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Pragmatism and Faith

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Prelude

When we hear the word “pragmaticism”, especially that brand of it which was associated with the American Pragmatists (Charles Peirce, William James, John Dewey, Christine Ladd-Franklin, George Herbert Mead, etc.) at the turn of the 20th century, we are inclined to think of a way of reasoning that is as far from faith as integral calculus is from voodoo. This impression could be abetted by the habit of many who, when questioned on issues of faith, describe themselves as “pragmatists” - as if this somehow excuses them from the questions of ultimate concern. However, nothing could be further from the truth.

A fundamental contribution of American Pragmatism was to secure forever the essential link between thought and action (or between *orthodoxy* and *orthopraxy*). Right thought led to right action and right action, in turn, shaped right thinking. Dysfunctional belief systems (patterns of thought) would always manifest themselves in a maladapted lifestyle. However, these belief systems were not restricted by the early pragmatists to the ambit of the functional or scientific. They included in them the symbolic realms of meaning and purpose which gave unity and order to the very belief systems. This was central to the thinking of George Herbert Mead (1863-1931), one of the founding fathers of sociology, who saw our distinctive activity as humans to be symbolic - especially the use of our most powerful symbolic system i.e. language. His thoughts were later systematized by Herbert Blumer into the sociological school of Symbolic Interactionism. William James (1842-1910) is well known for his defence of faith as a vital belief system. In his notion of the *will to believe*¹, James tried to show that in order for the value of faith to be shown in one’s life, one had to open to that belief system. A well rounded faith gave a quality and unity to life and people who,

in their lives, were open to the transcendent, were more likely to live meaning-filled existences.

Less, however, is known of the thinking of Charles Peirce on the subject of faith. Charles Peirce (1839-1914) was the undisputed founder of American Pragmatism; but, arguably because he never held any permanent, academic post and was somewhat marginalized for his personal eccentricities, much of his thought has been overshadowed by the more prominent pragmatists. However, in his *Collected Papers*² there are 325 references to religious topics (which involve at least 40 papers) and at least 85 manuscripts contain material of interest to the philosopher of religion³. Peirce had for a long time in his life wished to write a book that would disclose his thoughts on faith and his own brand of scientific theism. Writing in 1885, Peirce noted that, while Josiah Royce (1855-1916) held that God would be “of the same nature as the reality of anything else”, he held “another theory, which I intend to take an early opportunity of putting into print”⁴. He never did get to write this book and today there is little consensus among scholars of Peirce as to how one should describe his scientific theism.⁵ I would like to show, in this essay, that Peirce’s understanding of the universe was such that it was, as Michael Raposa states: “included in but not exhaustive of the divine reality”, a view that “neither undermines the doctrine of creation nor collapses the distinction between God and the universe”⁶. More importantly, I would like to explore the idea that holding to a belief in a Creator God was, for Peirce, not an irrational stance, but one that was perfectly in line with the practice of science and one that expressed the truest and deepest aspects of our human nature.

A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God

Introduction

The closest Peirce ever got to writing his book was an article he wrote in 1908 for *The Hibbert Journal*, entitled: “A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God”⁷. In an addition to this argument, written in 1910, Peirce tells us that his “neglected argument” is really a “nest of three arguments for the Reality of God”⁸. These three arguments, Peirce believed, would excite a

“peculiar confidence in the very highest degree”⁹, because they followed the very methodology of the growth of science. For Peirce, the practice of science has three essential stages, what he calls: retrodution (abduction, theory), deduction and induction. In the first stage, the scientist tries to formulate some theory or hypothesis that will explain the phenomena at hand. This is a creative stage, where the free play of the imagination takes place until the scientist arrives at “some point of view whence the wonder shall be resolved”¹⁰. Our ability to favour one hypothesis over another, Peirce believed, is founded on the fact that our very cognitive abilities themselves have been forged over our evolutionary history through natural processes and, thus, give us an instinct for the truth.

Modern science has been built after the model of Galileo, who founded it, on *il lume naturale*. That truly inspired prophet had said that, of two hypotheses, the simpler is to be preferred . . . in the sense of the more facile and natural, the one that instinct suggests, that must be preferred; for the reason that, unless man has a natural bent in accordance with nature’s, he has no chance of understanding nature at all¹¹.

In the second stage, all the logical consequences of the theory are now deduced and the criteria that would be needed to verify these corollaries. Finally, with induction, these deductions are put to their empirical test and are shown to be either expectations that are founded or unfounded in the kern of experience. Many have identified the distinctiveness of the scientific method just with this third stage of enquiry¹². For Peirce, this position undermines the very creative genius of science as a way to discover new paradigms of truth. He was well aware that, in the human quest for truth:

. . . we are building a cantilever bridge of induction, held together by scientific struts and ties. Yet every plank of its advance is first laid by Retrodution alone, that is to say, by the spontaneous conjectures of instinctive reason; and neither Deduction nor Induction contributes a single new concept to the structure.¹³

The Humble Argument for the Reality of God

St Augustine (354-430 AD) was renowned among the early theologians of the church for his writing about the universality and constancy of the sense of God among the peoples of the world.¹⁴ It was this sense that forms the basis of Peirce's first argument for the reality of God.

A nest of three arguments for the Reality of God has now been sketched, though none of them could, in the limits of a single article, be fairly represented. The first is that the entirely honest, sincere and unaffected, because unpremeditated, meditation upon the Idea of God, into which the Play of Musement will inevitably sooner or later lead, and which, by developing the deep sense of the adorability of that Idea, will produce a truly religious Belief in His Reality and His nearness . . . This is that "humble argument", open to every honest man, which I surmise to have made more worshippers of God than any other.¹⁵

Peirce is convinced that this humble argument is open to all, even the "mind of the clodhopper"¹⁶, and that the plausibility of the hypothesis of God "reaches an almost unparalleled height", so that "there is the danger that the investigation will stop at this stage, owing to the indifference of the Muser to any further proof"¹⁷. We have noted already that retrodution not only presents new hypotheses, but it also gives one the intuitive sense of which among rival hypotheses is the one to be preferred. Musement, for Peirce, is a form of meditative retrodution which differs from scientific retrodution only in its greater passivity and liberty. Religious musement is the imaginative contemplation upon some wonder in the universe "with speculation concerning its cause"¹⁸. From musement the notion of a "strictly hypothetical God"¹⁹ arises. This idea is only plausible at first. Peirce was aware that even in science one had to begin with entertaining a hypothesis because of its plausibility and then move on to establishing its probability²⁰. So, for the scientist to exclude plausible theological and metaphysical hypotheses is tantamount to blocking the road to enquiry and condemning science to being "middle-sized and mediocre"²¹.

But, why did Peirce think this sense of God would be so strong? It is because a person finds in this “a response in every part of his mind, for its beauty, for its supplying the ideal of life, and for its thoroughly satisfactory explanation of his whole threefold environment”²². So, the reason for the strength of the “God hypotheses” is, first, a question of the mind’s response to beauty. Esthetics, for Peirce, is the ability of the feelings to impart to anything “a positive simple quality” from the “multitude of parts”²³; as, for example, in our ability to discern the intention and quality of a painting from the multitude of paint strokes put by the artist on a canvas²⁴.

The Universe as an argument is necessarily a great work of art . . . a painting – with an impressionist seashore piece - then every Quality in a Premiss is one of the elementary coloured particles of the Painting; they are all meant to go together to make up the intended Quality that belongs to the whole as whole²⁵.

This sense of God’s purpose as portrayed by the whole universe is, by no means, static. The second reason Peirce gives for the strength of the hypotheses of a Creator God is that it provides the ideal of life. Peirce criticizes Gottfried von Leibniz’s (1646-1716) idea of a pre-established harmony because it denies God any role in the unfolding of the universe²⁶. Peirce sees the universe as continually growing to higher and higher degrees of rational synthesis, which is reflected in our own growth towards greater rationality – individually, and as communities of people. So, the sense of God is “merely the instinctive indication of the logical situation”²⁷. The logical situation being that in the human struggle to create value, we discover that value (as a developing, existentially-given of the universe) has shaped our very ability to uncover it.

It is not because that the True, the Beautiful, and the Good seem admirable to us that we are able to think them the quasi-purpose of the Universe, but because this purpose everywhere pervading Creation, naturally crops out, too, in the shaping of human reason ²⁸.

The third reason for the strength of the idea of God, says Peirce, is that it provides a thoroughly satisfactory explanation for one’s “threefold environment”. Here Peirce is referring to his three ontological categories

(firstness, secondness and thirdness) and their counterparts in human consciousness (primisense, altersense and medisense)²⁹. Discussion of these categories is beyond the scope of this essay. Suffice it to say that, for Peirce: firstness accounts for the creativity in the universe – the endless realm of new possibilities; secondness for the facticity of existence – the independent ‘thingness’ of each existing object that cannot be wished away; and, thirdness for the harmonies and relations that we see existing between objects of our experience. These relations are the higher degrees of rational synthesis that we see emerging at different levels and that we have already alluded to³⁰. The three ontological categories are always found together in our experience. We live in the concrete day to day realities of individual existing things (secondness); but, these things reveal that new creativity can break forth (firstness) and be harmonized with the relations and regularities that exist between the things of life (thirdness). For Peirce, life is, then, thoroughly symbolic and our human symbols echo what is happening at the heart of nature. All symbols point to and reveal reality (secondness); but, since they are continually growing into new realms of meaning and inter-connectedness (thirdness), they must have a dynamism and freshness that allows them to be creative and innovative (firstness). Since retroduction gives us our primary access to creativity and developmental teleology, musement gives us our conviction of what Raposa calls Peirce’s “theosemiotic”: that the universe is “God’s great poem, a living metabology of symbols”³¹. Put in another way, the sense of God arises from the dawning awareness that the logic of human reason and discovery (which is thoroughly symbolic) parallels the divine logic of ongoing creation, that God’s “thought will result in evolution just as surely as the author of a book gives that book a gradual development”³². So, in the discovery of the God hypothesis one realizes, not that religious experience is some ‘species’ of experience; but, rather, that all human experience is potentially “God-bearing”³³. From the very marvel of human reasoning, the “existence of a finite mind”, we are lead to the marvel of the “existence of an infinite mind”³⁴.

Given the fact that all human experience is potentially God-bearing, why is the sense of God absent in so many today?³⁵ Peirce addresses this question as well. First, he mentions that, in many people, the development of their minds has practically extinguished all their feelings, especially those who are

“inflated with the current notions of logic”³⁶. A person who excludes feeling (primisense) from the scheme of life is more likely to adopt “a pseudo-evolutionism which enthrones mechanical law above the principle of growth”, a position which is “at once scientifically unsatisfactory, as giving no possible hint of how the universe came about, and hostile to all hopes of personal relations to God”³⁷. In the time of Peirce, the majority of scientists were still convinced of what John Dupré calls “an omnipresent and wholly regular causal nexus”³⁸, an understanding Peirce calls “necessitarianism”³⁹. He does not align himself with this position of “pseudo evolutionism”; but, neither does he align himself with those who see chance, or the “absolute violation of the laws of nature”⁴⁰, as the basis for the creation of the universe and all novelty. Rather, Peirce saw that all the regularities of nature “are never absolutely exact”⁴¹, for the precise reason that they are continually evolving. Nonetheless, even the novelty (chance) that occurs is subject “to a certain law of probability”⁴². This belief in laws as statistical regularities, enables Peirce to show that novelty is not totally random, for a “violation of a regularity of a low order establishes a regularity of a much higher order”⁴³. It is this fact that reveals to Peirce that a personal God is in a dynamic relation to all that exists and is continually using novelty to further the creative plan for the universe. The second reason why people might block a sense of God is that they have become pessimistic in the face of evil. This is a problem I will tackle later. However, Peirce is convinced that if we have a broad view of history, we come to realize that even in the injustices of life the “secret design of God will be perfected” and that the universe was not “constructed to suit the scheme of some silly scold”⁴⁴.

The last reason a person might not have the sense of God is “that facts that stand before our faces and eyes and stare us in the face are far from being, in all cases, the ones most easily discerned”⁴⁵. There is a strange inversion that occurs in conscious reasoning that makes us oblivious to the wonder of itself. The thing that stares us in the face is the very fact of consciousness. This is, however, easily forgotten as being the complex construction of a highly-tuned evolutionary miracle (the brain); but, rather it is seen as purely the result of external reality working on us. The fact that evolution could produce consciousness means that it is “somehow more than a mere figure of speech to say that nature fecundates the mind of man”⁴⁶; indeed, for Peirce, to

“believe in a God at all, is not that to believe that man’s reason is allied to the originating principle of the universe”⁴⁷.

It is quite fashionable today to see the sense of God as arising from the use of hallucinogenic drugs by our primitive ancestors⁴⁸. The problem with such theories is that they cannot provide an adequate explanation why such experiences of drug-induced ecstasy should be labelled as originating in God. Where does the label of God originate from or from what does the original perception of time and space as limiting conditions arise? For Peirce, our awareness of any limiting condition arises from the miracle of consciousness. A human’s perception of God, then, belongs to the instinctive ability of people “of divining the reasons of phenomena”⁴⁹.

Where would such an idea, say as that of God, come from, if not from direct experience . . . open your eyes – and your heart, which is also a perceptive organ – and you see him. But, you may ask, Don’t you admit there are delusions? Yes: I may think a thing is black, and on close examination it may turn out to be bottle-green. But I cannot think that a certain thing is black if there is no such thing to be seen as black⁵⁰.

