

# Dimensions of Goodness



# Dimensions of Goodness

Edited by

Vittorio Hösle

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P U B L I S H I N G

Dimensions of Goodness,  
Edited by Vittorio Hösle

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# INTRODUCTION

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It is one of the paradoxes of our time that, as a collective, we accumulate more and more knowledge but, as individuals, we inevitably become less and less able to grasp even the basic concepts of those disciplines to which we do not dedicate our lives. Philosophy itself, which traditionally sought an overview of the knowledge of its time before it could start to clarify concepts, has become a highly specialized enterprise that often prides itself in speaking a language that is inaccessible to non-specialists and in dealing with problems that are no longer connected with those of everyday persons—or, for that matter, with those of scholars outside the realm of philosophy. Those who read recent work in metaethics are often amazed at how little such work is connected to the concrete issues that torment those trying to live good lives. The Notre Dame Institute for Advanced Study was founded in the fall of 2008 as a place where scholars who want to counteract this tendency of fragmentation—often, but not always, inspired by the Catholic tradition—are encouraged to pursue their research. In addition to its residential program, the Institute organizes every year a large conference addressing questions that are by their very nature interdisciplinary—problems that focus in particular on connections between the descriptive and normative realms. After its inaugural 2010 symposium on beauty, the Institute decided to hold its second major conference in April 2011 on “Dimensions of Goodness.” Representatives of disciplines as diverse as philosophy, chemistry, biology, neuroscience, medicine, psychology, economics, law, history, and theology were invited to address issues connected with the question: what are moral decisions, both generally and in those specific fields that challenge the contemporary world? A deliberate choice was made to include a former statesman, who could add practical experience to his theoretical reflections. Given the global nature of the problems humanity has to face, the group was international: it included scholars from Canada, China, Germany, Italy, Mexico, Switzerland, and the United

Kingdom. Each of them was asked a specific question, though he or she could modify that question for greater relevance to his or her research.

Since the time of Hume and Kant, it has become a commonplace that Is does not imply Ought. Even if one regards this as true, however, the question remains as to how statements of value relate to those of fact. In the first section, two contributions address two aspects of this problem. In the first, the nature of moral statements is discussed: do they refer to some real objects that are independent of the human mind? In the second, a perspective committed to the unity of being, even while acknowledging the difference between good and evil, cannot help but consider the issue of whether the world as a whole is good.

The contemporary moral predicament of the Western world is doubtless characterized by the awareness of momentous historical changes in the formation of ethical theories. This awareness, still alien to Kant, need not lead to relativism, but it often does. It seems hard to uphold moral realism if we recognize that different cultures—and, within the same culture, different epochs—have radically different ethical outlooks. Relativism is almost inevitable when historians, philosophers, and theologians do not engage in a considerable effort to explain and find meaning in the development both of our moral sensibility and of ethics itself. In the second section, three papers address this problem from very different angles: they focus not only on the Enlightenment's contribution to moral and ethical change but also on that of Christianity.

The third section reveals the perspective of natural and social scientists. The relations between science and ethics go in both directions: science can try to explain human ethical behavior—which, though it rests on a biological basis, has its own, specifically human characteristics—but ethics must also give direction to scientific and medical research. In the case of complex issues such as stem-cell research, only a willingness of science and ethics to learn from each other is likely to bring forth a consensus acceptable to the whole of society.

The fourth section deals with applied ethics and thematizes what are probably the most urgent challenges of our time—those of the environment, development, the fair business order, the place of religion in a liberal constitution, and war.

The twenty-first century will hardly be an American century: it will most likely be an Asian century, if for no other reason than for the simple one that sixty percent of humanity lives in Asia. But it will be the century of an Asia that has deeply internalized Western science and values and is trying to connect them with its own tradition. The last section offers the

view of a Chinese scholar on the process of integrating Western culture into the rich fabric of China's own intellectual and moral tradition.

As far as I am aware, the combination of these different approaches to the nature of goodness in a single volume is almost unique: if it is not in fact unique, it is certainly very rare. Though the many chapters of the book exhibit differences not only among their methodologies but also among the specific conceptions of morality that inform them, there is nonetheless an overarching concern that connects them—the desire to have goodness penetrate as much as possible society and the tree of knowledge. If the dialogue among persons from different backgrounds is itself a moral imperative in a world that has lost much of its unity, then this book is not just an inspiration for discussions of goodness: it itself fulfills a moral duty.

The first paper, “Moral Realism,” is by one of the best analytical German philosophers, Franz von Kutschera, whose handbooks have become standard in almost all philosophical disciplines—including logic, philosophy of language, philosophy of science, epistemology, ethics, aesthetics, and philosophy of religion; he has also written one of the most comprehensive recent books on Plato. His essay is based on his last book *Wert und Wirklichkeit* (*Value and Reality*) and offers a subtle answer to the problem of the ontological status of values. Kutschera wants “to steer a course between the Scylla of subjectivism and the Charybdis of realism.” Both approaches have problems, but, although those of subjectivism are significantly less tractable, it is nonetheless subjectivism that has become the all-but-official doctrine of our time. Its central thesis is that all moral value statements are merely expressions of preference. It is so attractive not only because preferences can be ascertained empirically while objective values cannot but also because it appeals to our autonomy: according to subjectivism, norms do not originate from outside our preferences. But it is easily countered by two objections: first, Hume's Law teaches that neither deontic nor value statements follow from descriptive statements, and, second, subjectivism is unable to justify obligations beyond those one is already inclined to accept. It can be only a basis for prudential hypothetical imperatives. Realism, on the other hand, struggles with the problem of motivational force: it cannot answer the question of why one should act morally. The distinction between weak and strong realism becomes important here: while the former, defended by Kutschera, claims only that moral value statements *do not follow* from preference statements, strong realism avers that moral values *have nothing to do* with preferences. Kutschera rejects the latter. The conflict between our interests and the demands of morality can only be overcome if our interests and morality

