

A Theory of Human Values

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By

Michael H. Mitias

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CHAPTER ONE

PREFACE

The task of a theory in philosophy, science, technology, theology, and practical life is (1) to shed light on a difficult question, problem, or mystery or to provide an explanation of the nature of matter, life, and mind, (2) to show that certain beliefs and or ways of thinking, feeling, and acting are reasonable, valid, or acceptable, and (3) to explore the meaning of existence in general and the meaning of human existence in particular. In constructing her theory, the inquirer is usually prompted by the impetus of curiosity, the passion to know, the need to understand the nature of a certain kind of problem, or by the urgency to promote a program of social reform. No matter its purpose or the conditions that prompt the need for its construction, and regardless of whether it is individual or communal, the construction of a theory is always a response to an existential situation or state of affairs. The fundamental intuition that underpins its structure arises from a comprehensive reflection on the logic and nature of the factors or events that make up the structure of the situation or state of affairs. A theory in general does not exist, although it can be analyzed as a kind of reality; it is always a theory of a particular aspect of the world or human existence. The life and viability of a theory depend on its usefulness or the extent to which its power of explanation endures.

The task of a theory of human values is to answer three questions: (1) what is the origin of human values? How do they come into human life? (2) What is the nature of value as a human phenomenon? What type of reality is it? (3) How is a value which exists as an ideal or concept in the mind be translated into a principle of action? How is a value, e.g., beauty or justice, realized in the experience of a human being? An answer to these three questions should promote our understanding of the career, life, and vocation of values in human life. This present inquiry is based on the assumption that values are not only essential to human life but are also its foundation. They are directly or indirectly involved in what people do in individual, communal, practical, and theoretical life. They act as the most efficient and final cause of what they do. An inquisitive glance at the vast domain of

social existence will, I think, show that values such as honesty, friendship, justice, freedom, religiosity, patience, modesty, courage, magnanimity, success, and love, to mention a few values, are the *raison d'être* of the activities that constitute the lives of individuals and communities. If we allow our inquisitive glance to linger on human life and penetrate its depth, we discover that, although values are integral to human life, people are not always clear about their nature, validity, or the basis of their realization in experience. For example, most humans deem friendship central to human life, but what is friendship? What kind of friendship fosters human growth and development? An inquiry into the nature of friendship and its relation to human nature by philosophers, theologians, social scientists, and especially ordinary people will reveal the prevalence of an amazing diversity of conceptions in the way it is understood and practiced. Can we speak of friendship if we do not assume that all the different conceptions of its nature share a common essential feature, one that defines it? What is the basis or source of this commonality? We encounter a similar diversity of conception with all the primary values people pursue in their individual and social lives. Our intellectual perplexity increases when we shift our attention to the global and historical reality of human values and the role they play in their lives. Is the meaning and realization of values relative to the individual or society? Are they instruments for the attainment of personal aims? Are they gifts of the various religions of the world? Are they products of the social and economic conditions of society? Are they creations of human reason?

If values act as the foundation of human existence, and they do, consequently if their realization in concrete situations is essential to human well-being and progress, it should follow that an understanding of their origin, nature, and the conditions under which they can be realized will be a significant contribution not only to the way people design and pursue their life-projects as individuals but also in the way they design and pursue social policy in the sphere of education, politics, science, economics, business, technological, art, and religion. This point is especially significant for contemporary life given the gradual transvaluation of values directly or indirectly prompted by the unprecedented development of science and technology that seems to transform every aspect of how people live and achieve their happiness.

In this book, I advance a novel theory of human values. It is based on two fundamental assumptions: first, values originate from the human essence (mind, spirit, soul, reason, or human nature), which emerges as a unique reality from the natural process and inheres in the formal organization of the human body as a potentiality. Second, human values emerge as an

existential response to peremptory needs inherent in the structure of the human essence. I argue that the human essence is one and the same in all human beings regardless of their color, education, ethnicity, or political, economic, scientific, and religious status. First, unlike the plethora of conceptions of human nature or essence that are idealistic, materialistic, religious, sociological, metaphysical, or historical in their orientation or worldview, I argue that the human essence is the highest and most unique emergent from the cosmic process. I assume that process is the essential feature of the universe and everything in it: everything that exists is a process and comes into being as an emergent from the natural process. The human phenomenon does not fall from a metaphysical or physical sky, nor does it fall from the mind of an ivory tower dreamer. It originates from the human body as a life force that seeks to exist and fulfill its destiny according to its nature. Second, the human essence does not emerge as a gift from nature to a particular society but to all the societies that comprise the *Human Species*. Values emerge as an existential response to the impulse to human life, which exists as a potentiality in the human essence. What the Chinese, Pakistani, Cuban, or American peremptorily desires as a means of fulfilling their destiny in the world is, in principle, the same in all human beings.

The book is composed of three parts: the first (Chapter 1) is a statement of the theory, the second (Chapter 2) is a detailed discussion of the thesis of the book, and the third (Chapters 3-5) is a detailed illustration of the primary claim of the thesis.

In the second chapter, I argue that human values come into being as an existential response to the peremptory desires or basic human urges that constitute the essential structure of the human essence and that the human essence exists as a potentiality in the formal organization of the human body. Implicit in this thesis is that an adequate understanding of the phenomenon of value should be based on a reasonable examination of the instantiation of value in aesthetic, intellectual, religious, moral, and individual experience and in the dynamics of its origination. We cannot adequately comprehend a phenomenon in the fullness of its being unless we comprehend it in terms of its structure, assumptions, effects, and the conditions under which it comes into being.

In Chapter 3, I discuss the dynamics involved in the generation of human values from the human essence that exists as a potentiality in the formal organization of the human body. The analysis of these dynamics focuses on the elucidation of five concepts: first, causation, which is indispensable for an explanation of the nature of emergence, second, the emergence of the

human spark from the cosmic process, third, the emergence of the human essence from the human spark, and fourth, the differentiation of the human essence into three capacities, intellect, affection, and volition, and fifth, the emergence of human values from the human essence.