The Neglected Argument for the Reality of God

Peirce tells us that the second of the nest of three arguments is “the neglected argument”, although he has “sometimes used the abbreviation “the N.A.” for the whole nest of three”.

The second of the nest is the argument which seems to me to have been “neglected” by writers upon natural theology . . . Were the theologians able to perceive the force of this argument, they would make it such a presentation of universal human nature as to show that a latent tendency toward belief in God is a fundamental ingredient of the soul, and that, far from being a vicious or superstitious ingredient, it is simply the natural precipitate of meditation upon the origin of the Three Universes⁵¹.

In the humble argument, the activity of musement produces the God-hypothesis. As is scientific practice, this hypothesis held as only ‘plausible’

and, being somewhat vague, has to be made more definite before its probability can be tested.. To render the concept of God more precise, Peirce saw the necessity of deduction, which characterizes the second stage of scientific enquiry. This deduction precipitates the more precise idea of God as an “*Ens Necessarium*”, who is really “creator of all three Universes of Experience”⁵². Peirce’s argument here is really a variation of the second form of Anselm’s ontological argument⁵³.

In the first form of the ontological argument, Anselm contents that if God (who is that-than-which-a-greater-*cannot*-be-thought) exists only in the mind and not in reality as well, then the conception in the mind is self contradictory. For, one can conceive of something greater (i.e. as existing in reality as well), and then the notion of God is that-than-which-a-greater-*can*-be-thought. René Descartes (AD 1596-1650) formulated this argument to mean that existence is a necessary predicate of the notion of God. Peirce rejects this first form of the argument. For him, to speak of God’s *existence* is to reduce God to the level of created order. Since, most comments concerning the ontological argument centre around the first form of the argument, it is the second form that has been *neglected*. But, it is the second form that Peirce adopts as his own. The second form of the argument really focuses around the idea of God’s *aseity*: that God is an infinite being by and of God’s self – an *Ens necessarium*. Anselm’s second argument also makes the point that a self-sufficient being would have to be infinite, which excludes the double possibility of its ever coming into existence or ceasing to be⁵⁴. Peirce rejects the idea that the Big Bang could be a chance phenomenon; as, from the potentially inexhaustible number of contingent worlds, a self-sufficient principle is necessary to draw out the particular actual (contingent) universe that does exist⁵⁵. Alfred Whitehead (AD 1861-1947) saw the continuum of inexhaustible and creative possibility as the first stage in the creative process and as that which constitutes God and God’s primordial nature⁵⁶. Creativity is the ultimate principle (antedating God) and “God is its primordial, non-temporal” result⁵⁷. The weakness of this position, however, is summed up by Rasvihary Das as follows: “the idea of a thing being both creator and created in respect of the same created act involves self-contradiction”⁵⁸. Peirce, however, envisages three moments in the act of creation. First, God the Father (*ad extra*), diffuses God’s conscious

personalized feeling through what is no-thing (the primeval “chaos of unpersonalized feeling”⁵⁹); and, in so doing, personalizes it. That which was incapable of being (was “absolutely motionless and dead”⁶⁰, the “nothingness of which consists in the total absence of regularity”) is personalized and so becomes the inexhaustible continuity of possibility⁶². Second, since “Genesis is production from ideas”⁶³, the Son is the blueprint through which potentiality can take concrete existence. He is the regularity that enables time to be born, for from the “infinite multitude of unrelated feelings”, time comes to be when “a regularity in the relations of interacting feelings” is created⁶⁴. But, third, the Holy Spirit is the originating principle of growth and higher levels of synthesis. For growth, the Holy Spirit has to continually draw out (from potentiality) and differentiate (through form – the Son) new particular existences. This is an on-going task for the Holy Spirit, so that we can say that the “universe must be undergoing a continuous growth from non-existence to existence”⁶⁵. For synthesis, the Holy Spirit has to bring what is new and disparate into higher levels of harmony with other existing levels of synthesis. So it is the Holy Spirit that gives to all of existence “that mixture of freedom and constraint, which allows them to be, nay, makes them to be teleological, or purposive”⁶⁶. The universe, then, as it partakes ever more of God’s being or unity, can be said to be the locus within which God reveals God’s self to us. It is the “Deity relatively to us”⁶⁷, so that “Nature is something great, and beautiful, and sacred, and eternal, and real”⁶⁸.

But, then, what can we say about evil in the world? Traditionally, the problem of evil has been presented in terms of a riddle: if God is all-powerful and all-loving, why is there so much *prima facie*, gratuitous evil in the world? For, if God is all-powerful God should be able to remove it; and, if God is all-loving God should want to. Edward Madden and Peter Hare maintain that there are four types of response possible:

The first strategy is to evade the problem; the second is to show the problem to be meaningless; the third is to try to solve the problem within the traditional theistic framework; and the fourth is to modify theistic concepts in the direction of a temporal and/or pantheistic concept of God . . . ⁶⁹

Peirce's scattered comments on the problem of evil could be interpreted as one of the first two strategies. However, when one places these in the context of his evolutionary cosmology, it is more likely that his approach is a combination of the latter two. Peirce's principle of Synechism⁷⁰ is such that, as the cosmos progresses, there is a continual growth of structural complexity. At each new level, because the scope of relations are enhanced, a new essence or rationality emerges. This rationality can function as a law governing the behaviour of specific sub-systems, while also partially determining the activities of more comprehensive super-systems. In living beings, this emerging rationality is shown in the scope of self control of any organism⁷¹. With human beings this self-control is evidenced in the adoption of a fundamental option or self-management style which, when progressively rationalized, secures one more and more within what Peirce calls the "eternal verities"⁷². This enables him to distinguish between a carnal, social and spiritual consciousness⁷³ in humans. God's omnipotence is not shown in the fact that God has created a perfect universe; but, in the fact that the universe is *being created* towards that goal. "Whatever is, is best", in the sense of being a necessary, but imperfect, stage of growth⁷⁴. God's love:

. . . is not a love of which hatred is the contrary; otherwise Satan would be a coordinate power; but it is a love which embraces hatred as an imperfect stage of it, an Anteros . . . Henry James, the Swedenborgian, says: "It is no doubt very tolerably finite or creaturely love to love one's own in another . . . but nothing could be in more flagrant contrast with the creative Love, all whose tenderness *ex vir termini* must be reserved only for what intrinsically is most bitterly hostile and negative to itself . . . which discloses for evil its everlasting solution"⁷⁵.

God's love is shown in the first stage of creation, when God diffuses God's love throughout what is most hostile to God's unity (no-thing, the primeval chaos). But, it is continually shown as God's *eros* love draws novelty into existence, and God's *agape* love draws what is disparate into higher levels of synthesis. What is the archetypal physical evil for Peirce, is the inertial resistance of all levels of creation that resist this circular motion between novelty and harmony.

It must never be forgotten that evil of any kind is none the less bad though the *occurrence of it* be a good. Because in every case the ultimate in some measure abrogates, and ought to abrogate, the penultimate, it does not follow that the penultimate ought not to have abrogated the antepenultimate in due measure⁷⁶.

In human beings, the real moral evil is “not to have an ultimate aim”⁷⁷, a spiritual consciousness; since one then settles at a previous stage of human development and one punishes oneself by one’s “natural affinity to the defective”⁷⁸. To understand this point better, it is imperative to see it within the appreciation Peirce had for Josiah Royce’s (1855-1916) contribution to metaphysics. Peirce called him “our American Plato”⁷⁹ and reviewed both his books: *The Religious Aspects of Philosophy* and *The World and the Individual*⁸⁰. What Peirce had learnt from Royce was that:

. . . it is by the indefinite replication of self-control upon self-control that the *vir* is begotten, and by action, through thought, he grows an esthetic ideal, not for the behoof of his own poor noddle merely, but as the share which God permits him to have in the work of creation⁸¹.

The spiritual consciousness, that arises from the awareness of the *aseity* of God, opens our real communion and “love of mankind at large”⁸²; and this, in turn, helps our own personal advance which takes place “by virtue of a positive sympathy among the created springing from the continuity of mind”⁸³. Peirce was convinced that God’s glory “shines out in everything like the sun and that any esthetic odiousness is merely our Unfeelingness resulting from obscurations due to our own moral and intellectual aberrations”⁸⁴.

The Moral Argument for the Reality of God

The third of the nest of the three arguments for the reality of God, Peirce portrays as enclosing and defending the other two, for it:

. . . consists in the development of those principles of logic according to which the humble argument is the first stage of a scientific inquiry into the origin of

the three universes, but of an inquiry which produces, not merely scientific belief, which is always provisional, but also a living, practical belief, logically justified in crossing the Rubicon with all the freightage of eternity⁸⁵.

As in scientific practice, the ultimate test of the hypothesis of God must be inductive. Scientific beliefs have to be verified or falsified through observation and experiment; whereas, the hypothesis of God is verified through the moral certainty of its value “in the self-controlled growth of man’s conduct of life”⁸⁶. Peirce’s notion of moral certainty is, however, not merely something that is assessed on the individual level. It implies also the idea that an ongoing *communal* assessment of the moral implications of belief in God, enables one to progressively make more sense of the surrounding empirical conditions and one’s moral role within them. Consistent with his interest in telepathy and other aspects of the paranormal, Peirce never totally rejected the possibility of private revelations or miracles⁸⁷. But, to base religion and morality purely on a private inspiration was, for Peirce, akin to the scientific “method of tenacity”⁸⁸. Indeed, the community is vital in establishing both orthodoxy and orthopraxy:

The *raison d’être* of a church is to confer upon the men a life broader than their narrow personalities, a life rooted in the very truth of being. To do that it must be based upon and refer to a definite and public experience . . . Even for the greatest saints, the active motives were . . . the prospect of leaving behind them fertile seeds of desirable fruits here on earth⁸⁹.

At first, Peirce did regard religion as being hostile to science; but, even at this time he acknowledged that the “famous trio of Charity, Faith, and Hope” were the “dispositions of heart” a person ought to have in the quest for truth⁹⁰. By 1893, however, he was convinced that the two were complementary approaches to truth, religion had the task of discerning: “Teleological considerations, that is to say ideals”, while science “can allow itself to be swayed only by efficient causes”⁹¹. Today, there are, broadly speaking, four ways in which the relationship between science and religion is envisaged: conflict, independence, dialogue and integration. The first position is characteristic of both scientific materialism and biblical literalism. Scientific materialism rests on the assumption that the scientific method is

the only reliable path to knowledge and that all reality can ultimately be described by the working of mechanical laws. Biblical literalism has many mutations in every age; but, in essence, they are all “inclined to deal with the creation message of the bible on exactly the same level as the premises of the natural sciences”⁹². The second position would hold that, in order to preserve the authentic methodology and character of each discipline, one has to see science and religion as essentially autonomous and independent. The third position would recognize the differences in methodology and content; but, because there are important areas of contact (such as mutually enriching paradigms) and correlation (such as the fact that for human progress neither can afford to be isolated), dialogue is essential between the two disciplines. Finally, the fourth position sees the need for both the continual reformulation of scientific and theological doctrines to bring them into existential fitness (as it were); and, the need for seeking for an inclusive metaphysics to which both science and religion have contributed. Peirce, endorsed the last position. Between the community of inquirers (scientists) and the community of believers there should be an essential integration; what Peirce called a “religion of science”⁹³. This is because, for Peirce, they both employ the threefold methodology of retroduction, deduction and induction to arrive at the truth and both, therefore, are never complete and can only be content to take “steps toward the truth” and integration is essential so as not to split what is already known “into warring doctrines”⁹⁴. The ultimate aim of both, then, should be to draw into “communion almost the entire collection of men who unite clear thought with intellectual integrity”, so that a “sympathetic unity of consciousness can be created”⁹⁵.

Peirce was well aware that religions (as, indeed, sciences) have a tendency to become institutionalized and so to drift away from the dynamic interdependence between orthodoxy and orthopraxy. There is, then, a danger that there will be the “continual drawing tighter and tighter of the narrowing bounds of doctrine, with less and less attention to the living essence of religion”⁹⁶. Whereas, true religion is “a life, and can be identified with a belief only provided that belief be a living belief”.

Do you know what it is in Christianity that when recognized makes our religion an agent of reform and progress? It is its marking duty as its proper

finite figure. Not that it diminishes in any degree its vital importance, but that behind the outline of that huge mountain it enables us to descry a silvery peak rising into the calm air of eternity⁹⁷.

Conclusion

This, then, is the neglected argument for the reality of God that Peirce proposes for the scientific age. Why does it express the deepest aspect of our human nature? Peirce was convinced that the antiquity of a belief did not automatically make it irrelevant. From the beginnings of the human sense of the “circumambient All”⁹⁸, humans have been lead to reflect upon the moral and social consequences that authenticate that sense. This was a social reflection that gave greater definition to the human person and their thought processes, which, in turn, refined their sense of God⁹⁹. An example that Peirce gives of the deep instinct that the sentiments of faith have forged into our nature is his definition of the similarity between prayer and our sense of paternity; for suppose: “a child to get up on its father’s knee and ask(ed) to be loved. That would be an instinctive motion connected with an emotion and would certainly find a response in the father’s breast”¹⁰⁰. The argument is named by Peirce precisely as a humble argument. It is not a proof for God’s existence, for Peirce would say that we can only prove what can be fully grasped. Rather, the argument is a way of being known. As Elizabeth Boyle intuits:

. . . although scientific method begins with an act of imagination, it relies for verification upon *observation*, whereas poetic intuition and natural mysticism move from imagination and physical observation to knowledge by participation . . . communion with natural phenomena becomes for the contemplative *a way of knowing and being known*¹⁰¹.