are in principle compatible, for otherwise morality would lack any motivational force. Even if moral values are independent of individual preferences, “a world without subjects would be a world without values.” Values are neither merely objective nor merely subjective. Kutschera then considers the concept of *true interest*—a concept that played an important role for Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, and Kant. Their basic idea was just this: “good is what lies in our own interests if we understand them correctly.” There are, however, three problems connected with this idea. First, it is unclear whether our true interests are those that we actually have or those that we ought to have. Kutschera thinks that we must understand the correspondence between our true interests and moral goodness as synthetic, not analytic. Second, we must assume that we have interests of which we do not know. Most serious, however, is the third problem—that our true interests are those we have as rational beings, but only a few of our interests result from our rational nature. In general, appeals to human nature are bound to fail, since we are by nature cultural beings. Kutschera therefore favors the alternative concept of *fundamental personal interests*. Their coincidence with the good, however, is only an ideal, “so the good cannot be defined from fundamental interests but has to be determined by itself.” A consequence of this conception is that we have “no truly common basis for moral judgments.” Generality and autonomy seem to stand in tension with one another.

Markus Gabriel, who became full professor at the University of Bonn at the age of twenty-nine, has had one of the most extraordinary careers in the history of German philosophy. Schelling has been one of the most important influences on his thought, and the ontological project that he proposes reflects some of Schelling’s ideas. His paper, “Is the World as Such Good? The Question of Theodicy,” actually shifts that question toward what he calls “ontodicy”—a justification of being itself as a place where goodness can manifest itself. For Gabriel rejects the tradition of ontotheology—a tradition, he holds, that “actually does harm to theology, if not to God.” According to him, being is already permeated by goodness, because it is only in value-laden experiences that we can encounter the intelligibility of existence as such. Since existence implies intelligibility, ontology is ultimately triggered by ethical experience. Gabriel proposes a form of ontology that starts from Kant’s idea that to exist means to belong to the field of possible experience: “to exist is to be capable of reference by a genuinely truth-apt and empirically contentful thought.” Existence, however, is not a proper property—is not, that is, a property successful reference to which enables us to distinguish one object from another. For all objects in the world exist. In order to count given objects, we need a

rule that establishes the count, which Gabriel calls “sense.” Gabriel criticizes particularly the idea dear to Frege and Quine that existence can be reduced to quantification. For we cannot quantify over vague and constitutively ambiguous objects, even if such objects in fact exist. So he distinguishes between quantifiable domains of objects and fields of sense: “whereas all domains of objects are fields of sense, not all fields of sense are domains of objects.” This implies the nonexistence of the world, for “existence is field-relative appearance.” The proper understanding of the world’s nonexistence, Gabriel claims, guarantees the existence of value, “because everything exists in some field of sense or another.” Disenchantment is, therefore, an illusion. Gabriel addresses the objection that his concept of sense is more hermeneutical than moral by trying to connect these two senses of “sense”: inspired by Kant, he claims “that regarding someone as an end in herself presupposes the capacity to penetrate beyond senseless bare corporeal existence.” Gabriel’s sense ontology is radically pluralistic—indeed, is Leibnizian, albeit without Leibniz’s God: the danger that he sees is that there is too much sense. In any case, it is the inextricability of existence and sense that guarantees the possibility of goodness, “for it explains our fundamental groundless freedom.” Scientism appears in this view as a form of evil “if it postulates bare senseless existence as its ontological paradigm, because this annihilating gesture tends towards the destruction of the human capacity to become self-aware of sense.”

Jonathan Israel is doubtless one of the greatest historians of our time: his work over the last decade has revolutionized our understanding of the Enlightenment and the intellectual developments that led to the emergence of our contemporary value system. His paper pursues the “philosophical and historical logic that led first to Spinozist moral, social, and Biblical criticism, then to a full-blown radical enlightenment, and finally to egalitarian democratic revolutions.” What is new in this essay—what cannot be found, that is, in his splendid trilogy on the Enlightenment—is his extension of the concept of enlightenment to antiquity and the Middle Ages. In doing so, he follows Leo Strauss, whose esoteric reading of Maimonides Israel supports. But he follows also eighteenth-century Radical Enlightenment itself, which even thought of itself “as sharing profound affinities with Confucianism in China, Japan, and Korea where, since ancient times, philosophical tradition evolved predominantly around moral and social concerns.” For Israel, ancient materialism, with its poetic culmination in Lucretius, represents the first wave of enlightenment. In the Middle Ages, Israel sees an analogous movement in Averroism—even if, due to social and religious changes, it had to fight a “more perilous and

more clandestine campaign.” Even if the tradition of the “three impostors” dates to late antiquity, medieval Averroism represents its peak. But while al-Razi taught that philosophy is accessible to all people alike, the mainstream of medieval enlightenment, knowing well that an ignorant majority ruled the world, wanted to address only a small group. “By contrast, eighteenth-century radical thought involved an intellectual revolution that sought to propagate its message through every sector of society and directly triggered the political revolutions that transformed the world.” In fact, Strauss is criticized for overlooking the revolutionary political thrust of this movement, which strove “to overthrow what the princes, priests, and the commonalty designated the divinely sanctioned moral and social order,” while Epicurus hoped to emancipate only individuals, not whole societies. Israel is doubtless right about the differences between ancient and medieval enlightenment and the Enlightenment proper—and about the latter’s contribution to the formation of the modern world. Less obvious is his further claim that there is a deep link, both historically and philosophically, between materialism and social radicalism—“for only a materialism rejecting all forms of providence and all final ends could explain how it is that human society can be in every respect defective.” After all, a teleological account of history can make sense of progress within the social order—and, furthermore, it is not clear how a faith in such progress can be rationally justified outside of such an account. Indeed, Israel admits that “Enlightenment radical thinkers mostly remained distinctly pessimistic about man’s prospects.”

