

# **A History of Philosophy**

## **79 Ethics Since Logical Positivism**

### **By Dr. Arthur Holmes of Wheaton College**

I think I have my voice back this week, so it's less painful for me, and I hope for you, too. Last week, we were looking at the way in which ordinary language analysis broadened and loosened up the rigid scientific empiricism of the logical positivists. And we were seeing that in particular with reference to the religious language dispute of the 1950s, early 60s, which was groping for some kind of empirical reference to talk about God.

I want this morning, this morning, a little bit late for that, this afternoon, to take a look at ethical theory, since logical positivism, and what we'll see initially is the same sort of influence of ordinary language analysis in breaking that stranglehold of logical positivism with its emotivist theory of ethics. Ayer articulates it very effectively in that chapter of his on ethics and theology when he argues that there are really no moral judgments that can be made, only emotive expression, not even statements about subjective states of affairs, not even those judgments. They are simply descriptions of psychological states, not moral judgments.

And so to say anything like stealing is wrong or war is shameful is simply emotive and not bringing any predicate to bear on what we're talking about. Now, the influence of the ordinary language analysis comes out in a debate that went on within what we call metaethics, really a term that was coined in conjunction with G.E. Moore's quest for what is the good. You remember Moore maintained that we have some intuitive knowledge of good and intuitive recognition, rather, of the good, though we cannot reduce it to any natural property, happiness, pleasure, utility, natural law, or anything at all empirically or metaphysically, definable, his naturalistic fallacy.

Well, Ayer responded, of course, to Moore's intuitionism by maintaining that if we cannot define or describe the good, the term is meaningless. And so the emotivist theory simply spun out of that sort of consideration. But metaethics has to do with the meaning of ethical language.

And you can see obviously how metaethical concerns were the prime concern as a result of logical positivism's claim that moral terminology is meaningless, cognitively meaningless. It refers to nothing. But intuitionism didn't die as a result of that.

W.D. Ross continued a kind of intuitionism where what is intuitive is the right, not the good, but the right. And you might keep those two terms distinct with a parallel distinction between *ought* and *can't*. *Ought* and any consequentialist or teleological ethic is concerned with good, a good outcome, the good end that we're pursuing.

Whereas the right has to do with the quality of an act or a motive itself, not in terms of consequences. In can't, the right is always acting out of duty. So W.D. Ross maintained that we have an intuitive recognition of right.

The meaning of that term becomes clear even though we cannot reduce it to any other property, still avoiding the naturalist fallacy, you see. But it's recognizable, for instance, in the case of having entered into a contract or made a promise. We then recognize that we have trailing obligations.

And it is right that we fulfill our obligations. And so the meaning of the term then has to do with commonly recognized obligations arising from certain relationships and contracts. You might notice that what is beginning there has become much more frequent since a kind of contractarian, a kind of contractarian theme.

Having entered into a contract, we have obligations. Later on, we'll find that it gets universalized as a basis of all moral obligation, some kind of contractarian relationship. But it's simply a point of reference for Ross in giving examples of our intuitive recognition of the right.

But the ordinary language analysis comes into play more effectively when you get to the other developments that I've listed. A moral point of view approach developed somewhat by William Frankner, who taught at the University of Michigan, wrote a widely used introduction called *Simply Ethics*, which, for a book of about 100 to 120 pages, has probably been used more than any other one, and is still referred to. Frankner was a Christian Reformed background, a Calvin College graduate.

And while his theism does not come out explicitly in his book, it's certainly there under the surface. And became evident in an article that he wrote, I think I may have mentioned this to you before, that he wrote in the late 30s, as I recall it was, in response to G.E. Moore's naturalistic fallacy, where he argued that while you cannot deduce an ought from an is, if you have some additional premise, for instance of a theological sort, then you can deduce an ought from an is. That is to say, whereas A does not logically imply B, A plus B does logically imply B. So, with the addition of some premise that can introduce a source of moral obligation, a basis for values, you can deduce some moral obligation from certain factual premises.

So that if you say, premise B, God, a personal moral being exists, then immediately you've got some value judgment into the initial premise. But in any case, that initial paper of his, which actually established his reputation in philosophy, that initial paper of his, I think, prepared the way for his later emphasis on taking a moral point of view. Because the meaning of ethical terms depends on your taking a moral point of view.

