

## **EDITORIAL**

One thing clear about moral thinking today is that it is in great confusion. There are good many reasons for it. The most obvious one is that with the ascendancy of empirical sciences from the beginning of the sixteenth century attention shifted from the outside world of nature to the inner world of consciousness. The method of empirical sciences became standard for all human knowledge. But empirical approach by its very nature was incapable of arriving at a convincing moral philosophy for all to follow. But one could not go back to the Greek perception of natural law as the foundation of all morality. Both Augustine and Aquinas who had adopted natural law as the basis of their moral doctrines also noted its imperfection and inadequacy. By the very fact nature is created it is clear that there cannot be perfect order in nature. Physical evil is an expression of the inherent limitation of nature, and moral evil shows that the created human will is limited and weak. So both Augustine and Aquinas got the help of divine revelation to bolster up the demands of nature. But such a fusion of religion and philosophy is not appreciated by the contemporary secularist world. It looks for a more holistic and consistent moral philosophy.

Another simple fact behind the obsolescence of traditional morality is that it was to a great extent based on the patriarchal system and the more or less static nature of the social order. What humanity is looking for today is a moral system that starts not from above, from the absolute metaphysical principles, but from below, from the daily psychological and social experiences of people. We live in a society where "one man one vote" is the democratic principle, and women are entering in increasing numbers in the jobs and occupations that were once the exclusive privilege of men. Hence a more integral and maternal approach to morality is called for.

The problem with traditional moral authorities, whether social or religious is that they are struggling to maintain the observance of old ethical conclusions, which may still be valid, with old philosophical systems that have become more or less obsolete or at least unintelligible in the modern consciousness. The answer to this situation is to become aware of the different ethical systems of the world.

They in their divergent convergence can show the value and relevance of the moral conclusions they agree upon. This is the value of comparative ethics. It does not attempt to create a new common system out of the different systems. Its function is to show each system in its own identity. The tension among the different systems is a healthy reflection of the unity in diversity of the present world.

This is too large an issue to be discussed adequately in a single number of the Journal. What we have done is to select some points, which, though even peripheral to the main ethical discussion, can throw light on the philosophical inquiry that is going on today. The first article "Towards a World Morality" gives a brief description of the main ethical thought patterns so as to bring out their radical divergence and the unavoidable tension among them, though they are all concerned with the ultimate meaning of human life and man's responsibility to regulate his own actions. Walter Schulz defends Advaita Vedanta's ontological formulation of the eternal standard of ethical activity, namely the spontaneous activity of a man who has realized his true nature. Barbara Amodio, a philosopher and a specialist in criminal psychology, is fascinated with the ethical role of Ravana, the villain in the Ramayana. She sees the epic as a vast psychodrama in which the parts of the complex human character are fractured and artificially displayed in order to bring out the role of each part in realistically building up an integral ethical system.

Sarojini Henry makes a comparison of the ethics of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Buber in their active involvement in the social and political fields. Raul J. Canizares shows how the religion and mythology of an enslaved people can have the moral dynamism for their own liberation taking for example the African-Cuban religion of Santeria. While Thomas Michel S.J. of the Vatican Commission for Interreligious Dialogue gives a brief and comprehensive overview of Islamic Ethics, Thomas Kochumuttom discusses on *dhamma* which is the ultimate principle of Ethics - based Society of Buddhism. These articles are intended to be only samples to encourage research into various neglected areas of moral thinking in different traditions.

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