Whoever believes that complex forms of religiosity—such as Averroism, which, despite its criticism of revelation, was hardly atheistic or materialistic—remain intellectually attractive even after the radical Enlightenment will appreciate leading Protestant ethicist Jennifer Herdt’s “What is Christianity’s Contribution to Ethics?” Herdt does not want to weigh the extent to which Christianity has acted historically as a force for good or evil; she wants to focus only on the good. But how do we know what is good? Do we have to appeal to some external standard transcending Christianity? While aware of Karl Barth’s criticism of such an approach, Herdt insists, on theological grounds, that Christianity is itself the result of engagement with the intellectual resources of the surrounding world—resources such as those of Hellenistic culture—and that the unity, sovereignty, and goodness of God imply His presence in the whole of creation. This is also the reason that Christianity could and can operate on Western culture in “ways that overflow the boundaries of explicit commitment to Christianity.” Christianity should be understood not simply as a collection of ethical principles but rather as “a holistic

form of ethical life, in which ethics is embedded metaphysically, historically, and socially.” Herdt insists that Christian ethics is intelligible only within the context of a theory of creation, for only such a theory explains why the world is hospitable to intentional agency. Even if the goodness of the world is independent of its instrumental value for humans, they play a special role in creation. Herdt recognizes that “it has taken thousands of years for the radical implications of Christian doctrine to be fully realized,” but she insists that the modern doctrine of human rights is historically indebted to the Christian doctrine of the *imago Dei*—and that, if this doctrine is rejected, it is not easy to find a non-religious ground for human rights. Though Herdt rejects the voluntarist conception of the moral law, she values the emphases on tradition and particularity in Christian ethics—emphases that seem, to her, more in tune with contemporary anti-foundationalism. At the same time, however, she recognizes the task of distinguishing between metaphysical and narrative claims. She then goes on to elucidate the specific moral relevance of the dogmas of the Trinity and of Kenotic Christology, both of which point toward intersubjective relationality and the self-gift of solidarity. Regarding Biblical hermeneutics, she defends the idea that the Holy Spirit is as present in the Bible’s intelligent interpretation as it is in the symbolic life of the church. She identifies as a specific trait of Jesus’s moral teaching the responsibility for denouncing injustice—even while offering forgiving responses to human failure: “while grace is problematic if understood either as a disruption of the created order or as an expression of preferential favor, it is a powerful way of naming the received goods ... and appreciating these with gratitude.”

Vittorio Hösle’s “Can a Plausible Story Be Told of the History of Ethics? An Alternative to MacIntyre’s *After Virtue*” treads a middle ground between Israel and Herdt. Committed to an account of ethics that is based on reason alone, he recognizes the seminal importance of Christianity in the development of ethics and sees in Kant’s work the ultimate synthesis of Christian—and specifically Pietist—intuitions with the demands of rigorous rationality. The paper presents a sketch of a philosophy of the history of ethics, thus combining a narrative perspective with the systematic one. Needless to say, any such philosophical history will be informed by the author’s own ethical position, but there are objective constraints upon such a story: no historian of ethics can ignore Aristotle, Aquinas, Hume, Kant, Mill, or Nietzsche. While generally defending moral progress toward intentionalism and universalism and interpreting Aquinas as an intermediate figure between Aristotle and Kant, Hösle points to the repetition of certain challenges to ethical thought—challenges like the defense of radical egoism by certain sophists, Epicurus,

and Hobbes. He recognizes the interrelatedness of ethical theory and social and religious movements, but he also defends the autonomy of ethical reasoning: the relationships among ethics, society, and religion simply point to the fact that social changes are themselves inspired by the very moral feelings that the ethicist tries to articulate. The first step towards universalism occurs with the axial age, but only the Greeks move from preaching moral wisdom to ethics proper: thinkers as early as the sophists use counterfactual thought experiments. Socrates discovers a sphere of moral autonomy—one into which people may be educated through discourse—and Plato connects the idea of the Good to the peculiar mode of being of mathematical objects. Socially respected virtues are measured according to this transcendent standard; Plato is thus far less of a virtue ethicist than Aristotle, whose “foundational failure” is criticized—as is his “lack of a theory of justice within which virtues can unfold.” The lasting contribution of Hellenism is the overcoming of the limits of the polis: the Stoics develop universalism and the doctrine of natural law. Christianity both inherits and corrects the Jewish concern with law, alters the catalogue of virtues, and deepens the theory of vices; with Abelard, it embraces intentionalism. After the rise of modern science and the discovery of an autonomous social world, consequentialism develops from the discovery that good intentions may have devastating consequences—and vice versa; it is sometimes linked to the idea that an equilibrium of egoisms may lead to a result that is, overall, acceptable. While unable to render justice to this insight, Kant offers a rationalist justification of universalism that gives proper place not only to natural law, but also to the virtues—even while clearly demarcating the one from the other. His rejection of eudaimonism only reiterates a deeply Christian intuition. Nonetheless, his theory does not solve a problem that continues to torment us—that of the status of nature.

Humans are the result of an evolutionary process that has taken billions of years. Which features of our moral behavior have roots in prehuman animals? Since the main organ directing human behavior is the brain, the neuroscientist Camillo Padoa-Schioppa focuses on the neurological mechanisms that underlie choice in our primate relatives. He begins his essay by discussing perceptual decisions. This concept may, at first, seem surprising, but it expresses the important truth that decisions play a role not only in higher cognitive operations but also in mere perception. Padoa-Schioppa describes experiments on the saccades—that is, eye movements—of monkeys that are exposed to visual stimuli moving with varying coherence in front of the animal. While the neuronal activity of the middle temporal area is necessary for the animal to perform its task, such activity