That is to say, to take a moral point of view represents a non-cognitive ingredient, not simply emotive, but a non-cognitive kind of attitude as you commit yourself to assessing things morally. So with the addition of that non-cognitive point of view, you begin to see that moral terms refer to such attitudes as are involved in a moral point of view. They have that psychological point of reference.

You might say that this leads to a sort of ethical subjectivism, where the moral terminology is defined in relationship to such subjective states as taking a moral point of view. All right, but you still have cognitive moral judgments as a result, which is what you did not have with A.J. Ayer. Kurt Bayer is the second representative of this Australian philosopher.

More widely referred to is the prescriptivism of R.M. Hare. R.M. Hare, who taught at Oxford, you remember I mentioned him in connection with the religious language debate. He was the man with the example of the Oxford don who had an irrational blink, you recall, about someone trying at that time.

In his book, *The Language of Morals*, tried to analyse the ordinary usage, remember that phrase, tried to analyse the ordinary usage of moral language in common parlance. And came to the conclusion that what pervades moral language is an imperative rather than an indicative form of grammar. So that the root significance is not that you are making some factual statement, A is B, or something of that sort, stealing is wrong, but the imperative mood.

Don't do it! Moral language is prescribing, not describing. And as such, it evades the positivist verification of purportedly factual descriptions. Moral assertions are not factual descriptions; they are prescriptions, and so you have something different.

Notice is implicit in the claim that the logical positivist view of language was so crudely narrowed down that all it allowed were tautologies and descriptive statements. Everything else is emotive expression. Well, what about commands and so forth? Notice that puzzle even in Wittgenstein, a passage that I read to you last night, last week rather, where Wittgenstein says, somebody says, thou shalt not.

And what you want to say in response is, well, what if I do? What Wittgenstein is sort of toying with is the oddity of a thou shalt not if you're working with a reductionist view that all you can do is make factual statements or express things emotively. You say, what is this thou shalt not? And Hare, in effect, is picking up on this and seeing it as the salient feature of moral language, not only moral judgments but all other kinds of moral language as well. Prescriptivism.

That kind of prescriptivism, of course, is quite non-committal about the grounds on which it is based. This may be a social prescription. It may be a parental prescription.

It may be some other command or order. It could even be a divine command. And that divine command note, you notice, comes out a little bit later.

Well, prescriptivism was shortly followed by the appearance of descriptivism. Descriptivism. Philippa Foot, who's at UCLA, and John Searle, here, the essence is that it's simply of empirical facts but of value-laden empirical facts.

And in order to make his point, John Searle, in an article called, How to Derive an Ought from an Is, he showed the way in which that can be done. So, here on the board, let me turn this off for the moment so that you can see it a little better. Jones said, I hereby promise to pay Smith \$5.

Now that's a factual statement, empirically verifiable. So it follows that Jones promised to pay Smith \$5, a simple translation. Therefore, it follows again that Jones placed himself under an obligation to pay Smith \$5, simply a matter of the definition of terms.

It follows then, simple translation, Jones is under an obligation to pay Smith \$5. And as a result, again, simple translation, Jones ought to pay Smith \$5. And you've got a moral obligation coming out of an empirically verifiable statement.

That is to say, there are some factual situations, such as promising, which is a social action, something describable in empirical terms. There are some describable situations that do involve a moral ought. So you describe an is from an ought by carefully describing and translating the description accordingly.

And so, what So was doing, you see, was pointing out what he calls a speech act of the sort that, number one, Jones said, I hereby promise to pay Smith \$5. That's sort of a speech act. It is a morally committing kind of speech act.

Language is far more diverse than the oversimplifications of AGA. So you get a descriptivism. Now, in many ways, one of the most interesting developments is that of divine command theory.

Now, the literature on divine command theory, and to those of you who have been in ethical theory, this is old hat, but the literature on divine command theory often takes it way back into the Middle Ages, back indeed to Plato's dialogue, the Euthyphro, where Socrates discusses the matter of respect for a parent and the respect of the divine and so forth. Raises the question of whether the command is right because God wills it, or does God will it because it's right? That sort of thing Plato raises. Well, the point is there is a long tradition of tracing our moral obligations, of course, to the will of God.