In Chapter 4, I discuss the emergence of aesthetic value in some detail. I argue that aesthetic value inheres in the formal organization of the artwork. The essential structure of this potentiality consists of the unity of the aesthetic qualities the artist creates in the creative process. These qualities make up the artistic dimension of the work. Their realization of the aesthetic culminates in the construction of the aesthetic object. It emerges in the experience as a world of meaning.

In Chapter 5, I discuss the emergence of religious value. I elucidate and defend the proposition that religious experience, which is mystical in character, is the ontic source of religiosity in all its manifestations. This kind of experience is based on a reflective, intuitive, and synoptic contemplation of the universe in its details and the power that underlies its creation and continuation. The religious experience is so luminous, magnificent, overpowering, and creative that it deserves respect or reverence. Religious value emanates from the primary mystical experience. The nature of the power that underlies the universe is revealed in this experience.

In Chapter 6, I discuss the emergence of individuality as a primary value. The main focus of this chapter is human happiness. I argue that human growth and development are the essence of freedom; it is also the essence of happiness: a person grows in happiness the more she grows in freedom. What is freedom? I argue that freedom is the final aim of human life. In my attempt to establish the validity of this proposition, I argue in some detail that a human being is essentially a value reality. Humanity exists in nature, but it thrives in a human environment created by the hands of humanity as a collective mind. Moreover, the human being is a self-created being. A necessary condition for human growth and development is living in a democratic environment. Why? This kind of environment provides sufficient conditions for human growth and development.

CHAPTER TWO

ORIGIN OF HUMAN VALUES

Introduction

In their endeavor to inquire into the nature of human values, axiologists begin by reflecting on a sphere of value that figures prominently in human experience, such as religious, moral, intellectual, social, economic, political, or aesthetic experience. Ethicists theorize on the nature of moral values, aestheticians on the nature of beauty or aesthetic values, theologians on the nature of religious values, political philosophers on the nature of human well-being, justice, and the conditions of social progress, and economists on the nature of economic values. Frequently, an analysis of value in one of these areas of human life, regardless of the extent to which it may be adequate, amounts to a theory or conception of value, as if the theory is comprehensive and exhaustive in its function as a principle of explanation. However, one wonders whether a reasonably constructed theory of morals or any other sphere of human values, taken singly, can, in principle, provide an adequate explanation or analysis of what it means for something to be a human value. For example, the ethicist restricts her inquiry to questions such as what makes a law, situation, institution, person, or act moral. What does “moral” signify? What is the basis of moral principles? How can we establish the validity of a moral judgment? We encounter a similar approach in the other areas of value and value experience. Although a comprehensive theory of the nature of one value may be meaningful, enlightening, satisfactory, and logically compelling, it would not, I submit, be adequate if it does not provide an adequate understanding of the nature of value in the fullness of its being as a human phenomenon. Regardless of whether they are taken singly or collectively, instantiations of a concept, or schema, of a value, the way it is disclosed in concrete human experience cannot by itself reveal the nature of the depth of the inexhaustive possibilities of realizations implicit in the concept or schema, or the value primarily because any one of them is general and therefore a potentiality for limitless realization. The inexhaustibility of a value as a schema reflects the inexhaustibility of the possibility of types of value and valuation inherent in the human essence as a potentiality.

An adequate comprehension of the phenomenon of value should be based on a reasonable grasp of not only its instantiation in the various domains of value experience or in the way it reveals itself in them but also on its genesis, that is, on its source and stuff that makes up its essential structure as a phenomenon. Value experience, as I shall momentarily discuss, is an integral element of human experience not only because the activities that make up the structure of human life, in general, are inherently conscious and purposeful but also because the concept of purpose implies deliberation, selection, evaluation, and a sense of value. Value is the basis of purpose. No matter its kind, purpose as well as the process of its realization are embodied in the stream of human experience individually and collectively. A reasonable account of this two-fold process is a necessary condition for an adequate understanding of the phenomenon of value.

Moreover, achieving this understanding without a serious grasp of the roots from which value comes into being is extremely difficult and, I think, impossible. The point that merits special attention is that we cannot comprehend any phenomenon adequately, in the fullness of its being, unless we comprehend it in terms of its origin, assumptions, and the activity of its realization in concrete experience. It derives its being from this origin, after all! Ontologically speaking, the essential nature of a cause, or some of its basic aspects, is, to a large extent, immanent in its effects. Do we not acquire a significant measure of understanding the nature of the sun by a scientific examination of the light it emits? Do we not acquire a reasonable understanding of the mind or character of the artist by a critical, analytical, and intuitive understanding of her work? Do we not derive ample knowledge of a dead culture by an examination of its cultural achievements in the domain of art, religion, technology, science, and cultural achievements? It would, I think, be plausible to argue that a reasonable knowledge of the origin of value as a phenomenon is a necessary condition for the possibility of an adequate account of its nature.

Furthermore, in all its concrete dimensions, humanity is a value reality: the human as such comes into being in the medium of realized value. This is the primary reason why the central types of human experience exemplify the thrust—aim and drive-- of the values that underlie all the types of experiences people undergo in the course of their theoretical and practical lives. Again, can we speak of types of value if they do not share the same essence or nature or if they do not arise from the same source? Religious, moral, political, aesthetic, and cultural values are generically different from each other, and yet they are identical by the fact that they are types of value. What is the basis of this identity? In what sense are they modes of value

experience? How does value arise in human experience as a living reality in the course of value experience? There is no reason to argue the way Plato did that natural and artifactual objects derive their identity from a particular universal, which exists as a metaphysical entity in a transcendental realm, by being similar to the universal, by the participation of the universal in the particulars, or by the presence of the universal in the particulars, although most if not all philosophers ever since the Enlightenment abandoned this mode of explanation simply because Plato's view of universals is epistemologically and metaphysically untenable. We can say that his view stands on its head; accordingly, it would be appropriate to let it stand on its feet and palpably argue that various values arise from a primordial source of value, that they derive their identity as values from this source, and that their concrete realizations in experience are instantiations of these values. This argument warrants reflection on the phenomenon of value in the fullness of its being, that is, from the standpoint of its origin, structure, and effects.