is not sufficient, because it gives only an account of what is going on at that particular instant. But “to succeed in the task when the coherence is low, the monkey must accumulate information over time,” and so another brain area, the lateral intraparietal one, is involved. A successful perception, in this case, consists of rightly discerning in which direction the motion is occurring. The second part of the paper addresses economic choices that range “from the choice between different dishes out of a restaurant menu, to the choice between different financial investments, to the choice between working harder (earning more) and enjoying more leisure time.” Fundamentally, economic choices have to do with the computation of subjective values, and such a computation can succeed only if preferences are transitive. Lesions in the orbitofrontal cortex of humans can lead to the collapse of this transitivity. In a series of experiments done on non-human primates by Padoa-Schioppa himself together with Assad, the choices were between different quantities of two different drinks, peppermint tea and grape juice. If the same amount of the two drinks is offered, the monkeys prefer grape juice, but this changes if the ratio is altered. Since four peppermint teas are preferred to one grape juice—while, in the case of a choice between three peppermint teas and one grape juice, either is chosen half of the times—the relative value is three. However, “a different individual, or even the same individual at a different time, will generally make different choices and thus reveal a different relative value.” In the orbitofrontal cortex, three different types of neurons can be distinguished: one type encodes the offer value, another encodes the chosen value, and a third—which becomes maximally active upon the delivery of the juice—encodes the chosen juice. Even in monkeys, economic choice does not depend upon the visuo-motor contingencies of choice. The trade-off between different dimensions includes not only quantity and quality but also varying probabilities, varying delays, and varying costs—and all of these have to be integrated into a single scale in order to make a decision possible. The ventromedial prefrontal cortex seems to be involved in the formation of subjective values that are defined by the integration of these multiple dimensions. But what about moral choices, such as that between the certainty of saving one human life and the mere probability of saving many? The corresponding value signals were found “in the same brain regions that encode subjective values during economic choices (OFC and vmPFC).” However, the consideration of non-negotiable sacred values in humans activates the lateral prefrontal cortex, and this seems to be unique to our species. The contrast between Kantianism and utilitarianism may well have a neurophysiological basis. “In this respect, there seems to be a clear

distinction between the domain of moral decisions and that of economic choices, where differences between humans and non-human primates seem to be much more subtle. This consideration might seem to cast some doubt on the possibility to provide a unitary neural account for moral decisions and economic choices. However, even if one embraces this stance—that is, even if the assignment of moral values is a uniquely human mental function—it remains possible that the neural machinery through which values are compared in a decision process is conserved across cognitive domains and, indeed, across species.”

Values, so moral realists are well advised to assume, are ideal entities, whose validity does not depend on their actual recognition. At the same time, however, there are homonymous entities that can be studied by social scientists—the existence of which indeed depends on the actual behavior of individuals or collectives. Even if ethics is irreducible to psychology and sociology, every moral philosopher who wants to impact the real world ought to try to grasp the psychology and sociology of values. The Canadian psychologist Clive Seligman has studied in depth the role that values play in individual decisions. For him, “value theory provides a context in which to think about our positions on social and ethical issues.” Values are due to biological needs, the requirements of coordinated social action, and the necessity of group survival and functioning. This shows that they operate on a social level, even if they have to be internalized by individuals, for they are “the intersecting point between broad social goals and individual motivations.” While there is, in a given culture, usually a consensus regarding values, it is their rank ordering—that is, the value system—that varies among individuals. While there is a lively debate over whether values exert any causal role at all on behavior or, alternatively, serve only to rationalize past behavior, Seligman assumes that values do impact behavior. However, his empirical research points to the fact that, for the same persons, their ranking of values is not the same in different domains. People do rank their values markedly differently when asked to do so in general and when exhorted to do so with a specific problem, such as abortion, in view. In the former case, “attitudes to abortion were not predictable at all from value importance rankings.” One seems to reorder one’s values when they are connected to concrete issues—“perhaps to better justify one’s position.” Seligman also studied the differences that emerge when people are asked to distinguish between the values that *de facto* determine their behavior and those that ought to determine their behavior. Despite these results, a given person does tend to believe that his or her position is the right one and that the position of his or her opponent is the wrong one. Seligman then applies his

findings to political psychology. Political ideology does not fit well on a single dimension, and so various dimensions are proposed in order to categorize the political spectrum. (Thus, political conservatives may, or may not, reject libertarianism.) Clearly, different countries have different priorities, and values are not sufficient to determine policies, since factual information also plays a role. Regarding the opposition between liberalism and conservatism, Seligman differentiates between political attitudes and political ideologies. Someone may, for example, favor liberal values in principle but regard the price that has to be paid to push them through in a determinate situation as too high. On the other hand, a reactionary who rejects liberalism may well be as willing as a radical to use violence to achieve his ends. "After all, both advocate sweeping change." Finally, Seligman investigates the values that guide the purportedly value-free research of value psychologists and suggests that there is a general bias in favor of liberalism in academia. A standard definition of authoritarian personality, for example, excludes from its extension any who oppose the traditional power structure, even when they are characterized by submissive behavior toward their superiors and self-righteousness toward anyone else. Favorable facts about conservatives—who tend to be more generous as well as happier—are minimized. Seligman insists that "both sides are expressing important values, certainly to themselves, but also to the general society" and invites us "to see the others' perspectives as reflecting genuine positions on this debate" rather "than to attribute them to deficiencies in moral character or reasoning."

Both the promises and the dangers of the modern world are essentially linked to the successful application of science, and thus it was a particular honor that the Goodness conference was graced by the presence of one of the most brilliant scientists of our time, the 1991 Nobel laureate in chemistry Richard R. Ernst, without whose discoveries the enormous range of applications of nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscopy would not have been possible. His "Academic Opportunities for Shaping a Better Future" is a lesson on the specific tasks of people who are so fortunate to work in academia and thus owe society something in return. Precisely because the academic world is less subject to short-term evaluation than are the worlds of business and politics, it has the duty to think more about long-term issues—and its thoughts have the potential to be enormously effective because "the time at the university is of great importance for the personality formation of our students," even if those thoughts operate slowly and more like catalysts than reactants. Ernst is skeptical that moral behavior can be taught by words: such behavior, he holds, is reducible to personal responsibility and courage. Fortunately, however, his paper is