The law of God, commands of God, however promulgated they might be. And that was picked up in this regard, of the meaning of ethical terms. Now, I come at it that way intentionally in order to point out that divine command theory can be used in at least two or perhaps three different ways.

It can be used, and I think this is perhaps its most helpful significance; it can be used in talking about the basis of moral obligation. Why be good? Well, God's will. Divine command theory.

The basis of moral obligation, quite obviously. It has also been used in terms of the source of our moral knowledge. How do we know what's right? Because God has said.

And incidentally, Carl Henry, in his writings on ethics, lays emphasis on it in that regard. Actually, he doesn't distinguish these different regards, but it's mainly his concern to stress the source of moral knowledge. I think you can still use it to stress the source of moral knowledge if you recognize that there is general as well as special revelation in moral matters.

And, of course, in Romans 1, Paul is talking plainly about moral knowledge by means of general revelation. Insofar as there is witness to moral law in the way in which human nature is constructed to function, then in that sense, having God as creator means this divine command back there. But the third way in which divine command theory is used, and the one which is significant in this post-positivist context, is in terms of the meaning of moral terms.

What does it mean to say that something is right or wrong? What does it mean to say it's good or bad? The reference is to God's commands. Reference to the will of God. So this renewal of divine command theory has come to address the issues posed by Ayer.

Now, that comes out most plainly in the writings of Robert Adams. At UCLA. Incidentally, you've heard, perhaps you met Marilyn Adams when she was here for the conference, was it last year? Robert Adams is her husband.

They're a husband-wife team at UCLA. Most remarkable couple. He has written a number of articles on divine command theory.

Philip Quinn has written a book on the subject. He was at Brown University. He, like many other good people, is now at Notre Dame.

The whole world seems to gather there at Notre Dame. And Phil Quinn is. He's now, incidentally, editor of Faith and Philosophy, the journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers.

But those two currently are the main voices. But the emphasis on divine command theory also goes back to Elizabeth Anscombe. Whose name ought you to be acquainted with?

A British Catholic woman philosopher who, from way back in the forties onwards, has been doing a great job in largely matters of moral philosophy and philosophical psychology. Well, I think it was in 1955, I think it was. She published an article in the British journal *Mind* called *Modern Moral Philosophy*.

*Modern Moral Philosophy*. In which she complained that it seemed as if for half a century there had been some sort of a conspiracy to eliminate the conception of law from modern ethics. She's talking particularly about the influence of utilitarianism.

But of course, the story of the first half of this century includes not only the spread of utilitarian ethics, but also the rise of logical positivism. Which obviously eliminated the conception of law from moral philosophy. Her assertion was that it's not altogether surprising that, without some sort of moral law-giver, it's very hard to sustain a conception of moral law.

And she referred accordingly to the roots of the conception of moral law in the Western tradition, being in the Judeo-Christian tradition and in Roman Stoicism. Now that combination. And she, as a Catholic, as a Thomist, was arguing, of course, for a renewal of the emphasis on moral law.

Which would give us some basis for not only obligation, but for the meaningfulness of the conception of moral law. The meaningfulness of the conception of moral law. The term can have meaning if there is a moral law giver.

And what she would want is a natural law theory. A combination of divine command and natural law. Divine command gives meaning to the moral terms, as well as a basis for authority.

And natural law in terms of how we know what our moral obligations are. So that story then really restores the whole enterprise of ethical theory to, I think, effectively, to where it was before the positivists appeared on the scene. In fact, in some ways, it is further ahead than it is because of the serious challenges to a purely utilitarian ethic that appear particularly in divine command theory.

But also in a moral point of view and prescriptivist ethics. Any comment, question? Yeah, Carl. Yes, but sharpen that up a little, Carl.

Unless there is a moral law-giver, the concept of moral law has no meaning. There's no empirical reference point, no factual reference point for moral law. Now, there

could be laws enacted by humans, but in that case, you would have a legislature or a ruler who's performing the function of moral law-giver.

But that would not have the authority of divine law. So she wants the divine law giver in order to give meaning to universal and unchanging moral law, which concept would be empirically meaningless, factually meaningless without. How would Kant respond to that? Well, to begin with, Kant would not be concerned about empirical meaning and empirical verifiability and all of that business.

