It is said that all men desire to know (Aristotle, 1994) and the Medieval emphasis on the mystical did not quench this desire. Rather, it directed the desire in service of the mystical. Discovering and understanding the natural world was considered a path to the discovery and understanding of the

[11] A critical difference here is that a feudal lord could only render justice within the limits of his rule, but a head of a household in Ancient Greece was not, strictly speaking, bound by such limitations. According to Arendt (1998:34), he 'knew neither of laws nor justice outside of the political realm'.

divine. It was only through faith that true understanding (be it understanding of the natural realm or the divine) could be reached (Maurer, 1962:4). Fortunately for the Christians, Augustine considered truths discovered by the pagan minds – whether scientific, philosophical, or something else entirely – to be of use to the Christians (Maurer, 1962:5). He considered all truths to emanate from God, be it through divine revelation or through studying the things created by God, which in Christian theology is the entirety of the natural world. This is important for Aquinas because the works of pagan thinkers could be absorbed into the philosophies of Christian thinkers. If a thinker posits true facts, the Christian can (and might be obligated to) absorb it into his work, while falsehoods can be rejected or amended as needed. This sets the stage for the moment of synthesis mentioned above.

Christianity also brought about an additional ontological shift to Greek thought. In the first paragraph of the Gospel of John (Bible, 1983) for example, John writes that in the beginning, the 'Word' existed, that the 'Word' was with God and that was God and that it was through the 'Word' that creation came into being. He later writes that the 'Word' became flesh, became human, and lived among humans. The term 'Word' here is translated from the Greek word *logos*, which generally translated as 'reason' or 'rationality' (Kok, 1996:63). The Greeks, and the Stoics especially, would have no problem identifying God in the rationality of the universe. Bur John goes further and claims that the *logos became* human. This would have been an unthinkable idea for the Stoics – 'insanity', according to Luc Ferry (2011:61). They viewed the *logos* as the animating force in the world, it was what gave humans and animals their souls, made plants grow and what gave inorganic matter its cohesion (Kok, 1996:63). The idea that the animating force of the universe could be concentrated within a single man would be difficult for a Stoic to accept, and understandably so, for it changes their fundamental understanding of the universe. Firstly, reason no longer finds its source within creation. Rather, reason finds its source outside nature, flowing from its creator, God. The universe has reason only insofar as God has imbued it with reason. What was once the animating force, is now subordinate to another being, one that is unknowable by human reason by virtue of its existence outside of creation, because the human intellect can only reason about information gathered by the senses, and the senses only operate within creation. Therefore, a barrier has been placed between humanity and a full understanding of reason. The only way to overcome this barrier is through faith (broadly defined as trust in divine authority). The only way to gain knowledge about this outside source of reason is through revelation. For that, one needs to trust that this source of revelation – whether a prophet or scripture or something more direct – both exists and is trustworthy. If it is both these things, then it seems reasonable for Augustine to say that

‘[u]nless you believe, you will not understand’ (as cited by Maurer, 1962:4). Thus, reason is subordinate to faith.

Forgiveness – the most unique, and perhaps crucial, concept introduced by Christianity – will be addressed below. It is an element that is not found among the Greeks or the Romans. Only a vague equivalent is only found in the act of sparing the defeated or commuting the death penalty, as is the right of all rulers. Through this, it is revealed that they have a dim recognition of the necessity of forgiveness as a corrective for damages that inevitably occur when acting in the world (Arendt, 1998:239). In Arendt’s (1998:240) view, forgiveness is necessary to escape from the consequences of misdeeds. Revenge, which is the most natural reaction to being wronged, binds all involved to its process in a chain reaction of reciprocating revenge. In contrast, forgiveness breaks this cyclical chain reaction. It is an action that cannot be predicated or predicted. In doing so, it creates something new, a new possibility without the chains of past sins hanging over one's head like a sword of Damocles. As an alternative to forgiveness, Arendt (1998:241) suggests punishment, for it too aims to put an end to the endless process of revenge. Yet, it may be argued that one needs the other. Punishment needs forgiveness to avoid spilling over into revenge, while forgiveness in some sense needs punishment to ensure that justice is maintained. An example of the latter may be found in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. In Christian thought, it is through this event that God’s forgiveness enters the world. However, crucifixion is a punishment, which God takes upon himself, in the form of Christ, to facilitate forgiving the sins of humanity. This may be necessary as a method to repair the damage caused by misdeeds. When a creditor writes off a debt, for instance, he loses all claim to the money the debtor owes him: He makes a loss. Similarly, by forgiving a misdeed, the one who has been wronged, loses whatever claim to retribution a punishment may have given. This is all well and good for smaller misdeeds, such as a lie, but for larger ones such as murder, a gap is still present separating the sinner from the rest of society. Something is needed to make up for that loss. This is where punishment and redemption come in. Unlike revenge, which is aimed at returning the harm caused, punishment acts as a corrective, paving the way for the sinner to re-enter society. Thus, it may be that forgiveness and punishment act as complementary forces within human relations.

Above, forgiveness has only been discussed insofar as it involves authorities. Christ has done something unique by bringing forgiveness down from those lofty heights and making it accessible to the masses. Arendt (1998:239) writes that when Christ says that the Son of man has the power to

forgive sins, He is claiming that it is within the power of every individual to forgive sins, which until that point was thought to only belong to God[12]. More radical still, He claims the men must forgive before God is willing to forgive them. This is important because it reveals the communal nature of forgiveness. Arendt (1998:237) suggests that forgiveness depends on plurality, that attempting to forgive oneself is much like making a promise to oneself: 'forgiving and promising done in solitude remain without reality and can signify no more than a role played before one's self'. When forgiving, the deeds themselves become an afterthought: *what* was done is being forgiven for the sake of the *who* did it (Arendt, 1998:241). It is through a type of love that forgiveness takes place. Through love, an observer can see a clearer picture of the person involved, unconcerned with the achievements and failings of the person in question (Arendt, 1998:242). This love is, of course, distinct from the modern idea of romance and desire. For this reason, Arendt (1998:243) prefers to use the term 'respect', for it too is only concerned with the individual in question and is, according to her, enough to prompt forgiveness for the sake of that person. However, this is also the reason why it may be impossible to forgive oneself. When looking inward, we struggle to see another person to forgive. We only see our achievements and failings. To forgive, we must be able to look past these trappings and see the person underneath. Thus, forgiveness can only happen in a communal setting. Similarly, this communal setting is revealed by Christ's words that one must forgive even if one has been trespassed against, or sinned, against repeatedly. Arendt (1998:240) notes that this relates to the ordinary nature of trespassing, the everyday slights and offences that happen unintentionally. For this reason, forgiveness is necessary, and it is only through it that men can remain free. Only by the mutual release of guilt and willingness to change one's mind and start anew, can one be trusted with the power to create something new that forgiveness provides. This is fundamental to the Christian ideal. Christ talks about being 'born again' in his conversation with Nicodemus in John 3 (Bible, 1983), it signifies the start of a new life, one that is both free from the shackles of the old one and filled with new possibilities. Consider Paul of Tarsus; in his first appearance in the Bible (Acts 8 (Bible, 1983)) is persecuting the newly formed church. Yet, later he became not only part of the church after his encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus described in Acts 9 (Bible, 1983), but became a key figure in the growth and development of the Early Church. This could only happen if the church was willing to forgive his past persecution. It shows something of the power that forgiveness has to create something new and direct a person's life in a new direction.

[12] Traditionally the verse Arendt is referencing, Luke 5:21-24, has been interpreted as a demonstration of Christ's divinity.

Lastly, the importance of forgiveness within the context of Christianity cannot be overstated. The religion is predicated on Christ's death on the cross and the subsequent resurrection, which is meant to facilitate the forgiveness of sins. God Himself takes on the punishment meant for mankind, and in doing so the possibility for forgiveness is created, along with all the possibilities discussed above. Without it, the Christian emphasis on redemption and rebirth becomes unintelligible.

A World Divided

Umberto Eco (1986:81) argues that if Aquinas did not do what he did, the Renaissance would have already started in the thirteenth century. Yet, at the same time Eco claims that he needed to do what he did for events to proceed as they did. At the time, Europe was sharply divided. Neo-Platonic mysticism dominated theology. God was far away, sitting in heaven with the universe a delightful distraction (Eco, 1986:82). In contrast, by the time of Aquinas's birth, reason had been developing for the past century. New methods of comparing traditional authorities were developed, ones based on logical procedures built on a secular grammar of ideas. Plato's mathematics were rediscovered and, though it was only partially understood, Aristotle's writings on logic were already being included in study manuals (Eco, 1986:81). The writings of Plato and Aristotle, and mystics, were enough to understand God and the problems of the soul, but the world around us, the guts in a man's stomach or the nature of a flower, remained a mystery. The dilemma was that if one understood the heavens, one could not understand the earth (Eco, 1986:82). A system of a natural world based on geometrical laws was being developed. Although it was not the scientific method of Roger Bacon, it was an honest attempt to explain the universe through natural processes, even if nature itself was still seen as a divine agent (Eco, 1986:81). While dealing with this divide, Europe's men of reason learnt through the Arabs that Aristotle could help unite the scattered limbs of European culture (Eco, 1986:82). In addition to theology, Aristotle wrote about biology, physics, astronomy, psychology, and politics. More importantly, especially with regard to Aquinas's work, he gave European scholars the keys to changing the relationship between the essence of a thing (what makes something the thing it is) and the matter of which a thing is made. In the Aristotelian view, the essence of a thing is located within the thing in question. It is what makes it grow and develop, revealing itself. Through this revelation, man can understand the essence of a thing (Eco, 1986:82). Through this change, God becomes irrelevant and even more separated from the world. He may have provided the physical laws that allow the world to exist, but other than that He was unnecessary.

Thus, to 'Christianize' Aristotle, Aquinas needed to make space for God. He did this by positing that it was God that sustains the universe. Rather than simply sitting in heaven, God maintains the existence of all created things, like an electric current maintains the function of a computer (Eco, 1986:83). However, other contemporary followers of Aristotle followed the example of the Arab Averroes[13](Eco, 1986:84). A century before Aquinas, he saw that Aristotle's science led to a universe that behaves mechanically and mathematically, one which is, like God, eternally existing. Something akin to modern materialism was created. Thus, Aquinas needed to walk a thin line when integrating Aristotle. He needed to make Aristotelian thought acceptable to the theologians of the time and at the same time detach it from the use to which Averroes and his followers had been putting him. He did so by aligning the divergent opinions, clarifying their meanings, questioning everything, even revelation, and listing possible objections before writing the final meditation. In every case, Thomas found a way for God and revelation to lead and guide secular reason. In doing so he provided the Catholic church with a new doctrine that put her in line with the natural world.

The Summa

As the name implies, a 'summa' is a summary. Kreeft (1990:14) explains that it is more like an encyclopaedia than a textbook and should be used more like a reference library than a book. The style is concise and to the point. There is no illustrations or digressions. It has an ordered structure derived from the Medieval belief that God is a god of order. It is a system made with loving care, though quite unlike the closed deductive systems of more modern thinkers such as Descartes or Spinoza. It uses inductive reasoning in addition to deduction and uses experience, divine revelation and philosophical first principles as sources of data. Overall, it proceeds in a dialectical fashion, similar to a debate. Yet, unlike the modern idea of a debate, it is not a scholarly dispute or a sharing of opinions, but rather a shared journey toward truth. In the case of Aquinas specifically, he always managed to find some important truth hidden within the objections given to his arguments, for he not only believed that a source of truth existed, but that there was some truth even in the objections. Consequently, he worked to distinguish truth from error (Kreeft, 1990:14).

The *Summa Theologica* is structured in a way that mirrors Aquinas's view of reality. It starts with God, who was there in the beginning. From there it moves on to creation itself and the creatures within it, giving special consideration to man, 'who alone is created in the image of God' (Kreeft, 1990:14). It then deals with man's return to God from his sinful state through his moral and religious choices. Finally, it culminates in the things that facilitate this return, Christ and the church

[13] Otherwise known as Ibn Rushd (Eco, 1986:84).

(Kreeft, 1990:15). Kreeft (1990:15) describes the overall scheme of the Summa as an '*exitus-redditus*', a departure and return to God. As described earlier, there is this idea that God sustains the universe, but it is not as static as the earlier description might have made it seem. Rather, it might be that God's relationship to his creation is like a heart pumping blood throughout the body.

'God is the ontological heart that pumps the blood of being through the arteries of creation into the body of the universe, which wears a human face, and receives it back through the veins of man's life of love and will' (Kreeft, 1990:15).

The relationship of a body described here, is far more dynamic than the computer example used earlier. The Summa is similar. It attempts to mirror a dynamic universe. It is important to keep this image in mind, for the atomistic style in which Aquinas wrote can cause a reader to focus on certain topics and details and lose their place in the greater picture. Yet, this style of writing is necessary for the Summa to maintain its readability and digestibility (Kreeft, 1990:16).

The Summa is divided into four parts (I-I, II-I, II-II and III), each of which is divided into Treatises, or topics that are to be addressed such as creation or law. Each of these Treatises is divided into numbered Questions, which in turn are divided into Articles, the basic building blocks of the Summa. Thomas uses the terms 'Question' and 'Article' in a different sense than the modern connotation. A 'Question' in his thought is equivalent to what we call an essay while an 'Article' is built around a specific, single interrogative sentence – what we would call a question. Each article is made up of five parts. The first is the question itself. Thomas formulates it as a simple yes or no question. He does this not to oversimplify a complex philosophical problem, but rather that limit the debate to something finite and definable. For example, there is an infinite number of answers to the question 'What is God?', whereas the question 'Does God have a body?' is far simpler. Once the question has been formulated, Aquinas first considers the objections to the answer he is going to give. These are not simply contrary opinions, however. They are full-fledged arguments: each debater must give relevant reasons for believing the objection. Aquinas takes these to be truth claims; if they are true, then his argument cannot stand. Kreeft (1990:17) states that '[those who are] seeking the strongest possible arguments against any idea of St. Thomas will rarely find any stronger ones, any more strongly argued, than those in St. Thomas himself'. With the objections articulated, Aquinas moves on to the third part. He states his own position, usually as an argument from authority, be it from scripture, church fathers, or other recognized authorities. Knowing that

the type of argument is the weakest, he moves on to the fourth part of the article. In this section, which forms the main body of the article, he makes the case for his position. Finally, in the fifth section, he deals with the objections specifically. He goes about explaining where they contain truth and distinguishing them from the falsehoods within them (Kreeft, 1990:17).

As the above structure may imply, Aquinas's Summa is structured in a way that is meant to show not a monologue by a single author, but real summarised debate, for all of the objections Aquinas discusses, were live positions at the time of writing. Though not all of them have survived the passage of time, some did. It may be fruitful to examine Aquinas's approach to them. It should be noted, however, that for the scope of this thesis, only the ethical and moral sections of the Summa will be considered, because, as stated above, the Summa deals with various topics. While it does consider ethics, it is a far broader read than simply that topic.

Aquinas's ethics

Much like Aristotle, Aquinas starts his discussion on ethics by considering the final end for man. He recognises, like Aristotle, that all men seek to be happy. Because of this universal search for happiness, he too takes it as the final end; the goal of a man's life is happiness (Aquinas, 1947: 776). However, like Greek thought, this idea of happiness is more complex than subjective contentment or immediate pleasure. Rather, it is a real 'blessedness' and contentment but contentment in the true good (which Aquinas would later place in God). This discussion of an end in ethics is important, for it is according to this that all things are done. Aquinas recognises two ways a thing can approach an end. The first is in the case of a thing moving itself toward that end. This is mainly a mark of men, for they are the only thing that possesses reason. The second way is by being moved by another thing, like an arrow being directed by an archer. Things without reason are moved by natural inclination, instinct in modern terms (Aquinas, 1947: 778). It can be asked whether men share the same end, for it is evident that even if all men desire happiness, the things that they desire are not universal. Firstly, Aquinas quotes Aristotle in saying that if something is indefinite, you are denying that it is good: 'It is contrary to the nature of an end to proceed indefinitely' (Aquinas, 1947: 780). Thus, there must be something specific which defines the end. But the question remains as to whether all men share in this specific last end. For if the good, that is to say happiness, is specific and unchanging (Aquinas, 1947: 783) it would mean that only one lifestyle and associated actions lead to happiness. Yet, it is common knowledge that the lives and lifestyles of individuals differ to varying degrees. Some even turn away from the Christian idea of

happiness by sinning. Thus, such an end cannot exist. Aquinas responds that in sinning, an individual turns away from lasting happiness. Whatever pleasure he might have gained from sinning, he has frustrated his pursuit of the end (Aquinas, 1947: 783). Apart from sin, Aquinas makes a distinction between life and lifestyle through an analogy. All men enjoy sweet tastes, but not all men enjoy the same kinds of sweetness. But the point is that all men enjoy sweetness. Thus, whatever happiness is as an end in Aquinas's mind it must be specific enough to be definable, yet general enough to account for different tastes that men may have.

But what does this happiness consist of? Aquinas considered possible sources of happiness. Wealth is rejected on the basis that it is limited and can only obtain material wealth, not spiritual goods such as wisdom. Additionally, the temporal goods obtained through money will inevitably be sought again (Aquinas, 1947: 785). Honour and glory cannot lead to happiness for they are awarded in recognition of virtue present within a man (Aquinas, 1947:786-787). Power (or freedom in a modern context (Kreeft, 1990:367)) is not viable due to its relationship with good and evil: a powerful man is not necessarily good or evil, but it is determined by the man in question. Additionally, happiness is supposed to be self-satisfied; in gaining happiness a man is cannot lack in any necessary good. It is known that those with power may lack many necessary goods, and therefore it cannot be the basis for happiness either (Aquinas, 1947: 788). Health is also rejected on the basis that the simple preservation of the body cannot be man's final end. Like a ship captain keeping his ship afloat for the purpose of navigating the sea, a man's bodily health is preserved for another reason since a man's being consist of both the body and the soul. In Aquinas's mind, the body serves the soul: any good of the body is arranged in relation to the good of the soul (Aquinas, 1947: 789). Thus, health cannot in and of itself be the source of happiness. Pleasure and delight too were considered. Aquinas argues that while it is related to happiness, it does not form part of the essence of it. Rather, men desire pleasure for its relation to the good that forms the essence of happiness (Aquinas, 1947:790-791). Having exhausted other candidates for happiness, Aquinas concluded that the only source of happiness must exist outside creation. Fortunately for him, his Christian metaphysic provided him with a source of happiness. He noted that '[f]inal and perfect happiness can consist of nothing else than the vision of the Divine Essence' (Aquinas, 1947: 802). It is only in God that true happiness can be found. He gives two reasons for this. Firstly, as long as there is something for men to desire and seek out, he will never be truly happy. In God, as the source of all that is good, a man is supposed to find satisfaction of all of his desires. The second reason has to do with the idea that the perfection of a thing is determined by its nature. In the intellect, it is the knowledge of the essence of a thing, thus what the thing is. It reaches this

knowledge through inquiry and study. In studying and, eventually, reaching the essence of God a man is able to approach happiness. '[I]t will have its perfection through union with God as with that object, in which alone man's happiness consists' (Aquinas, 1947:802).

However, happiness is not simply a state of being. Like Aristotle, Aquinas views happiness as an action: '[E]ach thing is perfect only insofar as it is actual; since potentiality without act is imperfect' (Aquinas, 1947:795). In Aquinas's mind, a state of being is mere potential. Without bringing potential into reality through an act, it remains incomplete. We see this in how he relates to the body and the senses to happiness. The senses and bodily goods alone can only give man 'imperfect' happiness. In the happiness Aquinas is thinking of, the senses and body facilitate the intellect in attaining this happiness. Once it is attained, he believes that this perfect happiness will perfect the body and senses through an 'overflow', like love overflowing from the soul of a person in love and showing in their face (Aquinas, 1947: 796-797, Kreeft, 1990:377). As stated above, this attainment of happiness culminates in unification with God. This unification comes as the result of a combination of an act of the will (love of God) and the knowledge of God as a person, as distinct from knowing Him as a concept or an argument (Aquinas, 1947:797-798). This knowing is an act of the intellect, for in happiness is an act, and in Aquinas's mind it must be man's highest act. He considers contemplation as man's 'highest' act, specifically the contemplation of the Divine Good (Aquinas, 1947: 799). In this, man has something in common with the Divine, God and the Angels. Therefore, Aquinas believes that final happiness lies in this act. However, it seems that this kind of happiness can only be had in heaven – unification with God cannot be achieved before then. In this life, it seems that happiness can only be attained in an incomplete form. Following Aristotle, he believes that this kind of happiness is the result of the practical intellect directing human action and passions, that is to say the cultivation of virtue and the opposition of vice (Aquinas, 1947: 799).

Sin

Before considering Aquinas's teaching on virtue, it is useful to consider his teaching on good and evil. While Aristotle only briefly touched on the subject by saying that there are acts that must always be opposed (Aristotle, 2009:1107a8-25), Aquinas dedicated multiple questions and several articles to the topic. He distinguishes two kinds of evil: firstly, common-sense moral evil, what he would call 'sin', and secondly privation, otherwise known as a 'lack' or 'deficiency'. An example of the latter would be blindness. It is an evil if a blind man lacks sight, but it is not a sin, for nobody

voluntarily[14] chooses to be blind (Aquinas, 1947:888). This kind of evil is the kind that stems from how a thing differs from its essence, or what it ought to be. A man cannot be blamed or held accountable for this kind of privation, but merely pitied, for as long as he possesses such a privation his quest for happiness, perfect or imperfect, will be frustrated. As for sin, he agrees with Aristotle that some acts are, by their very nature, sinful (Aquinas, 1947:888-889), but he does not stop there.

The circumstances that surround an act may also determine its status as good or evil. Circumstances may not be part of the essence of an act, but it is not unrelated. It exists as an 'accidental' or modifying property of an act. Aquinas writes that '[f]or the plentitude of [an action's] goodness does not consist wholly in its species, but also in certain additions which accrue to it by reason of certain accidents: and such are its due circumstances. Wherefore if something be wanting that is requisite as a due circumstance the action will be evil' (Aquinas, 1947: 890). Take, for example, the act of killing a man. Under ordinary circumstances, it would be considered murder. Yet there are a select few circumstances where killing is not only not an evil act, but an active good such as killing in defence of yourself or another. Those who do so are not only not reviled as murderers are, but are sometimes even praised as heroes for this otherwise evil act. It seems quite obvious that circumstances affect the moral status of an act in addition to its essence. The circumstances do not usually change the kind of act that is being done, of course, but it does add additional goodness or malice to an act; it can aggravate or diminish the sin (Aquinas, 1947:899). This is seen in legal proceedings: a defendant may attempt to argue for mitigating circumstances in an attempt to lighten a sentence while a prosecutor may argue for the opposite, aggravating factors, in attempt to worsen an alleged criminal's punishment.

Lastly, the end sought by the man in question also affects the moral status of an act (Aquinas, 1947: 891). A man may give alms to the poor, which is a good act, but may do so to stroke his own ego. The wellbeing of the poor is an afterthought in this case, less important than the esteem gained from the act. Thus, the good act of giving alms is diminished and is worth less than if the man in question did so with the intent to benefit the poor. This is important, for it is the end that is sought that drives a man to action (Aquinas, 1947: 893). The intent of the actor is, of course, not the only factor to be considered. In Aquinas's view, an action needs all the above factors to be in place for an action to be truly considered 'good' in the moral sense (Aquinas, 1947: 893). Not every action fall into the broad moral dichotomy of 'good' and 'evil'. In some cases, actions exist that do not fall under what

[14] Voluntary and involuntary acts were discussed in chapter one.

Aquinas calls ‘the order of reason’ In his mind, every ‘human’ act – that is, an act that is voluntary and rational, is an act that falls within the aforementioned dichotomy, but not every act of ‘man’ does. The latter kind of act is one that proceeds not from reason, but imagination. Taking a walk, stroking his beard and picking an object from the ground are not, strictly speaking, moral acts, because they do not involve reason (Aquinas, 1947:897). The difference between the Greek and Christian ethical systems must be kept in mind here. In the Greek view, virtue was the only concern. Vice had to be avoided at all costs. This was a very individualist view, where man was beholden only to himself. ‘Punishment’ was not a consideration in the Greek ethic. Unvirtuous acts were only ‘punished’ insofar a man was unable to reach *eudaimonia*. In contrast, Aquinas’s view, and by extension that of Christianity in general, was that in addition to the aforementioned consequences of unvirtuous action, a man would be judged by God for his actions. This adds an element of accountability to ethical proceedings. A man was now beholden to another force, one more powerful than any other. In addition to the consequences of unvirtuous actions, eternal damnation also acts as motivation for a virtuous life.

Virtue

With the question of good and evil being addressed above, we now turn to the practical application in the form of virtue will be discussed in the sections below. Like Aristotle, Aquinas divides virtues into intellectual and moral virtues. According to them, the intellectual virtue is directed at truth; it is good when it considers truth. This can be done in two ways. First, it is that which is understood as self-evident, such as first principles; and second, those that are understood as the conclusion of an argument (Aquinas, 1947: 1109). The two virtues of the intellect, that is to say, reason, come in the form of wisdom and science. The latter considers all kinds of knowledge, which are many and varied, and requires the study of the various sciences. Of the former, however, there is only one. In Aquinas’s mind, wisdom is the knowledge of first causes in all orders of reality. In Ethics, the relevant knowledge is knowledge of the final cause. Science, however, is knowledge of the second causes. These are causes that relate to specific areas of reality (Aquinas, 1947: 1109). Wisdom in ethics manifests in the form of prudence – this is what Aristotle called practical wisdom. The man who possesses it knows the proper ends to be sought as well as the means to reach those ends. This intellectual virtue is required to perfect reason, to direct it in the right direction. For this reason, Aquinas considers prudence indispensable to human life (Aquinas, 1947: 1113).