However, since nature and society are continually changing and growing, Peirce knew that some sentiments and instincts would become outdated. So the community of inquirers and believers would have to be the locus of continual reflection. To ensure that this was no mere partisan reflection, Peirce realized that a “great catholic church is wanted”:

Man's highest developments are social; and religion, though it begins in a seminal individual inspiration, only comes to flower in a great church coextensive with a civilization. This is true of every religion, but supereminently so of the religion of love. Its ideal is that the whole world shall be united in the bond of a common love of God accomplished by each man's loving his neighbour. Without a church, the religion of love can have but a rudimentary existence; and a narrow, little exclusive church is almost worse than none¹⁰².

NOTES

¹ It was the contention of William James that certain kinds of truth and their pragmatic value for our lives could only be discovered when we put ourselves in a position in which that truth could be made manifest to us. Having the will to believe in a transcendent creator does not *create* the existence of God; but, allows the power of God in the human experience of living to become manifest. As Stumpf describes James' position: "Religion grows out of the deep personal experience of the fragmentary or broken character of life, and this awareness leads one to discover a power that can overcome this sense of incompleteness" (Samuel Enoch Stumpf, *Socrates to Sartre. A History of Philosophy* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), p. 422).

² *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, edited by C. Hartshorne and P. Weiss (volumes 1-6), and A. Burks (volumes 7-8) (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931-1958), which will be abbreviated in this paper as CP followed by volume and paragraph number.

³ David E. Pfeifer, "Charles Peirce's Contribution to Religious Thought", in *Proceedings of the C.S. Peirce Bicentennial International Congress*, eds. Kenneth L. Ketner *et al* (Lubbock, Texas: Texas Tech Press, 1981), p. 367.

⁴ CP 8.44; see also the same desire expressed in 1908, CP 6. 346.

⁵ Frederick Copleston, for example, sees Peirce's position as a type of process pantheism "an anticipation of Whitehead's famous distinction between the primordial and consequent natures of God" (Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy. Volume VIII, Part II*. (New York: Image Books, 1967), p. 85). Robert Carrington calls Peirce's position a radicalized panentheism, "in which God is as much an emergent from nothingness as any other reality" (Robert s. Corrington, *An Introduction to C.S. Peirce. Philosopher, Semiotician, and Ecstatic Naturalist* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 1993), p. 203). Charles Hartshorne notes Peirce's panentheistic tendencies, but regrets that he falls short of embracing the dipolar God of process philosophy by

clinging to a more classical theism (Charles Hartshorne, "A Critique of Peirce's Idea of God", in *The Philosophical Review* 50 (1941): 516-23). D. Orange suggests that Peirce considered God and Nature to be "metaphysically identifiable realities", although she applauds him for balancing the notions of divine transcendence and imminence (D. Orange, *Peirce's Conception of God* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), pp.64-5).

⁶ Michael L. Raposa, *Peirce's Philosophy of Religion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), p.51.

⁷ CP 6.452-85; from "A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God", *The Hibbert Journal* (1908): 90-112.

⁸ CP 6.486.

⁹ CP 6.477.

¹⁰ CP 6.469.

¹¹ CP 6.477.

¹² As, for example, the Vienna Circle of Logical Positivists who focused the criteria of truth merely on the principles of verifiability or falsifiability.

¹³ CP 6.475.

¹⁴ Martin Versfeld, *St Augustine's Confessions and City of God* (Cape Town: The Carrefour Press, 1990), pp.54-55.

¹⁵ CP 6.486.

¹⁶ CP 6.483.

¹⁷ CP 6.488.

¹⁸ CP 6.458.

¹⁹ CP 6.467.

²⁰ Peirce was aware of David Hume's contention that the establishment of the probability of the God hypothesis could not be determined statistically unless we had knowledge of other universes (CP 5.505; 6.494; 6.500; 7.167; 8.35). However, as is argued by many authors today, the plausibility of any argument rests on its ability to unify different areas of human experience, both internal (aesthetic, moral and cognitive) and external (experiential, experimental).

²¹ CP 1.119.

²² CP 6.467; 6.465.

²³ CP 5.132.

²⁴ While all art resides in the human ability to discover functional form, the development of functional form into the realm of symbolic form is based in the human ability to discern broader areas of consonance between different fields of reality, so that

art "continues to grow into a richer and richer symbolic tradition or convention, even as it "calls out" more and more tokens in a variety of fields" (Michael C. Haley, "A Peircean 'Play of Musement': Pablo Picasso's *Bull's Head* as Poetic Metaphor", in *The Peirce Seminar Papers. Volume I*. eds. Michael Shapiro *et al* (Oxford: Berg, 1993).

²⁵ CP 5.119.

²⁶ CP 7.380; see also CP 5.62.

²⁷ CP 7.190. Katsumi Takizawa calls this paradox the "Immanuel-principle": that we cannot think of our proper self or the self of God independently of each other, for we cannot affirm the autonomy and growth of the cosmos without somehow affirming God's all-encompassing support and action within our own existence (Katsumi Takizawa, *Das Heil im Heute. Texte einer japanischen Theologie* (Göttingen: Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987)).

²⁸ MS 1343(1902):29. MS stands for Peirce manuscripts in Houghton Library at Harvard University, followed by a number identified in Richard R. Robin, *Annotated Catalogue of the Papers of Charles S. Peirce* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1967), and, when given, a year and page number in which the passage was written.

²⁹ CP 1.377. For fuller discussion on these categories see Joseph L. Esposito, "Peirce and *Naturphilosophie*", *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society XIII* (1977): 122-41; and Joseph L. Esposito, "The Development of Peirce's Categories", *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society XV* (1979): 51-60.

³⁰ This relatedness between the different levels of reality is often called supervenience. If one borrows a term from the philosophy of mind (see Jaegwon Kim, "Supervenience", in *A Companion to the Philosophy of Mind*, ed. Samuel Guttenplan (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), p. 582). Supervening qualities are said to in some sense dependent on, yet irreducible to, their subvening (underlying) levels. Peirce establishes the irreducibility of emergent, supervening levels in two ways: first, the irreducibly, novel causal properties that each new level of reality has; and; second, the relational complexity between the parts that constitute the whole (CP 6.476).

³¹ Michael L. Raposa, *Peirce's Philosophy of Religion*, p. 144. G. Van der Leeu argues that this poem is seen in the established orders of nature as well the unpredictable spontaneities (G. Van der Leeu, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation. Volume I* (New York; Harper Torchbooks, 1963), p.71).

³² NEM 4:140. NEM stands for *The New Elements of Mathematics by Charles S. Peirce*, edited by Carolyn Eisele, 4 volumes in 5 books (The Hague: Mouton, 1976), followed by volume and page number.

- ³³ Vincent G. Potter, *Peirce's Philosophical Perspective*, ed. Vincent M. Colapietro (New York: Fordham University Press, 1996), p. 152.
- ³⁴ CP 6.407.
- ³⁵ CP 6.88-101.
- ³⁶ CP 6.478.
- ³⁷ CP 6.157.
- ^{**38} John Dupré", *The Disorder of Things. Metaphysical Foundations of the Disunity of Science* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 171.
- ³⁹ CP 1.155; 1.161; 1.402; 5.342; 6.23; 6.43; 6.365-5; 6.610; 7.470; 8.1; 8.153.
- ⁴⁰ CP 6.88-101.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁴² *Ibid.*
- ⁴³ CP 4.587; 6.63.
- ⁴⁴ CP 6.479.
- ⁴⁵ CP 6.162.
- ⁴⁶ CP 5.591.
- ⁴⁷ CP 2.24. In CP 6.516, Peirce writes the following about prayer: "We, one and all of us, have an instinct to pray; and this fact constitutes an invitation from God to pray. And in fact there is found to be not only *soulagement* in prayer, but great spiritual good and moral strength. I do not see why prayer might not be efficacious, or if not the prayer exactly, the state of mind of which the prayer is nothing more than the expression, namely the soul's consciousness of its relation to God".
- ⁴⁸ Mary Barnard, for example, asks that when we consider "the origin of mythologies and cults related to drug plants. We should ask ourselves which, after all, was more likely to happen first: the spontaneously generated idea of the afterlife ... or the accidental discovery of hallucinogenic plants . . . which distort time and space, making them balloon outwardly in greatly expanded vistas" (P.O. Stafford and B.H. Gollightly, *LSD: The Problem-Solving Psychedelic* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1967), p.73).
- ⁴⁹ CP 6.476.
- ⁵⁰ CP 6.493.
- ⁵¹ CP 6.487.
- ⁵² CP 6.452.
- ⁵³ The ontological argument is to be found in chapters 2-4 of Anselm's *Proslogion*. Among the best English translations is *St Anselm's Proslogion* (trans. M.J. Charlesworth (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965)) from which I will take any subsequent quotations.

⁵⁴ Charles Hartshorne has given a modern rendition of this argument in terms of modal logic. "Critics have generally discussed the problem as though it concerned a mere question of fact, of contingent existence versus contingent non-existence ... to squeeze this modal complexity into the mere dichotomy, "existent versus non-existent," is to fail to discuss what Anselm was talking about. He repeatedly expressed the principle that "contingently-existing perfect thing" is contradictory in the same way as "non-existing perfect thing." However, since what is not exemplified in truth is certainly not necessarily exemplified ($\sim p \rightarrow \sim Np$), and since what is not necessary could not be necessary ($\sim Np \rightarrow \sim N$), to exclude contingency (this exclusion being the main point of the Argument) is to exclude factual non-existence as well as merely factual existence, leaving as the only status which the idea of perfection can have (supposing it not meaningless or contradictory), that of necessary exemplification in reality; and it then, by the principle $Np \rightarrow N$, "the necessarily true is true," becomes contradictory to deny that perfection is exemplified. (Here, and throughout, we use the arrow sign for strict, not material implication.)" (Charles Hartshorne, *The Logic of Perfection* (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1991), p.50).

⁵⁵ MS 891.

⁵⁶ Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality. An Essay in Cosmology*, eds. David Ray Griffen and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: The Free Press, 1979), p. 343.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.1.

⁵⁸ Rasvihary Das, *The Philosophy of Whitehead* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), p. 175.

⁵⁹ CP 6.33.

⁶⁰ CP 1.274.

⁶¹ CP 8.317.

⁶² CP 1.175; 1.274-6; 1.362; 1.409; 5.459; 6.33; 6.206; 6.265; 7.512-5; 8.317; W 4:551-2; W 5:293. This is why Peirce makes the qualification in his neglected argument. At first he says that God is really "creator of all three universes of experience" (CP 6.452); but, later qualifies this to "or at any rate two of the three" (CP 6.438). God cannot be said to create nothing, but can be said to draw from it creation after personalizing it with God's feeling.

⁶³ CP 1.227; see also CP 1.571; 8.40.

⁶⁴ CP 8.318.

⁶⁵ CP 1.175.

⁶⁶ CP 7.570; see also MS 942.

⁶⁷ CP 5.107.

⁶⁸ CP 5.589.

⁶⁹ Edward H. Madden and Peter. H. Hare, *Evil and the Concept of God* (Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1968), p. 7.

⁷⁰ CP 1.300; 1.444; 1.453; 2.32; 2.87; 2.111; 2.157; 3.422; 4.50; 5.38; 5.43; 5.330; 5.385; 5.579; 6.31; 6.63; 6.313; 6.604; 8.11; 8.45; 8.213; 8.329.

⁷¹ Although Peirce gives no systematic definition of self-control, one can glean his meaning from various texts. Edward Petry has given a systematic analysis of the development of Peirce's notion of self-control and contends that this took place in four stages from 1857 onwards (Edward S. Petry, "The Origin and Development of Peirce's Concept of self-Control", *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society XXVIII* (1992): 667-90). It would seem that the degree of self control of any organism is determined by its *developmental capacity* and the openness of its *behavioural scaling*. Developmental capacity is the capacity that an organism has to adapt its behaviour to novel situations (CP 1.348; 1.648; 5.477; 5.511; 6.498). Writing to F.A Woods in 1913, Peirce described it as follows: "Any race of animals that has subsisted for ten millennia or more must have instincts of reasoning that have been marvellously near right so far as their purposes were guided by them in reference to matters vital to them . . . instincts become modified by experience" (MS L 477). Behavioural scaling denotes the ability of an organism to scale its behaviour appropriately to different aspects of the environment (both internal and external). Peirce notes that "it is requisite to consider the character of things as relative the perceptions and active power of things ... The interest which the uniformities of Nature have for an animal measures his place in the scale of intelligence" (CP 6.406; see also CP 6.229).

⁷² CP 7.575.

⁷³ CP 7.575-6. Peirce had defined this from a religious perspective, stipulating that a person "has a free will who follows God's will" (MS 891).

⁷⁴ MS 970; see also MS 330: 4-5; 890:1 ff. Hendrikus Berkhof makes the same point when he says that the "statement that the world was created good (*tob*), even very good (*tob meod*, Gen. 1), was wrongly taken as evidence of perfection: *job*, however, is not "perfect", but "suitable for its purpose" (Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christian Faith. An Introduction to the Study of the Faith* (Grand Rapids: William Eerdmann, 1979), p. 171).