You'll see. Your question's interesting because Kant does it the other way around. Kant will say that inasmuch as we have this intuitive recognition of a sense of duty, we have this intuitive recognition, we must explain that in some way.

To wit, ultimately, a moral law-giver. You'll see. So my guess is that Kant would applaud Anscombe for that point while rejecting her natural law theory with its metaphysical basis.

You'll see. But the connection between moral law and moral law giver Kant recognizes just as plainly as Anscombe. Yeah.

Kant would say you have to postulate the law-giver. And I suspect that Anscombe, at least in the 1950s as a Thomist, would have said we can use Thomas's five arguments for the moral law giver. But even without the law-giver, Kant would say we have a duty.

Yeah, he would say we have a sense of moral obligation. That intuition. Well, yeah, we have an intuitive recognition of the common base of morality that we should always act out of a sense of duty.

Yeah, in that sense, it's intuitive. The contradiction comes in when trying to act rationally and do something that is wrong. That's where the contradiction shows up, in the particular moral judgment.

But I think the difference between them that you may be getting at is this. I use the term intuitive for Kant. Yeah, not in the sense of Moore or Ross, it's not intuitive, but in the sense of a common core of morality.

But because of the coming of the positivist verifiability criterion, Anscombe would want to avoid that sort of approach. Because the positivist would ask Kant. What is the status? What is the meaning of this sense of duty? Is this an empirically accessible sense of duty? And the positivist would say no, it's not.

So Kant's ethic would be ruled out by Ayer's emotivist theory. Do you follow? Now, in sidestepping that, Anscombe is trying to get back to a meaning for the conception of duty or moral law. Therefore, making it depend on a moral law giver.

Karl? So, the recognition of these moral laws is just an outgrowth of a moral law-giver? It's not intuitive, but it's more... Yes, yes, yes. So that if a person is a thoroughgoing naturalist and has no moral law giver, they're not likely to find any meaning to moral law. No factual meaning at all.

Now you see, ask yourself, you can see this quite plainly, ask yourself what sort of meaning, in terms of Ayer's verifiability theory, what sort of meaning attaches to a statement like, we are all of us morally bound by universal law? You see? Well, to be morally bound, what does that mean? To have subjective feelings of having to do this? Subjective feelings of guilt, all right, Ayer would say, that's something for the psychologist to describe, has nothing to do with moral obligation. You see? So if you revert simply to psychological descriptions, that doesn't help at all. Remember Ayer's four kinds of moral language? Remember? There are psychological descriptions, and there are psychological and other subjective descriptions.

There are exhortations, okay, which are simply emoting. There are outright emotive utterances, and there are purported moral judgments. There are meta-ethical statements, I should say, as well.

All right, let's move on to the next. The outcome of that debate over moral language and its meaning reintroduced normative ethics. And we've had the last 20 years of thoroughly vigorous activity in normative ethics.

I've listed five of the most influential writers, names that you should get familiar with, and you already are if you've been taking ethical theory. John Rawls at Harvard, his book on the theory of justice, introducing a contractarian approach. You recall John Locke's notion of a state of nature, which led, because of common needs and rights, to a civil society that depended on some sort of social contract.

What Rawls is doing is not just talking about a contractarian basis for government, but a contractarian basis for all morality. So he needs to have his equivalent of Rawls' state of nature. And what he describes is what would go on behind what he calls a veil of ignorance.

A veil of ignorance. That is to say, if a group of people were to adopt a stance that they know nothing about future outcomes that might affect them for better or for worse. A veil of ignorance.

What sort of principles would you then set up for the ordering of our lives behind that veil of ignorance? And he suggests that what would emerge, what he proposes,

is based on two principles. One, that the benefits and costs of the society should be equitably distributed. And second, that this should be when there is inequity with advantage to the least advantaged people.

With benefits favoring the least advantaged. Well, and on that, he tried to propose the way in which a political economy could be ordered in that sort of fashion. It's not quite a utilitarian approach.

Although when he talks of equalizing benefits and costs, there's obviously a consequentialist note. But it's not a utilitarian approach. He's not simply saying outright, maximize the benefit for the maximum number of people.