However, the intellectual virtues only perfect reason. Its opposite, our appetites and desires, must be perfected by the other kind of virtue, namely the moral virtues (Aquinas, 1947: 1117). This is necessary because intellectual virtue is not enough. In the past, it was believed that all that was required for a man to be good was knowledge. That is what Socrates believed in antiquity and so many modern penologists, sociologists and psychologists follow in his footsteps. According to them, one only needs education or psychological therapy to cure crime and other antisocial behaviour (Aquinas, 1947: 1117, Kreeft, 1990:452). This is not the case, according to Aquinas. He claims that the intellect does not control the appetite despotically, as a master controls a slave, but like democracy, as a king who rules over free peoples who may object to his commands (Aquinas, 1947: 1117). Consequently, something in addition to reason is required to direct the appetites. However, moral virtue is not disconnected from intellectual virtue. It cannot properly function without prudence and understanding, that is wisdom. A man knows the ends sought ends through the intellect, but moral virtue is required to direct the appetite to that end. Even that requires a man to know and understand the moral virtues. It is required for him to be able to choose the correct means to the proper ends (Aquinas, 1947:1119), but the relationship is a symbiotic one. In Aquinas's mind, moral virtue creates a feedback loop. If a man acts good, he will know what is good.

This is similar to Aristotle's idea that if you do not have *some* knowledge of ethics, you will not be able to fully understand virtue (Aristotle, 2009:1095a1, 2009:1095b1-9). It is important to understand the moral virtues' duty of directing the passions. In many ancient philosophies, especially that of the Stoics, passions were considered contrary to virtue (Aquinas, 1947: 1122). In Aquinas's philosophy, passions are not in and of themselves good or evil. They can be either, depending on whether they are in accordance with reason or otherwise (Aquinas, 1947: 1121). Furthermore, some passion is expected to function when virtue is exercised. There is an expectation that a man finds pleasure in acting virtuously as well as when others act virtuously. Similarly, sorrow is expected when a man witnesses other acting unvirtuously or when he sins himself. Conversely, a virtuous man enjoys virtue being actualised (Aquinas, 1947:1123-1125).

In addition to distinguishing moral and intellectual virtues, Aquinas divided the moral virtues into two distinct groups. The first is the cardinal virtues and the other the theological virtues. The cardinal virtues are prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude (Aquinas, 1947:1134-1135). Prudence has already been discussed at length above. The virtue of justice concerns things owed

(Aquinas, 1947:1129). In modern times, the ideas of both justice and debt have become rather narrow. Justice only refers to crime and punishment, while debt is only associated with an economic burden. In the Medieval era, justice referred to both merits and demerits. A man could justly be owed praise, for example. The nature of what Aquinas calls 'debt' was determined by that from which it arises, be it from a contract, a promise, or a favour already given. Additionally, it was also affected by the relationship between the individuals involved, for a debt owed to a superior differs from that owed to an equal or one who is inferior in rank (Aquinas, 1947:1129). The third virtue, temperance or self-control, is necessary because wayward passions must be curbed. Left unchecked, these passions drive a man to act against reason, which Aquinas assumes has already been brought in line with virtue.

The last of the cardinal virtues, fortitude or courage, is necessary for when the passions pull a man away from reason. Aquinas specifies that fear or aversion of danger or work causes this pull. A man must strengthen himself to follow the dictates of reason (Aquinas, 1947:1134-35). It should be noted that while these virtues are distinct, they are not separated from each other. They are unified by a sort of overflow. Prudence flows over into the other virtues as they are directed by it. Similarly, temperance and fortitude flow into each other as he who can resist the desires for pleasure is better able to control himself when facing the deathly dangers. Conversely, he who can resist the fear of death, is better able to resist the temptations of pleasure (Aquinas, 1947: 1137).

Lastly, justice is present in all of a man's actions, for it is concerned with what someone is owed. All right actions have a share in justice, inasmuch they give to those involved that which they are owed. It is important to notice that these virtues relate to both the rational element within man as well as the emotional, or passionate, element. According to Kreeft (1990:457), the Christian ethic provides man with a completeness that is not found in pagan ideals, whether ancient or modern.

The group of theological virtues is concerned with something other than reason or passion. As the name implies, these virtues are concerned with God. As discussed above, humanity seems to be directed towards two kinds of happiness: an imperfect earthly happiness, and perfect happiness in harmony with God. The cardinal virtues perfect man for this earthly happiness, but the theological virtues are directed toward this perfect happiness. According to Aquinas (1947:1140), the perfect happiness that is sought is beyond human capacity and man must therefore receive additional help

from God (Aquinas, 1947:1140). Through this help, man can attempt to cross the gap between the mortal and divine realms.

The virtues that sprout from this help are distinct from the cardinal virtues in three ways. Firstly, they are focused on God rather than the world. Secondly, they originate from God. Thirdly, these virtues are not made known to man through the exercise of his reason, as the other virtues are, but are transmitted to us through divine revelation (Aquinas, 1947: 1140). The virtues in question are faith, hope and charity. In faith we find the articles of faith, what Aquinas calls 'certain supernatural principles' which are known through a divine light. To him, it is an intellectual virtue rather than one of passion, and a far cry from the modern view that all faith is blind faith. The second virtue is hope. Aquinas envisions it as a directedness of the will toward something attainable. The last virtue is charity, also translated as 'love' in the Bible passage that he references (1 Cor 13:13 (Bible, 1983)). Modern understanding of these terms has changed: in modern terms, 'charity' refers to helping others, especially the less fortunate while 'love' refers to the passionate desire a man has for a woman. In Aquinas's philosophy, both these terms refer to an act of the will; to love is to will the true good of another. It means that one takes steps to bring about the good for others, whether it is encouraging right behaviour, consoling during a tragedy or admonishing those who have done wrong. It refers to a type of spiritual union, one which transforms the will into something that seeks a supernatural end, manifesting itself as a kind of action, hope transformed from potentiality to actuality.

Consequently, Aquinas views charity to be the most perfect of the theological virtues, for faith is of things unseen and hope is of things not possessed, making these imperfect (Aquinas, 1947: 1142). Furthermore, he believes that in the order of generation, the imperfect precedes the perfect. Thus, faith precedes hope and hope precedes charity. This is because the appetite cannot do anything through simply hope or love unless it is understood by the intellect. It is through faith that hope and love are understood by the intellect, but it is not a one-way relationship. As indicated above, the perfect can 'perfect' the imperfect by a sort of overflow. Aquinas argues that it is in love that faith and hope find their fullest expression (Aquinas, 1947:1143).

Balancing the Mean

Like Aristotle, Aquinas finds that much of the practical application of the moral virtues come in the form of choosing between the extremes of excess and deficiency. He agrees that virtue is meant to direct man to good, which in this case is bringing the appetites into accordance with measure in

respect to right reason. Evil consists in discordance with this measure. This may happen in two ways: either by exceeding the measure or by falling short of it. This measure is, in some sense, an extreme, for no deviation from the mean is allowed. Yet, it seems perfectly natural for a rule to be followed, especially one that is reinforced by reason. The problem with excess and defect is one of the passions. The passions must be brought into line with reason (Aquinas, 1947: 1149).

Vice

Unlike Aristotle, Aquinas has a more robust treatment of vice, devoting an entire section of the Summa to the concept. Broadly speaking, a vice is a habit formed in contrary to the nature of a thing (Aquinas, 1947: 1201). In man, as the rational animal, vices form in contradiction with his reason. Instead of forming along the lines of reason, these habits form along the lines set by the senses. It is through the senses that man performs acts of reason. Yet, a man may follow only his senses without regard to his reason. Vice, and later sin, flows from this error. It should be noted that when Aquinas talks about sin in this section, he talks of wrongdoing in a general sense rather than in a specifically moral sense (Kreeft, 1990:481). There are three ways in which sin can occur. The first, and most obvious, are sins against others. The second is sins against oneself – this is where vice comes in. Sins against oneself refer to actions and passions that do not conform to reason. The third type of sin is against God, such as blasphemy or heresy. These sins are interconnected, for in Aquinas's mind, they conform to a threefold order in man. This order is (1) man in relation to reason, (2) man in relation to the divine, and (3) man in relation to others, or man as a political animal. The interconnection of the sins exists because these orders are wrapped up in each other. In the third order, we are directed toward others, but in this, we are directed according to our reason. Thus, the third order exists within the first. Yet, some of the things our reason directs us to, only relate ourselves, the sins of which are far more personal, such as gluttony and lust. According to Aquinas, things that fall under the order of reason, fall under the order of God, making the first order exist within the second. Like before, some things fall under the order of God and surpasses human reason. Accordingly, this order too has the unique sins against God mentioned above. This creates a view of morality that can be visualised as concentric circles. In the centre are relations to others, driven by the virtue of justice. Around that are the requirements of reason, directed through the virtues of temperance and fortitude. Surrounding it all is the order of the divine, to which man is directed through the theological virtues (Aquinas, 1947:1210-1211).

The comparative severity of sin seems to proceed similarly. In Aquinas's mind, sins against others are less severe than sins against God. Aquinas believes that the severity comes from the order of reason. In man, the highest point in man's reason is that related to the divine. If man's true happiness lies in a union with the divine, then it would follow that the most severe act will be one that is directed against God. That does not mean that the horrors of murder and theft are not damaging, but rather that they do not damage in the same sense, or to the same extent that sins of the higher-order do, since Aquinas argues that if one's soul is lost, what use is saving his body (Aquinas, 1947:1220). C.S. Lewis (2016:71-72) once described ethics of this kind as a fleet of ships. The fleet will not remain afloat if the ships keep colliding (sins against others). However, if the ships are not in seaworthy condition (sins against the self) they will not be able to avoid collisions. Lastly, if a fleet does not know where it is going (sins against God), all the seaworthiness and all the avoidance of collisions will not be worth anything. Worse still, if a fleet disagrees over its destination, collisions will inevitably occur in the confusion that flows from such a disagreement.

The operation of sin proceeds in three stages. The first stage is the thought, the second is speech, and the final stage is acting. In the example of an angry man seeking vengeance, his desire for vengeance first disturbs his thoughts. Then he articulates his desire. Lastly, he actualises his desire by acting against the object of his revenge. The same process occurs when a man succumbs to lust, or any other sin. Accordingly, sin can be divided into three kinds, sins of thought, namely sins of word and sins of deed. Of course, a sin only reaches full actualisation in the physical act, but it finds its genesis in thought and speech (Aquinas, 1947: 1214). Hence the importance of Paul's words in his second letter to the Corinthians where he writes that we must 'take every thought captive to obey Christ' (Bible, 1983). Similarly, Christ's words in the Gospel of Mathew chapter 5 (Bible, 1983) regarding adultery emphasises the starting point of sin in the mind.

It should be clear from the religious language which Aquinas uses that his ethics cannot be separated from his beliefs. His interpretation of Aristotle's ethics has a uniquely Christian approach. It forms a cornerstone of his ethical and philosophical thought. However, when that cornerstone is removed the entire structure must be rebuilt. That was the dilemma that the modern era faced. The scientific revolution undermined the foundations of religious belief in general, and Christianity specifically. Thus, they needed to create a new cornerstone from which to build their new ethics. Their attempts, along with their successes and failures, will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

Modernity and its Projects

‘Modernism may be seen as an attempt to reconstruct the world in the absence of God.’

Bryan Appleyard

‘No Gods or Kings. Only Man.’ This is the principle upon which Andrew Ryan built the fictional city of Rapture (2k Boston, 2007). Echoing Protagoras in a late modern idiom, man alone is to be the measure of things. This seems to be the ethos of the modern era[15] in general and not just in this fictional city. Unfortunately, man is a fickle being, prone to change his mind on a whim. Accordingly, the modern era is defined by contradiction. Unlike antiquity and the medieval era, it does not have a unified vision that shapes the lives of the people living during this period. There is no Greek or Roman state that carved its place into the world through military and cultural might. There is no religion like Christianity that unifies the masses under its banner. Rather, modernity defines itself in opposition to these historical and ‘traditional’ elements (Madsen, 2014:1201). Yet, through its praise of universal human rights, it accepts the traditional Christian notion that all men are created equal. It praises individuality and individual expression but suffers under the conforming hand of consumerism. In the same vein, it urges people to ‘mind their own business’, to ‘judge not, lest ye be judged’, in other words, it urges people to focus on their own subjective experiences and avoid judgement at all costs. Ironically, this emphasis on non-judgement results in harsh judgement of those who attempt judgements. The irony is even greater when one considers the praise and worship objective of science, a field that requires one to judge between truth and falsehood. Yet, the view of science is not without contradictions of its own. On the one hand, it has been praised for medical and technological progress which has given humanity. At the same time, it has also been condemned for the creation of, among other things, weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and causing the ecological crisis of climate change (Brient, 2000:513). It shows an era that is at odds with itself, an era that is unable, or unwilling, to reconcile its views, one that no longer has the direction provided by a unifying view that preceding eras could rely on. Alasdair MacIntyre

[15]It should be noted that only Western modernity is being discussed here. The ethical traditions of Africa and Asia are beyond the current scope of this thesis. Although it is true that Western modernity has exerted great influence on those traditions, they have their own histories distinct from both each other and from the history that produced Western modernity.

(2007:2,6) described modern ethics is in a state of grave disorder, that developments during the enlightenment have resulted in a world which no longer had any way to rationally determine morality. Worse still, this difficulty may extend far beyond ethics. It may be that this problem is faced by modern thought as a whole. This should be no surprise, considering the conflicts that plagued the last few centuries. Apart from armed conflicts such as the revolutions in the mid to late 18th century, the World Wars in the first half of the 20th century, the proxy wars of the Cold War, and the contemporary warfare of the 21st century, the intellectual landscape was not spared from the upheaval that occurred in the modern era. Between the scientific revolution which laid the foundations of modern science to the philosophical revolution, which attempted to describe the world in purely rational terms, the world was turned on its head. The authority of the church was broken when Martin Luther started the Reformation, and the cultural revolution of the 1960s marked the end of widespread acceptance of the traditional principles and virtues left over from previous ages. The old authority of church and family has been replaced by an emphasis on individualism and self-expression. While there is nothing wrong with these things in and of themselves, they are impotent without the context and building blocks provided by the church and family. Without the cosmic order created by these elements of tradition, conflict is inevitable.

Most of the changes that ultimately resulted from this conflict are positive. In many ways, the world is far better off than it was before. The efforts of those within the fields of science and technology have improved the lives of humans immensely (Brient, 2000:513). Humans, on average, live far longer than their ancestors and are generally more prosperous (metropolises like New York City or London would have been unthinkable to those living in the Middle Ages or Antiquity), and in places where this is not the case, great efforts have been made in an attempt to relieve the suffering experienced by the inhabitants, albeit with varying degrees of success. Travel and communication have made the world feel much smaller than it actually is. A journey that would have taken days or weeks or even months a couple of centuries ago can be made in a couple of hours. Similarly, messages that would have to be sent through messengers who had no guarantee of arriving can now be sent instantly and reliably. Through the internet, it is even possible to have something similar to a face-to-face conversation with someone who lives on the other side of the planet. Put simply, people have been living longer and better lives in far more comfort than even the greatest Medieval kings.

Yet for all the advances made in modernity, the attitude of modern man does not reflect it. Many are extremely pessimistic about the future of the planet and cynical about anyone attempting to perform acts of charity or other acts of goodwill. There is a fear that the world that we have constructed is a

hollow one, one without depth or solidity – a sneaking suspicion that whatever order exists is superficial and threatens to dissolve into meaninglessness (Brient, 2000:513). According to Francis Fukuyama (1992:3), 'the soberest and most thoughtful minds of [the 20th century] have no reason to think that the world is moving toward what we in the West consider decent and humane political institutions – that is, liberal democracy'. There seem to be two parallel crises that led to this pessimism: the crisis of 20th-century politics and the intellectual crisis of Western rationalism. The former led to the deaths of millions in the form of the first and second world wars as well as enslaving even more under newer and more brutal forms of slavery under totalitarian rule. The latter left democracy without the resources to defend itself (Fukuyama, 1992:11). This point needs to be explained.

Until recently, democracy was universally thought to be the superior form of government. The reason for this lies in the value placed on the participation of the average citizen in the working of the government. However, therein also lies its greatest weakness, for the plurality of voices and the self-doubt and self-criticism that come with them hamstring a democracy's ability to sustain long term policies. In contrast, totalitarian regimes do not allow the citizenry an opportunity to address their problems, meaning that the things that can cripple a democracy are not as damaging to a tyranny. According to Jean-Francois Revel (as cited by Fukuyama, 1992:9), the only liveable societies are ones that have criticism as a permanent and integral feature, but they are also the most fragile. Recent events have merely validated these attitudes.

Along with this pessimism comes an extreme distrust of authority. Obedience to authority, blind or otherwise, was replaced by rational self-government. This self-government meant, in theory, that all men would be free and equal, obedient to no master but themselves (Fukuyama, 1992:4). Nowhere is this more evident in the field of philosophy. While it has always been expected for philosophers to criticise their predecessors, the extent of this criticism has intensified in recent decades. Entire philosophies have been overthrown and ridiculed. Ethics have perhaps been hit hardest by this distrust. The old authority of church and tradition that made ethics intelligible has been replaced by individual rationality. The focus on rationality is, of course, not bad in and of itself, but there is the impression that there is no correct way for that rationality to be used : one man's perspective is just as valid as the next, regardless of what the content of that perspective is. This is devastating to a field like ethics, for a field which attempts to articulate the conditions of the good life, or at the very least distinguish between right and wrong acts, cannot intelligibly exist in the absence of a standard against which to measure the lives or actions of individuals. Without this standard, events of the previous century, such as the Soviet purges or the Nazi concentration camps, which are commonly

seen as atrocities cannot be seen as such. The men who ordered and performed these acts are as 'right' as their detractors are in accusing them of wrongdoing. Put at a more personal level, the rapist and the murderer and the thief have done nothing wrong in this view. This seems absurd, and begs the question of how we got to this point and how this idea has shaped modern ethics.

Modern Crisis

Vasti Roodt (2016:36) identified three interrelated crises that had shaped much of modern thought. These are the crisis of meaning, the crisis of evaluation, and the crisis of authority. The first of these crises, that of meaning, calls to mind an association with nihilism, a philosophical position that rejects meaning. This is not a mere coincidence, for, according to Roodt (2016:36), nihilism forms the backdrop, explicit or otherwise, of much of the modern predicament which plagues philosophy in general and ethics specifically. The core of the problem lies in the fact that we have lost faith in any yardstick that could possibly be used to determine meaning. This results in the problem of attempting to create meaning in a world where meaning cannot be determined (Roodt, 2016:37-38). This is a uniquely modern problem, and this absence of meaning would have been unthinkable for previous eras. Consider the crisis faced by Martin Luthor. Taylor (1998:18) describes the anguish and self-condemnation that he felt before coming to insight regarding salvation through faith as a 'crisis of meaning'. Yet, the term would have been meaningless for the Augustinian monk, for whom the meaning of life was unquestionable, as it was for his entire age. George Kateb (1984:151) describes the contrast well: 'The difference between now and then is that there is now a feeling of having become lost, and a self-conscious and deliberate expectation that one should not be lost or have to endure the void of meaninglessness'. This problem seems to be exacerbated by an endless pursuit of truth. There exists an idea, labelled a fallacy by Arendt (as cited by Roodt, 2016:38), that finding truth will guarantee meaning. The distinct difference lies in the ends of the search for truth and the search for meaning respectively. In the case of the former, the establishment of truth is the end goal of the activity. Once it had been reached, the 'quest' ends and thinking ceases. Conversely, the quest for meaning is unending, for man must reconcile himself with the world around him and must try to 'make himself at home' (Roodt, 2016:38). In ages past, the search for truth was in service to something else. For the Aristotelians, the search was in service to the end goal of endless contemplation. For those in the medieval era, it was in service to the endless task of reconciling with God. The endless pursuit for meaning, even the unshakably anchored meanings of antiquity and the Medieval era, was served by the pursuit for truth, for even after truth was established, the meaning must be pursued. In modernity, truth is meant to provide meaning – something that it was never able to do. Instead, it must 'create its normativity out of itself' (Habermas, J. as cited by

Rampley, 2000:2, Madsen, 2014:1201), a view completely contrary to preceding eras, which held that norms and meaning had to be discovered. Thus, the modern world is trapped in a paradox: it is trapped in an endless quest for meaning, but the tools for generating or discovering meaning are no longer accessible (Roodt, 2016:40). This amounts to what Albert Camus called 'absurdism'. Humanity is locked in an absurd quest for meaning in a universe that cannot provide it.

The second crisis, that of evaluation, is closely tied to this loss of meaning, because this loss of meaning results from the loss of an ultimate or transcendental source of meaning. The death of God is the loss of faith in this ultimate meaning, the ultimate form of apostasy, which leaves nothing from which anything in human experience could derive its value. This means that while one can still hold the old virtues of justice and prudence and so forth as valuable, one is unable to explain *why* they are valuable. Instead, moderns define value in terms of functionality (Roodt, 2016:41). This standard is a fluid one, dependant on the needs and desires of the society in question. The value of things become dependent on external factors, that is the society in question, instead of something internal, such as their essence or nature, giving them inherent value. This exacerbates the problem of nihilism rather than solving it. It reinforces the absence of meaning in the universe. This reinforcement goes beyond the lamentation of the first crisis that 'all is in vain' without meaning. It destroys the meaning it attempts to preserve. According to both Nietzsche and Arendt (as cited by Roodt, 2016:42), this destruction comes part and parcel with modern nihilism. Arendt specifically writes that in the aftermath of the First World War, a great disgust developed toward the 'bourgeois' values that allowed and facilitated the horrors of the trenches. Worse still, this class of people has no sense of the loss of ultimate value standards. According to her, these bourgeois represent the ultimate functionalisation of not only values but human beings as well. Everything becomes currency to be used and abused. As the saying goes, everything is for sale and everyone has a price. This is the result of the core problem of the evaluation crisis: It is not evaluation as such, but rather the justification of values. Roodt (2016:43) writes that without a transcendental reference point from which to measure values, this economisation and functionalisation of values is inevitable. It is an attempt to escape the nihilism that results from the lack of values that, ironically, results in an exacerbation the problem.

This loss of a transcendental reference point results in the third crisis, namely the crisis of authority. It should be made clear that this crisis does not refer to the loss of authority in general, the existence of governments and other structures of law and order, not to mention its abuse in authoritarian and

totalitarian states, proves that authority certainly still exists. Rather, the crisis refers to the loss of a specific kind of authority, one derived from 'the peculiarly Roman notion of *origin* and *foundation*' (Roodt, 2016:44, emphasis in original). Nietzsche and Arendt (as cited by Roodt, 2016:42) describe this loss as a world that has been 'unchained…from its sun', 'a Protean universe where everything can become anything else'. The origin of values has been lost, resulting in a world that unanchored, drifting in an endless intellectual vacuum. This ultimately creates the crises mentioned above, for '[w]here nothing stands authoritatively for us, where there is no shared locus of meaning, no common measure, it seems impossible to judge the legitimacy of the claims we make on each other' (Roodt, 2016:45). Without an authority from which meaning, and judgements can be derived, there can be no judgements, there can be no evaluation, and there can be no meaning, no direction in which life ought to move. This is devastating for ethics, for without these elements the content and structure of a 'good' life, or a life well lived, cannot be articulated. What must be understood is that this authority must be established beforehand, otherwise, no amount of violent coercion or persuasive argument can establish it. Roodt (2016:45) writes that this relationship requires a pre-established hierarchy, one where those listeners recognise the right of the speaker to demand a response from them. The term 'demand' is not a coincidence. Roodt's description of authority is similar to the relationship between rulers and ruled:

'[A]uthority necessarily involves a hierarchy. More specifically, for something – or someone – to stand authoritatively for us, it is necessary that we recognise the right of the other to command a response from us. If one accepts that to be addressed by another is at the same time to be called upon to respond, and that this response itself rests on the recognition of the legitimacy of the command…such legitimacy cannot be the outcome of a process of reasoning or persuasion, nor of the exercise of power. It depends, rather, on the mutual recognition of a preceding relation between claimant and the addressee' (Roodt, 2016:45).

The establishment of this prior relationship is especially essential for the special form of authority related to government and other ruling or commanding figures. The loss of legitimacy results in insurgencies and other resistance activities. It is why authoritarian and totalitarian governments attempt to establish a *raison d'être*, a reason for their existence. It must back whatever power they wield. Fukuyama (1992:15) writes that while a population can be controlled through intimidation, 'at *some* point a dictator must have loyal subordinates that believe in his legitimate authority' (emphasis original). Thus, there are two ways that the loss of legitimacy is devastating. The most

obvious is that a government's rule becomes destabilized and a country falls apart under the weight of those attempting to fill the void. The second, and more relevant to this thesis, is that the loss of authority loss of origin for meaning and judgement: the crisis of authority leads to the other crises discussed above. And as with the above crises, there have been attempts to solve this problem.