The thesis I will clarify and defend in this chapter is that values come into being as an existential response to peremptory desires inherent in the human essence. They are not only ingredients of human experience but also their foundation. These desires are the reason for being of the values. Delete them from the sphere of human living, and you delete humanity as a real phenomenon. Implicit in this proposition is the idea that human nature is a reality in the sense that it exists as a potentiality in the formal organization of the human body and comes to life as realized value in experience. How? In my attempt to defend this proposition, I shall first advance a concept of the human essence as the ultimate source of everything human in our lives. In this context, I shall discuss the concept of potentiality with particular emphasis on what it means for human nature to exist as a potentiality. Second, I shall argue that the human essence is essentially a power, an impulse for being according to its nature. Its structure consists of five basic peremptory desires, which can be viewed as capacities, drives, or urges. Their living unity constitutes the structure of human nature. These desires are entirely telic in character. The objects at which they aim are values. Third, human beings live in two realms: the first is natural, and the second is human. The first is the realm of nature, and the second is the realm of realized human values. These values exist in the world as human achievements.

A Concept of Human Nature

An inquiry into the nature of human values should, I submit, proceed from an adequate conception of human nature and, more concretely, from the *phenomenon* whose presence in a reality makes it a human reality. Philosophers have been in the habit of asking questions such as, what makes an act, an object, or a situation moral, religious, aesthetic, or political? In raising these and similar types of questions, they seek an understanding of the phenomenon that makes the reality moral, religious, aesthetic, or political. Although these qualities do not exist as ready-made objects of perception for our sensibility or intellect, the way trees or rocks, or the way sensual qualities exist; nevertheless, they are as real as the reality of the objects to which they belong. For example, we seek an understanding of the type of quality that makes an object aesthetic because aesthetic qualities such as grandeur, tragedy, or magnificence are possible objects of experience and because we deem them desirable and important or significant. Similarly, philosophers ask with irresistible curiosity or concern, what makes an organism a human being? This question calls for urgent consideration not only because people are self-conscious beings and possess a sense of curiosity and a desire to know but also because self-understanding is indispensable for meeting their needs, desires, and dreams. Any type of discourse about the quality, aspect, or reality that makes people human beings, that is, the human dimension of their being, is a discourse about the dimension that distinguishes human beings from the rest of the animal species.

Broadly, the nature of an object is the source of its identity. It is the basis of classifying it as a *kind* of object. To know the nature of an object is to know the nature of the reality that gives it its identity. We may refer to it as “essence” primarily because it consists of essential, constitutive, and generative powers or elements. Accordingly, it is the basis of its definition. Cognizing the identity of an object is, in effect, cognizing the essential structure of its essence, and to cognize its essence is to apprehend the constitutive features and elements that make up the unity of its essence or, put differently, to apprehend the unity of its differentiae. The essence of an object shines through this unity. For example, a manikin is not a human being, although it appears to be one. But if by a magical or supernatural act, it is endowed with the essential features that constitute the human essence, which necessarily shines through its appearance, we can interact with it as a human being. Again, whether it is a particular rock, lion, or tree, we know its identity by an apprehension of its differentiae, or essence.

However, the essence of an object is not merely its appearance or the way it is apprehended in ordinary or mental or sensual perception, or simply its differentiae, for the appearance is a necessary condition for its existence as well as its perception but includes the appearance; on the contrary, the appearance is an integral part of the essence of the object as an integrity. We do not, and cannot, experience the differentiae apart from all the elements that make up the appearance. This is why it is appropriate to say that the essence *shines in and through* its appearance. This claim is based on the fundamental assumption that the essence of objects is not always given in the fullness of their being in ordinary mental or sensual perception. Let me illustrate this point with two examples, one from the realm of nature and the other from the realm of humanity. First, we can say that matter is the essence of physical objects, but then, what is matter? We may begin with the given or perceptible features of the object, for instance, a rock, that is perceivable by the five senses. Can we say that the material essence of the rock is these features? No. The types of physical objects that make up the scheme of nature are both limitless in number and different in kind. The elements and features of water are different from the features of rocks. Again, the objects that make up the class of rocks and those that make up the class of water are variable. However, although physical objects exist and have different types of identities, they share one essence by virtue of which they are categorized as “physical objects.” As the history of science from the times of Democritus to the present shows, as a reality, matter is an unusually complex structure composed of a diversity of elements. It took scientists 3000 years of painstaking research to discover most of the elements that constitute the structure of matter. The history of physical theory is a history of a growing and developing] knowledge of this structure. To a large extent, most of these elements are not directly given to ordinary mental and sensual perception, that is, as parts of the given appearance of the physical object. Yet, they are constitutive of their appearance, for they appear to the scientist under certain perceptual conditions. These elements are not restricted to what scientists discover by means of their instruments and mathematical computations or the way people perceive or identify them in ordinary experience. This is why it is plausible to say that the essence of an object shines in and through its appearance.