No. There's a Kantian note in it, the emphasis on equality, ignoring other considerations. There's a Kantian note in it, but it's not a Kantian ethic acting out of a basic sense of duty.

It's a contractarian arrangement. So that morality does not rest on some divine command. It does not rest on some a priori moral principle.

It does not rest on empirical assessment of consequences. Okay. In that way, you eliminate divine command, you eliminate natural law, you eliminate Kantian ethics, you eliminate utilitarian ethics.

It rests rather on social agreement. It rests rather on social agreement. And his approach has had an immense amount of discussion, not only among ethicists, but in political science, in economics, and so forth.

In general, his leanings are towards a more liberal than conservative political-economic philosophy on the basis of these principles. Also at Harvard, Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, the State, and Utopia*, is about as conservative in economic and political thought as one could be. Nozick's point is that there is just one basic principle.

That every individual has the right to acquire whatever he can, as long as he doesn't take it illegally from somebody else. Acquisition rights. It's a form of ethical egoism.

The one basic moral principle is respect for acquisition rights. Oh, he does advocate a safety net for the least advantaged. But essentially, it's a thoroughgoing individualism.

It seems to me that he's the philosophical expression of the kind of Reaganomics that talked of individual initiative and essentially of acquisition rights with a minimum of legal regulation and a safety net. Curiously, there were two people in the same department at the same time at Harvard. A few years ago, there was one of our graduates in law school there at Harvard, and they were having a discussion about

these two points of view in one law class, when a voice from the back of the room, which turned out to be Rawls, interrupted and corrected somebody.

And another voice, turned out to be Nozick, from the other side of the room interrupted likewise, and so they had the two of them in that law class debating this issue. Lots of debates, I suspect. Alan Goodworth, University of Chicago, just retired a couple of years ago.

Reason and morality. Essentially a Kantian. And in many ways, he's representative of a rebirth of Kantian approaches to ethics.

Frequently called respect for persons. Respect for persons is the basic principle. You remember that Kant's second formulation of the categorical imperative was that we should always treat people as ends and not just as means.

Respect for persons. Well, Alan Goodworth tries to spell that out in terms of the fact that each one of us wants to have the maximum freedom possible to pursue our own life project. Now, the fact that I want that freedom, if I'm going to be logically consistent rather than logically self-contradictory, means that I should respect other people's freedom to the same end.

So we have what he calls a principle of generic consistency. A principle of generic consistency, which is really Kant's universalizability principle. You don't want to assert your own ends, your own goals, your own rights in violation of the same rights in others.

That would be violating the principle of generic consistency. And so he has tried to rebuild a Kantian ethic thus. Alan Donegan, who was also at Chicago for many years and then moved to Caltech, died just a year and a half, two years ago.

Alan Donegan's book, *The Theory of Morality*, is also Kantian. What he tried to do is to pick up on the principle of respect for persons and see what could be inferred from that in terms of the implementation of a more specifically developed kind of ethic. What he did was to argue that the essential principles of the Judeo-Christian ethic are true.

You'll be interested that, he told me this once when he was out here, that while it took him many years to work this through and argue it, after the book had gone to the printer, he came to the conclusion that if the Judeo-Christian ethic was true, that the underlying theology probably was too, and he ought to become a Christian. And being an ethical person, he did. And quite a remarkable individual at the same time.

Alan Donegan, a very worthwhile book. Alasdair MacIntyre, a name you've heard in a number of connections, I'm sure. Three works in this field that are very influential and represent a turn from rule-governed approaches to moral decisions and actions.

Turning from that, a rule-governed approach to moral decisions. An ethic of decision-making. Turning from that rather to what we call virtue ethics.

An emphasis on moral character. The moral qualities of the person. Rather than the moral quality of individual actions.

Now, in *After Virtue*, he really traced the whole history of ethics from pre-Socratic times, in fact from Homeric times, before the pre-Socratics, from Homeric times way up into post-Kantian times. Making the point that the early Greeks and on into Plato and Aristotle and the Stoics and on into the Medievals, were all interested primarily in the cultivation of virtue. Concern for the growth and the development of the soul, you find in Plato.