The first has been to suspend the question of authority altogether, instead relying on 'mutual understanding' through 'the formal process of argumentation' and the 'consistency of arguing and reasoning'. The difficulty lies in the fact this solution requires a world that is common to all parties involved in the process of reasoning (Roodt, 2016:45). This common world is established through authority. Logic cannot bridge the gap between humans who fundamentally distrust the validity of each other's judgements (Roodt, 2016:46-47). The second solution to the loss of authority is to accept that in the absence of authority, evaluations, judgements, and justifications cannot overcome the immediate sensations of the individual subject. Ultimately, the subject becomes the only remaining source of authority. The difficulty is that in the absence of any 'authoritative relation to others', judgements do not only lack any universal validity; they have no meaning at all. This solution is merely a consequence of the loss of authority and the nihilism that flows from it (Roodt, 2016:47). Like before, it exacerbates the problem it attempts to solve. The third attempt to solve this nihilism was to pursue perfect objectivity, one that is detached from subjective experience and the judgements that accompany it. At first glance, it may seem diametrically opposed to the second solution and therefore could serve as a solution to nihilism. However, like the second solution, it is an attempt to avoid judgement. In its place, the principle of non-discrimination, that is value-free descriptions devoid of all praise or blame, is offered. In doing so, it partakes in the very nihilism it attempts to solve (Roodt, 2016:48). Worse still, this solution has resulted in harsh condemnation from both Nietzsche and Arendt (Roodt, 2016:49). The former indicates that that the suspension of judgement indicates a lack of character, while the latter asserts that the statement 'who am I to judge?' means that the speaker is already lost, for in her view it is through judgement that we connect to the world outside of the private realm. Refusal or inability to do so indicates an indifference to the world. What is left in this case is an 'inner experience of worldless subjects who no longer exercise any claim upon one another. In other words, to suspend judgement is to withdraw from the inter-human domain, and all that remains in the absence of such a common world is either subjective preference that remains incommunicable or, quite literally, nothing' (Roodt, 2016:49). Hence, the tragic reality is that thus far, all attempts to overcome modern nihilism has not only failed but has ironically exacerbated the problem.

A Public Privacy

In the previous chapters, the ‘gap’ between a ‘private’ and ‘public’ realm was discussed. In antiquity, these realms were those of the home or *oikos*, and the city or *polis*. During the Medieval era, these roles were more or less fulfilled by the secular realms and the church respectively. In modernity, this distinction seems to have largely fallen away. According to Arendt (1998:28), the dividing line between public and private has become blurred: the ‘body’ of people and political groups are seen as something akin to a family whose affairs have to be taken care of by a ‘national housekeeper’, a gigantic administrative endeavour. An example of this change is the idea of a national economy. In the past, it was left to the citizen to manage his financial affairs; yet in modern thought, it is the government’s responsibility to provide a stable economy, and consequently facilitate the financial affairs of its citizens. Arendt (1998:29) describes this change as a ‘collective of families economically organized into the facsimile of one super-human family [called a] “society”, and its political form is called “nation”’. A sort of ‘fusion’ seems to have occurred between the private and public realms. Formerly private interests have gained significant public interest. This falls in line with the Christian idea of the ‘common good’. In this idea, there is the recognition that individuals have common interests, be it spiritual or material. An integral part of this recognition is the idea that to retain private existence, someone must take care of this common interest. Unlike modernity, however, this Christian idea still held that the private realm was ‘exclusive’, distinct from the realm of shared interest. Arendt (1998:35) calls the realm of ‘private interests’ that are of ‘public interest’ a ‘curious hybrid’, almost as if it is something that should not exist. One of the chief difficulties in describing this new realm called society in relation to the ‘private’ and ‘public’ realms is that with the rise of society, the definitions of ‘private’ and ‘public’ changed. The ancients associated ‘privacy’ with a kind of privation; to live a private life was to be deprived of something human. Like a slave who was barred from the *polis* or a barbarian who refused to enter it, a man who lived this kind of life could not be fully human in ancient thought (Arendt, 1998:38). This idea is completely foreign to a modern audience. A life of privacy is not only not a privation but is rather seen as the exact opposite. It is seen as something sacred. It is enshrined in the notion of a ‘*right* to privacy’, something that cannot be violated without great condemnation.

Arendt (1998:38) argues that this change is partly due to enrichment by modern individualism. This shift can be seen in the new core of ‘privacy’. It is no longer defined in relation to the ‘public’ realm, or *polis*, but rather against the social, the society outside the individual. What must be kept in mind is that Arendt, and by extension Nietzsche, is not merely talking of ‘society’ as just the

opposite of the individual, referring to life among others. Rather, they are referring to a specifically modern experience. Society is considered the opposite of 'culture', which in their view is defined as 'organisation, discrimination[16] and measure' (Roodt, 2016:56). In contrast, 'society' is defined as 'disorganisation, dissolution and measurelessness'. They are not objecting to humans living amongst one another – it is what was expected of the members of the *polis*. Rather, they are objecting to the dissolution of boundaries, the disappearance of the distinction between the great and the small, of the blending of private and public concerns. She views the locus of the shift in the honour we give to labour. By this, she does not mean just physical exertion that is often associated with the term labour, but rather all activities concerned with only the existence of the species, what she calls the 'metabolism of nature'.

Emphasis is placed on 'earning a living' rather than excellence, as was the case of the Greek heroes and the Christian saints. The objection is not against labour as such, because it is as necessary as the necessity of the private realm of the Greeks. Rather, the problem concerns the proper place of the development of both human and natural things. Roodt (2016:58) explains that 'certain aspects of human life can only flourish inside the protective boundaries of the private realm, and others only when they are seen and heard by everybody. With society's destruction of the boundary between public and private, human existence loses the protection of *both* realms, so that the private and intimate become matters of common consumption and therefore shallow or vulgarised, while all genuinely public concerns that are not tied to strictly personal interest – concerns that refer to the world rather than to the self - wither away' (emphasis original). Pornography is an example of this vulgarisation. What is traditionally seen as something private and intimate (or even sacred), has been turned into something to be literally bought and sold.

Worse still, the product of this intimate act, the baby, is considered disposable, to be thrown out if and when it becomes inconvenient. What is perhaps the most damning element, is that this change, this transformation of the act of love into a business transaction, is somehow seen as 'empowering'. Arendt describes this change as a rebellion against the demands of 'the social' (Arendt, 1998:38). Unlike the private, which was localized in the home, the intimate is of the heart. It has no tangible, objective place in the world. Similarly, the society against which it must try to assert itself, cannot be localised in the same way as the *polis* could be. Both intimacy and social are subjective modes of

[16] Discrimination here is not to be thought of in the more modern sense which implies oppression, but rather in a more general sense which refers to the distinction and separating different groups and concepts. Compare to the societal characteristic of 'dissolution', which implies a 'melting together' of disparate elements.

human existence, modes of existence that are necessarily in conflict. The intimate must assert its authenticity and individuality against the conforming hand of the social. This conformity is quite distinct from the equality of antiquity and even the flat equality of modernity. Rather, it is the equality of a family.

Regardless of whether a nation exists of equals or non-equals, 'society always demands that its members act as though they were members of one enormous family which has only one opinion and one interest' (Arendt, 1998:39). In the past, this conformity was localised in the family unit, with the household head determining the family's course[17]. Yet, unlike the family, this conformity is not maintained by the strength of will of a single man but rather by sheer numbers. The difference is this: the rule of a single man can be dispensed with in time but this rule by numbers, a sort of 'rule by no-one', cannot be done away with as easily, if at all. That is not to say that this 'nobody' ceases to rule. The power of the bureaucratic government, which Arendt views as the most social form of government (Arendt, 1998:40), indicates that the mere absence of a clearly defined ruler does not mean that a populace is not being ruled in some form or another. This bureaucracy creates a form of equality very distinct from that of Antiquity.

Modern equality, in addition to the ultimately Christian idea of equal value, finds its basis in conformity and, according to Arendt (1998:41), is only possible because action was replaced by behaviour as the 'foremost mode of human relationship'. A distinction should be made between the view of action described in the first chapter, which is also accepted by Aquinas, and the one articulated by Arendt herself. Arendt speaks of something she calls the '*vita activa*'. The term refers to uniquely human acts that attempt to achieve a type of immortality. This is not the striving for literal immortality, that is, a life that does not end. Rather, it refers to the overcoming of the worldly limits of human mortality. Through the human activities of creation (work) and politics, the ground is prepared for this immortality. The former, work, creates the 'human artefact', something that can create a measure of permanence and durability in a world that is bound by the limits of human frailty and the fleeting character of time (Arendt, 1998:8). The latter creates the preconditions for remembrance and history, for the creation of politics and civilisations preserve and remember the great deeds of the past (Arendt, 1998:9).

[17] Arendt (1998:40) considers the decline of the family unit in modern society as a clear indicator that the family has been absorbed into the family-like structure of the social realm.

As an example of an individual who exemplified the pursuit of the *vita activa,* Arendt identifies Socrates (Arendt, 1998:20). He is notorious for refusing to write anything down. Arendt argues that if he had done so, he would no longer be concerned with eternity but would be preoccupied with leaving some trace of himself. In focusing on immediacy, he enters the *vita activa* and the potential immortality that comes with it. The difference between action and behaviour therefore lies in the following: in Antiquity, only those who managed to distinguish themselves were able to enter the *polis*. It was a realm of equals in the sense that only the exceptional could enter it. In contrast, the realm of the social is open to everyone. Anyone can enter it at any time they wish. This may be necessarily the case, for the rise of statistics and the study of 'behaviourism', the study of human behaviour, requires large amounts of time and/or large numbers (or in the case of humans, large groups of people). According to Arendt (1998:43), the validity of behaviourism lies in this requirement, for the larger the group of people involved, the less non-conformity is tolerated.

From a statistical perspective, this stamping out of non-conformity manifests as a levelling out of fluctuations and anomalies. In this view, historic events and human excellence become metaphorical blips on a historical timeline; exceptions to the regularity of statistical analysis (Arendt, 1998:43). In contrast with the Greek emphasis on excellence, this emphasis on conformity reduces man as a whole to little more than a conditioned animal (Arendt, 1998:45). These conditioned animals cannot enter a public sphere as the Greeks envisioned it. In society, the things that were formerly only of private significance, such as health and finance, are now at the forefront of public significance (Arendt, 1998:46). This may have been inevitable considering the nihilism described by Roodt above. Without the notion of a cosmic order found in traditional views providing a central gravitational point, the only thing around which a society can be built, is the only thing that is still shared among members of that society, namely the preservation of life.

Orientation

To understand the dilemma in which the disappearance of the private realm leaves us, we must understand the role it played. Its significance as the 'cradle of life', as the place where the necessities of life are attended to, has already been discussed. What has not been as thoroughly discussed is the role it played as an intellectual landmark from which a man may orient himself in relation to the rest of the world. To the Greeks, the man without a private space, specifically in the form of private property and homeownership, could not participate in the affairs of the world, simply because he had no place to call his own (Arendt, 1998:46). Charles Taylor (1998:15) writes

that the things located in the private space (such as homeownership, head of a household, holding a job, and providing for dependents) provide a basis for a man's dignity. This dignity provides a starting point for a man to orient himself in relation to the rest of the world. Of course, this orientation is not limited to the things of the private sphere. A man may orient himself according to things of more public significance, such as their faith or nationality (Taylor, 1998:27), in addition to the things of the private sphere. This has not changed in the modern era. However, what is striking about moderns, is that they doubt whether life has meaning and what that meaning might be. This question of meaning is not unique to moderns. Taylor (1998:16) states that members of a warrior or religious culture may have questioned the extent to which they have reached the goals and values of their culture, namely honour and piety, respectively. The difference between moderns and these cultures is that the underlying framework that undergirds these goals and values remain unquestioned in those cultures. In the modern view, these frameworks are not only questioned but are also seen as problematic in and of themselves (Taylor, 1998:16-17). There is not a single, unified framework that defines modern culture. There is no single framework that is shared by all, which can be taken as *the* framework of modernity. The lack of a framework results in a spiritually senseless life. A less spiritually inclined reader may not understand why this is a problem. Taylor (1998:18) argues that the world has lost its 'spiritual contour'. He describes this kind of life as one where 'nothing is worth doing', where the greatest fear is not of death itself, but rather a 'terrifying emptiness, a kind of vertigo, or even a fracturing of our world and body-space' (Taylor, 1998:18). He seems to be describing a distress that is beyond human ability to articulate, for stepping outside the horizons that a framework provides is tantamount to stepping outside something integral to undamaged human personhood (Taylor, 1998:27).

The loss of orientation in which this stepping outside of frameworks results, gives rise to a loss of identity (Taylor, 1998:28, 1998:29), a loss which would place one in an 'appalling identity crisis'. Taylor (1998:31) considers a person who has gone beyond this limit as 'deeply disturbing'. This loss of framework may be the result of the absorption of the private sphere into that of the societal hybrid sphere. As discussed before, under the Greeks the private sphere was a literal, objective place located in the real world. It was a place to which man could always return in an attempt to reorient himself. In contrast, the modern private realm is located in the intellect. The malleability and questionability of modern frameworks indicate that they are no longer found in reality, as those of the ancients. The notion of a cosmic order, which so dominated the minds of the ancient and Medieval thinkers, has faded for us.

This leads to a difficult position. The nihilism that results from this loss of cosmic order has been discussed at length, and Taylor's description of a 'deeply disturbing identity crisis' further complicates matters. This in itself is devastating in the broad sense of society and human relations, but the difficulty becomes more pronounced when ethics are considered. It has already been stated that the conditions for the good life, or *eudaimonia*, can no longer be articulated, for, in this cosmic vacuum, these conditions do not exist. Thus, the ethical orientation point has been lost, resulting in a similar fracturing as described above by Taylor. Nonetheless, people seem to have an irrepressible urge to attempt ethical lives. Even without the cosmic orientation point of *eudaimonia*, we have created what MacIntyre (2007:2) calls a 'simulacra of morality', or an idea that contains all of the trappings of the old ethics, but with none of the content. What little remains has been warped and removed from the contexts from which their meaning and authority derived. Yet, this simulacrum seems to carry the same weight of authority its premodern counterpart carried. This is certainly true of things universally regarded as sins, such as murder, rape, and theft, even if other sins such as blasphemy or fornication no longer carry the same cultural condemnation they did in previous eras. The question now is what kind of ethic has been built in the absence of the old orientation point, and whether a new orientation point been found; or whether one has been chosen arbitrarily, with its authority being axiomatic.

Suffering for Happiness

Much of modern ethics places a great emphasis on the avoidance or relief of suffering. Taylor (1998:12) describes it as a unique feature of 'higher' civilizations. Older, or 'lower', civilizations were far less sensitive to it, especially when it comes to the subject of punishment. Old punishments like flogging, are considered barbaric by modern sensibilities. Take, for example, the old German punishments described by Nietzsche (2006 :39). Stoning, impaling, boiling in oil, and more were what awaited medieval German criminals. Executions, which are still being performed in some very modern places such as some states of the USA, are performed outside of public view. This is in stark contrast to the spectacle that these punishments afforded to the older civilizations (Taylor, 1998:12-13). One of the reasons for this contrast is the shift in the view of suffering: in premodern ethics, suffering was not treated as something distinct, but rather fell under the heading of justice.

Above, the character of justice as discussed with regard to that which someone deserved. Accordingly, one could deserve suffering, and this justified the 'barbaric' punishments. It was believed that criminals deserved such suffering as a punishment for what they had done.

Conversely, it was also possible for suffering to be unjust. Because this suffering was undeserved, relieving it was an act of justice. The similarity between modern ethics and premodern justice lies in the relieving of undue suffering. However, the difference is that in the modern view all suffering seems to be viewed as unjust[18]. This ultimately means that 'the notion that we ought to reduce it to a minimum is an integral part of what respect means to us today' (Taylor, 1998:13). This is found in the ethics of two leading figures in modern philosophy, Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno. Horkheimer considers suffering as integral to human social reality. If one does not acknowledge the 'singular import of suffering, and the corresponding desire to overcome it' one cannot understand reality (Berendzen, 2017). Adorno also considers the 'need to let suffering speak… a condition for all truth' (as cited by Zuidervaart, 2016). In both cases, the alleviation of suffering forms the foundation of their approaches to ethics.

Even the conception of happiness is defined with reference to this foundation. Unlike Aristotle and Aquinas, happiness is not something to be pursued for its own sake. Rather, happiness is considered the absence of suffering. While these past thinkers could argue that some suffering could produce some good in the long run, such as the case of the Christian martyrs (Fukuyama, 1992:3, Taylor, 1998:219), this can no longer be maintained in the face of the loss of cosmic order. It is one of the criticisms that Horkheimer levelled against Hegel. According to Horkheimer, this view 'transfigures' suffering, covering up this integral part of human experience (Berendzen, 2017). This seems similar to Jeremy Bentham's conception of utility, when he describes the faculties of 'pain' (suffering) and 'pleasure' as the only faculties that determine both what we do and what we ought to do (Bentham, 2000:14). In all these cases great emphasis is placed on human welfare as such, which Taylor (1998:13) describes as a secularized variant of Christian spirituality. Taylor may be overestimating Christianity's contribution to modern Utilitarianism, but he is correct about the fact that it is from Christianity that the conception of alleviating suffering as a good is taken.

However, suffering from happiness is not the only thing left over from the old morality. Another equally important concept props up modern morality, namely the right to happiness.

[18] That is not to say that some sins and crimes no longer deserve suffering in the minds of modern man. When considering conversations on these things there seems to be a consensus that those who commit these crimes deserve to be punished. However, this may simply be a holdover from the old view of justice. In general, it seems that idea that some actions merited suffering has largely been removed from the equation. This is evidenced by the distaste for causing suffering in those that are punished discussed above.

A Right to Happiness

Ethical and political controversies are often framed in terms of human rights, such as a right to life, a right to privacy, a right to healthcare, or a right to marriage. Regardless of the validity of these 'rights', there is an underlying thread connecting all of them: there is something about humanity that merits them without question or argument. They are to be awarded or protected at all costs. This underlying thread is not a modern invention, even if the language of rights is. Rather, it is a holdover from the Christian idea of equality among believers. The idea of equality of all men stems from this Christian idea (Fukuyama, 1992:56). If it is combined with the Aristotelian idea of human natures, it is possible to construct a system in which humans merit these rights. It may be the only basis for such a system, for the abandonment of the cosmic order that undergirds them and the nihilism that follows it undermines any attempt to do so. Such a system implies duties and laws that have been undermined by the nihilism discussed above. Accordingly, rights must be assumed *a priori* by a modern moralist; they cannot be derived by experience or an underlying cosmic order. In this, it is similar to Kant's idea of a 'metaphysic of morals' (Kant, 1998:3). Whatever moral laws exist be must be derived from *a priori* principles. Any 'law' that is derived even partially from experience or empirical grounds can only be a practical law and not a moral one. Instead, a moral law is one that must be both universal, that is, it must apply to all rational creatures, as well as derived from *a priori* principles (Kant, 1998:3). Thus, the principles of virtue ethics discussed in previous chapters, being derived in part from human experience, cannot be moral in the Kantian view. However, the reliance on unquestionable *a priori* principles imply an ordered world that can produce such principles. Such a world implies the existence of a cosmic order, has already been shown as untenable in the modern period.

Twin Pillars

Despite the difficulties described above, the above ethical principles still carry some legitimacy. Most modern controversies revolve around these two concepts, as may be illustrated with reference to the different kinds of disagreements MacIntyre (2007:6) in the second chapter of *After Virtue*. He describes disagreements on war, abortion and government-funded services. In all cases, some kind of right or suffering is in some way involved, either as something to be promoted or alleviated. This emphasis on rights and suffering extends beyond just human concerns. Both Peter Singer and Tom Regan have promoted animal welfare on the basis of utilitarianism and animal rights, respectively (Desjardins, 2001:110-114). These distinct principles occasionally flow into each other, creating a curious hybrid system. In controversy over the concept of euthanasia, for instance, many of the

arguments in support of the concept centre around the suffering experienced by a person dying from a terminal disease. However, there is a parallel argument that is based on the idea that a person has a 'right to die with dignity'. This right is poorly worded. A cynic may respond that dignity does not matter to the dead. Even if the cynic is disregarded, it is not at all clear what dying with dignity would mean. Ultimately, it may simply boil down the alleviation of the suffering of the dying. It may be a 'right to not suffer'. However, that does not make the argument equivalent to that of simply alleviating suffering. The initial arguments are built on the axiomatic assumption that it is better to alleviate suffering, but this new 'right' goes further than that. Rather than making the relatively simple argument that it is better to alleviate suffering, it states that we have a duty to do so. We are in some way obligated to allow, or even assist, those with terminal illnesses to end their own lives if they wish to do so. It should be noted that this is not a critique of the argument for euthanasia – that would be beyond the scope of this thesis. Rather, it is a demonstration of the hybridisation of the two base ethical principles discussed above. Ultimately, they form the basis of modernist thinking on ethics, regardless of whether they can be supported as something more than a human invention. Due to the parallels with Medieval religious thought, it may be that Carl Schmitt was correct in positing that religion survives in the quasi-political structures of rights and the alleviation of suffering (Moyn, 2008:72).

Unethical Ethics

While the two principles discussed above form the central basis of modernist thinking, they are not the only principles on offer. As was stated at the beginning of the chapter, man is fickle and full of contradiction. Appropriately, there have been several lines of thought that go against the ethical tradition of right and wrong behaviour. Of these, two will be discussed, namely psychological egoism and moral isolationism.

Psychological egoism can be simplified as the 'cynic's ethic'. It states that all voluntary actions are necessarily motivated by self-interest. While supporters of this line of thought will not deny that humans desire things other than their own welfare, it is ultimately a means to an end, the end in question being their own happiness (Fienberg,1999: 494). This view is supported by certain generalisations regarding human actions. These generalisations are that voluntary action is motivated by an individual's own motivations. Because individuals experience pleasure when they get what they want; individuals deceive themselves into thinking that they are acting for the sake of others while they *in reality* act for their own interests, be it praise or self-satisfaction, and lastly, the

psychological egoist states that moral education has inculcated virtues and morals through reward and pain rather than the goodness of these things (Fienberg, 1999: 494-495).

All the above generalisations are questionable. The first relies on a tautology. Although it is certainly true that people are motivated by their own desires, is impossible to argue from that alone that all desires are selfish. To do so, the psychological egoist must collapse the distinction between motives, which must always come from within the individual, and selfish actions, which exist as a special kind of motive that is directed at the individual's own interest alone, often at the expense of those around them (Fienberg, 1999: 495).

The second generalisation fares no better: it carries the suggestion that the only unselfish act is one that does not benefit the individual acting in any way, for the psychological egoist believes that the benefit gained from performing the supposedly unselfish action is the motivating factor, negating whatever unselfishness may be involved in performing the act in question. The problem is that even if we grant that all actions an individual desires to perform will confer some kind of benefit (a premise that is by no means evident), it does not follow that that benefit is the motivating factor. Joel Feinberg (1999: 496) argues that the opposite may be the case, because in certain special cases the presence of pleasure is an indicator of unselfishness. It indicates that the individual in question sought some other end, for pleasure is never properly sought for its own sake. One can never reach it fully in this way. Rather, it is an 'extra' result of reaching the goal an individual was working toward, or a bonus. Feinberg (1999:496) states that more often, no bonus is received or worse; 'the bitter taste of ashes'. In this, Feinberg has allied himself with the premodern view. Deriving pleasure from performing virtuous acts for their own sake is in the old view considered to be an indicator that the individual's attitude and desires are in line with virtue. To the premodern view, this was the proper state of affairs. Pursuing these good acts for the sake of one's own pleasure is to deprive the act of its proper goodness.

Even without considering premodern attitudes, the psychological egoist fails to properly consider those who act to their own detriment. The existence of martyrs or soldiers sacrificing themselves for a cause seems to fly in the face of this generalisation. If they were only seeking their own benefit, it does not make sense that they risk life and limb for the transitory pleasure gained from the praise they may receive if they happen to survive their ordeals. Even the transcendental praise of some divine reward seems insufficient motivation for risking life and limb. The third generalisation might

be relevant here. The psychological egoist suggests that all people deceive themselves about their desires typical of the Marxist idea of ‘false consciousness’. While there may be no logical mistakes present, there is a critical lack of evidence (Fienberg, 1999: 497-498). It seems impossible to prove that all individuals deceive themselves about their own desires at all times, but even if this impossibility is granted, it may be better to leave it in place. As long as people are deceived, they will attempt to perform unselfish acts. In doing so, they may develop an unselfish character, and in doing so, the deceit is turned into truth.

The fourth generalisation becomes problematic when it is considered why children are schooled in morals. While Fienberg (1999:498) admits that punishment and reward are probably indispensable to moral education, he warns against teaching a child that pain and pleasure are the only reasons for acting moral. Such a child will develop a wholly inconsistent character that only does the moral thing when he knows that he will gain some kind of benefit from it, or avoid some kind of suffering. He is likely to be a thoroughly untrustworthy person. This kind of attitude goes against all explicitly moral teaching to date, even those of modern ethics.

Ultimately, psychological egoism fails on the impossibility to produce a truly selfless person by the standards set in its central premise. Selfishness must be placed in contrast with its opposite, selflessness. In this view, the selfless person not only acts for the sake of others, as it is in ordinary understanding. Rather, a selfless person must act without desiring to act as well as not receiving any kind of benefit from such action. He must do this without being taught what right and wrong actions are, as well as without deceiving himself about what right and wrong are. It seems absurd that this should from the generalisations that undergird this theory. Unless the psychological egoist means something entirely different than the ordinary meaning of the term ‘selfish’ (as Feinberg (1999: 504) argues) the theory does not deserve further consideration because of the impossibility of its claims.

Below the focus will be on what Mary Midgley calls ‘Moral Isolationism’ (1981: 69). It is a view that that prohibits criticism of a culture outside the one from which the individual comes. It is meant to be a ‘polite’ and ‘respectful’ response to a foreign culture. The individual cannot fully understand another culture and can therefore not make an informed judgement of that culture. Yet, even this is problematic, for to be respectful, one must make a judgement – implicit or otherwise – that the object in question (for example, a foreign culture) is worthy of that respect, however tentative that

judgement may be (Midgley, 1981:69). What the moral isolationist has not considered is that judgements can be both good and bad. He has done so with good intentions, for some aspects of culture are value-neutral. The eating and clothing habits of other cultures are not in and of themselves moral or immoral, for example. In the past, these things have been condemned by those who are too crude to judge elements of culture on their own and have dismissed entire cultures on the basis that they are different. Accordingly, they prohibit judgement in an attempt to avoid the unjust criticism of foreign cultures. It should be noted that this prohibition is largely centred on 'Western' countries – foreign cultures seem to be allowed to criticise western culture in general without impunity (Midgley, 1981:70).