rich in concrete suggestions. The three main tasks of universities are educating future leaders, research for solving the great problems of our time, and planning a beneficial future. The main problems of our time include an unlimited faith in technology and a free market economy, the claim to unlimited personal freedom, the increasing gap between rich and poor, the loss of a shared ethical foundation, and governance by a single superpower. “We seem to sit in an acceleration trap, and, at the end, only stress remains.” Ernst speaks of a worldwide identity crisis, for our objectives have become dubious. Scientists, therefore, need support from the humanities. More important than conveying mere knowledge is the acquisition of wisdom: “we need not lecturers but *motivators* who inflame their students’ curiosity and initiative.” Particularly fascinating is his sketch of the traits of creative personalities—traits that include restlessness, a broad horizon, knowledge in several fields, a talent for interdisciplinary thinking, and a sense for analogies. “Creative minds oscillate between *self-confidence* and *self-criticism*, between *stubbornness* and *flexibility*, between *concentration* and *relaxation*.” Opposed to them is the frozen ignorance of fundamentalism. Ernst is not at all inimical to religiosity; on the contrary, he points to far-reaching similarities in the ethical traditions of the three Abrahamic religions. But what is missing in this tradition is an explicit understanding of the duty to aim at sustainability—one that includes the duty to engage in birth control. The paper ends with reflections on the limits of American hegemony, the necessity of strengthening the United Nations and restructuring the World Trade Organization, the positive lessons to be learned from the European Union, and the crucial issue of who should represent the future generations upon whose rights we now trample. In economic matters, Ernst recognizes the necessity of incentives, but he suggests that such incentives could take the form of bonus certificates that have to be given to charities of one’s own choice. The preservation of our cultural heritage, he finally argues, is as important as that of biodiversity.

Jane Maienschein, the director of the Center for Biology and Society at Arizona State University, is one of the world’s best experts in the history of embryology. Since the issue of stem cell research has triggered many ethical, legal, and political controversies—and since at their basis are fundamental disagreements about the relationship between science and ethics—the topic of her “Finding Goodness among Is and Ought Debates in Stem-Cell Research,” even if it is highly specific, fits well with the overall purpose of the conference. Maienschein’s analysis of the problem stands in marked contrast to the position of the Catholic Church and thus enriches dialogue at the University Notre Dame, the Catholicism of which

will be a responsible and intellectual one only if it considers intelligent objections and serious alternatives. Maienschein starts her reflections with an endorsement of Hume's Law, which she interprets as valid in both directions: neither do norms follow from facts nor do facts follow from norms. She then looks at the evolution of our ideas about embryos—ideas which have unfolded in an oscillation between epigenetic and preformationist assumptions, the current doctrine being a complex synthesis of both. Aristotle, for example, upheld an epigenetic model, which was also accepted during the Middle Ages: let us not forget that both Aquinas<sup>1</sup> and Dante<sup>2</sup> embrace the doctrine of successive ensoulment. Preformationist ideas become powerful in the eighteenth century due to what Maienschein calls "metaphysical materialism": "since they could not imagine how form could arise from the unformed material without some vitalistic force or factor, they rejected vitalism and were thereby led to invoke preformationist ideas." With the rise of cell theory during the nineteenth century, the Catholic Church embraced the doctrine that an individual life begins at conception, even if it "was not fully consistent with the dominant epigenetic understanding of development that saw the individual living organism as coming into being only gradually." Hans Driesch's famous experiments showed that embryos can still go through a twinning process—a possibility that throws into doubt the doctrine that each embryo can be understood as an individual in the strict sense of the word; equally problematic was the later discovery that embryos of eight cells can form chimeras. Genetics, on the other hand, suggested some new form of predeterminism, since genes carry the information that directs development. The new possibility of pre-implantation genetic diagnosis and the medical use of totipotent stem cells—which are by necessity embryonic, since adult stem cells are no longer totipotent—created new moral questions, for embryonic stem cells are gained by the killing of embryos. Various and contradictory executive orders—as well as court decisions interpreting the highly ambiguous Dickey-Wicker Amendment—have led to remarkable policy changes over the last fifteen years. Finally, Maienschein deals with flaws in the argumentation of a 2000 document by the Pontifical Academy of Life. The embryo does not have "the same well defined identity throughout all stages of its development if what was one can be split into two, or what were two can be combined into one." Here, however, one can object two things. First, while continuity in the development of the embryo indeed exists only to a limited degree, absolute continuity does not seem necessary for the ascription of identity: after all, even the mental life of adults is quite discontinuous. Identity and potentiality, on the other hand, are more general concepts: without the

identification of objects, experience is impossible. And it seems quite clear to what I refer when I say “when I was an embryo in the womb” or what I mean by “this human embryo—but not this feline embryo—is potentially a moral agent.” Twinning, one has to grant, leads to peculiar problems, but let us assume that adult humans could reproduce vegetatively: would this undermine our understanding of identity or justify our depriving such humans of their basic rights? Second, there are very good moral reasons to abstain from killing some organism whenever there is reasonable doubt that said organism is a human person. Maienschein herself warns at the end of her paper against those who claim to know that the embryo is ethically neutral.

Humans are not simply organisms: they can influence and even alter their biological nature to an extent that no other organism is able to do. Anita L. Allen, professor of both law and philosophy and member of President Obama’s Commission for the Study of Bioethical Issues, discusses some of the moral issues connected with modern medicine in her “Medicine in the Twenty-First Century: Ethical Means and Ends.” She starts with the assertion that, even if “illness and disability can confer meaning and rewards of their own,” health is recognized as a foundational human good by almost all philosophical and theological traditions. However, this creates different duties for different classes of subjects. First, “a responsible adult has ethical duties of self-care,” which include both negative duties—such as not to use tobacco and alcohol immoderately and to eschew cosmetic surgery—and positive ones—such as getting exercise and submitting to invasive diagnostic testing. Second, the government has to guarantee the proper education and ethical regulation of members of the health profession; it must ensure, for example, confidentiality between doctors and their patients. Allen avoids, however, a discussion of the complex issues surrounding the right—or lack thereof—of a government to mandate health insurance. Third, since the time of Hippocrates, health care providers and researchers are recognized to have very specific duties. One such duty, as promulgated by the 1903 Code of Medical Ethics of the American Medical Association, concerns the obligation of physicians to avoid “gloomy prognostications.” With Thomas Beauchamp and James Childress, Allen recognizes as basic principles of medical ethics autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice. These bind, however, only *prima facie*, and there is no clear lexical ordering of them. Allen discusses later additions to and important differences between ethical rules in the European Union and in the United States of America—differences which she attributes to the multi-national nature of the former polity and the mono-national nature of the latter. The