Second, let us direct our attention to an artifact such as an artwork. This type of work has an identity distinguishable from the identity of other types of artifacts. What makes an artifact an artwork? To begin, it is characterized as an artwork because its essence is a phenomenon we normally characterize as an artistic phenomenon. The presence of this phenomenon in an artifact makes it an artwork. It is its essence as an artwork. What is this essence? If

I cast an ordinary yet inquiring look at a painting such as DaVinci's *Mona Lisa* in search of its artistic essence, I cannot find it because my ordinary eyes cannot perceive it. All they can see is a representation of a woman seated in a certain way against a natural background. I cannot, no matter how much I try, discern a reality I can identify as "art," and yet this very representation is an artwork. How can I cognitively ascertain that it is an artwork? To do this, I must perceive it as an aesthetic object, which is possible under certain perceptual conditions, the way the scientists ascertain the existence of matter under certain perceptual conditions. Fulfilling these perceptual conditions enables me to perceive and ascertain the presence of the artistic dimension in the representation. Implied in this process is that, as a type of reality, the aesthetic dimension of the painting is not given to ordinary perception or as a part of its sensual appearance, but as a potentiality inherent in the formal organization of the appearance. It shines in the fullness of its being when I can penetrate the appearance into the potentiality of the artistic dimension. Only when I am able to actualize this potentiality under the conditions of aesthetic perception, the way a physicist penetrates the appearance of a physical object into its essence under certain perceptual conditions, can the work shine in and through its appearance.

The point that deserves special mention in view of the analysis of these two examples is that the essence of an object is the basis of our cognition of its identity. Any talk about it is tantamount to talking about its nature. This is why I feel justified in using "essence" and "nature" interchangeably. This approach to the concept of essence, which is Aristotelian in character, obviates the need to take into consideration the various views of "essence" and "nature" that dominated philosophical speculation from the days of Plato and Aristotle to the second half of the last century. Its field of reflection is the natural and artifactual objects people create and interact with during their theoretical and practical lives.

However, unlike natural and artistic objects, human nature does not exist in the world as a kind of given object that exists as an individual identity the way a tree, a car, or an artwork does. In our search for it, we do not encounter it anywhere, either in the sphere of the mind or in the scheme of nature. Nevertheless, it is as real as the reality of the tree, the car, or the artwork not only because it is the source and foundation of the realm of humanity in the amazing richness of its concretizations but also because it is omnipresent in this realm and the source of the identity of every object in it. It is at once embodied in and shines through these objects. Its presence in them is what endows them with a human character. However, if human nature is real, and it is, it should be treated as a *nature*, therefore as a type of reality, although

it is not given as a ready made reality; but if it is a nature, we should be able to reflect on it the way we reflect on any other type of reality, examine its structure, and articulate a conception of it. Once more, if it is a reality but does not exist directly to our faculty of reflection, where are we to look for it or identify it? In what sense is it an object of reflection?

Broadly, we examine the nature of the human essence the way we examine the nature of any type of *embodied reality*. For example, the beauty of an artwork is, as I have just explained, embodied in the formal organization of the artwork. The beauty of the work comes to life in the process of the aesthetic experience. The beauty shines through the dynamic interrelatedness of the elements that make up the aesthetic structure of the work, and the beauty we experience is always the beauty of a particular artwork. However, when we turn our attention to the human essence, we discover that it is embodied in three basic types of reality, each one of which is a class of various objects: first, the individual human being as a cognitive subject; second, the multitude that comprise the human beings in the past and present, and third, the history of human civilization, viz., the works or achievements of human beings in the past six millennia. Although these achievements are different in particulars and types, they are human achievements by virtue of the fact that they embody one and the same essence. This essence shines through their structural form as their distinctive quality.

First, I know what it means for a reality to be human by an examination of my inner, or subjective, self. My body, every experience I undergo, and every action I perform or artifact I create, embody the flare of the human essence that pulsates in every element of the work I accomplish, produce, or create. Beginning with oneself in our attempt to explore the nature of the human essence is not only natural but also reasonably reliable because the structure of my being is given directly to my inquiring mind. But no matter its resourcefulness, we cannot, in this kind of inquiry, be contented with the knowledge derived from self-examination because the individual self is just one reality in which the human essence is embodied. As we shall presently see, this essence is an inexhaustible possibility for realization in different forms and ways. Do we not encounter it in every element of the realm of humanity? Does the human individual not reveal her humanity in limitless forms and ways? Does the creative act of the human individual recognize any limit of envisionment or imagination?

The second type of reality we should consider as a source of our knowledge is the human essence is the plentitude of human beings in their various

domains of experience everywhere in the world with a special focus on what they do and how they think, feel, desire, and make decisions primarily because the human essence reveals itself in their subjective world and objectively in their actions and achievements. Every human being is a center of human presence. She is a drop of human life. This drop is a human world. It is private, subjective, and confidential, but as a living world, she reveals herself in her various actions and achievements. Do we not constantly interact and observe other human beings in the sphere of the family, society, workplace, school, religious places of worship, and every institution of the state? Do we not discern the depth and versatility of their humanity in their actions and attainments? How can we achieve this discernment if the humanity we comprehend is not the same humanity we comprehend in the privacy of our souls? Do we not sometimes see ourselves in the human other and the human other in ourselves? Can we not glean the depth of our humanity when we intuitively reflect on the humanity that shines in the deeds and achievements of other human beings?

But, third, the fundamental insight implied in the preceding remark, which functions as an assumption, applies with greater lucidity in our attempt to acquire an adequate understanding of the human essence when we move our attention to the actions and achievements that make up the essential structure of human civilization. In this realm, we do not observe or interact with human beings individually or collectively, but with their deeds and achievements. What are these deeds and achievements? From one vantage point, we can say that this world is a macroscopic extension of what people do, seek, and achieve, but with one exception. The world of human civilization is an amazing mosaic of universal and significant human achievements, those that matter to human beings in the course of realizing their life projects everywhere in the world. Generally, those achievements reflect the peremptory desires that constitute the human essence. They reflect what human beings can do and create. If we examine these achievements, we discover that they are works of science, philosophy, art, religion, technology, and social organization. We can plausibly assert that the nature of the world human civilization is the nature of the human being writ large mainly because the humanity revealed in them is the humanity of the human individual. We can intuit the dynamics of the human essence, which throbs in the bosom of the human individual, in the story of human civilization. Do we not acquire a depth of self-understanding the more we explore the nature of human achievements in the various fields of human experience? Is the history of these achievements not a mirror in which we see a magnification of our individual selves? What is the aim of education but the growth of self-understanding? Do we not assume in pursuing this

aim that this type of understanding is a necessary condition for achieving our happiness or well-being?