⁷⁵ CP 6.287.

⁷⁶ CP 5.551; see also CP 5.533. Again this is an idea that is echoed in the thought of Berkhof when he says that original sin is not so much a fall from a higher state of existence, as the refusal to rise to a higher level of loving communion with God, a

"guilty yielding to the gravitational force of our natural background" (Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christian Faith. An Introduction to the Study of the Faith*, p. 181).

⁷⁷ CP 5.133.

⁷⁸ CP 6.287.

⁷⁹ CP 8.109.

⁸⁰ CP 8.39-54; 8.100-31.

⁸¹ CP 5.402.

⁸² CP 6.291.

⁸³ CP 6.507.

⁸⁴ MS 310 (1903): 9; see also CP 2.453; 3.488.

⁸⁵ CP 6.485.

⁸⁶ CP 6.480. Too often scientific practice narrows the idea of verification merely to denotation and forgets that there are other facets that establish connotation such as (among others) feasibility, utility and moral worth (John Padinjarekutt, "Are theological statements meaningful?", *Bijdragen* 37 (1977): 2-27).

⁸⁷ CP 1.90; 1.143; 1.655; 6.36; 6.92; 7.601. See also Robert H. Ayers, "C. S. Peirce on Miracles", *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* XVI (1980): 242-54.

⁸⁸ CP 5.384.

⁸⁹ CP 6.451.

⁹⁰ CP 2.655.

⁹¹ CP 6.434. CP 6.428-34 is from: "The Marriage of Religion and Science", *The Open Court* 7 (1893): 359-60.

⁹² ". . . hulle neig om die Bybel se skeppingsboodskap op presies dieselfde vlak as die natuurwetenskaplike gegewens te behandel", Adrio König, *Gelowig Nagedink Deel 5: Oor die Mens en die Sonde in die Praktyk* (Pretoria: N.G. Boekhandel, 1982), p. 182.

⁹³ CP 6.433.

⁹⁴ CP 6.432.

⁹⁵ CP 6.446.

⁹⁶ CP 6.438.

⁹⁷ CP 1.675.

⁹⁸ CP 6.429.

⁹⁹ CP 3.488; 4.540; 7.378; 7.384.

¹⁰⁰ W 1.574.

¹⁰¹ Elizabeth Michael Boyle, *Science as Sacred Metaphor. An Evolving Revelation* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2006), p.17.

¹⁰² CP 6.443.

Religion versus Spirituality¹

A Contemporary Conundrum*

SANDRA SCHNEIDERS

INTRODUCTION

The subject I propose to discuss with you this evening is particularly acute, if not peculiar to, contemporary, and especially first world culture. It is, like many of our cultural problems such as inclusivity, addictions, and family breakdown, ironically a product, to a large extent, of our unprecedented abundance, leisure, and freedom. The problem is the relationship between religion and spirituality. This is a somewhat different approach to the topic than was suggested to me, namely, secular and religious spiritualities. I think we will get into that topic but I think the real problem many of us are confronting in society, our churches, and perhaps even in our classrooms is not an abstract one of the theoretical distinctions and differences between secular spiritualities and religious spiritualities but the alienation or struggle between religion and spirituality.

I do not know how similar what we are experiencing in the United States is to what you are experiencing here in South Africa, but permit me to describe briefly the religio-social phenomena that are raising this question in my country and in many European contexts and see if you recognize it as similar to your situation.

Statistics detail the decline in the U.S. of the mainline Protestant churches even though fundamentalist denominations and Roman Catholicism are growing numerically². Nevertheless, Catholic “practice” or institutional participation (in the sense of going to church, espousing Church teaching, observing Church laws, or referring to the clergy for guidance) is much less widespread than in the past and Catholics are much more likely to be involved in what was once called “indifferentism” or the relativizing of

exclusivist claims for Christianity as the unique path to salvation or Catholicism as the one true Church³. In other words, although the majority of Americans claim some religious affiliation and religion is apparently a permanent feature of American culture, religion as a powerful influence in individual or societal life seems to be in serious trouble⁴.

On the other hand, spirituality has rarely enjoyed such a high profile, positive evaluation, and even economic success as it does among Americans today. Publishers and bookstores report that spirituality is a major focus of contemporary writing and reading⁵. Workshops on every conceivable type of secular and religious spirituality abound. Retreat houses are booked months and even years in advance. Spiritual renewal programs multiply and spiritual directors and gurus have more clients than they can handle. Spirituality has even become a serious concern of business executives, in the workplace, among athletes, and in the entertainment world. You can find research as well as popular literature on “a spirituality of work,” or “the spirituality of sport” as well as interviews with entertainment personalities on their spiritualities or spiritual practice. Spirituality as a research discipline is gradually taking its place in the academy as a legitimate field of study. In short, if religion is in trouble spirituality is in the ascendancy. The irony of this situation evokes puzzlement and anxiety in the religious establishment, scrutiny among theologians and religious studies professionals, and justification among those who have traded the religion of their past for the spirituality of their present.

The justification of intense interest in spirituality and alienation from religion is often expressed in a statement such as “I am a spiritual person (or on a spiritual journey), but I am not religious (or interested in religion).”⁶ Interestingly enough, and especially among the young, this religionless - thus, secular - spirituality often freely avails itself of the accoutrements of religion. Invocation of angels, practices such as meditation or fasting, personal and communal rituals, the use of symbols and sacramentals from various traditions such as incense and candles, crystals, rainsticks, vestments, and religious art are common. Indeed, even the most secular types of spirituality seem bound to borrow some of their resources from the religious traditions they repudiate.

Finally, our era is marked by an unprecedented contact and interchange among religions, not only ecumenical contact among Christians but genuinely inter-religious encounter among the three monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) and between them and the other great world religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and others⁷. These contacts run the gamut from serious interfaith encounter through dialogue and shared practice⁸ even to the point of disciplined “crossing over”⁹ to naïvely disrespectful “raiding” of other traditions by spiritual dabblers who appropriate interesting objects or practices from religions not their own. Whatever else can be said, it is no longer the case in non-tribal cultures that most people are initiated from childhood into a family religious affiliation and remain within it for a lifetime, never seriously questioning its validity and unquestioningly passing it on to their own offspring. These religious developments in our cultures affect all of us, in one way or another, personally and/or through families and social contexts.

Three models for the relationship between religion and spirituality seem operative in our context. First, there are those who consider the two, religion and spirituality, as separate enterprises with no necessary connection. Religion and spirituality are *strangers* at the banquet of transcendence who never actually meet or converse. This is surely the position, on the one hand, of our contemporaries who respect the religious involvements of others but are simply not interested in participating in religion themselves, or of those, on the other hand, who consider correct and faithful religious practice quite adequate to their needs without any superfluous spirituality trimmings. Second, some consider religion and spirituality as conflicting realities, related to each other in inverse proportion. The more spiritual one is the less religious, and vice versa. The two are *rivals, if not enemies*, vying for the allegiance of serious seekers. This is the position, on the one hand, of many who have repudiated a religion that has hurt them or who simply find religion empty, hypocritical, or fossilized and, on the other hand, of those whose dependence on religious authority is threatened by spirituality which does not ask clerical permission or accept official restraints in its quest for God¹⁰. Finally, some see religion and spirituality as two dimensions of a single enterprise which, like body and spirit, are often in tension but are essential to

each other and constitute, together, a single reality. In other words, they see the two as *partners* in the search for God.

The last is the position for which I will argue in what follows. But I do not plan to do so from a dogmatic position, i.e., as a faith tenet one must accept, or for apologetic reasons, i.e., to convince anyone that this is the only reasonable position because, clearly, it is not. Rather, by describing with some nuance both religion and spirituality I will try to uncover both the real and the *ersatz* sources of tension between them and then suggest how a contemporary person who takes seriously the spiritual quest on the one hand and the real resources and problems of religion on the other can situate her or himself in our religiously pluralistic environment with integrity, freedom, and responsibility.

SPIRITUALITY

Many today would argue that spirituality is the more important of the two terms, religion being a form (if not a procrustean bed) of spirituality. In fact, the priority assigned to either religion or spirituality in relation to the other depends on the level on which one is discussing each term. At its deepest level each is prior and the question of priority becomes a classical chicken-and-egg conundrum. But in contemporary experience, I would argue, spirituality has a certain priority so I will discuss it first.

A. Spirituality as an Anthropological Constant

In its most basic or anthropological sense, spirituality, like personality, is a characteristic of the human being as such. It is the capacity of persons to transcend themselves through knowledge and love, that is, to reach beyond themselves in relationship to others and thus become more than self-enclosed material monads. In this sense, even the newborn child is spiritual while the most ancient rock is not. But we usually reserve the term spirituality for a relatively developed relationality to self, others, world, and the Transcendent, whether the last is called God or designated by some other term. Although spirituality is not necessarily Christian or Catholic, and I will be

making some appropriate distinctions as we go, my concern in this context is primarily Catholic Christian spirituality.

Spirituality as a developed relationality (rather than a mere capacity for relationship) is not generic. Just as we don't speak "language" but always some particular language so we don't live "spirituality" but some form of it. We distinguish among spiritualities according to various criteria. For example, we may distinguish qualitatively between a healthy and a rigid spirituality. We may distinguish spiritualities by religious tradition or family as Catholic or Lutheran or Dutch Reformed, Benedictine or Carmelite. Or we may distinguish spiritualities by salient features, e.g., as Eucharistic, biblical, or feminist. These distinctions are not necessarily mutually exclusive nor is this listing comprehensive. A healthy spirituality may be Catholic, Benedictine, Eucharistic, and feminist. Conversely, a rigid spirituality may also be Catholic, Benedictine, Eucharistic, and feminist. In short, although all humans are spiritual in the basic anthropological sense, and all christian spiritualities share a deep commonality, each individual develops her or his spirituality in a unique and personal way, analogously to the way individuals develop their common human personhood into a unique personality. Therefore, the personal spiritualities of Christians, even within the same denomination, Religious order, or movement, may differ enormously.

B. Spirituality as Life Project and Practice

What, then, is this unique and personal synthesis, denoted by the term spirituality? Peter Van Ness, a professor of religion at Columbia University in New York City who has specialized in the study of non-religious or secular spirituality, defines spirituality as "the quest for attaining an optimal relationship between what one truly is and everything that is."¹¹ By "everything that is" he means reality apprehended as a cosmic totality and by "what one truly is" he means all of the self to which one has attained. In other words, spirituality is the attempt to relate, in a positive way, oneself as a personal whole to reality as a cosmic whole. This definition is broad enough to include both religious and secular spiritualities.

In my own work I have offered a somewhat more specified definition which may highlight particular aspects of what we mean by spirituality. I define spirituality as “the experience of conscious involvement in the project of life-integration through self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives.¹²” Like Van Ness I have tried to define spirituality broadly enough that the definition can apply to religious and non-religious or secular spiritualities and specifically enough that it does not include virtually anything that anyone espouses or does.

The adjective “spiritual” was coined by St. Paul who used it to denote that which is influenced by the Holy Spirit of God (for example, “spiritual persons” [1 Cor. 2:13, 15] or “spiritual blessings” [Eph. 1:3; Rom. 15:27]) and the substantive, “spirituality,” derives from that adjective. However, although “spiritual” originated as a christian term¹³, spirituality, in the last few decades, has become a generic term for the actualization in life of the human capacity for self-transcendence, regardless of whether that experience is religious or not. In other words, in general parlance spirituality has lost its explicit reference to the influence of the Holy Spirit and come to refer primarily to the activity of the human spirit. The term has even been applied retrospectively to the classical Greeks and Romans and other ancient peoples who certainly would not have applied the term to their own experience¹⁴. Without going into the arguments for or against this expansion in the application of the terms “spiritual” and “spirituality” I would suggest that we have to recognize the linguistic fact that neither religion in general nor Christianity in particular any longer controls the meaning and use of the terms. This being the case, we need to unpack the general definition in order to clarify the meaning of the term as it is being used today and then show how Christian spirituality involves a specification of this general definition.

First, spirituality as we are using it in this definition denotes *experience*, a term that is itself very difficult to define. In this context, however, it implies that spirituality is not an abstract idea, a theory, an

ideology, or a movement of some kind. It is personal lived reality which has both active and passive dimensions.

\ Second, spirituality is an experience of *conscious involvement in a project* which means that it is neither an accidental experience such as the result of a drug overdose, nor an episodic event such as being overwhelmed by a beautiful sunset. It is not a collection of practices such as saying certain prayers, rubbing crystals, or going to church. It is an ongoing and coherent approach to life as a consciously pursued and ongoing enterprise.

Third, spirituality is a project of *life-integration* which means that it is holistic, involving body and spirit, emotions and thought, activity and passivity, social and individual aspects of life. It is an effort to bring all of life together in an integrated synthesis of ongoing growth and development. Spirituality, then, involves one's whole life in relation to reality as a whole.

Fourth, this project of life-integration is pursued by consistent *self-transcendence toward ultimate value*. This implies that spirituality is essentially positive in its direction. A life of narcissistic egoism, self-destructive addiction, or social violence even though it may involve the totality of the person's being, is not a spirituality. The focus of self-transcendence is value that the person perceives as ultimate not only in relation to oneself but in some objective sense. One might perceive life itself, personal or social well-being, the good of the earth, justice for all people, or union with God as ultimate value. Sometimes, of course, the perception of ultimate value is mistaken. We have seen tragic examples of this in cults such as Heaven's Gate which ended in group suicide in 1997¹⁵. What presents itself as spirituality, in other words, requires discernment.