environmental impacts of various medical treatments have become a new concern—as has the procedural demand for a democratic deliberation regarding any rules to be passed. Another modern ethical principle concerns respect for intellectual property rights and academic freedom. In the next section, she mentions specific issues in medical ethics that will torment the twenty-first century, such as the increasing number of people who survive war, albeit “with the effects of toxic exposure, amputation, and traumatic stress syndromes”; the quick spreading of infectious diseases over the whole globe; the issue of how to distribute scarce transplantable organs; the social consequences of increased longevity; the tension between pharmacology and cognitive behavioral therapy in psychiatry; the huge market for enhancement medicine; the increased difficulty of warranting the confidentiality of data; the use of neuroimaging in forensic medicine; the creation of pharmaceuticals for persons with certain genetic markers; and issues of regeneration and reproduction, including that of embryonic stem cell research. While she does not propose concrete solutions to the intricate moral issues connected with these new challenges, Allen ends with the story of a case in which everyone can agree that the basic principles of medical ethics were violated—that of the research done by the United States Public Health Service from 1946 until 1948 in Guatemala, where vulnerable men, women, and children were deliberately infected with sexually transmitted diseases. She forcefully argues that these covert actions—actions in which undue influence, if not outright coercion, took place—were not only wrong according to today’s standards: they violated the moral consensus of the time—both that of ordinary morality and that of the legal standards that were then being articulated at the Nuremberg Medical Tribunal. She ends with the reflection that “goodness in biomedicine depends upon the character of individuals, professional norm internalization, and the capacity of institutions to ensure accountability and transparency.”

Even if humans can manipulate nature, they remain encompassed by it; in an ultimate conflict between nature and humans, only nature can win. Robin Attfield is one of the best environmental philosophers of our time; his work encompasses both ethics and philosophy of religion. His “What Moral Consequences Does the Environmental Crisis Have?” begins with reflections on the nature of the crisis, which has to be distinguished from neighboring crises such as those of poverty and meaning. A crucial feature of the environmental crisis is that more than pleasure and pain, limited as they are to animals, are at stake: we need “a broader and deeper value-theory than one for which pain and suffering are the only evils and pleasure and happiness the only goods.” An immediate consequence is the

extension of the range of bearers of moral standing. The rejection of anthropocentrism in ethics goes hand in hand with the rejection of the corresponding metaphysical idea that the world exists only for the sake of humans. Even ancient vegetarianism questioned such an idea, no doubt, but the pervasiveness of the contemporary environmental problem challenges it even more. (Attfield later writes that vegetarianism, while sometimes at odds with environmentalism, has a bearing on environmental issues.) The other basic problem for environmental ethics is the status of future generations; Attfield rejects the discounting of future impacts upon people and circumvents the identity problem by insisting that we have obligations “with regard to whoever there will be in coming centuries.” While insisting on the interdependence of humans and nature, Attfield rightly avoids metaphysical holism, which can only be articulated by using the distinction between “us” and nature that it pretends to abolish. A further important consequence is that “we can no longer rest content with an ethic that disregards foreseeable but unintended consequences.” Nor can we plead that the difference done by our own actions is insignificant. Attfield then focuses on the need for sustainability, particularly the duty to limit climate change, which already disrupts development in many third-world countries and will in time create millions of environmental refugees—refugees who, unlike refugees from armed conflicts, have no recognized international status. While policies of adaptation are crucial, they leave the causes of the problem unaddressed and have to be supplemented by policies of mitigation. Attfield supports the idea that greenhouse gas emission entitlements be divided between countries in proportion to their populations. Population figures might be reviewed every generation, but countries should avoid competing with one another to reap the benefits of population growth. But should not the emissions of the past be taken into account, too? Attfield’s answer is negative: this would be not only impractical but also unjust, since, until 1990, it was not common knowledge that anthropogenic global warming was taking place. One cannot, in other words, “justify allocating responsibility for the relevant emissions to the presumed successors of those who were unknowingly responsible.” Attfield also warns against mixing policies of mitigation of climate change with development policies, since this would render the first problem, difficult as it already is, almost intractable. Finally, green values and green virtues are discussed. The defense of the latter should not, however, be understood as supporting any kind of virtue ethics: “green virtues can instead be understood as those dispositions most likely to generate benign environmental impacts overall.” The moral and

cultural changes that the environmental crisis will impose on us will be momentous.

The ecological problem is partly the result of a false concept of wealth and of the immoral way in which we have organized our economy. Internationally prominent business ethicist Georges Enderle's "Defining Goodness in Business and Economics" deals with crucial issues in this relatively young discipline of applied ethics. At the beginning, he defends, in the spirit of Amartya Sen, an ethics-related approach in opposition to Lionel Robbins's engineering approach—one in which "rationality is equated with internal consistency of choice and maximization of self-interest" and interpersonal comparisons of utility are impossible. By contrast, the former approach regards economics not as "a hermetically sealed, value-free realm, but suffused with ethical values and norms incorporated in motivations and ends." This view is strengthened by Hilary Putnam's criticism of the dichotomy between fact and value. Enderle subscribes to Arthur Rich's idea that goodness in business requires both economic rationality and justice. He distinguishes three levels—none of which can replace another: a micro-level of individual decision-makers, a meso-level of business organizations, and a macro-level of economic systems. Roughly speaking, while the United States of America focuses mainly on the micro-level, continental Europe focuses mainly on the macro-level and Japan on the meso-level. Enderle also strongly supports the view that corporations are moral actors who can be held responsible for their acts. Crucial for the economy is the creation of wealth. But what is wealth? Wealth encompasses both private and public goods; in the case of the latter, markets with their pricing systems simply do not work, and self-interest cannot motivate individuals to seek them. Assets, for their part, include not only financial capital but also physical, human, and social capital, such as trust. "Making money" can be destroying wealth while creating wealth can be losing money." Good wealth creation has to be sustainable and must be motivated not only by competition but also by a commitment to "a better service to people and the environment." Such wealth creation has a spiritual dimension and involves distributive aspects from the beginning. No less important is the incorporation of human rights into corporate responsibility, even if such rights are only "minimal moral norms." Enlightened self-interest may lead the corporation to the respect of some human rights, but for a general respect other-regarding motivations are indispensable.