A critic who has been following the thread of my discussion would now intervene: “Can the humanity that is revealed in the cognitive subject, other human beings, and the history of civilization disclose the nature of the human essence in the fullness of its being? How can we say that this essence reveals itself in these three types of reality if we do not assume (1) that the human essence is a subject that presides over the creation of this world and (2) that every human being is a microcosmic subject that presides over its actions, creations, and management of its life? If the human as such is real, it must exist as a reality, and if it manifests itself similarly everywhere in the world, it must be universal—what is the ontological status of the human essence? In what sense is the human individual a human subject if we say that it inheres as a potentiality in the formal organization of the human body, which is a natural reality?”

This line of reasoning, as well as the questions it implies, is reasonable. The countless ways in which humanity is revealed in human achievements cannot suddenly surge into being *ex nihilo*. On the contrary, they are inherently telic, i.e., purposeful, which necessarily implies a power or an agent that consciously, knowingly, and pointedly creates them and underlies their existence. This inference is, first, logically warranted by the fact that every mode of human being and every type of its manifestation is essentially artifactual. The concept of artifact implies the concept of an artificer. Humanity is not a natural reality, although nature is its home; it is a created reality. Accordingly, it is appropriate to inquire into the nature of the agent or subject that creates it. Second, the human realm does not, and cannot, exist as part of human beings. If, perchance, they cease to exist, the human world ceases to exist. We not only experience this world as a created reality, but we also experience ourselves as its source. We may argue, as I have been doing, that the human being is its source; still, it is critically important to explore the nature of this source because, as the present analysis shows, the human subject as a creative power is not given to the world as a ready made reality but as a potentiality. When I encounter a human, I do not perceive or discern a cognitive or human subject. All I perceive or discern is a lump of flesh organized in a certain way and moves about in a strange way. What is the nature of the power that makes it move about the way it does?

Although the human essence does not exist concretely as a natural or metaphysical reality anywhere in the universe, as I indicated a moment ago,

nevertheless, it exists as a drop of potentiality in the formal organization of the human body; and as a concrete potentiality, in the sense that it is an identity, it exists as a creative, formative, and productive power, that is, as a subject that administers the process of its realization purposefully and volitionally. I characterized it, albeit metaphorically, as a “drop” not only to avoid referring to it as an object, since it is essentially a power but to accentuate the fact that it is also a burst of life and as such, a thrust for being—for continual growth and development in the process of realizing itself as an individual human reality. We may, moreover, characterize it as an “*elan vitale*”, a kind of source or *arche* that is formless yet capable of giving rise to a multitude of forms in a variety of ways. These ways of characterizing it are consistent with the being and logic of power as a natural human phenomenon. Is it an accident that philosophers from the days of Plato and Aristotle to the present viewed it as spirit, soul, reason, self, or some kind of reality that is not physical in nature? This is why it is justifiable to refer to it as a flare, flame, burst, drop, or even as a sun.

Now, what do we mean when we say that the human essence exists concretely as a power inherent in the formal organization of the human body? How does it come into being as a cognitive subject, one that thinks, feels, desires, wills, and acts? Does it exist in some organ or some corner of the body as a lump of flesh? No. No matter its kind, as a power, potentiality does not exist as an independent object. It inheres in the body as an organic whole. It emerges as an identity from the way the human body is organized, unlike the way the body of any other animal organism is organized. It is reasonable to say that it inheres in the dynamics that enable the body to function as a kind of reality the way the aesthetic object, or the human world, of an artwork emerges from the dynamic interrelatedness of the representational elements that constitute its substance as an artwork in the process of the aesthetic experience. The way of organization or relatedness of the various parts of the human body is the womb from which the human essence emerges as a distinctive reality. The event of emergence occurs the moment the human being opens her eyes to the world in the morning and passes into deep sleep the moment it closes them in the evening. This occurrence marks the emergence of consciousness. The human being functions as a cognitive subject and acts from the humanity that constitutes the powers that inhere in her being as a potentiality. The body that was dormant when it was asleep functions according to the will of the cognitive subject the moment it becomes conscious of itself. Our knowledge of it, which is based on self-examination, is very limited. Which cognitive subject can we trust? Although the dynamics of its emergence are shared by all

human beings, its details are still the subject of scientific and philosophical study.

The emergence of consciousness is, in fact, the emergence of the human subject that can act according to laws inherent in its being. What emerges is a flare of power. This power does not exist in the body as a physical constituent but in and through the body and functions, not according to the laws that govern the activities of the body as a natural object but as an instrument of the human essence that is immanent in it. This is why we can say that the emergence of the cognitive subject spiritualizes, or humanizes, the human body that it inhabits. The body is transformed into an objectification of the will of the human subject. As a human essence, the subject exists in its objectified mode of being, and the body exists as a human reality. When I stand before a human being as a human subject with the intention of having a conversation with her, do I stand before a mere lump of flesh or before a human subject? Do I see her merely as a body but primarily as a human reality? On the other hand, do I act as a lump of flesh or as a human subject? On the contrary, do I not feel that her humanity shines through every part of her body and every bodily gesture she makes? Even when men and women sometimes see each other as sexual objects, do they not engage in this kind of seeing as human realities? Would any one of them treat the other as a manikin or as a bionically engineered being?