Remembering that, in the concrete, there is no such thing as generic spirituality, let us now apply this general definition of spirituality to the specific tradition of Christianity. Here we are dealing with an explicitly religious spirituality in which the *horizon of ultimate value* is

the triune God revealed in Jesus Christ in whose life we share through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Christian spirituality is the life of faith, hope, and love within the community of the Church through which we put on the mind of Christ by participating sacramentally and existentially in his paschal mystery. The *desired life-integration* is personal transformation in Christ which implies participation in the transformation of the world in justice for all creatures.

Christian spirituality, then, is Christian because of the specification of the general features of spirituality by specifically Christian content: God, Trinity, Christ, Spirit, creation, Church, paschal mystery, sacraments, and so on. However, Christians share the fundamental reality of spirituality with other traditions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Judaism, and native traditions. Some of these traditions, such as Judaism and Hinduism, are specifically religious, that is, theistic, in that they identify deity as the horizon of ultimate value. Others, like Taoism and Buddhism, are analogous to religions in that the horizon of ultimate value is absolutely transcendent although not identified as a personal God. There are other spiritualities which are implicitly or explicitly non-religious in that they recognize no transcendent reality, nothing beyond the cosmos as naturally knowable. And finally, some spiritualities, e.g., feminist or ecological spiritualities, have both religious and non-religious forms¹⁶.

Religion

With this basic understanding of spirituality as a dimension of human being which is actualized in some people as a life project and practice, either within a religious context or as a secular enterprise, we can turn now to a consideration of religion.

A. Three Levels of Religion

Like spirituality, the term “religion” can be used on different levels and may well be accepted on one level and repudiated on another by the same person at the same time. At its most basic, religion is the *fundamental life stance* of the person who believes in transcendent

reality, however designated, and assumes some realistic posture before that ultimate reality. Religion in this most basic sense involves a recognition of the total dependence of the creature on the source or matrix of being and life which gives rise to such attitudes and actions as reverence, gratitude for being and life and all that sustains it, compunction for failure to live in that context in a worthy manner, and reliance on the transcendent for help in living and dying. In this sense, religion is at the root of any spiritual quest which is not explicitly atheistic or reductively naturalistic. However vaguely they may define the Ultimate Reality, or however antagonistic toward organized religion they might be, most people speaking of spirituality are religious in this most basic sense.

Second, religion can denote a *spiritual tradition* such as Christianity or Buddhism, usually emanating from some foundational experience of divine or cosmic revelation (e.g., Jesus' experience of divine filiation and the first disciples' experience of his Resurrection, or the Buddha's enlightenment) that has given rise to a characteristic way of understanding and living in the presence of the numinous. Most people are born into such a tradition, remotely in their home culture and often proximately in their family of origin. For example, whether or not they go to church or synagogue or know much about the doctrines of Christianity or Judaism the majority of North Americans operate within a framework that is traditionally Judaeo-Christian. Most Koreans, whether Christian or even non-believing, are deeply Buddhist and/or Confucian in sensibility. Separating oneself completely from the religious tradition of one's origin and/or culture is actually extremely difficult and requires considerable intellectual effort even for those who have chosen another tradition or deliberately rejected all traditions. Thus, even people who claim to have rejected religion in favor of spirituality probably continue to operate to some degree in relation to a religious tradition, if only by way of contrast.

Third, the term "religion" can denote *a religion or institutionalized formulation* of a particular spiritual tradition such as Missouri Synod Lutheranism, Dutch Reformed Calvinism, Soto Buddhism, Roman

Catholicism, Orthodox Judaism, and so on. Religion as institutionalized tradition, as those who specialize in its study tell us, is a notoriously difficult term to define¹⁷. Traditionally, and probably in the popular imagination, a religion is identified as an institutionalized system of relating with God or gods, leading to salvation either in this life or another life. However, as scholars have studied societies in the concrete they have discovered that religion in many cultures is not a separate institution distinguished from parallel institutions such as the political, economic, or educational but that these dimensions of group life are embedded inseparably in the culture as a whole. Furthermore, not all the cultural systems we would identify as religious involve belief in God. For example, Buddhism and Taoism, which are certainly analogous to Hinduism or Christianity as paths of salvation, both totally permeate their respective cultures and are non-theistic. What seems to mark religions in the concrete is that they are cultural systems for dealing with ultimate reality, whether or not that ultimate reality is conceptualized as God, and they are organized in particular patterns of creed, code, and cult.

First, religions are *cultural systems*. They are institutionalized patterns of belief and behavior in which certain global meanings, usually based on some kind of foundational revelation or revelatory insight, are socially shared. So, for example, Christianity holds certain global convictions based on the Judaeo-Christian revelation of God through Jesus which embrace our relationships with self, other human beings, and the world.

Second, religions are *concerned with whatever a society or group considers ultimately important*, however that is defined. This may involve placating dangerous deities or pleasing benevolent ones; assuring fertility or victory in war; honoring ancestors or achieving enlightenment. In Christianity what is ultimately important is salvation which involves both personal union with God, now and for all eternity, and the transformation of all creation in Christ.

Third, religions are culturally institutionalized in the form of *creed*, or what the group believes about the nature and functioning of personal, cosmic, and transcendent reality; *code*, or what the group holds to be obligatory or forbidden in order to live in accord with ultimate reality; and *cult*, or how the group symbolically expresses its dependence upon ultimate reality whether that be a personal God, the cosmos itself as sacred, the ancestors, or some other transcendent or quasi-transcendent reality. In some way, religions are about the socially mediated human relationship to the sacred, the ultimate, the transcendent, the divine. These are not strictly equivalent terms but religion as institution is basically a cultural system for dealing with that which transcends not only the individual but even the social entity as a whole.

B. The Dialectical Relation Between Religious Tradition and Institutionalization

In light of the foregoing, we can see that religions as cultural systems operate on two levels which are distinguishable but so intimately related that they cannot be separated, namely, the religious tradition and the institutionalization of that tradition in an organized system called *a* religion or, in some cases, a denomination or a sect within a religious tradition.

Religions, as we have already seen, are usually born in the intense, often mystical, revelatory experience of a founding figure or group who encounters the divine, the numinous, in some direct way that leads to personal life transformation, i.e., to spirituality in the developed sense of that word. But if this revelation experience and its characteristic spirituality is to give rise to a religious tradition, that is, is to have followers beyond the original founding figures, the spirituality to which it gives birth must be somehow institutionalized as *a* religion (or analogous reality). The enlightenment of the Buddha, the burning bush encounter of Moses, the “abba” experience of Jesus and the Resurrection experience of his disciples gave rise respectively to Buddhism, Judaism, and Christianity as traditions lived by communities in some institutionalized form. And it is precisely this

institutional character which is both the safeguard and the nemesis of religious traditions and their spiritualities.

The reason for institutionalization is clear. If the spirituality of a religious tradition is to be made available to others there has to be a way of initiating people into the mystery that has been discovered by or revealed to the founding figures and of sustaining them in living it. This is the purpose of the RCIA in Catholicism. By rites of initiation, inculcated teachings and practices, mentoring by mature members, systems of rewards and punishments that encourage correct belief and behavior, and properly celebrated rituals, the religious institution passes on the religious tradition and its spirituality thus sustaining not only its members but itself as a social reality. The resulting cultural system governs the most important aspects of the life of the group such as sexuality, kinship, worship, the distribution of material goods, the exercise of social power and authority, and so on. Its ultimate purpose, however, is not simply the fostering of social meaning or the regulation of behavior in the society but the personal development and even salvation, i.e., the spirituality, of the persons who make up the society. In this sense, *institutionalization* as an organized religion is what makes *spirituality* as a daily experience of participation in a *religious tradition* possible for the majority of people. When there is no institutionalized religion the religious tradition itself dissipates into a vague and shapeless generalized ethos. It may have some kind of private significance for individuals or some kind of public ceremonial function but there is no way for the participants to share it with one another or embody it in public life. In the United States, for example, the banishing of all religions as institutions from public life under a (mis)interpretation of the First Amendment to the Constitution mandating separation of Church and state has created a spiritual vacuum in which shared religious beliefs and values cannot be called upon to shape public policy or sanction private behavior. In the once Christian Czech Republic the now widespread atheism is due to the aggressive suppression of institutional religion during the time of the Communist regime.

The danger, of course, in the institutionalization of any religious tradition is that institutions often end up taking the place of the values they were established to promote. Institutionalization of religion easily leads to empty ritualism, hypocrisy, clericalism, corruption, abuse of power, superstition, and other deformations familiar from the history of religions and from which no religion is totally free. Many people are so scandalized and disillusioned by these deformations that they jettison all connection with institutionalized religion.

Such global rejection of religion involves a failure to distinguish between the authentic and life-giving religious tradition and the spirituality to which it gives rise on the one hand, and its institutional form on the other. It is a classic case of curing a headache by decapitation. The Christian tradition centered in Jesus the Christ has been institutionalized in Roman Catholicism, Orthodoxy, Protestantism, Episcopalianism, Anglicanism and other denominations. Each of these churches has carried the authentic tradition more or less successfully throughout its history. Institutional Catholicism, for example, has had glorious moments, such as the Second Vatican Council, and utterly despicable moments such as the medieval Inquisition or the current clerical sexual abuse scandal.

Although institutions are notoriously prone to corruption, non-institutionalized spiritualities, especially those unrelated to any religious tradition, are prone to extremism and instability on the one hand and to ghettoizing on the other. When people abandon the religious institution, even if they manage to find a small group of like-minded companions in exile, they are left without the corrective criticism of an historically tested community and the public scrutiny that any society focuses on recognized groups within it. And they also lose the leverage which would enable them to influence systemically either Church or society¹⁸. Such unaffiliated individuals or groups have no access to the sustaining shared practice of a tradition that has stood the test of time. They no longer enjoy the social encouragement, the plausibility structures of a shared sociology of belief, the clarity of a coherent theology, the formative mediation of a canonical sacred

literature, the tested tradition of moral ideals and restraints, the wisdom of the great figures in the tradition. Nevertheless, it must be frankly acknowledged that the regular practice of institutional religion is no guarantee at all of the internalization of the tradition as personal spirituality and faithful denominational membership is no guarantee of voice or influence in either Church or society.

In short, the institutionalization of religious tradition in organized religions is a paradoxical blessing. Institutionalized religion initiates people into an authentic tradition of spirituality, gives them companions on the journey and tested wisdom by which to live, and supports them in times of suffering and personal instability. But it also provides a way for people to be publicly correct and socially respectable without ever becoming truly spiritual and it often undermines personal faith by its own infidelity to the tradition, sometimes exacerbated by cynical official insistence that its worst offenses, for example anti-semitism or the oppression and exclusion of women, are expressions of the divine will. It can require uncommon faith and integrity to find in the christian tradition the resources for a genuine Catholic spirituality by participating in the life of an institution that is often a very poor vehicle of that tradition.

The Contemporary Conflict between Spirituality and Religion

Having looked at the meanings of and the distinction between spirituality and religion that often has grounded the tension between organized religion and personal spirituality we are in a position to appreciate the particularly acute version of that conflict today. Because religion is not embedded in western culture but exists as a distinct institution we, unlike our forebears, can objectify it, compare it to religions in other cultures, and thus problematize it in a way members of more traditional societies could not. The alienation of many contemporary people who have abandoned religion in favor of spirituality has a double source that was not operative in earlier times or more restricted societies. First, postmodernity fosters the pursuit of idiosyncratic and non-religious spirituality and, second, ideological criticism

reinforces the alienation of contemporary seekers from institutionalized religion.

A. Postmodernity and Non-Religious Spirituality

This is not the place, nor do I have the time, to give even a thumbnail sketch of the emerging culture of postmodernity¹⁹. Suffice it to say that it differs from the modern culture in which most of today's adults were raised by its anti-foundationalism and its rejection of master narratives. This entails the repudiation of any kind of unitary worldview, as well as a recognition that others are irreducibly different and cannot be subsumed into our reality or perspective. A postmodern mentality often involves the repudiation of any claims to normativity or non-negotiable ultimacy by any institution or agency, a thoroughgoing relativism with regard to religion as well as other institutions and authorities, and a despair of genuine relationships with those whose reality is really "other" than our own. Postmodernity, therefore, is characterized by fragmentation of thought and experience which focuses attention on the present moment, on immediate satisfaction, on what works for me rather than on historical continuity, social consensus, or shared hopes for a common future. In this foundationless, relativistic, and alienated context there is, nevertheless, often a powerfully experienced need for some focus of meaning, some source of direction and value. The intense interest in spirituality today is no doubt partially an expression of this need which is often felt more profoundly by young people who have no stable background religious experience upon which to fall back in times of personal crisis.