However, praising a foreign culture is allowed. This cannot be done without contradiction. Judgements can be both favourable and unfavourable. One cannot fairly make favourable judgements while prohibiting unfavourable ones. A consistent moral isolationist would prohibit the forming of any opinions of foreign cultures (Midgley, 1981:71), but this creates a rather serious problem. While it avoids the unjust dismissal of foreign cultures, it does hamper one's ability to point out true immorality in other cultures, such as the execution of homosexuals in some parts of the Middle East and the totalitarian actions of the Chinese government.

There is also no reason to limit this prohibition to a 21st-century audience. There is no clear basis on which the immoralities committed by Western nations of the past should be judged. They are as much a different culture to us as the modern Japanese are to modern Americans. We cannot consistently condemn the past evils of slavery, the holocaust, and the Soviet gulags if we commit to the moral isolationist view. We may not even be able to judge modern Western culture if we do so. Midgely (1981:71) argues that we hamper our ability to do so due to the lack of comparison with other cultures. Without a wide range of alternatives, we are unable to contrast and compare to see what might be 'better' about another culture. However, the problem goes far further than this: if an individual is prohibited from judging foreign cultures because he is unable to fully understand it, how is he meant to judge his fellow human beings? All people know from experience that it is impossible to fully understand another human being. Thus, judgement in general must be prohibited; yet, we must be able to judge, for some actions not only merit judgement but demand it, for example, criminal acts such as murder or rape, as well as milder offences such as rudeness or dishonesty. Additionally, we cannot praise the good works of others in this view. We can neither condemn the guilty nor praise the virtuous.

Midgley (1981:72) describes this as a situation where man's 'main evolutionary asset, his brain, [is] so little use to him'. Moral isolationism goes against something instinctive in man, namely his ability to learn. It is impossible to learn of other cultures if we cannot point out the things that seem good or bad, however little these cultures are understood. These judgements, just or unjust – deserved or undeserved – create an opportunity to learn and better understand another culture. Even if this is not the case, the isolationist position does not treat foreign cultures seriously (Midgley, 1981:73), but ironically he treats them as something that does not merit the respect that a judgement implies, for judgement implies that the object of judgement is not children to be coddled, but adults that can understand the world around them.

The Revival

Despite the difficulties for ethics that result from modern nihilism, there are some that still hold to the old system, for example modern Thomist and Aristotelian philosophers like Alasdair MacIntyre and Richard G. Howe that defend the validity of the premodern virtue ethical system. They have reason to do so, for while the system aims toward a single unified end – happiness – it treats man as a cohesive whole rather than boiling ethics down to a single principle such as 'suffering' or 'rights'[19]. They have a serious difficulty to overcome, however, because the current nihilism threatens them as well. Without re-establishing the metaphysics, or cosmic order, that undergirded premodern virtue ethics, they will only obtain partial success. Modern nihilism will undercut any attempt to establish virtue ethics without this metaphysic. The crises discussed above guarantee it.

Despite this difficulty, it may nonetheless be worthwhile to keep this ethical system in mind as modernity moves forward. Its holistic approach and the intellectual debt owed to it discussed above means that it will always be with us, even as a shadowy intellectual apparition. It builds the bridge between man as he is and man as he ought to be (MacIntyre, 2007:52). What the old ethics attempted to do was create a good character, someone who would and could do the right thing. Modern ethics treats its subject as something far more atomistic. It isolates aspects of human experience, such as suffering, and raises them to the status of *summum bonum*, the highest good. Neither the eradication of suffering nor the preservation of human rights is an end in and of itself, both seem to be means treated as ends. In practice, they seem to facilitate human happiness, with even less clarity regarding the details of what the said happiness is supposed to be. Thus, a system

[19] It is true that there are nuances to modern ethical systems, they are usually built around a central premise.

that explicitly attempts to reach happiness seems to be superior to those who treat specific human experiences as fundamental.

Ethics, therefore, are in a crisis. The nihilism of modernity has removed its ability to discriminate the good from the bad and in doing so has hampered its *raison detre* of determining the good life. It can no longer muster the authority to enforce the principles that leads to the good life. Thus, ethics will be hamstrung as long as this crisis of nihilism persists. However, not all is lost: the existence of ethics despite this crisis may be an indication that drive and desire for the good are not extinguished.

But as long as real ethics exist, it cannot just be a theory discussed by philosophers. It must be applied. The good life must be lived. To that end, the next chapter will focus on how virtue ethics may be applied, specifically to men.

Chapter 4

Modern Man and the Decentring of Masculinity

‘Ultimately, the only power to which man should aspire is that which he exercises over himself.’

Elie Wiesel

Similar to the topics discussed in the previous chapter, the message that men[20] are being sent by the society around them is one of contradiction. The first message is the myth of the traditional glorification of the hero. As noble as his goals may be – for instance resisting evil, protecting the innocent or some other praiseworthy goal – they are often reached through violence, physical or otherwise. Even the ‘anti-hero’, a man whose actions are often unscrupulous or even outright immoral, has his actions justified and even sanctified due to the sheer evil that opposes him. In the hero, the violent man who righteously opposes evil, man is not only given a place to exercise his strength but is praised for the violence that he visits upon the unrighteous. Over and opposed to this message is the modern abhorrence expressed toward violence in general. There is a great emphasis on using words to solve conflicts rather than outright violence. This is not exactly new, and the first chapter already addressed the Greek notion that violent solutions were located in the realm of the pre-political mode of life, which was limited to the household, the *oikos*, and the barbarians outside the realm of the *polis*. In the Medieval era, violence against the innocent was condemned under the banner of justice. Violence was only permissible under the condition that those against whom it was committed, deserved it.

What is new, however, is the abhorrence of the specifically male tendency toward violence and aggression. Called ‘toxic masculinity’ by some (Elliot, 2018:19) and viewed as part of a vaguely defined masculine hegemony by others (Perez & Sasson-Levy, 2015:465), this almost natural desire for a man to exercise his strength, is condemned by the society around him. Those who seemingly undermine this tendency, such as those who seek exemption from compulsory military service (Perez & Sasson-Levy, 2015:468), are praised as ‘alternately masculine’ (Perez & Sasson-Levy, 2015:472). Thus, in contemporary society, violence is both condemned and praised. This contradiction muddies the water when it comes to defining masculinity. As long as it exists, the old exemplars of masculinity, such as the hero or knight, cannot be fully embraced. Even the

[20] In this chapter, and those following it, the terms ‘man’ and ‘men’ will be used to refer to the adult male in particular, unless otherwise specified.

alternatives of ‘father’ and ‘husband’ are opposed on the basis that it forms part of a ‘masculine hegemony’ or ‘patriarchy’ which must be opposed. Without an exemplar of masculinity, it is not clear where men are supposed to go, how are they are to define themselves or whether it is even possible to do so.

In addition to this mixed messaging, there is also a growing feeling that men are redundant. The old roles of protecting, providing, and impregnating have shifted. It is no longer necessary for men to fulfil these roles. As societies become safer, the need for protectors diminishes. This is especially true in urbanised countries (Snider, 1998:25), where the role of protector has been localised in the form of law enforcement and the military. Similarly, changes in the job market as well as the entry of women into this market means that men are no longer the sole providers (Snider, 1998:24). Lastly, the rise of artificial insemination and the practice of abortion (Snider, 1998:25) have meant that men’s most pivotal role – that of fathering children – has been taken away from them. Even if their gametes still form part of the process, the men themselves are no longer necessary. Thus, men no longer have a role to play. Worse still, no alternative roles have revealed themselves. They have no place in contemporary society. The result is the presence of lost and angry men in the world. Laureen Snider (1998:24) writes that it is this loss of purpose that fuels the ‘male rage’ of the late 20th century and beyond.

It seems clear that men are in a disastrous position. They no longer have any exemplars to follow, and they no longer have any roles to fulfil. It is a crisis for them to define themselves in the face of this loss, and be a man when manhood is no longer available.

The Human Hegemony

Merav Perez and Orna Sasson-Levy (2015: 465) describes the characteristics of the masculine hegemony as ‘physical strength, toughness, aggressiveness, courage, self-discipline, rationalism, self-restraint, emotional control, and heterosexuality’. In a similar vein, Brenda Weber (2013:671) associates the masculine culture with progress and rationality. Snider associates traditional masculinity with dominance, power (1998:23) and the suppression of emotions (1998:24). In contrast, femininity is linked with irrationality and primitivity (Weber, 2013: 671). According to Snider (1998:26), it is seen as something to be resisted among ‘virtually every known male subculture’.

It should be stated that none of the authors supports this stark divide between men and women. They view the undermining and destruction of it and the associated male hegemony as something

noble and something that ought to be pursued (Snider, 1998:24, Perez & Sasson-Levy, 2015:468). However, in merely criticising the modern cultural distinction between men and women and the roles that it entails, these authors leave both men and women without something upon which to model themselves. Women have been lucky in that they have been able to comfortably transition into the traditionally male role of 'provider'. Many have entered the job market and some have even positioned themselves as the main breadwinner in their households. A minority have also taken on the role of 'protector' in the form of law enforcement or military service. However, men have not been so fortunate. The encroaching of women on their traditional territory has resulted in less opportunity for men to fulfil those roles. They have not been able to transition into traditional female roles as women have done with male roles. While the 'strong female' archetype may be admired, the image of a 'softer' or 'effeminate' man has not been as well received. They are seen as weak and unmanly, as something pathetic, and as something not to be admired. There are no clear archetypes for men to pursue, the ones that exist have been deemed 'toxic' for being too aggressive or engaging in the male hegemony. The worst result of this loss of role model is men who seek refuge in the now discredited traditional male roles; a refuge where the only virtue is in being 'unfeminine'. Without articulating an explicit alternate masculine model, the criticism offered by these authors is only a half measure, regardless of the validity of their criticism.

There is, however, a second and far more fundamental mistake at work here. As mentioned above, certain traits have been divided between the categories of 'masculine' and 'feminine'. The problem is that many of these traits are not unique to men or women, even if one is more common in one than the other. Rationality, for example, is a faculty afforded to both men and women, but the literature seems to associate it exclusively with men. Similarly, emotion is associated exclusively with women. In both cases, the mistake is to associate a trait that is possessed by virtue of a shared human nature with one or the other gender. Even when it is pointed out that men are shown to possess certain 'non-traditional' masculine traits, they are described as 'alternately masculine' (Perez & Sasson-Levy, 2015:472) and used as a bludgeon against ideas of traditional masculinity rather than a supplement to it. In doing so an opportunity to create a more holistic approach to masculinity is missed.

What is curious is that this sharp divide between masculine and feminine is not quite a traditional idea. There was indeed a divide – it was indicated in the first chapter how the Greeks viewed it as natural that men took on the role of provider and women reared children. This division of labour may have started as a simple matter of practicality, because a pregnant woman could not hunt or effectively defend herself against things that threaten her. Thus, she could not fend for herself.

Similarly, while a man was out hunting, he could not rear his children and he was therefore dependant on the mother to raise and teach his children. The necessity of this relationship is what led the Greeks to believe that this was the natural state of affairs.

Yet, the Greeks did not divide men and women to the same extent as was shown in the preceding paragraphs. They did not categorically deny women's ability to be aggressive or dominant, even if they did not see it as a desirable situation. Similarly, they recognised women's ability for rationality and virtue and praised them when they exhibited it. Plutarch (as cited by Warren, 2019:60), for example, praised Mark Antony's wife, Octavia, for her virtue and condemned Cleopatra for her domination of Mark Antony (Warren, 2019:60). The former is associated with reason and the latter with unrestrained passion. In men, the permissibility of emotional vulnerability (which might be considered 'feminine') is exemplified in the friendship between King David and Johnathan, as well as the life of Jesus Christ. In the case of the former, the Bible mentions repeatedly that the two men loved each other[21] (1 Sam 18:3, 1 Sam 20:17, 2 Sam 1:26 (Bible, 1983)) and when David learned of his friend's death, he 'mourned and wept and fasted' (2 Sam 1:12 (Bible, 1983)). Similarly, when Christ learned of his friend Lazarus's death, he cried (John 11:33-36 (Bible, 1983)). Thus, it seems that it is not categorically impermissible for men to show their emotion. In terms of the ethics discussed in previous chapters, it must be understood that the principles were not relegated to one gender. Both men and women were expected to rein in their passions and direct them toward virtue in the hope that it would lead them to happiness.

Yet, the details of this expectation were different for men and women respectively. As explained above, their roles were different, and therefore the exercise of specific virtues would be different for each gender. This resulted in a view that men and women were similar but different. They were similar in the sense that they shared human nature. Yet, they were different by virtue of their roles, which were given to them in part by nature and in part by culture. Accordingly, Plato (as cited by Warren, 2019:60) can say that 'many women… are better than many men in many things'.

Two questions arise from this. Firstly, if this divide in terms of gender was not as stark in antiquity as today, where did it come from? Secondly, if men and women share a nature, what is it that distinguishes men from women?

[21] This should not be taken as proof of a homosexual relationship. The Bible's usual references to a sexual relationship is absent. Additionally, both men had clear heterosexual relationships, with David having several wives and concubines and Johnathan having a son at the time of his death (De Young, 2000:290, Gagnon, 2008:12). The idea that the references to a sexual relationship being edited out is questionable at best. David's other sins are clearly shown, such as the adulterous affair with Bathsheba (which falls into the same class of sin as homosexuality) and subsequent the murder of her husband. It would be odd that a homosexual relationship was edited out of the text, but not the adulterous one that resulted in a murder, which is an altogether more serious and severe sin.

Industrialised Masculinity

The former of the two questions will be addressed first because it is a far simpler one. As was pointed out, the initial distinction between men and women was a practical one. Yet, this distinction does not seem to be set in stone. Female historical figures such as Boudicca, Cleopatra, and Joan of Arc took on male roles when the need arose. This may mean that whatever divide there was between the sexes existed, not as part of some higher principle but rather as a matter of practicality and the cultures that were built around this practicality. While women may have been unsuited to male roles, it seems they were not thought incapable of performing them. However, at some point this attitude started to change.

J.M.H Visser (2017:343) notes that the attitude regarding the sexes changed during and after the Enlightenment. According to T.W. Laqueur (as cited by Visser, 2017: 343), there existed a 'one-sex model' until about three centuries ago. In such a model, the sexes were judged according to a 'spectrum' in which one conformed more or less to the 'ideal' sex, which Visser identifies as the man[22]. At some point after the Enlightenment, the sexes began to be viewed as distinct counterparts. John Tosh describes an example of this change in the industrialising Britain of the 19th century. He argues that during this time, male and female roles were more sharply distinguished than ever before:

'Not only were the reproductive roles of male and female more sharply differentiated than ever before; the range of approved sexual behaviour was narrowed down to privilege penetrative sex, which emphasized the all-powerful libido of the male and the passivity of the female; and the secondary sexual characteristics that had been the subject of a good deal of playful parody now rigidified into their Victorian stereotypes. In moral discourse there was hardly any overlap between the active, rational, resolute male and the emotional, nurturing, malleable female. The two sexes were essentialized, and woman was constructed as "other" in a more absolute sense than ever before' (Tosh, 2005:336).

The differences in gender that were borne out of practical concerns had been stratified into the restrictive roles that we know today. Tosh (2005:331) identifies three factors that brought about this change: a punishing work ethic, an increased validation of the home, and a restraint of physical

[22] It is possible that the author is confusing the use of 'man' in pre-Enlightenment texts with the more modern use of the term. In pre-Enlightenment texts such as those written by Aristotle and Aquinas, 'man' was often used as shorthand for the human species as a whole. In contrast, modern texts often use the term 'man' to refer only to the males of the human species. If this is the case, it may be more accurate to speak of a 'one human nature model'.

aggression. The first of these, the work ethic, is closely tied to the male role of provider. However, there is a difference: what has previously been seen as something necessary for survival, was now seen as something inextricably tied to masculinity. Work was valorised as ‘moral duty and personal fulfilment’ (Tosh, 2005:336). This view was also held by the Puritans, a group who migrated to America and who are commonly thought to have held labour in high regard, although an article by Paul Seaver (1980:36) suggests that this may have been a more general Protestant Christian view. Regardless, labour was elevated from a position of necessary drudgery to a method of self-actualisation, to the point where even overworking was seen as something to be admired (Tosh, 2005:333).

The second factor, the validation of the home, stands opposed to the Victorian work ethic. Physically, it stood opposite the noise and ugliness of the city while in a moral sense it stood across from the cynicism of market relations. This contrast between labour and domesticity was met in widely divergent ways. For every man whose spirits lifted when he crossed the threshold of his home, there was one who relished the aggressiveness of the workplace as a break from the banality it offered. The contrast also created a tension between patriarchal authority and the authority of the wife, because the home could be considered ‘her’ sphere. A wife might have had strict domestic duties to fulfil, but that also created the possibility that the home was where she ruled. Regardless of how the contrast manifested in practice, the gulf between labour and home profoundly affected how men presented themselves in both spheres (Tosh, 2005:333). This change likely is where much of the stratification of the gender distinction took place.

Thirdly, people’s attitude regarding violence changed. This change was the result of Evangelical Christians calling for an attitude of self-restraint (Tosh, 2005:334) and changes in education that focused on independence. Among the bourgeois, a special emphasis was placed on the ‘domestic affections’ and prohibition of interpersonal violence (Tosh, 2005:335). This resulted in a sharp reduction in male violence, as is evidenced by a drop of nearly a third in crimes between 1850 and 1914 (Tosh, 2005:334). Martin Weiner (as cited by Tosh, 2005:334) observes that ‘at every level of the criminal justice system, men were increasingly expected to exercise a greater degree of control over themselves than ever before’. This seems similar to our modern notion of toxic masculinity, albeit less severe. A great emphasis is placed on men controlling their urges and desires in both cases. However, the modern notion lacks a sanctioned ‘outlet’ for male aggression, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

Below, the effectiveness of the Victorian attitude toward gender will be discussed. Tosh (2005:334) estimates that only about 40% of the male population were affected by the new code. Among the unskilled working class, the attitude was almost non-existent. Most households were dual income, with the result that no sharp distinction could be established between the working man and domestic woman. Similarly, the passionless woman implied at the start of this section was more fiction than fact. J.S. Bratton (as cited by Tosh, 2005:337) points out that women in popular Victorian culture had at least an equal sex drive compared to men. Even among the bourgeois, the Victorian attitude toward masculinity was not wholly embraced. Tosh (2005:335) claims that experimentation with forms of leisure and sexuality contrary to the Victorian values of continence and industry was common among bourgeois men.

It is clear then, that the Victorian masculine ideal was not present across the entire society. The attitude did not penetrate much deeper than the middle class. However, the classes which it did affect, had a profound influence on the British empire. Specifically, the efforts that established the empire, were fuelled in part by the now redundant masculinity (Tosh, 2005:339). Beyond the economic interests that undoubtedly fuelled British colonial interests, the interests of those supporting those colonies, varied. They included a desire for independence (Tosh, 2005:339), freedom from domesticity, and ambition (Tosh, 2005:340), among others. For men, the colonies represented a sphere in which the restrictive bonds of domesticity and the legal boundaries of violence could be circumvented. The army represented a space in which violence and physical assertion could be freely expressed (Tosh, 2005:341). Meanwhile, in fiction, the works of Robert Louis Stevenson and Rider Haggard glamorized violence in a way that was ‘never before’ seen in Victorian literature (Tosh, 2005:340). Through empire building, the old male attraction to violence and expressions of strength was given an opportunity for expression.

Modern men do not seem to have a similarly legitimate expression of strength available to them. Due to the generally pacifistic trend in society, military action is frowned upon. Empire building, specifically, is frowned upon in modern society due to the trespasses against the native population of the various colonies during the colonial era. The terms ‘imperialist’ and ‘jingoist’ are used as terms to condemn what is seen as unjust military action. These notions have been associated with the ‘[r]ight-wing, racist, militia-style social movements and the reactionary, punishment-oriented political regimes which are their psychological equivalent’ described by Snider (1998:24). Yet, practical reality may require these ‘redundant’ instincts to remain active. The reality of modern terrorism means that war and conflict are no longer far-off concepts that the military has to deal with. Instead, it is something that can strike at the heart of a civilian population without warning. In

South Africa, local crime rates necessitate that a portion of the population be able to defend themselves and others. This reality creates an opportunity for male aggression to be 'channelled' into the more legitimate role of protector rather than that of aggressor. This role would be far more informal than the official peacekeeping service performed by law enforcement, and would provide a supplement to the shortcomings of police officers[23], who cannot be everywhere at once. Thus, a need exists for protectors who are independent of official law enforcement.

However, Britain is only one part of the world. While its empire was large and it undoubtedly had great influence throughout the world, other countries played also a role in the development of masculine views. Thomas Laqueur (as cited by Tosh, 2005:336) suggests that it was the French revolution and the social changes that resulted from it that shaped the British approach to masculinity. If Laqueur is correct, it would mean that the British view was a reactionary development and not a natural one. Regardless, the shift in masculinity in the 19th-century British empire may be seen as a microcosm of the development of masculinity in an industrialising society.

In view of the above the traditional male roles described by Snider at the start of this chapter should be kept in mind. The role of provider can be associated with the work ethic discussed in this section, while the role of the father is connected to the idea of 'domestic affections' which the Victorians saw as an escape from the punishing work ethic it attempted to maintain. In contrast, the protective role men that used to play was largely absent. The aggression needed to fulfil that role had to be reined in, for the domestic threats had been largely dealt with. There were no more barbarians at the gates. Thus, the aggression needed to be directed in a different direction, with the military being the obvious and most useful choice, albeit with questionable legitimacy. Yet, the core of the roles remained despite the changes in details. Snider (1998:24) dismisses the idea that the roles are merely social constructs, due to their pervasiveness:

'These three [fatherhood, provision and protection] have been central to male roles, male self-esteem and male identities, historically and cross-culturally, for thousands of years. There is no reason to believe they are epiphenomena, mere social constructions that can be wiped out by laws or political tinkering.'

[23] This is not to be taken as a criticism of any law enforcement body. Rather, it should be taken as an acknowledgement of their limitedness. No matter how well such a body is supplied, they cannot be everywhere at once. Furthermore, police usually arrive only after a crime has been committed, which necessitates the presence of a protector in addition to law enforcement.

If these roles are natural, and if they arise by some necessity, we must consider that make men what they are, and what makes them unique. Brief attention has been paid to how men are similar to women due to their shared humanity as well as the notion that there are differences that resulted in the practical division of labour by the Greeks, and presumably the tribes and other population groups around them. In the next section, the biology that brought about these differences and roles will be discussed.

Constructing Gender

The first aspect to be considered, is the distinction between gender and sex. The common view is that these are two distinct concepts, with 'gender' referring to cultural notions surrounding men and women and 'sex' referring to the biological differences between male and female. The latter concept will be discussed first because it is the least contested of the two terms (though it is not completely uncontested) and because it is the concept in terms of which the conversation is framed. Whenever the notions of 'gender roles' and 'gender non-conformity' are brought up, reference must be made to the biology in question, be it the notion of motherhood and fatherhood, or discomfort with one's biology in the case of the transgender community. One cannot escape talking about it, even when one attempts to reject one's own biology.

Lawrence S. Mayer and Paul R. McHugh (2016) writes that '[i]n biology, an organism is male or female if it is structured to perform one of the respective roles in reproduction.' According to them, the 'assignment' or determination of sex is determined by the reproductive system present in the individual in question[24]. One could argue that infertility poses a problem for this definition, however, because a system's inability to perform its normal function does not change what it is. An eye, for example, does not stop being an eye if it is blind, although it is recognised that that the eye is unable to perform its function. Similarly, the reproductive system is still recognisable as such, even when it cannot perform the function it ought to.

Above, the concept of 'sex' was defined. The partner term, 'gender' will be discussed in the following paragraphs. It is commonly understood that gender is culturally defined, and that certain gender roles and stereotypes form part of cultures. The way that men and women behave and carry themselves differ across both cultures and time periods. Yet, until relatively recently, these roles have consistently been associated with biology. As indicated above, early gender roles may simply

[24] There are biological abnormalities, collectively known as intersex, that will be discussed later. However, to explain the notion of sex and gender, only the general notion of sex needs to be explained. Additionally, intersex traits are usually explained in how they differ from usual sexual development, thus an understanding of the ordinary or normal sexual traits is necessary to understand intersex traits.

have been a matter of practicality and the response to human reproductive drives taking its natural course. There is some merit, though, in distinguishing between biologically determined traits and culturally defined ones. A problem arises, however, when one attempts to detach gender from biology, as has been one of the major projects of the feminist movement from the second half of the 20th century onwards. Simone de Beauvoir (2011: 283) wrote that 'one is not born, but becomes a woman'. Womanhood, and manhood by extension, then is not the result of an act of birth, which merely makes one male or female, but rather something that one 'grows into' through conforming with masculine and feminine roles and standards that are set by culture and society.