You find in Augustine, and so forth, the development of character. And it's not until the 18th century, really, that you find in the Enlightenment the development of a rule-based ethic of decision and actions taking precedence. Now, you have to be careful you don't overgeneralize.

Because certainly in people like Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, with their natural law approaches to ethics, there is concern about moral rules, namely, natural moral law, as well as biblical law, to guide moral decisions and produce right actions. That's there. But the larger concern is that of the virtues.

In fact, it's interesting to notice, and it may seem initially paradoxical to hear it, that when Thomas Aquinas is talking about the rules for just war theory, he's doing so under the large rubric of the virtue of love. The virtue of love. Because love requires that justice be tempered with love.

And so just war has to be understood in that sort of way. Now, what MacIntyre does, however, is not only trace the development of these two traditions in ethics, but also look at what came after virtue in a rule-governed ethic, look at the development of utilitarianism and its complete indifference to matters of virtue. It's simply interested in the maximum utility of actions and policies, you see.

It's after non-moral ends rather than the moral end of character development. He does that. But he also makes the point that these rest on different traditions, different philosophical traditions that are incommensurable.

Now, to talk of incommensurability is to say that you cannot evaluate one by the norms of the other. You cannot translate one into terms of the other. They're not reducible, one to the other.

And he pursues this further in the second of these volumes, *Whose Justice, Which Rationality?* The question of whose justice makes plain the incommensurability of the traditions as far as the meaning and demands of justice are concerned. But which rationality lays emphasis on the incommensurability of the reasons that are given for the moral points of view that are offered. There are different standards of rational judgment that are involved.

And that theme comes out once again in his third volume, which appeared just a couple of years ago, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry*. Now, if you have time to read only one of these three, read the third.

It's much more succinct than the others. Each of the others could have been written, I think, and the argument pressed effectively in half the length. But MacIntyre's the sort of big Scotch-Irish person who is very effusive with his language and with his interests, so that what he writes is fascinating with all sorts of historical lore, especially where it's anything about the Scottish.

I mean, you get an education about Scottish history and the whole thing, but others as well. He just has fascinating interests in social history, not just intellectual history, but social history that comes through in this very effectively. Now, the three rival traditions of the third volume are ones that are obviously different in their view of reason as well as their view of the basis of ethics.

Number one is the Aristotelian tradition. The Aristotelian tradition, which, of course, is developed so much more fully by Thomas Aquinas. The second version is the 18th-century, 19th-century Enlightenment version.

He cites a certain 19th-century edition of *Encyclopedia Britannica*, which had an article on ethics, which treated ethics like another science, which was gradually accumulating more and more moral knowledge that was universally becoming recognized until we would have a universal science of ethics, thoroughly grounded in positivistic reasoning. Well, that sort of rationalistic approach, which he sees as the outcome of the rule-governed approach of some of the 18th century writers. Then the third version, the third tradition, is Nietzsche.

And this, of course, is the addition that he makes to the others. And I think it's fair to say that he adds the Nietzschean ethic of the strong and the weak-willed in a power struggle. You know, the Nietzsche stuff.

Because while he's been working on this other stuff, we've had such a resurgence of postmodernism, you see, with its emphasis now that we call political correctness, but which in essence was subjectivism, talking about my truth and my moral standards and so on and so forth, out of assertion of not rationally grounded but voluntaristically grounded desires. And so he poses these three alternatives and tries to pose what the decision between them really comes to. But remember that they have a different conception of what constitutes rationality.

In the case of the first tradition, there is a concept of wisdom, which comes from Aristotle, wisdom, and prudence. It comes from Aristotle and again in the Middle Ages. In the second, it's deductive reasoning in a quasi-scientific fashion, so it's the scientific ideal.

And in the third, of course, the reason is simply rationalizing. It is the servant of the emotions. And you can sense in this where he's coming from.

Interestingly, this sort of thing ties very much into his own autobiography. Because he started as a young man in the 50s writing on the religious language problem. You remember his contribution to the religious language discussion was in talking of the idiosyncratic platitude, the idiosyncratic nature of religious languages distinct from other language uses, so that you could not support religious belief by virtue of any other kinds of language uses.