Religion, however, in contrast to the postmodern sensibility, presupposes a unitary worldview. Christianity relies on a master narrative stretching from creation to the end of the world. Furthermore, it is ontologically based and makes claims to universal validity while promising an eschatological reward for delayed personal gratification and sacrificial social commitment. In other words, the christian religion is intrinsically difficult to reconcile with a postmodern sensibility. By contrast, a non-religious spirituality is often very

compatible with that sensibility precisely because such spirituality is usually a privatized, idiosyncratic, personally satisfying stance and practice which makes no doctrinal claims, imposes no moral authority outside one's own conscience, creates no necessary personal relationships or social responsibilities, and can be changed or abandoned whenever it seems not to work for the practitioner. Commitment, at least of any relatively permanent kind, which involves both an implied affirmation of personal subjectivity and a conviction about cosmic objectivity, is easily circumvented by a spirituality which has no institutional or community affiliation. Clearly such a spirituality is much more compatible with a postmodern sensibility than the religion of any established church, especially Christianity.

B. Ideology Criticism of Institutional Religion

Exacerbating the postmodern challenge to institutional religion and the corresponding attraction of religiously unaffiliated spirituality is the serious contemporary ideological criticism of religion itself. Although it arose in the Enlightenment this criticism is exacerbated today by the ecumenical and interreligious experience characteristic of postmodern globalization and the general espousal in the first world of democratic and participative principles of social organization. In this context, three features of institutionalized first-world religion, especially Christianity, have become increasingly alienating for contemporary seekers.

First, religions have been, historically, *exclusive*. Exclusivity can be cultural and geographical as was the case with the great religions of the East before migration within, into, and beyond Asia became common²⁰. It can also be tribal as has been the case with native American or many African religions whose adherents never understood or intended their beliefs to extend beyond the tribe in which the religion was culturally embedded. Or, exclusivity can be doctrinal and cultic as has been the case with Islam, to some extent Judaism (which is unique in many ways)²¹, and certainly Christianity and its sub-divisions. As long as the doctrinal and cultic exclusivity was implicit, because there was little or no contact with or conversion agenda toward outsiders, exclusivity posed little problem. But in the cases of Christianity and Islam, which

felt called to convert the world to thematic adherence to their religious faith and practice, it became both an agenda of domination by the institution and a litmus test of acceptability for members. There is no need to rehearse the tragic history of Christian persecution of Jews and Muslims, cultural destruction by Christian missionaries, the internecine wars among Christian denominations, the witch hunts and inquisitions within Christian denominations, or the holy wars of Islam. Religious exclusivity has been a source of hatred and violence which many contemporary seekers find so scandalous that they can no longer associate with the sources and purveyors of it²².

Second, religions as institutions are traditionally *ideological*. Membership involves acceptance of a particular set of beliefs and obligatory practices and prohibitions. In many cases, fair-minded moderns find some of the doctrines incredible and some of the practices arbitrary or oppressive and they claim the right to dissent both intellectually and behaviorally. Increasingly, educated people reject the kinds of controls on their minds and behavior, imposed in the name of God, that such beliefs, practices, and prohibitions represent. Repudiating membership in a religious denomination means, for many people, shaking free of narrow-minded dogmatism and guilt-inducing morality for the sake of spiritual breadth, autonomy of conscience, and psychological maturity.

Another aspect of institutional ideology that many people find alienating is the official repudiation of non-christian practices which a believer might find attractive and spiritually helpful. As Christians have encountered other religions and quasi-religions directly, rather than purely academically, they have experienced the power of rituals and practices from native American sweat lodges to Zen meditation, from African drumming to feminist nature rituals, from psychotherapy and support groups to channeling and twelve-step programs. Eclecticism, syncretism, and relativism, familiar to the postmodern mind in the areas of art, science, medicine, business, and education, seem natural enough also in the sphere of religion. But even serious scholars of religion who are trying to mediate the inter-religious

conversation are often viewed, by Church officials, with suspicion or even alarm when they attempt to deal with the possible mutual enrichment of religions²³. The simplest solution many see to what they perceive as the ideological narrowness and protectionism of the religious institution is to resign from official membership and pursue a personal spirituality within which they can include whatever seems to be of value for the religious quest whatever the provenance of such resources.

A third problematic feature of institutionalized religions especially within the christian tradition, is the *clerical system*. Officials who fulfill an organizational or service function in a religious group such as sacralizing and recording births and deaths, witnessing marriages, providing materials for devotional practices, maintaining places of worship or devotion, or providing personal support for members in times of crisis may not pose a problem. But a sacerdotal clergy which claims ontological superiority to ordinary believers and arrogates to itself the exercise of an absolutely necessary intermediary role between the believer and God is highly problematic for many people²⁴. The egalitarian theory and practice of modern democratic societies tends to recognize only acquired superiority based on competence or achievement and to be highly suspicious of ascribed status such as that of the clergy. Furthermore, it tends to resent monopoly of scarce resources, whether material or spiritual, by any self-appointed agency, especially if the monopoly is used to subordinate the rest of the community²⁵. Many find intuitively repugnant the claim by a small, exclusive group to control the access to God of the vast majority of believers. In a denomination such as Catholicism, which not only has such a clerical system but in which half the membership is barred from access to it on the basis of gender, this repugnance can and has led to disaffiliation from the religion altogether.

In short, the repudiation of institutional religion in favor of personal spirituality is, for many people, actually the repudiation of denominational belonging rather than of religion as such or of religious traditions in their entirety. It arises from a rejection, on the one hand,

of a medieval institutional model of the Church which is hardly compatible with either a sophisticated ecclesiology or a postmodern understanding of institutions and, on the other hand, of the exclusivism, ideological legalism, and clericalism that often characterize institutional religion. Non-denominational personal spirituality, by contrast, seems to allow one to seek God, to grow personally, and to commit oneself to the betterment of the world and society with freedom of spirit and openness to all that is good and useful, whatever its source²⁶. There can be no question that many such disaffiliated seekers are admirable human beings and some may even exercise a prophetic function by challenging the hypocrisy and control agenda of organized religion and modeling, by the sheer goodness of their lives, a spirituality that seems more authentic²⁷.

Making a case for the Partnership of Religion and Spirituality

Against the background of this acknowledgment that, at least for some people, a purely private and even idiosyncratic spirituality may work, I want to argue two points: first, that it is not an optimal formula for the spiritual life of individuals or for the good of society; second, that it evades the major challenge to unity that the Gospel addresses to us as human beings and as Christians at this particular juncture in world history.

A. Religion as the Appropriate Context for Spirituality

First, I would suggest that religion is the optimal context for spirituality. The great religious traditions of the world are much more adequate matrices for spiritual development and practice than personally constructed amalgams of beliefs and practices²⁸. In reality, such constructed spiritualities are private religions and, while this construction might seem like a creative form of postmodern *bricolage*, it is often quite naïve about how we humans function, individually and corporately.

I have already pointed out some of the shortcomings of religiously non-affiliated spirituality for the individual. First, lacking roots in a tested wisdom tradition or community of criticism such spiritualities

are not only prone to remaking the mistakes of the past but also, more seriously, to extremism and fanaticism. And those who lack the personal intensity to become extremists are likely to drift into spiritual lethargy in the absence of a community of support and encouragement. Community, although never perfect, is the nearly indispensable context for a wise and sustained spirituality²⁹. Spirituality which lacks roots in a tradition, although it may relate a person sporadically to a variety of like-minded seekers, lacks the ongoing support and appropriate challenge that a stable community of faith provides.

Second, personal spiritualities composed of a variety of intrinsically unrelated practices must draw on equally unrelated beliefs to sustain and guide the practice. Rigid dogmatism, especially the kind that was imposed on believers in pre-conciliar Catholicism, is rightly bemoaned, but the consistency of a thoughtful and critical systematic theology is a crucial structural support for the faith and morality that are integral to any spirituality. For example, the belief that all humans are made in the image and likeness of God and redeemed by Christ grounds the moral imperative of absolute respect for others regardless of age, race, nationality, gender, or class. Conversely, a general benevolence based on the golden rule is unlikely to ground either costly respect for the enemy, “non violence under oppression” or the active commitment to social justice of theologically informed Christian faith.

My third, and most important, hesitation about the adequacy of religiously disaffiliated spirituality is that, while it may respond well to someone’s current felt needs, it has no past and no future. It is deprived of the riches of an organic tradition that has developed over centuries in confrontation with real historical challenges of all kinds. And even if it facilitates some major spiritual intuitions by the individual it is intrinsically incapable of contributing them to future generations except, in some extraordinary cases, by way of a written testimony³⁰. By contrast, the participant in a religious tradition can both profit from and criticize all that has gone before and thus, at least potentially, can help hand on to successive generations a wiser, more compassionate approach to the universal human dilemmas and

challenges with which religion has always grappled. Privatized spirituality is at least naïvely narcissistic. It implicitly defines spirituality as a private pursuit for personal gain, even if that gain is socially committed. Although the practitioner may be sincerely attempting to respond to a reality, e.g., God, who transcends her or himself, she or he remains the sole arbiter of who God is and what God asks. The person accepts as authoritative no challenge to personal blindness or selfishness from sacred texts or community. There is certainly continuity, but there is also a real difference, between the personal openness to challenge that a sincere but religiously unaffiliated person might try to maintain and the actual accountability that is required of the member of a community.

In summary, the argument I am making for religion as the most productive context for spirituality, for both the individual and the community, is that the quest for God is too complex and too important to be reduced to a private enterprise. It is, of course, crucial for every truly spiritual person to remain ever vigilant in guarding liberty of conscience and integrity of practice against the deformations of institutional religion. But while sitting lightly to institution one needs to immerse oneself deeply in one's religious tradition and the community called Church which embodies and carries that tradition. Only from within that community can a person avail her or himself of its riches and promote not only the integrity of the institution but also the fecundity of the tradition itself.

B. Religious Commitment as the Instrument of Unity

As John Paul II said on a number of occasions *à propos* of millennial observances, unity is a deep desire of the heart of God and the ultimate vocation of the human race³¹. The creation story in Genesis, while it tells us nothing scientific about the origin of humanity, forcefully expresses the theological truth that God created humanity as one family. That family was split apart by sin but Jesus' deepest desire, for which he gave his life, is that "all may be one" as he and God are one (Jn. 17:20-21). Ironically, and tragically, one of the most powerful sources of division among humans is religion itself, but in our day

historical forces of all kinds are inviting, challenging, urging us to overcome religious division.

Globalization itself is involving us with our sisters and brothers of every nation and ethnic group on earth. Contemporary people know more about other religions than any previous generation. Vatican II opened the windows of the Church not only toward other christian denominations and the other great monotheistic religions, Judaism and Islam, but even tentatively suggested that Christians reach out toward the other great world religions. But these positive forces toward religious unity are counteracted by economic greed and political imperialism, by ancient and recent ethnic hatreds, by fundamentalist extremism and social intolerance, and even by ecclesiastical control agendas.

The path to reconciliation among religions is one we have so recently begun to walk that we have no adequate theological foundation upon which to proceed. Theologians of religion are struggling with such issues as how to reconcile Christianity's absolute and exclusive claims for Jesus Christ as Savior of the world with the undeniable salvific efficacy of religious traditions which predate Christianity by millennia and had never heard of Jesus until at least the 16th century³². And the very institutional authority which launched Catholicism into the inter-religious enterprise has brought under suspicion the best theologians working on these problems and issued warnings against the types of inter-religious practice that could open Catholics to the riches of other traditions and vice versa³³. Nevertheless, the last half of the 20th century was marked by extraordinary efforts at inter-religious encounter led by such remarkable individuals as Thomas Merton, Raimundo Panikkar, Enomiya Lasalle, Bede Griffiths, Mary Luke Tobin, Pascaline Coff, Albert Nolan, Desmond Tutu, the inter-religiously based group who engaged in "The Struggle", and others. However rocky the road ahead, the movement toward reconciliation among the world's religions must and will go forward.

One of the clear lessons these pioneers have taught us relates directly to our topic, namely, that fruitful inter-religious dialogue is unlikely to take place, at least at the beginning, at the level of abstract doctrinal exchange but only in the arena of shared practice and reflection on common or analogous religious experience, in other words, in the sphere of spirituality. However, the most serious participants in these shared experiences have consistently insisted that only a person deeply immersed in and faithful to her or his own tradition can make a real contribution to this dialogue. Inter-religious dialogue is not promoted by the well-meaning civility of vague non-denominationalism or some attempt at a least common denominator faith or a rootless practice composed of unrelated elements from a variety of traditions. The serious participants in inter-religious dialogue insist upon the difference between shallow syncretism and a gradually emerging organic synthesis, between ungrounded relativism and generous inclusivity, between non-normative eclecticism and thoughtful integration. They know the difference between interior enrichment by the other and extrinsicist accumulation of the exotic. To embody these distinctions in actual practice and illuminate them by theoretical discourse that is fully accountable to each tradition, genuinely open to the other, and committed to a pluralistic unity which we cannot yet imagine, much less describe in detail, is an enormously difficult undertaking. But those with experience in this arena, those persons in different traditions who are recognized as holy within and outside their own communities such as Bede Griffiths, the Dalai Lama, Gandhi, Lao Tzu, Abraham Heschel, Desmond Tutu, and Black Elk, make it quite clear that only those fully committed to their own tradition can both offer its riches to others in a non-imperialistic and credible way and be flexible enough to seriously entertain the challenging gift of the other.