“It seems to me,” my critic would at this point of my discussion interject, “that although succinct, your account of the emergence of consciousness is consistent with the recent findings of neuroscience. But these findings are, as far as I know, infant because they do not explain the emergence of the human subject as a cognitive subject and especially as a unique type of reality. I tend to think that the human phenomenon is irreducible to a physical phenomenon, which is the domain of physical science, according to which the meaning or truth of any proposition is determined by the method of its verification, which is assumed to be the method of empirical science. But the human as such transcends, in its existence and nature, the method of the empirical scientist. How can you explain, if you can, the emergence of human reality from the human body, which is essentially a material object? The emergence of self-consciousness seems to be a necessary condition for the existence of the human subject, but is it a sufficient condition? How can we explain the leap, or transition, from the material to the human? This question is a request for an explanation of the nature of the human essence that inheres as a potentiality in the formal organization of the human body, which is material in nature, giving rise to

an essence that is not material. My immediate response to this question is yes. Let me explain and defend this answer.

I shall first point out that the bifurcation of reality into two distinct types, physical and human, according to which neither one is reducible to the other, or there cannot be continuity between them, has been unduly exaggerated and, I think, mistaken. This distinction is philosophically and probably scientifically useful as a basis of explanation, for it enables us to classify the types of objects that make up the human and natural worlds, but it is not consistent with human experience on the ground of living reality where the human and material not only intersect existentially but are continuous with each other. Does the human dimension of the human being not shine in and through the human body? As Schopenhauer argued in detail, in *The World as Will and Representation*, the body is an objectification of the human will. How can that which is natural be transformed into a reality that is not only an image but also the actual reality of the human will? Is this type of transformation not an essential aspect of human experience? Let me illustrate the significance of this foundational intuition with some examples.

First, let us ask, what makes an artifact art? Most aestheticians would readily say that the presence of aesthetic qualities in the work is what makes it art; it comes to life as a non-physical quality in the aesthetic experience. But what is the nature of these qualities? How do they exist in the artwork, which is given to our sensibility merely as a physical object? Can we experience them through any one or a combination of the five senses? No. Again, how do they exist in the artifact? Broadly, we can plausibly ascertain that they come to life as non-physical qualities in the aesthetic experience, that is, when we perceive the work *aesthetically*. First, aesthetic quality is a human quality; it does not exist in the artwork as a sensual element or as a constituent of its physical dimension, and yet, it exists in it, but how? I submit that it exists in it as a potentiality inherent in the dynamic interrelatedness of the elements that make up the work as a representation. Can it come to life in the aesthetic experience if this type of potential does not inhere in the formal organization of the representation or if it cannot be realized in the aesthetic experience under certain conditions of aesthetic perception? Moreover, we experience it as a quality of the artwork, not merely as a subjective feeling. How does it move from the physical object into my experience as a human quality? Again, in what sense or mode does it exist in the physical representation? As I have just indicated, a plausible answer to this question is that it exists not directly in the representation but as potentiality inherent in its formal organization. Artistic form is what

artists create—pure form. The form of an object is the language the object speaks—expresses or communicates. The essence of this type of creation consists of translating the artist's vision, emotion, feeling, or experience during the creative process into a non-ordinary language: form. The form is given in the representation, but its mode of organization is not. The capacity of a human emotion, idea, mood, or state of mind to be embodied in a certain formal organization, which is sensible, is, it seems to me, a clear case in which the intersection between the physical and human becomes a continuity in the aesthetic experience: the physical and human are fused and transcended into a unique category or type of reality: viz., experience, and more concretely human experience. When I listen to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony aesthetically and move into the depth of the world of joy that unfolds in my experience, can I be aware of, sense, intuit, or in any way perceive, anything in my physical environment, including my body, and can I be aware of any psychological or intellectual states of mind, or anything that is not an integral part of the unfolding of the world of the music? Am I not one with the music when I am having this type of experience? Is this moment not a flare of experience, of life, of being that transcends the physical and psychological? If you ask me to describe my experience, can I describe it? No, not literally. All I can do is smile and ask you to listen to the symphony aesthetically. How can I describe it if my experience is neither mental nor sensual? But one in which the physical is humanized and the human materialized?

Second, let us consider a religious, mystical, or metaphysical experience, in which I experience the presence of the divine, or the ultimate, in my life and the scheme of nature. In the heat of a mystical experience with the divine, am I, or can I be, conscious of myself or the physical reality in which I am anchored through my body? Can I be conscious of a being like God, Absolute, Substance, Universal Spirit, Unmoved Mover, or the Ultimate in the living flare of this kind of experience? Does my experience not transcend any material or human characterization? Is it not miraculous that matter ceases to be matter and humanity ceases to be humanity in this kind of experience? Is it an accident that some mystics declare after emerging from this kind of experience, "I am God!! I am the Divine!"? Alas! Does the phenomenon of experience have two faces, one material and the other spiritual? I say two faces because the face is the means that expresses the inner being that lies behind it. Let me reiterate an example I visited a few moments ago: do I see or interact with a lump of flesh when I meet or interact with a dear friend? But then, how can I treat this lump of flesh as a human reality if I do not experience it as a human reality? Yet, this very reality is given to my sensibility as a lump of flesh.

A Concept of Potentiality

However, my critic would remind me that the real question is whether the human essence, which is irreducible to physical terms, can emerge from a physical reality such as the human body. My immediate response is, why not? I have discussed a few examples in which the human emerges from the material. Now I would like to direct my critic's attention to the scheme of nature, which exists to our sensibility as an amazing web of species and sub-species. If we take into consideration the recent findings of biological science, we can characterize this scheme as a process of creative advance, in the sense that it is an evolutionary process. Biological species emerge from existing biological species under certain natural conditions. These conditions are creative in character. The newly emerging species always exists as a potentiality in the species from which it emerges. Can a species such as lions emerge from a species such as water or apple trees? The potentiality of any species or object inheres in the formal organization of the members of existing species or objects. Regardless of whether it is natural or human, the form of an object is a dynamic organization of elopements. These elements are held together by virtue of the dynamic nature of the relations that constitute the structure of the object. Dynamism is a necessary condition for the possibility of any kind of creation and any kind of change. This aspect is inherent in the structure of reality and indispensable for the possibility of change. If, for some reason, it vanishes from the universe, material reality collapses. I would not be amiss if I said that it is not only the impetus but also the moving force of any type of change, evolution, development, or creation.