While there is some truth in this argument, it contains the tantalising suggestion that one can completely rewrite these standards, abandoning the practical aspect that served as an origin point for these standards. This idea was solidified in the works of Ann Oakley, Suzanne Kessler, Wendy McKenna and others (Mayer & McHugh, 2016). Anthropologist Gayle Rubin (1975:204) posits that constructed gender can be deconstructed and that in doing so, we would be able to create 'an androgynous and genderless (though not sexless) society, in which one's sexual anatomy is irrelevant to who one is, what one does, and with whom one makes love'. More recently, the works of Judith Butler, Griselda Pollock, Jane Pollock, and Juliet Mitchell has done much to further the modern feminist cause. Butler specifically describes gender as 'performative' (Mayer & McHugh, 2016). The obvious interpretation is that gender is a role one performs, and one that can be swapped out for any other at will. According to her, 'Gender is neither the causal result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex' (Butler, 1990: 7). At first glance, Butler is simply following in the footsteps of her feminist predecessors. However, she goes a step further in saying that 'sex is as culturally constructed as gender' (Butler, 1990: 10). Biology is therefore no longer a factor to her, but all comes down to words that can be changed at will: ' 'woman' need not be the cultural construction of the female body, and 'man' need not interpret male bodies' (Butler, 1990:142). Consequently, gender is 'a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male body as easily as a female one' (Butler, 1990: 6). This is the climax of the gender/sex distinction. The signifier is separated from the signified and both lose something in this separation: the signifier loses the point of reference that gave it its intelligibility and the signified can no longer be represented. The 'sign', the combination of the signifier and the signified, becomes little more than a human construct.

The *reductio ad absurdum* criticism of this view is that in this view the terms 'gender' and 'sex' become virtually meaningless. Yet, despite the contentious character of Butler's view, it has become very prominent in popular culture. An example is Facebook's 2014 change to include '56

new ways for users to describe their gender, in addition to the options of male and female', an option which includes the categories of '*agender*, several *cis*- and *trans*- variants, *gender fluid*, *gender questioning*, *neither*, *other*, *pangender*, and *two-spirit*' (Mayer & McHugh, 2016, emphasis in original). Butler's view is not new, however, but lies at the heart of De Beauvoir's statement above that one is not *born* a woman but *becomes* one. Accordingly, biology need not be considered – as long as one conforms to whatever standards one chooses, one can be any gender one wishes. This seems to echo the view of Jean-Paul Sartre that 'existence precedes essence' (2007:38), which, when taken to its logical extreme, means that an individual can become anything that he wishes to be. He merely needs to choose a path and pursue it. Butler's view can be seen as Sartre's existentialism applied to gender, although it also contains influences from John Searle, J.L. Austin and Jacques Derrida (Ton, 2018:3). The ultimate result of this line of thinking is described by Mayer and McHugh (2016) as follows:

'Whether or not Judith Butler was correct in describing traditional gender roles of men and women as "performative," her theory of gender as a "free-floating artifice" does seem to describe this new taxonomy of gender. As these terms multiply and their meanings become more individualized, we lose any common set of criteria for defining what gender distinctions mean. If gender is entirely detached from the binary of biological sex, gender could come to refer to any distinctions in behaviour, biological attributes, or psychological traits, and each person could have a gender defined by the unique combination of characteristics the person possesses. This *reductio ad absurdum* is offered to present the possibility that defining gender too broadly could lead to a definition that has little meaning.'

This meaningless definition may be Butler's objective. A complete deconstruction of gender and sex may lead to the egalitarian society envisioned by Rubin. In theory, it may serve as a cure for the inequities between the sexes. However, if Snider is correct in her assertion that male roles are not simply a social construct and that that they – and by extension, female gender roles – arose by some natural process, they may be harming the society that they are trying to fix. An example of this is the male rage cited by Snider (1998:24), which arguably arose in the wake of the hyper-egalitarianism of thinkers like De Beauvoir, Rubin, and Butler. The fact that the British approach to gender discussed above is most likely in reaction to French egalitarianism, may mean that a modern reaction is likely to pursue an equally stark distinction between men and women. In response, the feminist may argue that those who pursue such a distinction are simply attempting to hold onto the power that they possessed in the current hegemonic system. However, the situation may be more complex than that. Some may refer the physical differences between men and women and conclude

that what Butler is saying, is false. In reaction, they may reasonably posit that all distinctions are due to biology and that there is nothing cultural to be considered. This would, admittedly, not be a view that could be seriously maintained. As obvious as physical distinctions between men and women are, it is equally obvious that there are things that may be culturally defined, such as boys preferring rough and tumble play and girls preferring gentler forms of entertainment.

Thus, there are three possible relations between gender and sex. The first is that sex is a distinct biological category from which gender roles are derived, though it must be stressed that these roles are not as fixed as their biological origins. The second is a complete distinction between sex and gender, where the former is wholly biological and the latter is wholly cultural. Lastly, gender and sex are interchangeable categories that are defined by culture and have no meaning beyond what humans have given to it. Of these three, there first is by far the oldest. It seems to have existed since time immemorial, and it has persisted to exist despite changes in cultural attitudes regarding both men and women. That does not automatically grant it truth status, but it does imply that it may be something more than mere human artifice. In contrast, the latter possibilities are premised on the idea that gender, if not sex specifically, is a human creation that can be changed at will. Consequently, sex is seen as something infinitely malleable. However, if biological sex is a stable referent and gender is informed by it, the endless malleability suggested by thinkers like Butler is a fantasy. Humans may make mistakes due to limited knowledge, but the biological referent would serve to correct them. This is supported by a general biological view:

‘This conceptual basis for sex roles is binary and stable, and allows us to distinguish males from females on the grounds of their reproductive systems, even when these individuals exhibit behaviours that are not typical of males or females’ (Mayer & McHugh, 2016).

The stability of biological sex would mean that it is not irrelevant to discussions regarding sex and gender. Yet some would dispute the purported stability of sex. Butler specifically cites the existence of both intersex and transgender populations in arguments against this position (Ton, 2018:10). Attention must therefore be paid to the way these groups affect the notion of sex and gender.

Between Man and Woman

It is possible to suggest that Butler’s view is an academic one, with limited impact on society at large. However, it may be more widespread than it seems. The acceptance of homosexual relationships in recent years carries with it the implication that men and women are interchangeable. The suggestion is that a homosexual act, which is necessarily sterile due to the absence of either the

male or female gamete, is equivalent to a heterosexual one, which carries with it the potential of offspring. Even when a heterosexual couple is sterile, it cannot be equated with a homosexual couple, because the latter is sterile by its very nature while the former is sterile by accident. Much like the eye that is blind, the sterile heterosexual relationship is deficient. Yet, this deficiency does not change the nature of the heterosexual relationship as such. It still carries with it the potential for offspring, even if in certain instances this potential cannot be actualised. Thus, there is an inherent difference between homosexual and heterosexual relationships. Despite this serious difference, however, the general cultural attitude is one of seeming indifference according to which a homosexual relationship is merely an alternative to a heterosexual one, rather than one of a completely different kind. Effectively, male and female become interchangeable in terms of function.

The transgender community takes this a step further by claiming that men and women are not only interchangeable in terms of function, but in form as well: a man can become a woman and vice versa. In practice, however, this is often not as simple. The transgender individual does not experience a simple desire to be of the opposite sex, but rather feel that he or she *is* a member of the opposite biological sex (Mayer & McHugh, 2016). This feeling results in great discomfort with their body. They feel trapped within their body, which leads to great mental distress.

A similar phenomenon is that of the intersex individual. Like the transgender individual, the intersex individual experiences difficulty regarding his sex and gender. However, unlike the transgender individual, the intersex individual is not dealing with a mental difficulty, but with a biological one. The term ‘intersex’ refers to individuals that were born with ambiguous genitalia, usually as a result of some genetic abnormality (Mayer & McHugh, 2016). The result of this ambiguity is that the sex of the child is difficult to determine even long after birth. Nevertheless, it seems that the individual’s sex can be determined despite the difficulty and that there is no necessary effect that the existence of intersex individuals has on the common view of sex.

However, it must be stressed how delicate a topic the discussion of intersex and transgender individuals is. If it is handled poorly, lives could be lost. The rates of suicide among transgender individuals are incredibly high. According to Cecelia Dhejne *et al.* (2011:5), *postoperative* transgender individuals were 4.9 times more likely to attempt suicide and 19.1 times more likely to successfully commit suicide than their control group. Additionally, the researchers suggest that ‘things might have been even worse without sex reassignment’ (Dhejne *et al.*, 2011:7). Thus, the following discussion must be dealt with carefully, for while a judgement on the legitimacy of the

transgender population's claim to being 'born in the wrong body' is beyond the scope of this thesis, the statements made in the following section may affect the arguments regarding that judgement.

It was pointed out above that intersex individuals may not have any bearing on the common view of sex. It may nonetheless be prudent to examine how this may affect gender identity. To that end to a paper by William G. Reiner and John P. Gearhart (2004:334) will be consulted. It discusses the sexual identities of genetic males affected by cloacal exstrophy, a rare and complex defect of the entire pelvis and its contents, that causes severe phallic inadequacy or phallic absence in genetic males[25][26] (Reiner & Gearhart, 2004:333). According to these authors, the standard solution to the defect has been neonatal assignment to the female gender in an attempt to 'overcome' the problem of phallic inadequacy, and accordingly, most participants in this study were 'assigned' female gender (Reiner & Gearhart, 2004:334). Of the 14 participants who underwent the procedure, five identified unwaveringly with their assigned female gender, eight declared themselves male, and one refused to discuss the matter (Reiner & Gearhart, 2004:336). All subjects that were studied, showed typical male interests and behaviours. Only one subject said that she did not wish to be a boy, and only one (who would later identify as a male) stated a strong interest in marriage, which is described a typically female trait (Reiner & Gearhart, 2004:336). While the authors of the paper consider the results as an indication that neonatal clinical interventions should be reconsidered, Mayer and McHugh (2016) argue that the 'lack of persistence is some evidence that the assignment of sex through genital construction at birth with immersion into a "gender-appropriate" environment is not likely to be a successful option for managing the rare problem of genital ambiguity from birth defects'. The fact that the subjects all displayed male-typical behaviour, despite being raised female, may be an indicator that biology is a more powerful determiner of behaviour than expected and that it seems to play some kind of role in gender identity.

The next question relates to the effect that the transgender population has on this view. It should first be noted that Butler's assertion that the existence of transgenders is an indicator of the instability of sex, has been viewed as incredibly problematic (Ton, 2018:11-12). Butler's view that transgender individuals simply wish to conform to a cultural norm regarding sex, is in contrast to the transgender experience of discomfort with their own bodies. Their desire to have their bodies match the ideas they hold in their mind, is distinct from Butler's idea that they wish to undergo surgery to satisfy some cultural norm. For them to properly articulate their discomfort, requires

[25] The authors deny that this is an intersex condition (Reiner & Gearhart, 2004:338). However, it may shed some light on the effect that ambiguous genitalia and the procedures to 'correct' this ambiguity has on sexual identity.
[26] The testes themselves seem to be normal despite the phallic abnormality (Reiner & Gearhart, 2004:334). The sex as discussed above is unambiguous.

some kind of stable sexual and gender identity to be possible. The phrase ‘a man trapped in a woman’s body’ is meaningless if the terms ‘man’ and ‘woman’ refer only to human artifice which can be changed and altered at will. Thus, the existence of the transgender population may not have any effect on the common view of sex, but it may have an important influence on the view of gender. It stands as a critique against the stark contrast between male and female roles. Nevertheless, even with that critique, it is unclear what the ‘solution’ is regarding transgender experiences. It is unknown what causes this phenomenon, though many suggestions have been made (Mayer & McHugh, 2016). Moreover, the suicide rates associated with this phenomenon, identified by Dhejne *et al.* (2011:5) are cause for great concern. It is a challenging to suggest a course of action when the solutions on the table do not seem to produce desirable results. It is a difficult question to answer, and one that lies beyond the scope of this thesis. For the purpose of this thesis, however, it is clear that neither intersex nor transgender populations serve as an adequate basis to reject the gender binary.

Men Divided

With the brief analysis of gender and sex concluded above, the question of where and how men fit in remains. Snider (1998:24) describes the attack on traditional masculinity is a ‘source of hope’. Recent opposition to ‘toxic masculinity’ and the ‘masculine hegemony’ are contemporary forms of this attack. As mentioned at the start of the chapter, toxic masculinity is defined by male aggression and domination. Opposition to the unrestrained aggression and domination that defines toxic masculinity is not a problem. Since the Stoics, domination and aggression has been seen as an indication of a lack of self-control. However, without a clear way to fix the problems identified with the critique, a solution can only be partially reached. Snider (1998:24), in particular, encounters great difficulty in articulating an alternate male identity, and merely states that ‘it *must* be possible to find ways of being manly that are not misogynous and do not require the repression of every human emotion except anger’ (emphasis in original). While it is not clear that ‘traditional’ masculinity truly advocated the things that Snider thinks it does, it is clear that whatever this new masculinity is that she seeks, it is something gentler and less aggressive than the popular view of men as being are inherently violent. Beyond that, however, she seems unable to give more details. By her own admission, the old male roles of fatherhood, protection and provision are not ‘mere social constructions that can be wiped out by laws or political tinkering’. Instead, she views the loss of these traditional roles as that which fuels the ‘male rage that animates the late twentieth century’ (Snider, 1998:24).

Subsequently, it is not clear how to proceed. The supposedly hopeful destruction of traditional masculinity also seems to be the cause of the male rage that Snider is concerned about. One possible solution would be to look to the shift in traditional femininity, which was centred around the home and childrearing, for answers. The old femininity was replaced by one which encouraged women to enter the former male spheres of leadership and labour. However, this would imply that men should attempt to enter the old spheres of the home and childrearing, and the solution therefore does not seem clear cut. Men do not seem eager to take on these formerly feminine roles and, moreover, the suppression of male aggression that was discussed above may have contributed to the jingoism and colonial attitudes of the previous centuries.

At this point, it seems that men are sharply divided. On the one hand, there is the aggressive man who seems to desire to dominate all around him. On the other hand, there is has the more urbane and modest man, who detests violence and conflict. An effort should be made to somehow reconcile these two types of the male population and create some kind of third group which can pursue legitimate masculinity. If this cannot be achieved, society will always be caught between violent and peaceful men. Much like the male roles identified by Snider above, male violence seems to transcend cultures and time periods, as illustrated by, for example, the barbarians of antiquity or the bandits and raiders of the Middle ages. The ubiquity of male violence throughout history indicates that is not mere epiphenomena. Rather, it may be as natural as a lion's roar or a gorilla thumping at his chest. Accordingly, it may not be possible to eradicate male aggression, which is the problem identified by Snider above and Perez and Sasson-Levy's study of those men who avoid military service. Thus, crisis that results from the conflict between aggressive men and less aggressive men must be confronted along with the additional conflict between aggressive men and society as a whole. To do so, we must consider the construction of a version of masculinity that attempts to rein in and direct the aggressive and domineering instinct in men.

This raises the question of where this new masculine construct is to be found. Modern society, which threatens to destroy the very idea of gender, may be considered; or we may to look to the past to reconsider ideas that society has abandoned. This will be the topic of discussion in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

The Virtue of Men Revisited

‘Being a male is a matter of birth. Being a man is a matter of choice.’

Edwin Louis Cole

At the end of the previous chapter, a crisis of masculinity we described. There is a conflict between the *gentle man*[27] and the *aggressive man*. For the sake of clarity, these terms should be explained. The type of man referred to here is not simply one who is civil and polite. Rather, it is the one that is at the extreme end of ‘civility’ and ‘politeness’. These are not ‘tamed’ men, this would imply controlled aggression. Rather, they have been ‘defanged’. There is no aggressive tendency left to be tamed. Similarly, the aggressive man is not just the assertive man described by some forms of traditional masculinity. Instead, they fit the description of manhood given by Snider (1998:24): it is a masculinity that seems to require ‘the repression of every human emotion except anger’. They are the brutes and brigands that old stories cast as the villains. It should be obvious why these two extreme forms of masculine identity will inevitably result in conflict. The gentle man sees the aggressive man as nothing more than a brute while the aggressive man sees the gentle man as a pathetic coward who allows others to walk over him. The state of this conflict is such that masculinity is seen as something inherently aggressive and domineering, because the aggressive man will dominate those who are unable to resist his domination.

A reining form of masculinity is therefore described as something ‘toxic’. It will remain so unless a way can be found to resolve this conflict. Yet, as was indicated earlier, there seems to be few solutions from those who criticise this aggressive masculinity. They seem to satisfy themselves by simply saying that men must be less aggressive and dominating. As was mentioned before, no clear attempts have been made to redirect the near-universal male tendency to aggression and violence. This is not to say that those who criticise aggressive masculinity do not have a point: virtue ethicists have for centuries considered unrestrained aggression as a sign that a man lacks virtue, specifically that of temperance and justice. Thus, a solution to the problem of toxic masculinity may be found within virtue ethics. Within this underappreciated tradition lies a potential rediscovery and reconstruction of a positive masculine model. As a tradition, it has always exhorted men and women to rein in their emotions and desires. This was supposed to be achieved through adherence

[27] It must be stressed that the use of the term *gentle man* does not imply the term *gentleman* and the nobility associated with it. A gentleman is different from the gentleness of this kind of man.

to the virtues and the development of good habits that help to curb the power that possessed by strong desires. By living this way, individuals are expected to reach *eudaimonia* or happiness. Unrestrained aggression would threaten the possibility of happiness for all involved. Accordingly, there may be some worth exploring what worth virtue ethics has to say on the matter of toxic masculinity.

However, another issue needs to be addressed. There are two parts to this conflict within masculinity: in addition to the aggressive man, there is the gentle, unobtrusive man. Soft-spoken and modest, these men are often thought of as weak and cowardly, especially by their more aggressive counterparts. Even so, they are praised by writers such as Merav Perez and Orna Sasson-Levy (2015:472) as being 'alternately masculine'. This form of masculinity is set up not as another aspect of masculinity, but rather as one in conflict with a traditional form of masculinity. The implication seems to be that this form of masculinity is meant to replace, not supplement, traditional forms of masculinity. The question, then, is how these men should fit into society: are they truly the new template for masculinity or are they forever to serve as foils to more aggressive men?

Fortunately, a third option may be available. Rather than choose between the two extremes of aggression and gentleness, it may be possible to combine these two male tendencies. The biblical king David, for instance, is credited for several poems and songs in the Old Testament. He played music to soothe the then King Saul when he flew into a rage (1 Sam 16:14-23(Bible, 1983)) and his relationship with his friend Johnathan was filled with emotional vulnerability (1 Sam 18:3, 1 Sam 20:17, 2 Sam 1:26, 2 Sam 1:12 (Bible, 1983)). He even wept when he learned of the death of his traitorous son, Absalom (2 Sam 18:33 (Bible, 1983)). This paints the picture of David as a very gentle man. He can be considered a man 'in touch' with his emotions, or a 'sensitive soul'. Yet, in addition to being a gentle poet, he was also a king and general who led men into battle. Most famously, he is credited with slaying Goliath, the giant (1 Sam 17:48-51(Bible, 1983)). This requires both ferocity towards his enemies and the ability to dominate and direct his men in battle. These characteristics seem to be contradictory, since aggression and gentleness are antagonistic forces. Yet, it was possible for a man to embrace both these aspects of masculinity.

Two matters will therefore be discussed in this chapter. The first is the application of virtue to the concepts of male aggression and toxic masculinity[28] and the second is the possible combination the gentle man and aggressive man into some hybrid masculinity.

[28] Toxic masculinity is a modern concept, having only recently gained widespread prominence.

Masculine Toxicity

The previous chapter, the discussion focused on the concept of so-called ‘male hegemony’ and the idea of rationality and self-discipline. Specifically, the discussion attempted to show that rationality and self-discipline were not uniquely masculine traits, but rather that they were human traits, applicable to both men and women. In this case, the discussion of toxic masculinity will centre around male aggression. It should be noted that there have been instances of female aggression throughout history, such as Boudicca and Cleopatra. There is even a biblical account from the Book of Judges where a woman named Jael drove a spike into the head of an enemy general named Sisera (Bible, 1983). However, unlike rationality, aggression seems far more widespread among men as demonstrated by the ancient heroes such as Hector and Ajax, or medieval figures such as Baldwin IV, El Cid (otherwise known as Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar) and Richard the Lionheart, for instance. Although soldiers and generals in more contemporary are neither as well-known nor as revered as these legendary figures, violence still surrounds perceptions of masculinity. Aggressive sports such as rugby, boxing or mixed martial arts are sanctioned forms of aggression, but they are not the only aggressive acts in which men potentially engage. Informal acts of violence such as bar fights or criminal activity such as assault and murder are also expressions of male violence. Historically speaking, men are far more prone to violence and aggression than their female counterparts. Thus, there is some merit to singling out men’s propensity for aggressive behaviour. This presents the issue, however that unless one is a fully committed pacifist[29], one cannot say that the simple fact of male aggression is problematic. There are very legitimate exercises of violence in the form of sports or defence, whether it is the defence of another or the self. Thus, the correct limitations of male aggression need to be determined, since it is self-evident unrestrained aggression is not good, as it leads to various injustices such as assault and murder and, on a government level, tyranny and oppression. The following sections will focus on a means to achieve this.

Alasdair MacIntyre’s description of pre-modern ethics (2007:52) provides valuable insight to this end. According to MacIntyre, ethics proceeded in three parts, namely ‘man[30]-as-he-happens-to-be’ (shortened to ‘man as he is’), ‘man-as-he-could-be-if-he-realized-his-essential-nature’ (shortened to ‘man as he ought to be’), and the bridge between these two states, commonly referred to as ‘ethics’. MacIntyre (2007:52) describes ethics explicitly as ‘the science which is to enable men to understand how they make the transition from the former state to the latter’. In this view, ethics proceed on the assumption of a ‘*telos*’, or a purpose. It drives an individual toward some goal. From the previous

[29] Specifically, a pacifist who believes that all instances of violence or aggression are in all situations immoral.
[30] MacIntyre uses the term *man* to refer to human individuals in general.

chapters, we can say that this purpose of ethics is the driving of individuals towards this 'happiness', whether it is unity with God, as Aquinas suggested, or a life of virtue as Aristotle said. The process of ethics, then, is to promote the things that will lead to this goal and to prohibit those that would interfere with this goal. The things it promotes and prohibits are called 'virtues' and 'vices' respectively. Although these are familiar topics, there is some merit in discussing it here. The description of 'toxic masculinity' relates to modern masculinity in the same way that 'man as he is' relates to ethics. It is the starting point of the ethical process. The difference is that modern ethics has lost the rich vocabulary of virtue ethics that could facilitate the transition from 'toxic' men to proper, fully realised masculinity. The end goal of this process is a gentler, far less brutish and domineering form of masculinity. Virtue ethics may play a vital role in this, because it exhorts individuals to restrain and redirect their wayward passions (which unrestrained aggression and dominance certainly qualify as) in favour of the virtues. This may offer a solution for the crisis caused by 'toxic masculinity'.

However, restraining aggression is not the only thing that virtue ethics would urge men to do. Aristotle, and by extension Aquinas, was critical not only of excess but also of deficiency. Those gentle men, who would be examples of 'alternate masculinity' who avoid aggression and confrontation at all costs, would be equally criticised as those brutes who pursued all possible confrontation. The question now is where to locate a mean between aggression and gentleness. One possibility lies in discovering the 'essence' of men, or the thing that distinguishes them from women[31]. In doing so, it may become possible to discover the legitimate expressions of masculinity, along with men's aggressive tendencies.

Essence of Men

In the previous chapter, what distinguished males and females on a biological level was discussed. The potential ability to produce sperm determines a male organism while the potential ability to produce an ovum determines a female organism. It should be stressed that an organism's inability to actualise these potentials does not prevent an organism from being determined male or female. As pointed out earlier, it is clear something does stop being what it is when it does not fulfil its function – an eye that can no longer see does not stop being an eye, for example. Likewise, a male that cannot produce sperm does not stop being a male.

All men start with the potential to produce sperm. Accordingly, this is why J. Budziszewski (2012:58) describes men as those with 'the potentiality for fatherhood'. The concept of 'fatherhood'

[31] From this point on the assumption will be made that there are only two genders, i.e. male and female.

extends far beyond merely impregnating a woman. Many women are abandoned by the man who impregnated them, and these men therefore cannot rightly be called ‘fathers’. Rather, a father is involved in the raising of the child, in providing for their physical needs and protecting them from danger. It is from the father that the child learns what a man looks like, though how they ought to react differs depending on the gender of the child. A boy ought to learn how he should be. His father is, in theory, the one he models himself after. A girl, on the other hand, ought to see what a good man is by observing her father. In both cases, the father is the child’s first encounter with masculinity. Absentee fathers and abusive fathers are particularly damaging to children because their view of men and masculinity will be warped by their experiences. That the old masculine roles are visible in this description and in a sense, they flow from the origin of maleness.

Masculinity extends beyond the raising of children as well. Budziszewski (2012:62) describes men growing up as the joining of a brotherhood. Budziszewski chose this description for their knightly implications as he believes that it forms an integral part of masculinity. Men, and to some extent boys, wish to do great deeds worthy of praise, to vanquish evil, and to inspire others to do the same. A cynic might respond that men do this for personal gain and for the praise and prestige that they may gain from these acts. Yet, where fictional heroes are idolised (and these heroes often represent the idealisations of the virtues to which we aspire), it seems like we still desire those men who will vanquish evil even if the act costs them their lives. Even more telling, these modern heroes often hide their faces, which suggests that their fight against injustice is not merely a pursuit of fame or personal gain. These heroes also often have young helpers or ‘sidekicks’ who follow them in their work. This serves as something of an equivalent to the Medieval squire since they learn the details of being a hero as they assist their mentors. Manhood is similar – the full extent of manhood includes the building up of fellow men.