Paul Lakeland in his very enlightening work on postmodernism makes an important suggestion about how a christian believer might reconcile the total claim of her or his faith with the openness to other faiths which is necessary for movement toward unity through honest dialogue. He says that we must enter the arena of dialogue with our own faith tradition behind rather than in front of us³⁴. In other words,

we do not advance as onto a field of battle with our tradition as shield against heresy or paganism or, worse yet, as a drawn sword with which to vanquish the other. Nor, however, do we check our faith tradition at the door of the conference room and enter as a religious *tabula rasa*. Rather, we enter undefended, securely rooted in our Christian faith tradition which we have internalized through study and practice as our own living spirituality, knowing that our truth can never be ultimately threatened by the truth of the other. What will surely be threatened and must eventually be surrendered are the non-essentials we have absolutized. Beyond that, much that we had never encountered or that we had ruled out *a priori* because we thought we understood it will probably be added to our picture of reality

Although it would require another lecture to develop this point, it is worth mentioning here that Christianity, despite all the disgraceful lapses in its 2000-year history, has faithfully carried a unique and crucial religious and spiritual insight that, in my opinion, is desperately needed as an ingredient in any religiously based unity we humans can achieve. The incarnation of God in Jesus, fully manifest in the Resurrection, and the sacramentalism it grounds are at the heart of Christian faith. Herein lies the amazing revelation that divinity is available to us in and through humanity, not by flight from the coordinates of nature, materiality, and history. But as Christians have cherished this insight for all humanity they have made less progress than their eastern counterparts in appreciating, intellectually or experientially, divinity's absolute transcendence of all human categories, including being, or primal peoples' sense of the sacredness of the natural cosmos. In other words, Christians have something to offer and something to receive and that is the basis of the ultimate form of human relationship, friendship. Such friendship is based on God's relationship with us in Jesus: "I no longer call you servants, but I have called you friends." Amazingly, as the Christmas liturgy proclaims, only by accepting from us, in Jesus, the gift of humanity could God offer us, in Christ, the gift of divinity. This is the model of inter-religious exchange in which everyone gains but no one remains unchanged.

Conclusion

By way of summary and conclusion, I have tried to describe, particularly from the standpoint of Catholic Christianity, the religion-spirituality problematic as it presents itself in the cultural context of the 21st-century, analyze spirituality and religion separately, and suggest that they should be related not as strangers or rivals but as partners. Such a relationship, analogous perhaps to the relationship of spirit to body in the one person, is based on a recognition that religion which is uninformed by lived spirituality is dead and often deadly while spirituality which lacks the structural and functional resources of institutionalized religious tradition is rootless and often fruitless for both the individual and society. Recognizing that the contemporary conflict between spirituality and religion is fueled by the dynamics of postmodernity and ideology criticism and that there is considerable validity in the critique of institutional religion, I have nevertheless argued that religion as tradition is the most appropriate context for the development of a healthy spirituality which is both personally and societally fruitful and that only the rootedness of religious commitment in tradition can equip us for the kind of inter-religious participation which will further the unity of the human family. The conflict between religion and spirituality arises primarily when religious tradition is reduced to and equated with its institutionalization so that the failures of the latter seem to invalidate the former. What we may be learning from the struggles of our time in this arena is how to sit lightly to institution even as we drink deeply of our tradition. The oft repeated claim of contemporary believers that we do not merely belong to the Church but that we are Church, well expresses this insight. Christianity, even Catholicism, is not the institution but the People of God. Institution plays an important role in carrying a tradition but it does not own it or control it in any absolute way.

For those who follow Jesus, a faithful but dangerously critical Jew who was finally executed by the connivance of religious and political power elites, there is no guarantee against the distortions of religious tradition by institutional agencies but the latter are finally powerless to undermine genuine spirituality. Like Jesus, whose religious horizons, first defined by his Jewish experience, were broadened by his encounter with a genuine and

even superior faith outside Judaism (e.g., Mt. 16:21-28; Lk. 17:18-19; esp. Mt. 8:10-13) but who continued to believe that salvation is from the Jews (cf. Jn. 4:22), we cannot close our minds or hearts to the truth that comes to us from outside our own tradition nor can we afford to repudiate our own tradition that mediates salvation to us. Like Jesus, however, who encountered God in the tradition of Israel whose psalms were on his lips as he died, we finally commend our lives not to institutions but only into the hands of God.

* *This article was delivered as the annual St Augustine lecture at St Augustine College of South Africa on 21 August 2008.*

NOTES

¹This article has developed through expansion and refinement from its original presentation as "Religion and Spirituality: Strangers, Rivals, or Partners?" *The Santa Clara Lectures 6/2* (February 6) 2000 through revisions for audiences at the University of San Diego and Loyola Marymount University in early 2003. The widespread interest in the topic has led to numerous discussions and the present article is especially indebted to the thoughtful response given to the LMU lecture by Professor Ann Taves of Claremont School of Theology.

²See Trends Table 2 (U.S. membership changes by denomination) in *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches 1999*, 67th ed., edited by Eileen W. Lindner, prepared and edited for the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 11.

³The 1999 third national survey of American Roman Catholics was summarized by the members of the research team who conducted it, William V. D'Antonio, Dean R. Hoge, James D. Davidson, and Katherine Meyer in *National Catholic Reporter* 36 (October 29, 1999): 11-20. The poll is particularly significant because it follows, and thus allows comparisons with, the two previous surveys: the 1987 survey published as *American Catholic Laity in a Changing Church* (St. Louis, Mo.: Sheed and Ward, 1989) and the 1993 survey published as *Laity, American and Catholic: Transforming the Church* (St. Louis, Mo.: Sheed and Ward, 1996). The *NCR* captioned the issue "American Catholics: Attachment to core beliefs endures, link to institution weakens, NCR-Gallup survey reveals."

⁴In 1995, 69% of those responding to a Gallup poll said they were members of a church or synagogue, the same percentage as in 1980. However, in 1995, 57% of those polled said they believed the influence of religion as a whole on American life was decreasing, compared to 39% in 1985 (George H. Gallup, Jr., *Religion in America 1996* [Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Religion Research Center, 1996], 41, 54-55). Interestingly, in a 1999 Gallup ethics poll, clergy were ranked sixth in the top ten among professions considered "most honest" by the U.S. population (reported in *Emerging Trends* 21 [December 1999]: 3).

⁵Examples of the range of writing considered "spiritual" is the new series "Best Spiritual Writing," edited by Philip Zaleski, which includes *The Best Spiritual Writing 1998*, introduction by Patricia Hampl (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998); *The Best Spiritual Writing 1999*, introduction by Kathleen Morris (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1999); *The Best Spiritual Writing 2000*, introduction by Thomas Moore (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2000); *The Best Spiritual Writing 2001*, introduction by Andre Dubus HI (New York: HarperSanFrancisco); *The Best Spiritual Writing 2002*, introduction by Natalie Goldberg (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2002).

⁶Diarmuid Murchii, in *Reclaiming Spirituality: A New Spiritual Framework for Today's World* (New York: Crossroad, 1998), describes the conflict in the first two chapters. Although I have serious reservations about his analysis and conclusions his description is vivid and helpful.

⁷Testimony to this phenomenon is the increasing momentum of the movement of the World's Parliament of Religion. The first occurred in Chicago in 1893; the second 100 years later in 1993 (also in Chicago); the third six years later in 1999 in Capetown, South Africa, and plans call for regular meetings in the future. Information on the Parliament of the World's Religions (as it is now called) can be obtained from the website www.cpwr.org.

⁸An excellent example of such encounter in practice is chronicled in *The Gethsemani Encounter: A Dialogue on the Spiritual Life by Buddhist and Christian Monastics*, edited by Donald W. Mitchell and James A. Wiseman (New York: Continuum, 1998).

Ann Taves, in particular, raises the question of "blended traditions" which seems to go beyond dialogue and mutual enrichment in the direction of syncretism. More will be said on this below, but it is a serious question to which, in my opinion, the theology of religions at its present stage of development is not fully prepared to respond.

⁹The journey of Bede Griffiths from Protestantism to Catholicism, into Religious Life as a Benedictine, and finally to the Camaldolese and from his very bourgeois English Christian background to immersion in Hinduism is a striking contemporary example. It

is recounted by Shirley du Boulay in a fine work, *Beyond the Darkness: A Biography of Bede Griffiths* (New York: Doubleday, 1998).

More familiar to many is the story of Thomas Merton who, over a lifetime in the Cistercians, moved from a censorious and narrow-minded arrogance toward not only non-Catholics but even non-monastics to a humble and intense involvement in the study of eastern spiritual traditions, especially Buddhism and Taoism, and died at an inter-faith meeting in Bangkok. The story of that final journey is available in *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton*, edited from his original notebooks by Naomi Burton, Patrick Hart, and James Laughlin (New York: New Directions, 1973).

¹⁰The fear among some members of the Catholic hierarchy about both feminist spirituality and eastern spiritualities seems to be evoked by the freedom from clerical control that both manifest.

¹¹Peter Van Ness, "Introduction: Spirituality and the Secular Quest," in *Spirituality and the Secular Quest*, *World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest*, vol. 22, edited by Peter Van Ness (New York: Crossroad, 1996), 5.

¹²I proposed a slightly different version of this definition in "The Study of Christian Spirituality: The Contours and Dynamics of a Discipline," *Christian Spirituality Bulletin* 1 (Spring 1998): 1, 3-12.

¹³The study by Lucy Tinsely, *The French Expression for Spirituality and Devotion: A Semantic Study*, *Studies in Romance Languages and Literatures* 47 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1953) was augmented by Jean Leclercq in his article, "'Spiritualitas'," *StudiMedievali* 3 (1963): 279-96, which he wrote in response to the study by Italian historian Gustavo Vinay, "'Spiritualita': Invito a una discussione," *Studi Medievali* 2 (1961): 705-709. Leclercq's study, in turn, has been summarized and augmented by Walter H. Principe in "Toward Defining Spirituality," *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 12 (1983): 127-41.

¹⁴This phenomenon is partly due to the decision by the general editor, Ewert Cousins, of the Crossroad Series, *World Spirituality*, to include in the series volumes on archaic spiritualities of Asia and Europe, ancient Near Eastern spirituality, and classical Mediterranean spirituality. These inclusions were justified by the working hypothesis of the series about the nature of spirituality as the actualization of "that inner dimension of the person called by certain traditions 'the spirit'" (Preface to the Series).

¹⁵Thirty-nine members of the Heaven's Gate cult committed suicide together at a southern California mansion in March of 1997, in the belief that a spaceship following the Hale-Bopp comet would take them to a galactic paradise.

¹⁶For a good example of the overlapping and interaction of spiritualities, both religious and non-religious, in a kind of contemporary synthesis, see Patricia M. Mische, "Toward a Global Spirituality," *The Whole Earth Papers*, no. 16 (New York: Global Education Associates, 1982). Although herself a Christian Mische is proposing a kind of spirituality which could be affirmed and practiced from within a number of religious traditions and even by those who might be unwilling to admit any explicitly religious motivation but are convinced of the sacredness of cosmic reality and the vocation of all to the human quest.

¹⁷I find most cogent the definition offered by Clifford Geertz in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic, 1973), 90-91, which says, "a religion is: (1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men [sic] by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic."

¹⁸One of reasons the Civil Rights Movement had the leverage it did was because of its rootedness in the Black Church. The same can be said for the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, which was theologically underwritten by the Kairos Movement. The Kairos documents and related materials are available in Robert McAfee Brown, ed., *Kairos: Three Prophetic Challenges to the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1990).

¹⁹ An excellent introduction to the sources and ethos of the postmodern sensibility is Paul Lakeland, *Postmodernity: Christian Identity in a Fragmented Age* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997).

²⁰The spread of Buddhism, first within Asia and then beyond, is a remarkable example of the inculturation of a culturally rooted tradition in new environments. An accessible account is available in Robert C. Lester, "Buddhism: The Path to Nirvana," in *Religious Traditions of the World*, edited by H. Byron Earhart (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 847-971.

²¹There has been historically and continues to be to some extent an ethnic and even a quasi-national character to Judaism which has no real parallel in other religious traditions. However, since conversion to Judaism is possible, the biological, ethnic, and/or national features are not absolutes.

²²Recently Zen Buddhism, regarded by many as the least warlike of the world's great religions, has had to face the reality of its fanaticism and militarism, especially during the Japanese expansionism of the 1930's. See Allan M. Jalon, "Meditating on War and Guilt, Zen Says It's Sorry," *The New York Times* 1/11/2003.

²³The recent warning about the writings of Anthony de Mello by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Notification on Positions of Father Anthony de Mello," with a cover letter by Cardinal Ratzhiger seeking the banning of his books (available in *Origins* 28 [1998]: 211-14), and the current investigation of the careful and balanced Gregorian University theologian of religions, Jacques Dupuis, (especially of his treatise, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* [Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1997]) are examples of such concern.

²⁴Both Michel Foucault in *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, translated by Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1978) and Hannah Arendt in *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958) exposed the link between control of divine forgiveness and control of society. More recently, A. W. Richard Sipe, in *Sex, Priests, and Power: Anatomy of a Crisis* (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1995), 98-100, has discussed the same dynamic, recalling Friedrich Nietzsche's analysis and connecting the sexual scandals that have undermined the credibility of the Roman Catholic clergy to the decline of sacramental confession through which such power to control access to divine forgiveness has traditionally been exercised.

²⁵Leonardo Boff, in *Church, Charism, and Power: Liberation Theology and the Institutional Church*, translated by John W. Diercksmeier (New York: Crossroad, 1985) applied the liberationist analysis of monopoly of material resources to what he called the monopoly of symbolic resources through the sacerdotal control of the sacramental system.