The kind of reality that emerges in human or natural realm depends on the kind of potentiality that inheres in the object which gives rise to it. A certain species of apple trees is a potential for a variety of apple species. The new species emerges from an existing species of apples; it cannot emerge from a species of rocks or lions. It is critically important at this point of my discussion to spotlight the phenomenon of potentiality. What types of reality is this phenomenon? What do we mean when we speak of potentiality? The word "potentiality" is derived from the Latin *potens*, preposition of *posse*, "to be able", which derives from *potis*, "able". A potent object is powerful, and potentiality signifies power. Broadly, "potentiality" connotes "the state or quality of being potential; possibility of becoming, developing" (WNWCD). It does not exist as a perceptual mental or physical reality but as a latent—hidden or invisible—quality. Implied in this characterization is that potentiality does not exist in an object or individual reality but is always a quality inherent in an object. For example, we do not stumble on it in our

observation of any natural environment. However, it does not inhere in the object as perceptible quality, which one can perceive by one or more senses, but in the *dynamic interrelatedness* of the elements that make up the essential structure of the object. It derives its identity from the nature of the object and the way it is organized or formed.

From the standpoint of biological science, the human species as we know it in its present stage of development has emerged from a less-developed human species, which, in turn, emerged from a less-developed species. There was a point of evolution at which the human species, which may be characterized as primitive compared to its present form, emerged from an undeveloped human species. Every new kind of species emerges, under appropriate material conditions, from an earlier or less developed or structurally different species. The impetus of development inherent in the dynamic interrelatedness of the essential structure of the previous species is the type of potentiality latent in this very structure. We may palpably theorize that the evolution of human nature as it now exists in the scheme of nature emerged from the potentiality that inhered in the same species. Although the human nature that prevails in the human species at present is, in principle, the same as the one that prevailed in the human species millennia ago, nevertheless, it is far more developed than it had ever been. I think it will continue to grow in complexity and creativity with the gradual growth and development of the human and natural conditions of life.

Structure of Human Nature: Emergence of Values

The purpose of the preceding excursion into the concept of evolution, which is familiar to students of science, philosophy, theology, and ordinary people, is only to underscore the reasonableness of the claim that the human species can, in principle, emerge from a non-human species, thanks to the dynamical nature of reality. Now, we can ask in the spirit of my critic's query, how does the essence which exists as a potentiality in the formal organization of the human body come into being as a living reality when it becomes conscious of itself and the world around it? Let me at once state that, as a flash, impulse, or burst of power, a potentiality is a possibility for a multitude, and in some cases, as an infinite number of realizations in various forms and ways. For example, a rock that sits on the side of a mountain has the potential for realization as a building block, statue, monument, or weapon. This feature is an essential property of the concept, or universal, of any type of reality, to which I have already alluded in the context of my elaboration of the concept of human essence. We may view

it as a source that gives rise to different types of objects or formations. In itself, it is pure and formless, but it is capable of being a condition for the possibility of a plentitude of formations. As a universal, it expresses a necessary condition for the creation of novel objects. The presence of these elements in an object is the basis of its inclusion in a class. For example, the different types of apples we see in the marketplace are apples because they possess the essential elements of the general or universal concept or phenomenon of “apple.” As we see, the universal provides the basic structure that constitutes the identity of an object: to know an object is to know all the features it reveals in experience.

Now, when I say that the human essence emerges from the formal organization of the human body, I mean that its essential structure is a potentiality for the emergence of certain essential elements or functions, which are, in turn, potentials for the emergence of elements or powers that constitute the human essence. The possibility of this two-fold emergence in the evolution of the human species, which was not simple or straightforward, did not happen in one eruption, surge, or sudden appearance but gradually under certain material conditions. The essence that emerges from the way the human body functions and develops in accordance with the logic, powers, and demands of the human body; its domain of action and creation is the body. It cannot transcend its physical and potential capacities. The identity of the human essence is an emanation from these capacities.

The time is now ripe to ask more directly, what are the elements that constitute the structure of the human essence as a potentiality inherent in the body? How do these elements come to life as concrete, active, and constitutive components of the living human individual? I raise these questions because the human essence exists as a power inherent in the formal organization of the body. However, it does not exist as a simple, or pure but, as I indicated earlier, as a possibility for realization in various modes of being. What are these modes? Let me first point out that the constitutive components of the structure of the human essence are emergent from the human essence as a potentiality; they express the fundamental impulse of the human body, viz., the impulse to life. Its presence in this kind of body in contrast to the rest of the animal family, transforms the biological impulse to life to a human impulse to life. Human beings do not merely aim to live as lumps of flesh but as *human lumps of flesh*. The body is transmuted into a means, or materiel, indeed into an extension of the human being as a human reality. A comprehensive examination of the three manifestations of the human essence, namely, the cognitive subject, the human other, and the history of civilization, will show that the constitutive elements of the human

essence are five primary capacities, powers, or urges: thinking or intellect, feeling or affection, volition or choice, being or living.

These urges are thrusts—a cry for realization or being. We may characterize them as *peremptory desires* because they are insistent and cannot be resisted without the possibility of either failure, loss, or penalty, mainly because they are emanations from the potentiality that gives rise to the human essence. As urges, they are telic in character. They are types of appetite. The word “appetite” comes from the Latin *appetitus*, “eager desire for,” that is, a desire to satisfy an urge or craving. Although they are distinguishable, they exist as the unity of the human essence. They are interdependent. They imply each other. They derive their unity from the human essence as a potentiality.

Desire implies lack—need or want—and lack implies a craving for satisfaction. One desires something she does not have, and what she desires inheres in the essential nature of the desire as a craving. Essential or primary desires are needs; they are necessary for survival. One cannot feel satisfied or satiated until she fulfills her desires or, in some way, silences them. For example, the desire for food or drink is necessary for survival, the desire for social existence is necessary for the satisfaction of one’s social nature or impulse, and the desire for knowledge, beauty, and love is necessary for human growth and development. We can choose to fulfill our desires in various ways and measures, but we cannot choose to ignore, neglect, or marginalize them.