This echoes knighthood in another sense as well. In the past, the values of chivalry, the knightly code, were kept alive through a class dedicated to these values. It was spread from this class to others partially by imitation and partially by coercion (Lewis, 1986:16). Just as chivalry is passed on from knight to squire, manhood is something passed on from man to boy. It is chiefly passed on through imitation. A boy imitates his father, however imperfectly he may do so, and this is the boy’s first experience of manhood, though partial and imperfect. As he grows up, the boy will experience more aspects of manhood as he interacts with his father, along with other fathers, and other imitators of manhood, namely other boys. He may, in time, learn of the more ‘formal’ or ‘structured’ aspects of manhood and masculinity but his first *experiences* of masculinity are likely

to be of his father[32]. Literal fatherhood is not the only point where manhood is spread by imitation. Mentorship programmes may be the most explicit example of this idea outside the family, but other influential male figures may make a striking impression on the mind of a young man. They may be real, such as teachers, or they may be fictional, such as our modern superheroes or the knights of legend. Imitation may thus be considered the primary method of passing on manhood.

A second element of the spreading of knighthood is coercion. In modern times this concept acquired the negative connotation of forcing another to perform (or not perform) actions that they would not otherwise have done through the use of threats. At face value, it brings to mind various injustices. Yet, any society that wishes to maintain law and order, requires a form of coercion to function. Laws must be enforced. If they are not, they lose whatever authority to which they have a claim. In the past, this enforcement came with bodily punishments such as flogging or even execution. In the modern era, this enforcement comes in the form of fines and time spent in prison. In both cases, the punishing of the guilty man carries with it a threat: 'if you are guilty of the same crime, you will suffer as this man does'. Accordingly, coercion is integral to law and order. Without it, laws become little more than worthy ideas on scraps of paper. A detailed discussion of topic falls beyond the scope of this thesis and will suffice to say that coercion is not in and of itself evil or undesirable. Coercion may not be as violent as the term implies either.

With regard to manhood, a quiet condemnation from a respected role model may be far more effective in reinforcing masculine values than a physical punishment could ever be. This does not merely involve the threat of punishment or bodily harm, but rather the threat of shame and dishonour. In the modern age, shame and dishonour are no longer the deterrents they used to be in the past, because the individualistic modern society encourages people, especially the youth, to disregard the opinions of others. Shame and honour are bestowed based on social pressure: they are external standards and the modern disregard (though not complete abandonment) of these standards given people more freedom to pursue their own goals and desires. Our choices in dress and profession are subject to less scrutiny than in the past, but in our freedom, we have also lost sight of the fact that some things are by their very nature shameful and dishonourable. Though sins like murder and cheating are still frowned upon, they are condemned on the basis of the harm they cause rather than their sinful content. Similarly, lies are tolerated if they are told for the 'right reasons' and our culture's treatment of sex seems to indicate that unchastity is not only tolerated, but

[32] This may be why the absence of a father has such a devastating effect on young men. They have no first-hand experience of the proper function of manhood. Any attempt to inculcate masculinity in these men will be made more difficult due to this lack. Similarly, young men whose fathers were abusive, will start with the experience of warped manhood, which must be corrected before proper manhood can be inculcated.

celebrated. There was a purpose in the old system that bestowed shame and honour which was meant to reinforce the values that were inculcated either through imitation or formal instruction. Shame was, ideally, to be used as a means to correct the mistakes that were made. Accordingly, coercion has a place in the establishment of manhood – but this place must be well understood. It is a corrective, not an ideal. It reinforces already established values and principles. It cannot be used as a starting point to teach those values.

Ultimately, manhood revolves around the concept of fatherhood, whether in the literal setting of raising children or in the figurative setting of brotherhood and mentorship. In both cases it busies itself with the act of turning boys into men, protecting those who cannot do so themselves, and taking care of those dependent on them. It would seem that manhood has both a private and public element. In private, it is the concerns of the family to which a man must attend, whether it is merely his own well-being while he is single or those of his family when he becomes a husband and father. In public, he participates in the greater brotherhood of men where he learns from those men who are older and wiser and encourages and corrects those men who are not yet as developed in their manhood as he is. It is a balancing act, which requires an understanding of a man as a man, as well as an understanding of a man as a human being. Both require the development and exercise of the virtues, since a man cannot pursue manhood if he does not have the wisdom (prudence) to distinguish between good and bad men. A man cannot act as protector or mentor if he cannot distinguish between justice and injustice; and he cannot be a role model if he cannot practice self-discipline regarding his desires and emotions. Moreover, the pursuit of wisdom, justice, and temperance often comes with great difficulties and hardship. It requires fortitude to endure the loss of things that are incompatible with the pursuit of virtue, not to mention the self-condemnation that comes with the failure to fully actualise the virtues.

Fortunately, the situation is are not only negative. The theological virtues provide an internal support structure for the virtues. Faith provides rational beliefs while hope seeks the fulfilment of these beliefs; and over and above these stands charity or love. ‘Love’ in this context is more than mere affection; it wills the good to both the self and to others. Through this willing, the virtues are not only internalised but also pushed outward. In so doing, the virtues become more tangible, more real than they are when they are merely internalised. Justice, for example, becomes more real when praise or condemnation must be rendered. Similarly, fortitude and temperance become more real

when a man is faced with a choice that requires that he face his fears or run from them. Manhood and humanity are closely connected[33].

Another aspect of manhood is that of brotherhood, or relationships with other men. The saying that 'no man is an island' is especially true of manhood. The brotherhood does not only have its place in the initial instruction of manhood, but also in its maintenance. It also involves encouragement and gentle correction. Through the brotherhood, burdens are shared and carried together. Men share one another's burdens and in doing so they help make one another to become better men.

The Making of Men

With the core of manhood being established as the potential[34] to be a father (in both the literal and spiritual senses of the term), the topic of male aggression will be discussed further. Clearly, both too much and too little aggression may conflict with this image of manhood. Too much aggression will tarnish the virtues that the man is meant to teach. They will become toxic by association. A gentler man may be able to prevent the virtues from being tarnished, and if he is articulate enough, he may even be able to express their importance. If he is too gentle, however, he will not be able to enforce the rules set to reinforce the virtues. Furthermore, the masculine role of protector requires some aggression to be properly performed. Some aggression therefore seems to be a requirement when developing a full and comprehensive vision of manhood.

Comprehensive manhood is not limited to aggression and men are not merely men but also human. Men are not simply 'males' in the abstract, as one might have a male dog or a male lion, but they are *human* males. Accordingly, they participate in the elements of rationality that is shared by all members of the species. This includes emotions that experienced viscerally and that can then be expressed rationally through words and actions. Additionally, it includes the purpose, or *telos*, of human life. In the first half of this thesis, it as posited that human purpose is the pursuit of happiness. More specifically, Aristotle believed that happiness lied in living a good life, a life well-lived, otherwise known as *eudaimonia*. This kind of life was a life of virtue and the virtues were to

[33] This is not to say that men are more human than women, but rather that any attempt to separate men from their humanity is misguided. Any attempt to separate womanhood from humanity is similarly misguided. Men are both human and men at the same time, just as women are human and women at the same time. Human nature exists as an underlying reality of both men and women. Yet, they are not only human. Men are human men; women are human women. They are the same in their humanity, but different in their sex/gender.

[34] The actualisation of this potential is taken as self-evident. It ties into the purpose or *teleology* of manhood itself. The result of avoiding this actualisation is to forever be incomplete. One is lesser for it and will remain so until actualisation is sought.

be reinforced through habit so that they were no longer conscious acts but done without a second thought. They would become part of a person's character.

Ultimately, happiness can be thought of as a way of life. It is more durable than a simple state of mind and longer-lasting than the simple pursuit of pleasure. It may be the only bulwark against the instabilities of circumstance and emotion. The habits that facilitate a good life can be developed independently of changes in circumstance and they last beyond the feelings that come and go like the tides of the ocean. In a sense, it provides the stability that a good life requires. Aquinas extended this stability by attaching happiness to God. In his thought, a relationship with God is the only way to reach true happiness. As the creator and sustainer of all creation, He is thought to be the source of all goodness. A life of virtue may be the best a human might achieve but it is only through unity with God that the full extent of happiness can be achieved. Still, the pursuit of earthly happiness is still a worthwhile endeavour and the best a person can achieve. Its pursuit is worthwhile, even if one falls short. These virtues vaguely defined, however. In a sense, this is by design so as to accommodate the unique circumstances of each individual. While providing a framework for ethical behaviour, it understands that the struggles and problems that an agent may face differ depending on the individual and situation. One person may struggle with the virtue of chastity while finding the virtue of temperance easy while another may struggle with both of these but excel at applying justice. The standard may be the same for all, but no one is obligated to follow the exact same path in pursuing this standard. Individuals differ greatly, in terms of the things in which they excel and with which they struggle. Even within a single family, there may be vast differences between siblings, despite the similarities in parentage, schooling, and religious beliefs. Thus, a rigid structure (such as one that might be found in deontological thinkers) is more of a harm than a help to virtue.

A Practiced Standard

This lack of structure may make it difficult to find one's way. Practising the virtues requires self-knowledge, which is difficult enough at the best of times. In our age of slogans, mass advertising and internet soundbites, it is easy to lose track of knowledge of both the good and of the self. Accordingly, it may be useful to seek out a virtuous archetype against which to measure oneself. In layman's terms, this can be called a 'role model', an ideal towards which one must strive. This kind of archetype would change the virtues from mere abstract concepts into something wholly real. The question remains as to what ought to serve as a uniquely masculine archetype. Christians may be tempted to place Jesus Christ in this role. In the Christian view, He is the Son of God and He is thought to have been the perfect human being. In several places, the Bible (1983) exhorts Christians to 'imitate Christ' (John 13:13-17, 1 John 2:6, 1 Pet. 2:21, 1 Cor. 11:1, Eph 4:22 -24, etc.). The

difficulty with this is that Christ is to be imitated by *everyone*, not just men. He is the perfect human, and not simply the perfect man. He may serve as the ideal archetype for virtue in general, but He may not serve as a uniquely masculine archetype. However, it is not impossible to find in Christ an archetype that men ought to follow. St. Paul writes that men have a unique responsibility in imitating Christ. In his letter to the Ephesians, he writes:

'Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing, her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church— for we are members of his body. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a profound mystery— but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband' (Eph. 5:22-33 (Bible, 1983)).

It is tempting to focus on the first half of the quotation, where Paul tells women to submit to their husbands. Feminists have been especially suspicious of it in light of the past where men have abused their power over women. However, this leads us to ignore the second half which emphasises that husbands have a duty to their wives. If a wife is to submit to her husband as the church submits to Christ, it only follows that a husband must be like Christ in terms of his relationship with her. He is required, at least in the Christian view, to be like Christ in a special way, distinct from the general call to imitate Him that all Christians share. He is to protect and care for his wife as Christ cares for the church. His duty is to her growth and flourishing. Her holiness is his priority. His own good is, in a sense, secondary. Lastly, he is expected to lay down his life for her, just as Christ laid his down human life for the sake of humanity.

One may respond here that this role only applies to the husband rather than masculinity as a whole, and in a sense, such an argument would be correct. Not all men are husbands, and not all men desire to become husbands. However, it has been argued thus far that masculinity lies in fatherhood and brotherhood. In both cases, men are expected to put the needs of others before their own, be it those

of their children or their brothers. Being a husband focuses this unselfishness toward a single point: the wife. Like all unselfishness, it requires conscious effort to counteract greed and selfishness[35]. This, in turn, requires the kind of self-discipline that does not come naturally. Like the virtues it requires a man to be trained in this discipline, meaning that preparation for this role must come before a man becomes a husband. Thus, this role too is to be considered a way of life, like virtue, and like happiness.

Another difficulty arises with this since not all men are Christian. Even if such men agree that Christ was the best moral teacher, the exhortation to imitate Him will not be felt as strongly by such a man as a Christian man might feel it. Thus, it may be necessary to propose a more 'neutral' masculine role model. However, proposing such a figure comes with its own difficulties, as most of the figures that could have served in this role are in some way tainted by scandal. Often, our leaders, heroes, and celebrities show themselves to lack virtue through their association with sexual immorality, dishonesty, and other injustices. Even if a man is perfectly virtuous in public, the discovery of some private vice severely harms or outright destroys the potential he may have had as a role model. The saying that one should 'never meet your heroes' highlights the discrepancy that may (and often does) exist between public and private life. Accordingly, a living role model may not be a good choice. Instead, of *finding* a masculine role model, therefore, we may need to *construct* one by means of a sort of 'true myth' upon which masculinity can be grafted. This mythical man may not be real in a literal sense, but he may nonetheless refer to true ideals to which men may aspire.

Mythic ideals

Hence, a myth that exemplifies the ideal masculinity should be constructed. Often ideals are exemplified in the stories we tell. It is in heroes[36] that masculine ideals, such as courage, discipline and resisting evil, are represented. In films, literature and other entertainment media, heroes are usually depicted as vigilantes, or individuals circumventing the law to ensure that wrongdoers face justice. Even when these heroes appear as agents working from within the bounds of the law, such as detectives, they are sometimes required to bend or even break laws to capture or otherwise defeat the antagonists against which they are depicted. Even in war films, where heroism is depicted in its most natural environment, soldiers disobey orders for the sake of drama.

[35] This is not to say that the desires that a man, or any human being, may have are in and of themselves bad. Rather, we must be careful that these desires are not satisfied in spite (or at the expense) of other goods that may be pursued.
[36] Heroines may participate in the depiction of masculine ideals. In doing so, masculine ideals are extended to humanity in general.

These depictions of heroism are often far removed from reality; our culture lacks a stage upon which true heroism can be displayed. Real vigilantes are rarely more than thugs pursuing those who are accused of crimes. Because a detective's work can only occur after a crime has been committed, their roles centre around the punishing of criminals rather than the saviour aspect that is associated with heroism. This is not to say that punishing the guilty cannot form part of heroism – rather, it is not limited to this aspect. Punishing the guilty is not the whole of heroism. In contrast, soldiers may represent more a proactive form of heroism. The purpose of an army is the defence of a country and its citizens. It is for this purpose that they are trained and rightly earn the moniker of 'hero'[37].

However, the events that require military intervention, and by extension heroism, are extraordinary. On their own, they and the heroes who participate in them cannot provide a robust model of masculinity. Nevertheless, heroes are not useless to us in our pursuit of this model for they do not simply appear from the aether when these extraordinary events occur. Rather, they are made. As implied by the ideal of discipline, heroism requires a forging process to prepare an individual for the transformation from an ordinary person into a hero. Reckless courage and luck may indeed result in acts of heroism by persons who have not prepared for it. As implied above, our culture is filled with stories of heroism. The set of ideals encapsulated in the idea of 'heroism' is an attractive one, but this ideal must be discussed with care. It is taken for granted that heroes are also gentle. In our depictions of heroes, it is presented as natural fact that those who are courageous in resisting evil also defend the innocent. This is a grave mistake, however, because courage and discipline do not necessarily imply gentleness. Experience has shown us that those who are considered heroes, whether through great courage or great deeds, may well be noisy and arrogant bullies – this is what C.S. Lewis (1986:14) called 'heroism *by nature*' (emphasis in original). Instead, heroism is an ideal to be pursued. Heroes of the kind that have been discussed here – heroes who are both dangerous to their enemies and gentle toward the innocent – must be the product of a deliberate process. They will not be produced naturally, because (as indicated in this and the previous chapter) aggression and gentleness are not natural allies.

Nonetheless, the assumption that heroes must combine these two elements persists. Possibly because these two elements do not naturally gravitate toward each other that they must be combined. Experience has shown that heroes often need lessons in humility and self-control. Conversely, the humble man needs lessons in courage and honour for he is as likely as not to be a coward. Thus, a role model is needed that can combine both these features. Fortunately, literature

[37] It should be acknowledged that not all military personnel live up to this moniker. Rather, it is the ideal towards which they ought to strive.

has provided us with examples of this ideal. Perhaps the greatest of the fictional knights from Sir Malory's telling of the Arthurian legends, Sir Lancelot, provides an appropriate example. Sir Ector described him as such:

'And thou was the meekest man and the gentlest that ever ate in hall among ladies. And thou were the sternest knight to thy mortal foe that ever put spear in the rest' (1920:508).

In him, the double demand which virtue makes on human nature is demonstrated. It is in the knight that the more formal pursuit of virtue is seen. This knightly ideal is commonly known as 'chivalry', and the chivalric ideal may serve as the ideal representation of what full and virtuous manhood could and should look like. Thus, it is worthwhile to look into the role model that chivalry may provide men.

Modern Knights

The chivalric ideal is, in a sense, a difficult one to convey into the modern age. The meanings of the term 'chivalry' have ranged from heavy cavalry to the polite treatment of women. In order to understand it as an ideal – that is as the conception of a man as he ought to be (which Lewis (1986:13) called the 'special contribution of the Middle Ages to our culture) – Sir Ector's description of Lancelot must be kept in mind. He was both the 'sternest' (or fiercest or most aggressive) knight toward his foes and the 'meekest' and 'gentlest' man towards his friends and allies. This presents an image of a man that is not bound to one or the other end of the masculine spectrum discussed above. Because he is *both* fierce and meek, acting in a way that a situation demands, the figure of Lancelot may provide us with a role model for masculinity, that is to say an *exemplar*. One may see it in the brotherhood of men that evokes images of knighthood just as one may see it in a father passing on manhood to his son as a knight passes the chivalric ideal down to his squire.

However, Lancelot cannot simply be extracted from the pages of Arthurian legend and placed in a modern context. The demand of 'meekness' seems, in a sense, obvious. Though unwritten, the rules of propriety and courtesy seem well enough understood by most members of society. The fierceness of the knight, on the other hand, is more difficult to translate. The literal weapons and equipment used by the knights are no longer relevant in the face of modern warfare: swords and shields are no match for the might of rifles and tanks. Similarly, individual martial skills are not as necessary as they may have been during the Middle Ages. Our societies have gotten safer, even as our wars have gotten bloodier. Nonetheless, the need to resist evil remains. It is for this purpose that the fierceness

of the knight is needed, even though it may not be a physical resistance (though the ever-present instability of politics may unexpectedly require us to bodily resist evil). Quiet commendations or gentle corrections are ways to counter evil in a world where martial might is not as relevant as it once was (Budziszewski, 2012:63). Thus, in chivalry there is the possibility of combining both the aggressive and gentle elements in men, but it must be kept in mind that this combination forms part of a human ideal. This means that it may never be fully attained and wherever it is partially attained, it will only be done through dedicated effort. Still, this does not mean that the ideal is not worth pursuing – to the contrary, the pursuit is in and of itself valuable regardless of its success.

Chivalric Advancement

One last element of chivalry that shall be explored here, namely its development. Kenneth Hodges identifies three key points at which the form of chivalry shifts within Malory's version of the Arthurian legends. Each one is associate with the legendary sword Excalibur and, later, the Lady of the Lake. The first is the well-known story of the sword in the stone. As the story goes, whoever pulls the sword from the stone would be crowned king. Arthur then pulls the sword from the stone, proving himself the heir to Uther Pendragon's legacy and the rightful king. Hodges (2002:79) describes this as a 'chivalry [that] is little more than an effective capacity for effective violence'. Such a capacity for violence may have been necessary at the establishment of a kingdom. In order for law and order to be established some violence is required; but once the establishment of law and order has been established, chivalry can no longer retain its violent focus. This change in the Arthurian form of chivalry occurs after Excalibur breaks during the battle with the knight Pellinore (Hodges, 2002:80). It represents the end of the might makes right form of chivalry. After this, Arthur receives a new Excalibur from the Lady of the Lake. He does not receive it in recognition of his strength, as was the case with the sword in the stone, but rather through an agreement with the Lady of the Lake. This represents a shift toward a 'new chivalry based on reciprocal loyalties, usually family ties and exchanges of gifts (blood-feud chivalry)' (Hodges, 2002:80). This form of chivalry presents a more fluid set of choices (represented by the water of the lake) that Arthur and his people may make about what may be valued.

Yet, this form of chivalry does not last either, as is shown through the failure of Arthur to uphold his agreement with the Lady of the Lake and the subsequent betrayal of Balin. During this time, Morgan le Fay steals Excalibur, signifying that this chivalry too has become unworkable (Hodges, 2002:81). Later, Excalibur is returned to Arthur's hand through the help of a new Lady of the Lake, Nyneve. With Excalibur restored to him, Arthur announces the new standards of chivalry associated with the famous Round Table (Hodges, 2002:81). This new standard supersedes might-makes-right

chivalry and replaces loyalty to *people* with loyalty to *ideals*, resulting in a new chivalry, distinct from that of the past.

Chivalric Romance

This chivalry is not universally esteemed, though. Mary Wollstonecraft specifically opposed the revival of the chivalric ideal due to the implication of the exhortation that men ought to protect women. The implication is that women *need* protection and to her it is based on the idea of female inferiority (Cohen, 2005:329). This objection is not completely without merit, because in the chivalric tradition, women may be seen as mere objects for masculine actualisation – they could be mere objects for knights to rescue from castles and dragons. However, an opposite view is possible, where women do not *need* protection as much as they *merit* it. They are worthy of the risk to life and limb that a man faces in the act of protecting women.

Furthermore, much like the demands of chivalry, the position occupied by women within the chivalric tradition is not static. It is true that in might-makes-right chivalry women were 'little more than battle prizes' (Hodges, 2002:82). Arthur's mother, Igrayne, is wed to King Uther Pendragon after he defeats her husband Gorlois. Similarly, her daughter Morgan le Fay is married off to Uryns. In both cases, the women are not given the liberty to object to the unions. However, with the shift to blood-feud chivalry the role of women changes as well. Igrayne is asked to tell her story, resulting in a shift of her role from mere prize to participant in royal politics. Similarly, the wills of both Lyonors and Morgause are acknowledged when they consent to sleep with Arthur, in contrast with Igrayne's silence about her opinion of Uther.

It is only with the inception of Round Table chivalry that women truly come to the fore. The table itself forms part of Guinevere's dowry, and this marks a substantial intrusion of women into what was previously a fairly masculine realm (Hodges, 2002:83). The knights ignore this intrusion at their own peril, suffering shame or worse in the process. Often, the knights are rebuked by the women (Hodges, 2002:82), indicating that they have some modicum of authority over the men of the realm. They may even act as chivalric agents if the need calls for it (Hodges, 2002:83). Nyneve, for example, has an active career as an agent within Malory's tales. During her first adventure, she defends herself from Merlin's advances by imprisoning him. Under the old system, she would have been condemned for attacking a friend of the king, but neither the narrator nor Arthur does so. According to Hodges (2002:84), this demonstrates important points of the new code: 'the new code: that the loyalty to ideals is real, so that even friends of the king are not exempt from justice; and that women, if they are strong enough, can act according to the new standards of chivalry'. After this

event, Nyneve assists King Arthur in retaining his kingship. In doing so, she stands opposed to the rebel-sorceress Morgan le Fay. The details of this opposition are beyond the scope of this thesis and it will suffice it to say that both women are agents in their own right.

Lastly, Nyneve is involved in a shifting of the literal relationship between men and women. Throughout Malory's tale, the conventions surrounding sexual and romantic relationships evolve. First, Uther's rape gives way to Arthur's affairs and marriage. It is only once Nyneve enters the scene that the desires of women are emphasised.

The tale in question centres around the relationship between the knight Pelleas and lady Ettarde. In the story, Pelleas is madly in love with Ettarde. However, she does not return his affections. To the contrary, she uses his drive to impress her purely for her own benefit. In an attempt to impress Ettarde, Pelleas offers her a prize won at a tournament, fights to prove that she is the fairest woman in the land, and obeys her every wish, except for one that orders him to never see her again.

While distraught by her rejection, Pelleas encounters Gawain. Upon hearing the story, Gawain conceives of a plan to win Ettarde's affections. He would pretend to have killed Pelleas and present himself to Ettarde. He would then be able to make her see what she has lost, at which time Pelleas could reappear. However, the plan does not go as proposed. Instead of convincing Ettarde of Pelleas's worth, Gawain seduces her for himself. Upon discovering this, Pelleas is unwilling to kill the pair, and instead, leaves his sword across their throats. At this point Malory diverges from his French sources, where when Gawain discovers the sword, realises his sin and attempts to set it right by asking Ettarde to marry Pelleas. Ettarde, for her part, agrees out of love for Gawain. Hodges (2002:89) calls this a victory of masculine desire, one in which a woman is expected to yield to the desire of a man who does great feats of arms.

However, Malory changes the ending of the tale drastically. In his version, Gawain never repents and Ettarde does not marry Pelleas. Instead, Pelleas prepares to die of his broken heart. At this point, Nyneve enters the story. Upon hearing of Pelleas's sorrows from a servant, she endeavours to provide a satisfying ending to the tale. She recognises that feminine refusal is not to blame for this state of affairs. Rather, it is misplaced masculine desire. Thus, she enchants Pelleas into a deep sleep and when he wakes, he loves Ettarde no longer. Afterwards, she courts him herself, and the pair is married. As for Ettarde, Nyneve causes her to fall fruitlessly in love with Pelleas as a punishment for her treatment of the knight (Hodges, 2002:89 - 90). Significantly, it is not her lack of affection for Pelleas that is punished but her treatment of him. She may not have had control over

her feelings for the knight but her treatment of him was completely under her control, and this merited some punishment.

It is false to say that the chivalric tradition necessarily harms or acts to the detriment of women. As it developed, it has expanded the roles of women in society. By the end of Malory's tale, the roles of women have been expanded beyond their initial status as objects. By the time the final form of the chivalric tradition arises, women have potential as chivalric agents. Through the exhortation to protect them, women are prioritised and given a place of privilege. Their needs are placed above those charged to protect them. They even have some authority over the men, as evidenced by the ability to rebuke and correct those knights who fail in their duties. The chivalric tradition therefore does not necessarily diminish or make women into inferior agents. They merely perform different roles within the tradition.