The problem of wealth creation is crucial particularly for those countries where millions still live in dire poverty. Luis Ernesto Derbez Bautista is not only an economist and the president of the Universidad de

las Américas Puebla; he has also been Secretary of the Economy and of Foreign Affairs in Mexico from 2000 to 2006 under President Vicente Fox. His “What are the Right Politics for Developing Countries?” is a comprehensive statement on what should be the political and moral priorities of those countries that have not yet achieved successful development. But what is development? Growth is only a necessary, not a sufficient, condition for a more egalitarian development. In harmony with Enderle’s reflections on the nature of wealth, Derbez Bautista insists that those long obsessed with growth “neglected to account for the contribution that education and health would bring to the long-term value of labor in a nation... Many of those countries now have *both* weak educational systems *and* strong labor unions which refuse to make the changes necessary to improve the productivity of their economic system.” The reliance on debt to finance growth often enough severely reduces the chances of future growth. Since the formation of true markets is crucial to achieve equilibrium, the formation of monopolies and a political class that obstructs the market are serious impediments to growth. Growth with redistribution presupposes family planning, education, health, and social security for the poor. On the one hand, democracy does not seem to be a prerequisite for economic development, as the example of China shows; on the other hand, long-term political stability is fostered by the confidence of the general public in their leaders. Policies should therefore be developed in consultation with community leaders, be based on assessments of the needs of targeted communities, and use “disbursement mechanisms that ensure proper fiscal management and nonpartisanship.” Development cannot occur outside of the globalization process, but even if the creative destruction that it brings about is natural, “it doesn’t feel natural to those displaced in the process.” Without a source of income for those between jobs, “popular support for a policy of globalization quickly erodes.” The need to normalize international migration flows is paramount in an era of globalization. Also, development will be sustainable only if it addresses environmental constraints. Fortunately, “multi-nation cooperation can provide important opportunities for jointly developing carbon mitigation technologies and adaptation strategies.” The level of consumption now common in the United States of America cannot be achieved by the rest of the world without destroying our planet; thus, taxation is a legitimate means to limit such destructive behavior. Finally, human rights are integral to true development—and the widespread recognition of such rights has been accelerated by new communication technologies. Still, “those aspects of traditional society that advance social cohesion for the benefit of the members of the group” should be maintained, and different ways of

conceptualizing rights, which respect their interdependence, should be explored.

A complex economy can only function within a state, and the state can benefit from intelligent religiosity, which can offer something that goes beyond enlightened egoism. Steven D. Smith is a distinguished professor of law with a particular interest in constitutional law and the relationship between state and religion. At a time in which the aggressive opposition of religious and secular views has to a large degree poisoned both political and intellectual debates, his essay addresses the issue of what place the goods of religion have in the constitution of the United States with its first amendment's establishment clause. According to some interpreters, the latter implies that coercive laws inspired by what they call "a morality of higher purpose," such as restrictions on abortion, are a violation of the constitution. In his refutation of this position, Smith first distinguishes between epistemic and axiological religious reasons: the first appeal to religious *beliefs* such as the conviction that a cataclysmic flood is imminent, but the second appeal to religious *goods*. While Smith acknowledges that the two are not always easy to disentangle—after all, assumptions about goods are also beliefs—one might achieve a clear demarcation by restricting epistemic religious reasons to beliefs about facts that are not grounded in science but in putative revelations. In any case, Smith's focus is on religious goods, of which he distinguishes three kinds: salvation, obedience to God, and those that constitute a good life. According to him, only the first two goods are "ruled out as interests that government is permitted to pursue": Locke showed that religious beliefs have to be voluntary and that government lacks the competence to determine which religious beliefs are true. In the case of the third group, however, such an exclusion would be absurd, even if, in the perception of religious people, these goods are indeed linked to the goods of salvation and obedience. For every person has ideas about such goods: one may believe, for example, that "a society that caters to mere consumerism is not as good as one that cultivates music, literature, and philosophy." And it is the business of government to promote a good society that allows for individuals to lead good lives. Their views of what constitutes a good life will derive from all possible sources, and "to hold that government may act to secure what citizens believe to be the good society except when their valuations are influenced by religion would seem to discriminate against and effectively disenfranchise devout citizens." Even the argument that it may be too divisive if the state legislates on the basis of such valuations can be countered by the reflection that such prohibition "would be more divisive than the judgments it excludes." Smith then strengthens his

position with the following two arguments: first, most religious people are not voluntarists—that is, they do not believe that something is good because God has ordered it, but rather the other way around—and, second, even the interpretation of sacred texts is directed by assumptions about what is good—which means that such assumptions are not derived only from such texts. “Secularist arguments gain their rhetorical force... by lumping these various goods together under the heading of a dimly understood and under-analyzed ‘religion.’” Perhaps one could add that also the moral convictions of non-religious people are rarely based on pure reason alone. If, however, there is a pure practical reason, then the appeal to it could be used against irrational theories of the good, be they of religious or irreligious provenience.