Now, what do the peremptory desires that make us the structure of human essence aim at? What do they want? It is, I think, appropriate to propose that the objects at which peremptory desires constitute the human essence, which inheres in the human body as a potentiality, *aim are values*. The crystallization of these values as principles of action marks the emergence of human nature as a type of reality that emanates from the formal organization of the human body. Intellect aims at knowledge or truth; affection aims at goodness, religiosity, and beauty; and volition aims at freedom and being. If we reflect on the driving forces of our lives theoretically and practically, we discover that they aim at these values and their derivatives. For example, the value of truth embraces values such as wisdom, sound judgment, open-mindedness, or integrity; goodness embraces values such as justice, friendship, honesty, or courage; beauty embraces values such as grandeur, tragedy, or loftiness; religiosity embraces values such as mercy, piety, humility, or faith; and freedom embraces values such as individuality, success, prosperity, or progress. If we turn our attention to the

various domains of human inquiry, we discover that they comprise philosophy, science, religion, technology, and art. Philosophy aims at understanding the nature of the meaning of existence in general and human existence in particular; science aims at understanding the nature of matter, life, and consciousness; art aims to explore the nature of human and natural existence; and technology aims to translate the truth of the scientist, philosopher, and the artist into means of promoting the well-being of people in the various spheres of their lives. Any discourse about any dimension of human life is at the bottom, a discourse about these peremptory desires and the values they aim at.

The Idea of Value

We can plausibly argue that human values are existential responses to the peremptory desire that constitute the human essence because they are indispensable for human being and flourishing. They do not exist as finally definable aims because the spiritual and material conditions of life are variable and constantly changing. Human beings invariably strive to understand them and try to appropriate them for their growth and development. This is why the concept of value is treated as a general, universal, or schema. This way of viewing it is consistent, and in fact expresses, the meaning of potentiality as a possibility for inexhaustible realization in different forms and ways. Is there one way of loving a human being? Yet, all acts of love share the essential elements of the concept of love as a schema: the desire for union, being-with, sharing, affection, or self-completion.

The word “value” comes from the French *valu*, preposition of *valoir*, “to be strong, be worth, and from the Latin *valere*, which derives from *wal*, “be strong”. I emphasize this twofold root of “value” to spotlight two of its connotations, importance and power. Value is not merely an aspect of an object but also a power, the kind of power that expresses the essential demand of the human essence and plays a creative, formative role in human experience. A valuable object not only embodies a certain value but also a power that inclines the human individual to seek or desire it. How can one aim at an object if it is not important and desirable? What is desire but an urge or a drive? Again, how can it perform this function if it is not capable of satiating the impulse to human growth and development? When I stand before an aesthetically beautiful artwork, do I not feel the power and significance of this beauty the moment I begin my aesthetic penetration of its artistic depth? When the human warmth of my friend enfolds me in a

moment of loneliness or dejection, do I not feel the power and significance of his or her love for me? When I contemplate the amazing order of nature, do I not feel the power and significance of the being that shines through this order? When I am poor and overwhelmed by an assault of deprivation, do I not feel the power and significance of the reward I receive after I work hard and earn the needed income? By the same token, do I not feel the power and significance of these values?

The source of the feeling of self-fulfillment and elation, or the feeling of forlornness and anxiety or absence, originates from the fact that value is a potential meaning. *Realized value is realized meaning*. We feel satisfied when the value we seek is realized and frustrated when it is not. The experience and attainment of meaning are, as I have just indicated, the *raison d'être* of the being of the human as such, regardless of its kind or mode of being. They exist as responses to the peremptory desires that constitute the structure of the human essence because the process of their realization is the medium in and through which human meaning is attained. Having reflected deeply on the meaning of existence in general and the meaning of human existence in particular, Aristotle declared in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that the highest end or good of human life is happiness. However, we may ask ordinary people and philosophers, as he did, "What is the nature of happiness?" Well, what is happiness but the unity of the meaningful experiences human beings undergo during their theoretical and practical lives?

CHAPTER THREE

GENERATION OF HUMAN VALUES FROM THE HUMAN ESSENCE

“The conception of the genesis of human values you advanced in the preceding chapter,” my critic would now query, “stands on seven conceptual pillars. First, the universe is a process of creative advance. Accordingly, every element of its constitutive structure, regardless of whether it is physical, animal, plant, or human, is essentially a process of evolutionary advance, in the sense that its being consists of constantly changing from a given state of being into a new or different state, in which the essential structure of the preceding state, which is the basis of its identity, is transmitted to the succeeding state. The change may be tiny or negligible, and it may be modest and momentous depending on the change that takes place in its immediate environment. Second, the human species is the most recent and advanced emergent in the evolutionary process. The duration of its emergence cannot be measured by the human sense of time but by the pulse of time of the cosmic process. What seems a year, century, or millennium to the human mind may be a flicker from the standpoint of the pulse of cosmic time. Third, the human being is a drop of temporal existence. Like every element of the universe, she comes into being at a certain moment and passes out of being at a later moment. This is why we may characterize human existence as finite or limited. Third, although the human being is an integral part, or extension, of the natural process and depends for her existence on it, nevertheless, she emerges as a kind of reality from this very process. The human dimension of the concrete human being, or that which makes her a human reality, emerges from the unique formation of the human body as a lump of flesh. This type of formation is absent from any other natural or physical formation. Fourth, the human dimension inheres in this type of formation as a potentiality and emerges under certain conditions of social growth. This assertion is based on the assumption that, unlike any other type of emergent, the human body is a unique natural organization, one that is capable of giving rise to the human dimension. Fifth, the human dimension is the basis of what philosophers, scientists, and ordinary people call “human nature,” “mind,” or, as you refer to in this