Chivalry for All

Another objection that may be levelled against the use of chivalry is that of Eurocentrism. Because chivalry is a tradition that originated in Medieval Europe, there may be objections to it being exported from that time and place. However, the location of its origin does not invalidate any idea: in logic, this is called the 'genetic fallacy'. Even if the code of chivalry was temporally and geographically locked to Medieval Europe, it would not follow that it was to be rejected for this reason alone. Indeed, several authors, such as Richard Hurd, Bishop Thomas Percy, Charles Mills, and Kenelm Digby, have noted similarities between the classical heroes and Medieval knights (Lupack, A. & Lupack, B.T., 2016:5-7). Digby (as cited by Lupack, A. & Lupack, B.T., 2016:8) argues that to say that chivalry is dead – that that is to say that chivalry is limited to the Medieval Ages – is like saying that 'men can no longer be generous, faithful, indifferent to self-interest, and 'full of high honour''. Digby also argues that it is 'coeval with human society, and that it must continue to exist with it until the end of time' (Lupack, A. & Lupack, B.T., 2016:8). The tradition should therefore not be rejected simply on the basis of its age or location of origin.

Parallels have also been drawn between knights and the Japanese samurai. Both are considered members of warrior classes, subject to the whim of those under whom they serve (Al-Saleh, 2012:35). Yet, this parallel may not be as direct as it first may seem. The notion of a unified code that can be seen as an Eastern equivalent to that of chivalry, is a fairly modern one. According to G. Cameron Hurst III (1990: 511-513), the notion of a samurai code stems from the works of Nitobe Inazō, specifically his 1899 book *Bushido*. In reality, the idea that 'there was a normative system of

ethical thought, a “code” of behavior that was first universal among the samurai and then in fact became the “soul” of all Japanese citizens, and that this body of ethical thought was called bushido, whose tenets could be recited as readily as the Ten Commandments, or the Boy Scout Motto, is simply inaccurate’ (Hurst III, 1990:513). This is not to say that code of ethical behaviour existed. Various house laws and codes existed that espoused moral values among samurai. Once literacy spread among samurai, books addressing morality circulated among them. Most were written from a Neo-Confucian perspective, although some heterodox schools existed (Hurst III, 1990:513). While the notion of a samurai as some kind of ‘Eastern knight’ is not an accurate one, it still lends some credence to the idea that some kind of warrior class did exist beyond the bounds of the European continent.

Chivalric Virtue

Thus far, a case has been made for why chivalry may serve as a model for masculinity. Its attempt to combine the combative and gentle sides of men make it a perfect candidate for the task. In doing so, it may serve as the solution for the problem of ‘toxic masculinity’. Chivalry provides an opportunity to construct masculinity that creates rounded and complete men, rather than men who are characterised by rage and aggression. Furthermore, this function of creating complete men allows it to perform an additional function as a model for virtue. As discussed above, knights are expected to pursue and embody the virtues, despite the failure of both Malory’s fictional knights and their historical equivalents. This is not unexpected either, because it is within the nature of an ideal that it is rarely, if ever, fully attained. Even if an ideal is attained in part it, is only attained through arduous effort. The relationship between virtue and the chivalric tradition is thus obvious, but the details of this relationship are not quite clear at this stage. The details will be explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 6

Virtue Ethics as Playfield of a Viable Male Identity

‘Stand true to your calling to be a man.’

Elisabeth Elliott

While discussing the reconstruction of male identity, the chivalric tradition was proposed as a robust template for a potential masculine identity. This tradition attempts to restrain wayward passions and redirect them toward the Good. In doing so, it attempts to counter both extremes of warped masculinity, namely unrestrained aggression, commonly referred to as toxic masculinity, and the deficiency in aggression and drive. However, this potential template does nothing on its own. The tradition is not by itself sufficient for the recovery of a more solid male identity. Its mere existence does not endow it with the power to change society. It requires an additional driving force, something that gives it the authority it requires to direct and shape the lives of men. There are two important factors to consider here. The most obvious is perhaps its spread in society and culture. To be effective, an idea cannot simply be locked in the minds and hearts of those who have thought it up. It must be spread to other minds and other hearts. There are several methods of doing so, which will be discussed below. However, there is a more important factor to discuss first: the *grounding* of the chivalric tradition, what it is that makes it a viable model for masculinity. Its stated goals of directing and correcting male drives may make it a candidate for masculine identity, yet one may ask what informs these goals, and how it supports these goals What is it about the chivalric tradition that makes it not only a candidate for male identity but as a role model for virtuous living, as explicitly stated in the previous chapter? Finally, there is also the question of whether the chivalric tradition can still be relevant in our modern age. Budziszewski may have rightly pointed out that there is a similarity between the general relationship between men and a brotherhood of knights; yet the question remains as to whether the chivalric model ought to be resurrected. Even if it can be resurrected, it is unclear what form it ought to take. Chivalry may be a viable model of masculinity but taking a model of life from its age of origin and translating it into an era that has lost many of the convictions that underpinned it, is a problematic issue.

Moral Sentiment

During the events of the French Revolution, Edmund Burke lamented that the 'age of chivalry' was over (as cited by Dowling, 1982:109). At the time, some of his contemporaries felt that this was empty rhetoric. Thomas Pain specifically derided his lament for the chivalric tradition as 'nonsense' meant for a 'Quixotic age' (as cited by Dowling, 1982:110). The implication is clear: Burke is stuck in the past and should be left there. William C. Dowling (1982:116), one of his modern defenders, argues that if the French revolution had not developed into the disaster that was the Reign of Terror, he would have been remembered as little more than a shrill reactionary. However, the Reign of Terror did occur, and Burke was vindicated. Yet the question remains as to what he meant when he lamented that the age of chivalry was over. Dowling (1982:121, 122) argues that he is appealing to an intrinsic moral sense, something that is felt rather than thought. This is not to say that Burke advocated for an ethic of feelings over reason. Rather, he was advocating for an intermingling of the two, reason supplemented by feelings. In a vein of thought similar to Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue* project, he was lamenting the loss of a dimension of the ethical vocabulary, a loss which leaves us poorer for it. Dowling (1982:122) cites Hume's is-ought distinction[38] as a contributing factor to Burke's thought. The difficulty caused by Hume's thought is that no matter how many valid reasons may be given why an act may be sinful or morally impermissible, it does not explain why we should feel revulsion at thought of sinful acts, such as murder or rape or whatever other immoral act one might think of. In this view, the ethicist has little to say to someone who simply does not care, be it because he is simply unable to care or because the feeling has been suppressed by education or experience. The value or validity of this experience must be taken for granted. The naturalist[39] may be able to give various explanations for the origins of moral inclinations, which usually are the result of some evolutionary process (Budziezewski, 2011:80), but that does not explain its the validity. Attempts have been made, usually by falling back to utilitarianism (Budziezewski, 2011:87). In contrast, the teleological thinker, taking the validity of the moral feeling for granted, may see the lack of moral feeling as a deficiency, in much the same way as blindness may be viewed as a deficiency of sight[40].

[38]What is ignored, here is the fact that the distinction, otherwise referred to as a 'fallacy', is invalid. If an ought could not be derived from an ought, fields such as medicine would not be intelligible (Budziszewski, 2011:13). If one has poor eyesight, it seems perfectly valid that one ought to get glasses. If a tooth is aching, one ought to see a dentist. Nor does it help when one limits the distinction to the ethical field. The Utilitarians are perfectly satisfied in declaring that because an act is harmful in some way, it ought to be avoided as far as possible. Similarly, Deontologists and Natural Law Ethicists must make observations about what is to articulate and develop their ethical systems.

[39] It is only under naturalism that the distinction may flourish. Its lack of a law giver, or source of morality, hamstrings its attempt to ground any form of ethics.

[40] This is not to say that naturalists cannot recognise the deficiency. Rather, they are unable to account for its authority in the absence of a moral lawgiver.

One may ask why this feeling is necessary. If the authority of the moral law is taken for granted, it may be to deduce and determine its content simply through reason? It is possible to reason from the consequences of actions to some moral principles, thinkers such as Thomas Hobbes and John Locke did so when they developed their political philosophies (Budziezewski, 1997:111). The question remains, however, as to whether the principles developed in this way can hold the same validity as the old moral laws did. If the consequences were different, the principles might change. Moreover, the focus on the *consequences* of actions could risk the acceptance of the maxim that the ends (consequences) justify the means. Instead, the moral feeling acts as a guide for reason, pointing it in the right direction. In truth, moral feelings are more like intuition rather than simply emotion. Perhaps this moral intuition is better understood as *conscience*, an inbuilt sense of right and wrong. A moral feeling acts more like an instruction or command than a desire to do or not do something. It should be treated as data from which reasoning is to take place, supplementing the arguments given for or against proposed actions. This is not to say that moral intuitions are infallible: as mentioned above, the moral intuition may be suppressed or warped. However, this is no reason to reject it. The fact that the intuition can be considered suppressed or warped is an indication that there is a correct form of it.

The question remains as to why Burke would tie the moral imagination to the concept of chivalry. It would be more accurate to say that it is impossible to separate chivalry from its moral and ethical elements. Cristine de Pizan (as cited by Lupack, A. & Lupack, B.T., 2016:4), a writer in the French court, wrote that ‘we may call human life virtuous chivalry’. She outlined a system of instruction for young men, including the virtues that a young man ought to learn as well as the vices he should avoid. To her, this was monumentally important because she observed that a man ‘may not overcome the evils on the outside who will not battle strongly the sins of the soul; and it is the most glorious victory which may exist when he overcomes his own soul’. This echoes much of what has been discussed within this thesis: virtues that have been internalised in the form of good habits put a man in a position to overcome the trials and tribulations that life throws at him.

A similar sentiment is shown in the French text translated as *The Order of Knighthood*. Inspired by Hue of Tabarie’s account of his capture by Saladin, the text describes the moral qualities of the knight as depicted in the knighting ceremony (Lupack, A. & Lupack, B.T., 2016:4). Outside France, the Spaniard Ramon Lull wrote several books on chivalry, including *Blanquerna* and *Book of the Order of Chivalry* (*Llibre de l’Orde de Cavalleria*) (Disalvo, 1988:198). These texts would go on to inspire other knightly tales such as Joanot Martorell’s *Tirant lo Blanch* and through him Cervantes’s *Don Quixote* (Disalvo, 1988:198). It is with this background that Sir Mallory wrote his

famous *Morte d'Arthur*, which was discussed in the previous chapter. However, the notion of chivalry as a moral ideal was not universally accepted. Roger Ascham (as cited by Lupack, A. & Lupack, B.T., 2016:3) was more critical of chivalric literature. The *Morte* especially drew his ire. He described it as 'the whole pleasure of which booke standeth in two speciall poyntes, in open mans slaughter, and bold bawdrye: In which book those be counted the noblest Knightes, that do kill most men without any quarrell, and commit fowlest adoulteries by sutlest shiftes'. To him, the text represented the exact opposite of the chivalric ideal; it is not a display of ideal and virtuous knighthood but one of violence and vice. Even in literature, then, chivalry carried the remnants of its warrior past where might and physical strength determined an individual's position in life.

Nevertheless, the chivalric ideal developed to include an unwavering sense of virtue. In the mid-18th century Richard Hurd (as cited by Lupack, A. & Lupack, B.T., 2016:5) believed that virtue was universal among the Medieval knights. This idea was shared by other early modern authors such as Bishop Thomas Percy, Jean-Baptiste de La Curne de Sainte-Palaye, Charles Mill and, most influentially, Kenelm Digby (Lupack, A. & Lupack, B.T., 2016:6-7). Accordingly, there is a well-established precedent of chivalrous morality by the time of Burke's famous statement. Dowling (1982:114) believed that Burke was referring to 'the possibility that romance as the literature of chivalry is mimetic not by virtue of imitating the externals of some historical situation but by imitating a *moral attitude* which, however moribund at present, may be brought to life in any age of human history' (emphasis original). There is something about the chivalric ideal that transcends history and culture. The moral attitude embedded in the tradition exists independently of the external trappings of the age with which it is being associated. It was not the arms or armour that made the knight, but the attitude of his heart and soul.

However, it was this very attitude that was of concern. Mary Wollstonecraft considered the chivalric attitude as degrading to women (Cohen, 2005:329). In a similar vein, Lucy Aiken viewed the gallantry expected from chivalric men as 'a parasite and treacherous corrupter of the sex' (Cohen, 2005:329). Gary Dyer (1997:389) suggests an appeal to strength lies at the heart of any 'chivalric' code, which means that the values associated with chivalry devolve into barbarism themselves.

Starting with Dyer's objection to appeals to strength, he does not show a necessary connection between strength and barbarism. Strength may indeed be used and abused by those who wish to cause harm or otherwise work toward their own benefit at the expense of others. Yet, this does not show that the use of strength is in and of itself illegitimate. Strength is simply a tool and a means to

an end. The use of hammers to murder does not disqualify the work of carpenters. Similarly, the use of power and physical strength does not necessarily imply barbarism. To the barbarian, strength is the only standard to consider. 'I am stronger than you,' he says, 'and therefore, I may do as I wish.' All things must be made subordinate to the barbarian's strength. It is for this reason that the barbarian cannot be negotiated with. He accepts only authority that is supported by physical strength[41]. In contrast, the chivalric tradition demands that strength be restrained. Strength is made subordinate to the virtue that lies at the heart of the tradition. It is what is expressed by the writings of de Pizan, Lull, Bishop Percy, and Hurd, and it is shown in the development of Mallory's *Morte* as the Arthurian world shakes off its barbaric history to show knighthood in its full and proper glory. Even Ascham's criticism of the *Morte* carries this idea. He believes that the characters in the Arthurian legend do not act as the knights that they claim to be. In his mind, they abuse their strength, and they act as barbarians do. Therefore, there is a sharp distinction between the knight and the barbarian. The knight controls and directs his strength, while a barbarian is controlled by it[42].

Again, it must be noted that this idea of restraint and self-control is not unique to Medieval Christianity. H.C. Baldry (1968:193) wrote that by the sixth century BC the idea of *sophrosyne*, which Baldry described as an 'all-embracing order and the morality of restraint and limitation which the polis demanded', became the characteristic element of the Athenian citizen. It was a limitation born out of necessity, for it was 'only by taming hero [that the] community [could] grow' (JFH Finely as cited by Baldry, 1968:193). There is a parallel to the role of knighthood in the development of *sophrosyne*. In both cases, the violent men who acted in the defence of others, or who performed acts of great significance, needed to be restrained in times of peace. Perhaps the Greeks felt its needs far more sharply than Medieval Christendom. Theirs was an age of heroes and it is from them that we get the stories of the most famous heroes, like Achilles and Odysseus, Jason and the Argonauts, and Hercules, son of Zeus. Thus, it is likely that they understood its need better than modern audiences do.

Fortunately, this wisdom of the Greeks was not lost to the ravages of time. Instead, it developed over time and was embedded into the Greek culture and those that were influenced by it. First, it was praised by the conservatives and oligarchs of the fifth century, then it became the defining quality of the law-abiding democrat before finding its place in the canon of virtue during the fourth

[41] The question remains as to how Dyer expects to deal with a barbarian without any sort of appeal to strength. If all appeals to strength are illegitimate, how are we to deal with a man who refuses to respond to any other standard?
[42] It is difficult to say how often true barbarism in the way that has been described has ever occurred. Perhaps the rational nature of humanity has precluded a full commitment to barbarism at any point in time. Yet even the temporary suppression of reason in favour of physical strength necessitates the distinction being made here.

century. Plato gave it a central place in his ethics, through which it was carried over to the work of Aristotle and the Stoics. A similar notion ran through Roman thought, with Cicero linking *sophrosyne* with *humanitas* (Baldry, 1968:193). Hellen North (as cited by Baldry, 1968:193) describes the development of *sophrosyne* as a Christian virtue and in the first century AD, St Paul and the church fathers considered it a virtue that set them apart from their non-Christian neighbours. In the third century, Clement of Alexandria and Origen of Alexandria started integrating Plato's work into Christian thought. By the fourth century, this process was completed by the Cappadocians and culminated in the work of Augustine, who ensured that the cardinal virtues would be preserved in Christian thought.

This idea of restraint is not limited to the Greeks. In the Modern era, Robert Bly (1996:3) describes the loss of what Jules Henry called 'the Indo-European, Islamic, Hebraic impulse control system'. He described it as a certain kind of asceticism, one which praised hard work, the postponement of pleasure and 'no fooling around' (Bly, 1996:5). Like the Greek idea of *sophrosyne*, this impulse control system demands restraint and self-control. If the name given by Henry is accurate, however, this idea found its origin not in Athens, but in Israel. Two similar lines of thought developed in two distinct locations. It seems that Cicero's description of restraint as a *humanitas* is more appropriate than he realised. *Sophrosyne* possibly found such a comfortable home in Christian thought because it inherited the Hebraic impulse control system from its Jewish predecessor, resulting in a comfortable union between these two ideas of restraint.

Dowling (1982:112) takes this notion of restraint even further by arguing that the assumption that lay at the heart of the chivalric tradition that Burke described, is that the knight voluntarily submits to weakness, and that the symbol of this submission is the service of a knight to his lady. This not only contradicts Dyer's theory that strength lies at the core of chivalry, but it also creates difficulty for those who follow Wollstonecraft. If chivalry is degrading to women, it would be contradictory that the most significant example of chivalric values is the voluntary submission to women. It seems that the opposite is at work here: women are being raised to a position of privilege. Their needs are considered primary for those men who would consider themselves knights. This idea was so important that Hume (as cited by Dowling, 1982:112) concluded that '[a] mistress is as necessary to a Cavalier or Knight-Errant as a God or Saint to a Devotee'. Thus, chivalry places women on pedestals, treating them as objects of worship rather than fellow humans. This is possibly better than they deserve, because woman can live up to the idealisation of her entire sex. Regardless, the accusation that the chivalric ideal degrades women seems misplaced. The idea that the devotion and protection offered by the knight to his lady implies a deficiency or inferiority in women has been

discussed in the previous chapter. For the purpose of this thesis, it is sufficient to say that the chivalric ideal believes that women are worthy of that devotion.

However, there is more to this sentiment. Wollstonecraft (as cited by Cohen, 2005:329) wrote that the honour that chivalry offers to a woman 'vitiates them, prevents their endeavouring to obtain solid personal merit; in short, makes those beings vain inconsiderate dolls who ought to be prudent mothers and useful members of society'. Her concerns are not without merit. The knight's devotion to women may turn her into a vain and inconsiderate individual. It is for this reason that a man ought to be wise when choosing a woman to devote himself to. She too must pursue the virtuous life and its feminine manifestations[43]. Wollstonecraft is not simply referring to the potential that women may abuse the devotion offered to them. Rather, she is objecting to a broader limitation placed upon women. She believes that the chivalric attitude will unfairly restrict women to the traditional positions of wife and mother. There is no reason to suppose that the 'vain, inconsiderate dolls' into which women are turned by chivalry, would be either 'prudent mothers' or 'useful members of society'. Even if this was the case, there is no reason to believe that these dolls would be either 'prudent' or 'useful'. To perform the roles that Wollstonecraft thinks chivalry forces upon women, they must abandon their own vanity and selfishness. Vain mothers and inconsiderate members of society are harmful to human relationships in general. Chivalry would be doing a poor job if it induced vanity and selfishness in the subjects it claimed to serve. That would be counterproductive for the roles that it allegedly forced upon women. Fortunately, this limitation does not flow from any demands of chivalry as such. As was shown in the discussion of the character Nyneve in Malory's *Morte*, there is the possibility for women as chivalric agents. She possibly associates the chivalric sentiments with the rigid division of gender roles described by Tosh; but our liberal society has changed since those times. Women are afforded more freedom in determining the path that their lives should take. There is nothing within the chivalric ideal that prohibits this freedom as such. Though chivalry must indeed adapt to the different cultures in which it is inserted, the principles and the virtues that lie at its core transcends culture. Thus, the changes in British culture to which Wollstonecraft objects, are not inherently derived from chivalry. The accusation that the ideal degrades women or corrupts men, is misplaced.

There seems to be good reason, therefore, to believe that there is an integral connection between chivalry and virtue. Still, there remains the question about how chivalry became intertwined with

[43] A full discussion of femininity is beyond the scope of this thesis. Suffice it to say that the feminine may follow the same line of reasoning that was used to determine masculinity. Perhaps Budziszewski would again be useful here. He writes that what distinguishes women from men is their 'potentiality for motherhood' (Budziezewski, 2012:54). He means this in both the literal sense, that is the birthing and raising of children, and the spiritual sense of feminine mentorship.

the virtuous ideal. While certain warrior classes (such as the samurai) were tied to codes of honour, this code of honour did not become idealised and universalised beyond the night. Although some pre-chivalric notions of honour and virtue existed among the Greek heroes and the samurai of the East, it was never raised to the position of ideal. The knight, however, was associated with certain features elevated him to that lofty position.

Christian Knights

In chivalric literature, a significant element of the Medieval understanding of the knight – his dedication to Christianity – has been omitted, as is evident in the work of Lull and Malory and the tale inspired by Hugh of Tabarie and the letters written by Christine de Pizan. Lull associates the life of the knight closely with that of the Christian, and Antonio Disalvo (1988:198) points out that the transformation of knighthood into a '*milus Christianus*' can be traced back to his work. Even in the late Medieval period, the knight still carried with the violent past that necessitated the creation of warrior classes (Disalvo, 1988:199). Through his works, and those that followed, the knight was transformed from a simple warrior 'into not only a defender of the Christian virtues, but into one who could be placed in the service of the defenceless, the needy, and the downtrodden' (Disalvo, 1988:199). However, this process was not limited to the Spanish reformer. In Malory's work (1920:508) Lancelot is described as the 'head of all Christian knights'. Alan and Barbara Lupack (2016:4) observe that the knightly virtues that Christine de Pizan outlines, are not only appropriate for the young man pursuing knighthood but is worthy of pursuit by all Christians. In the tale inspired by Hugh of Tabarie, the knight says that the knighting ceremony also suggests that he 'should love God and always be willing to serve him' (Lupack, A. & Lupack, B.T., 2016:5). More recently, Digby maintained that while chivalry is 'coeval with human society', it was under Christianity that it was 'infinitely ennobled, and even [assumed] many general features wholly new'. Under Christianity. a warrior ethos was elevated into something wholly new. The absence of the Christian religion could possibly have prevented the elevation of the loose warrior codes of the East, such as the samurai, into a universal ideal.

Clearly, then, some element of the Christian faith made this elevation possible. Within Christianity, there is a universalising element, in that distinctions based on class, race, sex, and heritage fall away. All are one in Christ. There is no longer a 'chosen people' like the Jews or special people who, by virtue of their birth or wealth, hold power over people like the Greek or Roman aristocrats[44]. Instead, salvation is made available to all. It was offered universally because 'God so

[44] While this was not always put into practice, this was the message sent by Paul's words in Galatians 3:28: 'There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ' (Bible, 1983).

loved the world' (John 3:16, Bible, 1983). This contains a paradox, however because salvation is universally *offered* and not universally *given*. To accept salvation, something else must be given up, namely the sinful life that separates the individual from God. In the words of Christ, the convert must 'go and sin no more' (John 8:11, Bible, 1983). A complete shift must be made in the life of the believer[45]. If a person is unwilling to make this shift, it may be taken as a sign that he has not accepted the salvation that is offered. This is not to say that the inability to fully leave one's sinful past behind indicates an absence of salvation. Rather, the attempt to leave one's sins behind is worthy in and of itself. In this, there is a similarity with the pursuit of virtue. The connection between Christianity and virtue goes further than this. As seen in the discussion of Aquinas, the Christian life is supposed to be synonymous with a life of virtue. It is the best a human can achieve outside of the relationship with God.

This could be the bridge between chivalry and Christianity, as both emphasise a life of virtue and in both cases, it is the pursuit of this life that is considered worthy, because the attainment of perfect virtue is considered unlikely, if not an outright impossibility. With these considerations in mind, it should not seem too much of a leap in logic to think that Christianity's universalization would inform the chivalric tradition's development over time. It too seems universally applicable. As discussed above, both Medieval and modern thinkers thought it appropriate to instruct boys and as well as girls in this tradition[46]. Accordingly, chivalry is no longer confined to a warrior class. Anyone may pursue knighthood; like salvation, it is available for all, but only given to those who are willing to pursue it.

In an even bigger paradox, the pursuit of virtue that lies at the core of chivalry (as opposed to the Christian demand to love and obey God), demands excellence. In a sense, excellence is reserved for the exceptional, and the extraordinary. Those who achieve it in any noteworthy manner will be few and far between. Dyer (1997:389), accordingly, argues that a knight's attributes must 'be significant and consequential'. This is necessary. He could not be used as an example otherwise. If extraordinary trouble can be overcome by extraordinary effort, then, why is it not possible for ordinary troubles to be overcome by ordinary effort[47]? The example of the knight overcoming his foes, whether physical or spiritual, shows the possibility of overcoming difficulties that at first seemed impossible. It shows that excellence is within reach, even if it is not the kind that songs are

[45] It must be noted that there is a rather serious debate within the Christian faith regarding the intersection between faith and good works. Does one do good works to earn salvation or does one do good works because salvation has already been given? Regardless, in all cases, there is agreement that the refusal to give up one's sins is seen as unacceptable.
[46] It may be that the tradition comes more naturally to boys, for the reasons discussed in the previous chapter.
[47] One cannot forget that troubles that seem ordinary to an outside observer may be experienced by the individual subject to them as impossible to overcome. This is especially the case of addictions and persistent vices.

sung about or stories are told. Yet, it may be the best an individual can achieve. Through striving to improve oneself, one may not be able to reach the levels of greatness of one's heroes but the personal excellence that is achieved is worthy in and of itself. It is certainly better than personal mediocrity. In this way, the excellence demanded by chivalry is available to all but will only be achieved, whether on a purely personal level or on a public scale, by those who are willing to pursue it.