States are not only the guardians of domestic peace; they are also agents of war. Since the mass killing of innocent people inevitably occurs in wars, particularly in modern high-tech wars, an ethics of war is one of the most needed aspects of applied ethics. Mary Ellen O’Connell is a well-known law professor whose work focuses on international law. In her “Good Law against War,” she argues that, though war is never good, it is sometimes necessary and therefore morally and legally justified. Good is the international law that “prohibits many of the wars and lesser uses of force in which the U.S. has engaged.” And it is good in a double sense: it is both beneficent and valid law. “International law... is a better source of guidance than subjective opinions, especially those of media commentators.” O’Connell analyses America’s national character, from the Revolutionary War to contemporary computer games, as a peculiar mixture of commitment to the rule of law and belief in the efficacy of force. Based on the United Nations Charter, she recognizes only individual and collective self-defense in the face of armed attack<sup>3</sup> and executions of Security Council resolutions<sup>4</sup> as legal grounds for war; she therefore rejects pre-emptive self-defense and unilateral humanitarian intervention. “Kosovo, Iraq, and Libya are particularly interesting because they are later action for failures to intervene earlier.” The use of force, furthermore, has to be both necessary and proportionate; while these principles are not found in the Charter, both have been validated by several International Court of Justice decisions. O’Connell strongly defends a natural law basis for international law: without it, it is not possible “to point to either a basis for international law’s authority or to restraints that could bind states without their consent.” She is aware that, in the nineteenth century, such an appeal was regarded with suspicion by positivism—since natural law theory was connected with religious, particularly Catholic, doctrine—but she endorses Grotius’s progress in “moving farther in the direction of a secular

understanding of natural law... in order to avoid the religious controversies swirling as he wrote.” The last part of her paper is dedicated to a passionate defense of the obligatory character of international law. One might, however, still pursue the question of whether the violation of valid international law cannot become in exceptional cases as morally permissible as the violation of unjust but valid domestic laws—specifically, in those cases in which such violation leads to a more just international order: violations of international law may be sometimes necessary in order to hold the law of peoples above that of states—to protect people, that is, from their criminal governments.

Wars often originate in misunderstandings between cultures; one of the most important tasks of the globalized age, therefore, is to understand foreign cultures. There is little doubt that China will soon surpass the United States of America in economic power, and it is therefore appropriate to end the volume with an essay by a leading Chinese intellectual and internationally known expert in Chinese intellectual history, Wang Hui’s “The Voices of Good and Evil: What is Enlightenment? Rereading Lu Xun’s ‘Toward a Refutation of Malevolent Voices.’” Lu Xun is regarded by many as the most important Chinese writer and essayist from the first half of the twentieth century, and Wang makes it clear at the beginning of his text that he wants to read Lu Xun’s classic essay of 1908 not as a historical document, rather as one with contemporary significance, noting that it is the commentaries elicited by the classics that make them classics. Lu Xun’s thoughts belong to the era immediately before the revolution of 1911, an era during which Chinese intellectuals reacted in very different ways to the increasing influence of Western culture. The specific nature of Lu Xun’s reaction is his insistence on interiority and spirituality, without which revolution and social reform would be to no avail. Even more important than ideas is the degree to which they are sincerely espoused. From this perspective, language is not simply a convenient instrument for communication but an individual form of expression, one that should not simply be replaced by an artificial language such as Esperanto. “Eliminating linguistic difference means eliminating the subjective agency in language.” Equality does not mean flattening out all differences. While favoring a republican system, Lu Xun saw the danger of “an autocracy of the masses, the media, and public opinion, different from rule by a tyrant, but an all the more severe and despotic mass rule.” Wang sees both China and the West now dominated by a “dictatorship of consumerism.” In a similar vein, Lu Xun rejected the Enlightenment program of eradicating superstition, because even superstition expresses a metaphysical need. Wang remarks that Lu Xun’s “definitions

of religion and superstition are products of modern thought—they don't arise from within a religious context." Against the widespread idea, dear to the Enlightenment of the West, that China was a secular culture, Lu Xun defends the religiosity manifested in the pantheistic worship of the common people, whom he preferred to the hypocritical gentry. Equally critical of Taoism's quietism and of Christianity—which, despite Sun Yat-sen's baptism, did not, in his eyes, fit well with China's intrinsic character—Lu Xun rejected also all evolutionary accounts that saw an inexorable development from pantheism to monotheism and finally to atheism. Against complete rationalization, he defends the power of imagination and mythology; the prophets of science are themselves moved by a specific form of faith. Despite his closeness to certain Romantic ideas, Lu Xun rejected all forms of jingoism. China is praised for not trying to dominate other nations, and while national self-defense is necessary, Lu Xun despises those who worship powerful countries and sneer at nations that have been defeated. In the words of Wang Hui:

During the Iraq War, a significant number of "men of aspiration" were full of praise for the war... as if they had become "overnight Americans." These people were, in fact, merely second-class jingoists, or "jingoists who worship jingoism"—they are servile and lacking in voices of the heart and illuminating thoughts.

The subtlety of Lu Xun, "an enlightener who opposed enlightenment, an internationalist who opposed cosmopolitanism, a protector of national culture who opposed nationalism," is indeed something that can inspire our own time—one in which globalization, which began in the late nineteenth century, has achieved a new intensity.

Goodness, it seems, is something at stake in almost every discipline—whether as its object or as the force that inspires it. Perhaps this volume has shown how the various demands that emanate from the idea of the good into the several areas of human endeavor can shape a vision of the world that renders justice to its perplexing yet fascinating complexity—even as it strengthens the belief that moral norms are not simply functions of societal power relations: such norms are, rather, "real in an ideal world," that is independent of actual interests—interests which can dignify themselves only if they reshape themselves according to those norms.

I cannot end this introduction without thanking Dr. Don Stelluto, Carolyn Sherman, and Jo Ann Norris for their enormous help in organizing this conference; Dr. Stelluto's advice was particularly invaluable. The publication of the volume would not have been possible without the copy-editing of these many essays in different disciplines, several written by