The point being that back then, he had a thoroughly Barthian theology, that God is known quite independently of rational processes by some sort of existential encounter. Well, over the years, he drifted away from Christianity completely. He was interested in Marxism, and these three books represent the gradual movement that he's been having back towards some kind of theism. So when he published *After Virtue*, he was an Aristotelian, but had not returned to Christianity.

And the process has been going on so that the third volume, he is not just an Aristotelian, but a Thomist, and a confessing Catholic, you see. So he's come back to the Christian faith. And, as I said before, like many other good people, he's now at Notre Dame.

So this is the way in which ethics has been going. So I think it's fair to say that over the last 20 years, these are the five most influential people in ethics. My sense is that Rawls' influence is continuing and will continue, more so than Nozick, Gewirth, and Donegan.

And that at this juncture, it's perhaps Rawls in rule-governed, principle-governed ethical decisions, and MacIntyre in virtue ethics, who are the two most discussed individual writers, the people you ought to get acquainted with. Well, let me hold it there and leave it to you to question, give feedback, comment, add, whatever. The

outcome is that normative ethics, like philosophy of religion, is again alive and well, A, notwithstanding.

How are they dealing with justice and mercy? With justice, yes. You hear a lot of talk of justice. Rawls defines justice in terms of distributing the benefits and costs of a society equitably.

Nozick, in terms of upholding individual rights, basically advocates for acquisition rights. Gewirth in terms of respecting the other person and his life project. Donegan again, in terms of individual rights.

So I think it's fair to say that the emphasis on justice is in terms of the theory of rights. And I think it's also interesting that not one of those four are utilitarians. It doesn't mean to say that they ignore consequential considerations; they don't.

But they're not utilitarians in the sense of working on everything with the utility principle. So respect for persons, the Kantian note, and theories of human rights seem to be pretty central. Both Donegan, well Donegan for the moment, would certainly say that a biblical ethic goes significantly further than the Kantian approach to an ethic.

Though I'm not sure he ever worked that through to his satisfaction. I remember when he gave the keynote lectures at our philosophy conference a few years after the theory of morality came out. In the discussion time, I remember Rich Mao from Calvin College standing over in that corner, if we were in the east wing of Edmund, questioning Donegan over there at the podium, and trying to lead him step by step in order to articulate the way in which a Christian ethic would affect his ethical thinking.

And he was gradually coming along and coming along and beginning to see it, but he was having to think in ways in which he just had never thought before, before he became a theist. He was raised in a Methodist home in Australia, but I think he had not done much thinking from a theistic perspective since he was in graduate school. Okay, MacIntyre is having a lot of influence among Christian ethicists.

He's had a great influence on the theologian Stanley Hauerwas, H-A-U-E-R-W-A-S, who's been developing virtue ethics from a more theological position and tying it in with narrative approaches to ethics, the narrative of the tradition. You can see that sort of thing implicitly in the emphasis on different traditions. So participating in the life of a tradition, the life of a community, and making its story your own is one of the ways in which you interiorise the values of that tradition and begin to take on the virtues of that tradition.

And so the whole theory of moral development is being profoundly affected by this sort of approach. How would MacIntyre say you critique the virtues of a particular tradition? Yeah, that's the weak point. You try to maintain consistency.

You try to look at the effect on others and the end product. But he doesn't seem to have developed any clear-cut critical points of reference. So it becomes a matter of weighing the, I was going to say the moral, the social value of the thing.

You find in *After Virtue*, one of the first things that he does is to get a contrast going between the aristocratic ethic of the Homeric tradition and what becomes later the Socratic ethic, you see, where the one is interested in beauty, strength, and honour. That's the aristocratic ethic. And if you're familiar with Homer's writings, you can see it in his heroes.

Now, Socrates is very different. His concern is with justice. With friendship.

With respect. Reverence, you see. Now, he... Would I say either wrong? Wrong.

Inferior, yes. He doesn't seem to say wrong. He seems to say inferior in terms of the kind of society that it built.

One built Sparta. The other built Athens. Take your choice.

Yes. Yeah, precisely. You couldn't be more on target.

Human flourishing, in fact, is the term that is often used for the end, the goal. Human flourishing. What does it mean to flourish? Well, in the Aristotelian tradition, it means to actualise to the full.

The full flowering. Flourishing. The full flowering of human potential.

But that involves an Aristotelian teleology. Well, we've run over.