There appears to be three interconnected ideas here then: virtue, chivalry and the Christian faith. They share the common features that their pursuit is open to all but their goal will only be reached, partially or otherwise, by those who sincerely pursue it. Furthermore, these concepts have had a mutual influence on each other. Through Aquinas, Christianity has influenced the way in which virtue is viewed. Similarly, the idea of virtue has influenced how correct Christian behaviour is viewed. In time, the fusion of these concepts resulted in the chivalric tradition.

One lingering question remains: does the Christian influence invalidate the pursuit of the chivalric tradition by those who are not Christian? This does not seem to be the case. Like ethics, the pursuit of chivalry does not, strictly speaking, require belief in Christianity. However, without it, one may find oneself unable to reach chivalry's full depth. Especially in the case of the Atheist, chivalry will, like ethics, seem somewhat arbitrary and simply another man-made system. There would be no real reason for one to pursue it. Whatever appeals one may make to nature or consensus, will be hobbled by the lack of a source of authority. Nature and consensus become a quirk of evolution or human artifice. They may be useful but carry no real authority beyond that. However, they can never quite shake the *feeling* that they carry some kind of authority, even if the atheist considers it merely illusory. Conscience can never quite be denied. It is for this reason that a non-Christian's may comfortably pursue virtue and chivalry.

Chivalry and virtue do not come naturally, though. Even conscience only *points* us in the right direction. It is for this reason that some instruction in right and wrong is necessary even at a young age. As was mentioned above, men must be trained in virtue, so that they are not forced to rely on their imperfect and incomplete inclinations. Below, it will be discussed how this instruction is to take place.

Passing of the Torch

This discussion of moral instruction will start by discussing the idea of tradition. In it is carried the wisdom of the past, which is the result of generations of experience. Dowling (1982:123) describes this as follows:

> ‘To see this world in Burke's terms, by the same token, is to grasp the meaning of history in a special way, to recognize not only (as D.N. Archibald finely says) 'the lunacy of a world without order, custom, and tradition', but to see that such things as custom and tradition 'are not theories but facts - and they are facts of a rather special kind: received, felt, understood; not observed, thought-up, analyzed’.

Tradition might then be seen as facts and information that are passed along as a knight passes knighthood to his squire or as a father passes down manhood to his son. This method of instruction has been discussed in the previous chapter. It is through imitation that any ethical system is first introduced, and traditions work similarly. At first, a child imitates his parents. It is in the explaining and correction of this imitation that the child’s formal education in tradition and ethics begins. It is through interaction with his wider community and the formal education system that the child learns the values and principles that he is expected to live by. However, these values and principles are rarely, if ever, articulated in a formal code of ethics. Instead, it is shrouded in metaphor and a certain kind of mysticism, its principles assumed and implied. It is actualised through the shared habits that come with communal life. Bly (1996:46) writes that ‘[human] beings often struggle to preserve a given cultural group through the stories it holds in common, its remembered history or fragments of it, and certain agreed-on values and courtesies. A gathering of novels, plays, poems, and songs – these days wrongly called "the canon," more properly "the common stories" – held middle-aged people, elders, and the very young together’. It is in the stories that are told by a culture that the values and principles are expressed and taught.

Organisations have been formed with the deliberate goal to preserve and pass along the stories within a given culture, such as the Scouts or *Voortrekkers*. These organisations were formed to teach the values and skills that the founders deemed valuable. This is distinct from the methods described above because of its deliberateness. Previously, values were taught incidentally; the

stories were told, and some skills were passed on from parent to child but there was no organised effort to pass traditions and values on to the next generation. Schools and parents are rarely, if ever, primarily concerned with teaching traditions. Instead, they are concerned with, respectively, passing on knowledge and teaching the child to live in the society in which he finds himself. While the traditions and values might undergird these two purposes, their formal articulation is not necessary. Instead, they are learned through implication, through the actions that are praised and those that are condemned. In contrast, cultural organisations are formed with the intention to teach the cultural and traditional practices that undergird a community. They deliberately tell the stories that inform actions that are expected in a community. Parents are likely to contribute to this project. In theory, they play an active role in laying the foundation for any cultural teaching that is attempted by these organisations. However, the parents and family form an isolated unit, while these organisations are communal. Consequently, the scale and reach of their project is wider than that of a single family. Whatever the extent of a family's involvement with these organisations, it requires the family to step out of the private sphere and into the public one. The family must accept a new authority that supersedes that of the family head. A deeper discussion of this topic is beyond the scope of this thesis. For the purpose of this study, it is sufficient to note that there are organisations that dedicate themselves to the preservation of a culture's values and beliefs.

Various attempts have been made to preserve and promote the chivalric tradition. For example, an organisation, the Knights of King Arthur[48], was founded in 1893 by minister William Byron Forbush (Lupack, A. & Lupack, B.T., 2016:15). He founded this organisation due to a concern about what he called 'the boy problem', or juvenile delinquency. He hoped to use the male instinct for forming gangs as a means of doing good deeds and developing character. Through various guides he wrote for organisers of the club, Forbush developed guidelines and suggestions for the working of the organisation, including, but not limited to, ranks, rituals of induction, and recommended reading lists. In keeping with the chivalric theme, each club was a 'Castle' led by a 'King Arthur', a boy elected by the other members, who was advised by an adult 'Merlin'. The rest of the boys, they were given ranks within the club (page, squire, and knight) along with requirements for progression, rituals for induction into their new ranks, and badges representing the rank that the boy held. As for the recommended reading, Forbush and co-author Frank Masseck included various retellings of the Arthurian tales, poems such as Tennyson's *Idylls* and ballads from Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (Lupack, A. & Lupack, B.T., 2016:18). The

[48] A sister group for young girls was formed by Forbrush in 1902 called the Queens of Avelorn, in recognition that girls face a similar danger as boys (Lupack, A. & Lupack, B.T., 2016:16).

Merlin in charge of a castle was instructed to make a library of books and stories about King Arthur and other heroic stories. Additionally, the boys were encouraged to view appropriate images, such as Edwin Austin Abbey's Holy Grail murals in the Boston public library. In doing so, Forbush not only encouraged the boys to seek the Good, for his work was the final state of the notion that chivalry is a matter of morals and character rather than social class (Lupack, A. & Lupack, B.T., 2016:16), but also the beautiful.

Ultimately, Forbush's work bore fruit. The Knights of King Arthur spread throughout the United States and beyond, having chapters in Canada, Mexico, England, Jamaica and New Zealand. Although the organisation no longer exists, it did function until the Second World War, and in some places it lasted some decades past that. It lasted for over 50 years, with a legacy that lasts even longer.

Within the Knights itself, surviving artifacts include photographs, costumes, initiation regalia and even a handcrafted round table which was painted in imitation of the legendary Round Table in Winchester (Lupack, A. & Lupack, B.T., 2016:17). What is of more interest, however, is the generational involvement in the organisation. Some of the boys in the organisation were preceded by their fathers or even grandfathers, with boys incorporating the heraldry of their predecessors in the shields that they made as part of the Knights. This shows the generational impact that an organisation like the Knights can have, and also how a generation may receive the cultural inheritance due to such an organisation through a passing of the cultural torch from father to son that is represented in both ritual and objects made.

However, the influence of Forbush's Knights is not limited to the artifacts left behind. Despite being virtually forgotten, the legacy of Forbrush's work still remains. It influenced the creation of several similar programmes, including Minister Perry E. Powel's Knights of the Holy Grail, the National Child Welfare Association's Knighthood of Youth program, which focused on children aged seven to twelve, and perhaps most importantly, the Boy Scouts. According to A. and B. Lupack (2016:17), Sir Robert Baden-Powell borrowed the Chivalric element from Forbrush and combined it with the outdoor element of another American group, the Woodcraft Indians. Just like Forbrush's guidelines, early Scout manuals recommended that boys read stories of knightly achievement. Baden-Powell explicitly states that Scout Law is derived from the old knightly codes.

Most importantly, he expresses the notion that knighthood is not a matter of class or wealth, but rather it is afforded to ‘anyone who carries out the rules of chivalry of the knights’ (as cited by Lupack, A. & Lupack, B.T., 2016:18).

Thus, it is evident that there is a long history of attempts to spread the chivalric ideal, and there are several things that we to can learn from it. Firstly, it is clear that the family is essential for the spreading of chivalry and virtue. As valuable as organisations such as the Scouts or The Knights of King Arthur are, without the families to start a boy’s instruction in virtue, that boy may never develop the habits that inform chivalry. As indicated above, the boy’s first experience of virtue and masculinity will be that of his father. Without the father, his view of these things may be warped in a myriad of ways. Fortunately, these organisations may help correct these views, as they provide an opportunity for spiritual fatherhood and mentorship. This mentorship gives boys a chance to learn directly from older and more experienced men. This goes beyond the simple imitation of his father that a boy may attempt without this instruction. They are meant to shape and form the boy, giving him the tools that he needs to live as a man. It also gives boys the opportunity to form ties with other boys and men who will help them in their pursuit of virtue. These ties will give him the support needed to pursue virtue. They will celebrate his victories with him and give him comfort in defeat. A man does not pursue virtue in isolation, but he does so in tandem with his fellow men, those he follows, those who follow him, and those with whom he walks abreast.

This ties with elements of Christianity that were discussed above. Christianity too expects to create a system of support for believers in their pursuit of Christ. Similarly, the pursuit of virtue is shared between these organisations and Christians. It is significant that the founder of The Knights of King Arthur was a minister, because the shared principles of chivalry and Christianity provide a perfect launching point for instructing boys in the principles of manhood and virtue.

The purpose of this endeavour is to make men out of boys. It directs their natural tendencies toward the good and demands excellence from them. This is a way of life that many, such as Bruke, have held to be happy, fruitful, and wise. The alternative is to be stuck with Dyer’s barbarian problem. In the words of C.S. Lewis (1986:15), ‘[if] we cannot produce Launcelots [knights] humanity falls into two sections – those who can deal in blood and iron but cannot be ‘meek in hall’ [gentle], and those who are ‘meek in hall’ but useless in battle’. Without knights, there will be no one to resist the

barbarian when he knocks at the gates, and with the barbarian comes all of the barbaric cruelty of the pre-chivalric age. It is a kind of nihilism where the only acceptable beliefs and practices are those that can be established and enforced through strength of arms. For some, this is reason enough to inculcate this tradition in boys. It must be viable, within or without the Christian tradition, for boys have a longing for heroism. They are almost naturally drawn to the notion, to the glory and acclaim it provides, and to the bonds of fellowship that knighthood provides. They therefore need to be given the tools to pursue it.

Conclusion

‘Perfection is not given to any man. But an aspiration to perfection – to the highest possible standards in every aspect of life – is possible.’

Brad Miner

At this time in history, there is a distinct ambivalence toward masculinity and male identity that has not been seen within recorded history. While some still view masculinity as a good to be cultivated, a significant number view it as toxic and oppressive. Nowhere is ambivalence more visible than when we consider the greatest expression of masculine identity: the chivalric tradition. At best, it is in danger of being forgotten as a quaint cultural artefact of the Middle Ages. At worst, it is seen as an expression of male domination over society. Feminists such as Mary Wollstonecraft have long been critical of the tradition (Cohen, 2005:329). Moreover, cynics may respond that tradition is a cover for self-interest. Whatever virtues it may claim to pursue does not truly attempt to pursue the good. Rather, it aims at gaining some kind of advantage, be it praise, honour, power, or mere pleasure. The nihilist, similarly, might be suspicious of the tradition, for they reject all traditions and systems of value as mere illusions, a cultural product with no real authority. To accept the tradition is to lie to oneself. It is a false comfort. In both cases, the accusation of nostalgia may be levelled at the tradition. It is an artefact of a bygone era and anyone who attempts to follow it would mark themselves as a modern Don Quixote looking for giants but finding only windmills.

There have been two consequences of this view. The pursuit of virtue, which the chivalric tradition is built upon, has seemingly lost its authority. Real virtue does not exist, either because of the rising cynicism or the nihilistic scepticism of values. The attempted replacements in utilitarian and deontological ethics do not fulfil the same role as the old natural law tradition, because neither system accepts the notion of human nature that undergirds the old ethic. Consequently, they are even more vulnerable to the combined attack from the cynic and nihilist.

Fortunately, the old natural law tradition is still viable, through the system described by Aristotle and carried forward by Thomas Aquinas and the Roman Catholic church. In the modern era, thinkers like Étienne Gilson, Peter Kreeft, J. Budziszewski, Alasdair MacIntyre, and others carry the torch of virtue through their work. It is a tradition that pursues happiness as the basis for human purpose. It is reached through the inculcation of virtuous habits that form a virtuous character. Happiness here refers to the Aristotelian idea of *eudaimonia*, or a life well lived. It goes beyond the

modern idea of happiness as pleasure or merely pleasant feelings. However, it would be a mistake to say that pleasure or pleasant feelings is absent from *eudaimonia*. The experience of happiness forms part of happiness but does not form its whole. To the virtue ethicist, it refers to a life well lived – a full life. This can only be achieved through habits, for habits are the only thing that a human can reasonably control. The circumstances of his birth, his biology or constitution is out of his hands. Only his actions are his and his alone. Actions that are performed repeatedly, form habits, the collection of habits form character, and it is through character that the quality of one's life is determined.

That is not to say that character is the only factor to be considered. Virtue ethicists readily admit that external factors contribute to a person's quality of life. Aristotle (2009:1100b25-35) writes that fortune makes a happy life happier while great misfortune can and does diminish any happiness a life may have. Even so, he insists that a noble soul will shine through any misfortune. This nobility of soul is not merely an inborn condition but rather one that has been formed by habit and character. In this way, virtue may enhance the effects of fortune as well as mitigate the effects of misfortune.

However, this only applies to virtue insofar it relates to human beings in general. Men are male in addition to being human: this means that they have a uniquely male purpose in addition to their human purpose of happiness. This purpose is that of fatherhood, whether in the literal sense of having children, or in the spiritual sense of mentorship. This purpose flows from their biology and psychology. Snider (1998:24) writes that the traditionally masculine roles of protector and provider (both of which fall under the overarching role of father) have been central to male identity throughout history and across cultures. She notes that there is 'no reason to believe they are epiphenomena, mere social constructions that can be wiped out by laws or political tinkering'[49]. Thus, the modern attempt to rewrite masculinity is doomed to end in failure.

Thus, there is some merit in the accusations of male violence made by the feminist movement. It is clear from history that there is some propensity for violence and domination among men in general. If men cannot be changed, then how should this problem be dealt with? Unrestrained violent behaviour is undesirable, but therein also lies the solution. Because it is *unrestrained* violence that is the problem, masculine aggression must be restrained and redirected. This requires a model of masculinity that restrains masculine violence and redirects its energy towards the proper male purposes, virtue and fatherhood.

[49] The existence of cross-historical and cross-cultural values undermines the nihilist's view that values are merely cultural artifice.

Fortunately, history provides this kind of model. The chivalric tradition is built around the training and shaping of men. Like a father raising a child, the knight is to pass on the precepts of knighthood to his squire through instruction and example. He prepares his squire for knighthood as a father prepares his son for adulthood. In addition, a knight is instructed to oppose injustice – in the modern era, this often means verbal opposition to injustice. Yet, there are times where injustice must be opposed physically, because some people who commit injustice are beyond reason. This means that violence must be committed against those who are committing injustice. However, this violence is defensive in nature. If a man acts as an aggressor, he is guilty of violating the principles of chivalry. This is especially true for those men who enact violence upon women, since the core of the chivalric ideal lies in service to women. Hume (as cited by Dowling, 1982:112) points out that a mistress is as essential to a knight as God is to a saint. It is misguided to believe that the chivalric ideal opposes or undermines women in general.

Furthermore, it seems that there is no real alternative to knighthood. Without knighthood to combine virtue and the aggressive masculine tendency, the world left divided between those who can act aggressively and those who cannot. C.S. Lewis (1986:16) posits that chivalry ‘offers the only escape from a world divided between wolves who do not understand, and sheep who cannot defend, the things that make life desirable’. Without a correctly formed masculine identity, men will find themselves unable to defend the things that are worth defending. Therefore, we must take steps to defend the things that worth defending: we must train those who can defend against the wolves that kill and steal and destroy the things that a make life worthwhile.

Bibliography

2k Boston. 2007. Bioshock. [Online] PC. Novato, CA: 2k Games.

Aquinas, T. 1947. *Summa Theologica*. Translated from the Latin by Fathers of the English Dominican Province. New York: Benziger Bros.

Al-Saleh, A. 2012. Fate and Discipline: A Comparative Study of "The Tale of the Heike" and Chaucer's 'The Knight's Tale'. *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association*, 45(1):35-57.

Arendt, H. 1998. *The Human Condition*. 2nd ed. London: The University of Chicago Press.

Aristotle. 1994. *Metaphysics*. Translated from Ancient Greek by W.D. Ross. http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/metaphysics.1.i.html Date of Access: 9 December 2020.

Aristotle. 2009. *The Nichomachean Ethics*. Translated from the ancient Greek by David Ross. New York: Oxford University Press.

Baldry, H.C. 1968. Sophrosyne. *The Classical Review*, 18(2): 192-194.

Benatar, D. 2012. *The Second Sexism*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.

Bentham, J. 2000. *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*. Kitchener: Batoche Books.

Berendzen, J.C. 2017. *Max Horkheimer*. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/horkheimer/ Date of Access: 8 Feb. 2021.

Bible. 1983. *Die Bybel.* Nuwe vertaling. Cape Town: Bible Society of South Africa.

Bly, R. 1996. *The Sibling Society*. New York: Addison-Wesley.

Brient, E. 2000. Hans Blumenberg and Hannah Arendt on the "Unworldly Worldliness" of the Modern Age. *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 61(3): 513 – 530.

Budziszewski, J. 1997. *Written on the Heart: A Case for Natural Law*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press.

Budziszewski, J. 2011. *The Line Through the Heart*. Wilmington, DE: ISI Books.

Budziszewski, J. 2012. *One the Meaning of Sex*. Wilmington, DE: ISI Books.

Butler, J. 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. London: Routledge.

Cohen, M. 2005. "Manners" Make the Man: Politeness, Chivalry, and the Construction of Masculinity. *Journal of British Studies*, 44(2):312-329.

De Beauvoir, S. 2011. *The Second Sex*. New York: Vintage.

Desjardins, J.R. 2001. *Environmental Ethics: An Introduction to Environmental Philosophy*. 5th ed. Boston, MA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.

De Young, J.B. 2000. *Homosexuality: Contemporary Claims Examined in Light of the Bible and Other Ancient Literature and Law*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications.

Dhejne, C., Lichtenstein, P., Boman, M., Johansson, A.L.V., Långström, N., Landén, M., 2011. *Long-Term Follow-Up of Transsexual Persons Undergoing Sex Reassignment Surgery: Cohort Study in Sweden*. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0016885 Date of Access: 8 April 2021.

Disalvo, A. 1988. Ramon Lull and the Language of Chivalry. *Mystics Quarterly*, 19(4):197-206.

Dowling, W.C. 1982. Burke and the Age of Chivalry. *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 12(1982): 109-124.

Dyer, G.R. 1997. "Ivanhoe", Chivalry, and the Murder of Mary Ashford. *Criticism*, 39(3):383-408.

Hodges, K. 2002. Swords and Sorceresses: The Chivalry of Malory's Nyneve. *Arthuriana*, 12(2): 78-96. Date of Access: 15 July 2021.

Hurst III, G.C. 1990. Death, Honor, and Loyality: The Bushidō Ideal. *Philosophy East and West*, 40(4): 511-527.

Eco, U. 1986. In Praise of Thomas Aquinas. *The Wilson Quarterly*, 10(4):78-87.

Eliasson, E. 2018. Eustratius of Nicaea as a source for the Neoplatonist notion of levels of virtue in the Early Latin commentators on the Nicomachean Ethics. In: Hellerstedt, A., ed. *Virtue Ethics and Education from Late Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press. pp. 37 – 57.

Elliot, K. 2018. Challenging toxic masculinity in schools and society. *On the horizon*, 26(1): 17-22.

Gagnon, R.A.J. 2008. *More than "Mutual Joy": Lisa Miller of Newsweek against Scripture and Jesus* [Blog post]. http://www.robgagnon.net/articles/homosexNewsweekMillerResp.pdf Date of Access: 7 April 2021.

Feinberg, J. 1999. Moral Motivation and Human Nature: Psychological Egoism. In: Feinberg, J. & Shafer-Landau, R., eds. *Reason and Responsibility*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. pp. 493-505.

Ferry, L. 2011. *A Brief History of Thought: A Philosophical Guide to Living*. New York: Harper.

Fukuyama, F. 1992. *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York: The Free Press.

Hellerstedt, A. 2018. Introduction. In: Hellerstedt, A., ed. *Virtue Ethics and Education from Late Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century.* Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press. pp. 9 – 36.

Kant, E. 1998. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Translated from the German by Mary Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kateb, G. 1984. *Hannah Arendt. Politics, Conscience, Evil*. New Jersey: Rowman & Allanheld.

Kok, J.H. 1996. *Patterns of the Western Mind: A Reformed Christian Perspective*. Potchefstroom: Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education.

Kraut, R. 2018. *Aristotle's Ethics*. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-ethics/ Date of Access: 31 July 2020.

Kreeft, P. 1990. *A Summa of the Summa*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press.

Lewis, C.S. 1986. The Necessity of Chivalry. In: Hooper, W., ed. *Present Concerns*. London: Fount Paperbacks. pp. 13-16.

Lewis, C.S. 2016. *Mere Christianity*. London: William Collins.

Lupack, A. & Lupack, B.T. 2016. THE 2016 LOOMIS LECTURE: Moral Chivalry and the Arthurian Revival. *Arthuriana*, 26(4): 3-32.

MacIntyre, A. 2007. *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory 3rd ed*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.

Madsen, O.J. 2014. Modernity. In: Thomas, T., ed. *Encyclopedia of Critical Psychology*. New York: Springer. pp. 1199-1204.

Malory, T. 1920. *The romance of King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table*. New York, NY: The Macmillan Company.

Maurer, A.A. 1962. *Medieval Philosophy*. New York: Random House.

Mayer, L.S. & McHugh, P.R. 2016. *Sexuality and Gender: Findings from the Biological, Psychological, and Social Sciences part three: Gender Identity.* https://www.thenewatlantis.com/publications/part-three-gender-identity-sexuality-and-gender Date of Access: 31 March 2021.

Merriam-Webster, Inc. 2020a. *Merriam-Webster dictionary*. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/gentleman Date of Access: 8 Sept. 2020.

Merriam-Webster, Inc. 2020b. *Merriam-Webster dictionary*. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/noble Date of Access: 10 Sept. 2020.

Midgley, M. 1981. *Heart and Mind: The Varieties of Moral Experience*. Brighton: The Harvester Press.

Moyn, S. 2008. Hannah Arendt on the Secular. *New German Critique*, 105(3): 71-96.

Nietzsche, F. 2006. *On the Genealogy of Morality*. Translated from German by Carol Diethe. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Perez, M. & Sasson-Levy, O. 2015. Avoiding military service in a militaristic society: a chronicle of resistance to hegemonic masculinity. *Peace & Change*, 40(4):462-488.

Rampley, M. 2000. *Nietzsche, Aesthetics and Modernity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Reiner, W.G. & Gearhart, J.P. 2004. Discordant Sexual Identity in Some Genetic Males with Cloacal Exstrophy Assigned to Female Sex at Birth. *The New England Journal of Medicine*, 350(4): 333-341.

Roodt, V. 2016. *Amor fati, amor mundi: Nietzsche and Arendt on overcoming modernity*. Stellenbosh: Stellenbosh University. (Thesis – PhD).

Rubin, G. 1975. The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex. In: Reiter, R.R. *Toward an Anthropology of Women*. New York and London: Monthly Review Press.

Sartre, J.P. 2007. *Existentialism Is a Humanism*. Translated from the French by Carol Macomber. New Haven & London: Yale UP.

Seaver, P. 1980. The Puritan Work Ethic Revisited. *Journal of British Studies*, 19(2): 35 – 53.

Shield, C. 2018. *Aristotle*. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle/ Date of Access: 17 September 2020.

Snider, L. 1998. TOWARDS SAFER SOCIETIES: Punishment, Masculinities and Violence Against Women. *The British Journal of Criminology*, 38(1): 1-39.

Taylor, C. 1989. *The Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Tessitore, A. 1992. Aristotle's Ambiguous Account of the Best Life. *Polity*, 25(2):197-215.

Ton, J.T. 2018. *Judith Butler's Notion of Gender Performativity: To What Extent Does Gender Performativity Exclude a Stable Gender Identity?* Utrecht: Utrecht University (Thesis – MSc).

Tosh, J. 2005. Masculinities in an Industrializing Society: Britain, 1800–1914. *Journal of British Sudies*, 44(2):330-342.

Visser, J.M.H. 2017. Following the Man on the Slippery Slide. *Neotestamentica*, 51(2): 337-358.

Warren, L. 2019. Virtue, masculinity, and hierarchies of domination in Plutarch's *Antony* and *De Iside*. *Akroterion*, 20019(64): 45-64.

Weber, B.R. 2013. Masculinity, American Modernity, and Body Modification: A Feminist Reading of American Eunuchs. *Signs*, 38(3):671-694.

Zuidervaart, L. 2015. *Theodor W. Adorno*. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/adorno/ Date of Access: 8 Feb. 2021.