²⁶Phil. 4:8 seems to encourage such an open-minded approach to religious matters among Christians.

²⁷Two examples of this function, both ambiguous but striking, are the late theologian, Charles Davis, who not only resigned from the clergy but disaffiliated from the Roman Catholic Church shortly after Vatican II over the issue of papal power, and Mary Daly, the self-proclaimed post-christian feminist philosopher-theologian who became convinced that the sexism of the Church is irremediable and salvation will have to come from a society of women.

²⁸I am not talking here about the serious practice, such as that alluded to by Ann Taves in her remarks, of some element of another religious tradition, within the spirituality of one's own tradition. For example, there are committed Christians who practice Zen and who are spiritually enriched by this practice. Although we lack an adequate framework for the analysis of this phenomenon it should not be confused with the amalgamation of unrooted beliefs and practices into private and purely idiosyncratic, religiously disaffiliated spiritualities whose practitioners are not rooted in any tradition. Serious

practitioners of some element of another tradition intend to practice it according to the religious tradition from which they are borrowing and they also intend to remain faithful to their own tradition even as they enrich it with resources from outside it. This latter development, arising from the interaction of religions, is part of the difficult question of religious pluralism and is beyond the scope of this article.

²⁹ Ronald Rolheiser in his well received book on contemporary spirituality, *The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), explores the importance and character of community as a dimension of authentic Christian spirituality in chapter 6, "A Spirituality of Ecclesiology," pp. 111-140.

³⁰Examples of such documents from spiritual pioneers are the writings of Simone Weil (see *Waiting for God* [New York: Harper & Row, 1973]), who actually espoused the Catholic Christian tradition but never accepted baptism because of her need to remain in solidarity with those outside the Church and of Etty Hillesum (see *An Interrupted Life: The Diaries of Etty Hillesum 1941-1943* [New York: Washington Square Press, 1983] and *Letters from Westerbork*, translated by Arnold J. Pomerans [Ixmdon: Grafton, 1988], available together in *Etty Hillesum* [New York: Henry Holt, 1996]) who was culturally Jewish and died in Auschwitz because of her choice to remain in solidarity with her people but whose stunning religious faith and extraordinary spirituality were never embodied in institutional religious affiliation. Both of these women, however, were deeply and widely read in religion and philosophy, involved with spiritual guides who were mediators of the riches of tradition, and inheritors through their families and friends of traditional religious resources. Both practiced rigorously the traditional disciplines of prayer, fasting, and social commitment.

³¹An eloquent discussion of this topic, particularly in relation to Christian ecumenism, is the encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*, available in English in *Origins* 25 (1995): 49-55.

³²The Catholic Theological Society of America devoted its 1993 annual convention to discussion of this topic. See *Proceedings of the Forty-Eighth Annual Convention* (Santa Clara, Calif.: CTSA, 1993).

³³"Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of Christian Meditation," issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Origins* 19 (1989): 492-98.

³⁴See Lakeland, *Postmodernism*, ch. 3, pp. 87-113.

The Purpose of the Corporation

MARILISE SMURTHWAITE

The purpose of the corporation has been much discussed both in the academic literature and in business circles. This paper will examine the notion of corporate purpose presented in the academic literature as well as that suggested by Catholic Social Thought. To fully comprehend this purpose and its implications, it is necessary to understand the debate surrounding other notions about the corporation, most notably its nature, its moral agency and its role *in*, relationship *with* and responsibilities *to* society. The way we conceive of its nature and moral agency has a direct bearing on the way we will view its purpose. The latter, in turn, is fulfilled by means of its relationship with society and its role and responsibilities in society. Mindful of the oversimplification that can result from such an endeavor, it might be helpful to summarise the focal issues in the debates on the above aspects of the corporation. These are as follows:

- *The nature of the “corporation”*: the debate on the nature of the corporation turns on whether the corporation is merely a *legal entity* or *legal fiction*, or whether it is to be viewed as a *community* of some sort or as a *citizen* or as a *group* loosely bound or contracted together to further their own interests or whether it is the equivalent of an *individual person* or some combination of these.
- *Corporate moral agency*: this debate turns on whether a corporation can be seen as a *moral agent*, and whether it can therefore be seen to have **moral** responsibility at all. If the latter is true, the issue then becomes the *nature* of the moral responsibility and the accountability that the corporation can be said to bear – i.e. *who* bears this moral responsibility and to *what extent*? Is the corporation to be treated as a *person* in respect of moral issues or as a *group* or as a *legal entity*?
- *The purpose of the corporation*: the debate revolves around whether the purpose of the corporation is *only* to make a profit (for owners or shareholders) or whether, in addition to making a profit, its purpose is a broader one, for example, to contribute to society in some way (e.g.

socially and ecologically), to contribute to the common good or to develop human virtue. If it does indeed have a broader purpose, the question revolves around what *form* this should take or by what *criteria* it should be determined or measured.

- *The role of the corporation, its relationship with society and its responsibilities*: the corporation's role and its relationship with society usually correlate to the way its nature, moral agency and purpose are explained. Debate largely centers on conceptualising the *nature* of the role and relationship of the corporation with society and on *defining* what *responsibilities*, moral or otherwise, the corporation has towards society. Various theoretical models explain *what* this role and relationship are or suggest *how* they should be conceived. Within the various approaches differing priorities are given to the responsibilities/obligations/duties which are said to derive from the corporation's role in and relationship with society. In its simplest form, the debate could be summarised as being between those who view the corporation's purpose as 'profit-only' versus those whose view is 'profit-plus-extras'. Given the latter dichotomy, the issue seems to be what the corporation's responsibilities are, and, flowing from this, the *model* which best reflects or represents the corporation's responsibilities and relationship with society¹. At issue in all these debates are questions about *what* responsibilities corporations have, *to whom* they owe these, and *by whom* they are owed (i.e. directors, all members of the corporation etc).

We will examine each of these issues by means of a brief literature survey² and in so doing will clarify the stance of this paper, i.e. that of Catholic Social Thought while acknowledging that the chosen paradigm is not the only one to work with.

The nature of the corporation – the meaning of the term 'corporation'

The first step in understanding the purpose of the corporation is to understand what a corporation is. In the literature, few purely descriptive definitions are found. More frequently, the corporation is prescriptively

defined and the definition or explanation of what the corporation *is* actually indicates what the corporation *ought to be or do*. In addition, each discipline tends to have its own version of what the corporation is, but such versions do not provide a holistic view. “For ethicists the corporation is (or perhaps is not) a moral agent; for economists it is a set of relationships designed to optimise efficiency; for social scientists it is a social arrangement with its own culture, both like and unlike families and civil societies.”³

Even the law fails to provide a holistic perspective, as its view of the corporation is based on the problems it wishes to solve and varies according to the problem (Kennedy 2003:4).

Broadly speaking, the definitions/explanations of the nature of the corporation seem to fall into one of two types:

- The corporation as legal entity only
- The corporation as legal entity (stated or assumed) as well as something else e.g. citizen, community, etc.

Phillips (1992) goes some way to outlining the main conceptions of corporations in 20th century *legal theory*⁴ as follows:

- *concession theory*, which views the corporation as an *artificial person* created by the state which has no real existence other than in law
- *aggregate theory* which views the *corporation* as a *collection of smaller basic units*⁵
- *real entity theory* which views the corporation as a *real entity* in the sense that it really exists, rather than being just an artificial creation of the law. Such entities have qualities over and above those of the individual constituents.

Like the legal concession theorists, Samuelson and Nordhaus (1985) define a corporation as a legal entity, owned by shareholders who have limited liability. It is an entity which can be sued, a ‘good’ means of raising much capital, a ‘convenient’ way to do ‘good’ and ‘efficient’ business without which the market economy would be less efficient.⁶ This view, typical of the neoclassical/neoliberal economic paradigm, is clearly normative rather than descriptive and emphasises the corporation as legal entity rather than as

human enterprise or human endeavor. A similar explanation of the term ‘corporation’ is given by Robbins, “Technically a corporation is a social invention of the state; the corporate charter granted by the state ideally permits private financial resources to be used for a public purpose.” However, he adds that, “at another level, it allows one or more individuals to apply massive economic and political power to accumulate private wealth while protected from legal liability for the public consequences.”⁷

Interestingly, Lutz (1999:181) notes that even though there could be “overpowering reasons to believe that the modern investor-owned corporation *ought not to exist*” economics, in line with its approach to all “existing social institutions”, accepts the corporation as an “unquestionable given”.⁸

A very different view is taken by those who see the corporation as a **community** and/or as being *part* of a community. This view is taken by Catholic Social Thought among others⁹.

The challenge of Catholic social thought to our understanding of the role and place of business in modern capitalism goes to the heart of how we explain, legitimate and understand the economy, because it goes to the underlying values upon which both our economy and our understanding of the economy are based (Clark 2002:83).

Catholic Social Thought differs from the neoclassical idea of the ‘firm’, company or corporation. The latter is based on a view of human nature and society rooted in, “the marginal utility theory of value ...which leads to the ultimate conclusion that the ultimate good in society is the consumption of utility achieved through market exchange.” (Clark 2002:86)¹⁰. On the other hand, in Catholic Social Thought, the ‘firm’ is defined as a ‘...community of persons.’¹¹ It was Pope Pius XII who first expressed the idea that business was comprised of “persons who are partners...who together seek a common purpose” rather than being constituted by a group of shareholders only (Abrahams 2003:40).¹² Furthermore, it was also Pius XII who stressed that those who work in such enterprises were ‘subjects’ not ‘factors’ – the latter

being a ‘neutral’ term used in economics (Calvez 1997:2)¹³. It is significant that

John Paul II’s idea of business as a community of work does not suppose a disembodied community disconnected from the economic pressures of profit, risk, competition, and productivity. Rather, he sees that only through a community of work can these economic values be properly ordered within a business so that they serve to develop people and society. Because of the nature of business, profit and productivity are necessary and critical dimensions; but unless a community develops within a business to provide a proper ordering of these economic dimensions, the possibility of the business becoming a place where people can develop evaporates (Calvez and Naughton 2002: 12)¹⁴.

Thus Melé and Fontrodona (1997:7) state that businesses ought to incline to being *authentic communities* - they have goals, a mission, and they perform a task together which has an effect on society.¹⁵

Examples of ‘secular’ writers inclining to this view of business as a *community* include Solomon, an advocate of the virtue ethics approach to business ethics, Bowie, writing from a Kantian perspective and Kelly. Solomon refers to business as a “... human and social enterprise”; believes the corporation is the “unit” of commerce in our time and that businesses are defined in terms of their roles and responsibilities in the community *outside* of their own internal setting¹⁶. They are both part of the community and comprised of individuals who in turn make up a community. For Solomon (1992:109), “corporations are neither legal fictions nor financial juggernauts but communities, people working together for common goals”.¹⁷ Bowie (2002:68) argues that “A Kantian views an organization as a moral community”.¹⁸ Kelly (2001, 2003:87) too argues that the corporation is a community (not merely a group of stockholders) and cannot be seen as an individual or person as it is both larger than a person and is “immortal.”¹⁹

On the other hand, a number of views cluster around the notion of the corporation somehow being a *part of the community*. Goodpaster (2001) argues that business is part of the community, and, like the individual person, is a “juristic person” and therefore can be seen as a citizen with both “functional” and other roles²⁰. Waddock (2002:50-52) holds a similar view.²¹

King (2001) also seems to see the corporation as a citizen, while at the same time recognizing that it is created by statute and is *part* of the community.²² Koehn (1993:180) argues that corporations *belong to* communities “...in which they are bound to one another by ties of justice and trust”²³ while Verstraeten argues that businesses are *social institutions* not private organisations, and form part of the wider society. They get their legitimacy by contributing to the community *of which they are part*²⁴.

Those who believe the corporation is not a community, but a group of individuals united ‘by chance’ or for particular purposes, include Keely²⁵ who sees the corporation as merely a group of individuals who have found certain relations between themselves to be of mutual benefit and Van Gerwen who, writing in business ethics from a social contract perspective, defines the corporation as a *group* which unites members *by chance* in their following of their individual interests.²⁶ He argues that few corporations will become communities, as the latter offer, “an all-embracing context for the socialization and interaction of their members. Social restraints of functional differentiation and of respect for the private life projects of the participants will preclude the occurrence of this type of process in most companies.”²⁷ In addition, a community also does not merely unite its members by chance as does the corporation.

At the same time, those who view the corporation as the private property of individuals to be bought or sold at a profitable time, also only have a partial view because the corporation combines human capital (expertise) and contracts, is both a profit making and a social group with history and expertise, and has a purpose, as well as having operating and decision making structures.²⁸ Yet Donaldson (1989), a leading advocate of the social contract perspective, differs in his view and conceives of the corporation in terms of a contract between society and business, where society would see the corporation as a single legal agent and would grant it permission to use land, resources, and hire labor.²⁹ However, what the corporation recognizes as ‘society’ would be more complicated as it would need to include consumers’ and employees’ interests in the contract agreement.

Velasquez, also a business ethicist, defines the corporation by citing its development from a “joint stock company” in the sixteenth century to its modern form where the law “...treats [them] as immortal fictitious “persons” who have the right to sue and be sued, own and sell property, and enter into contracts, all in their own name”. However, the corporation is also made up of shareholders, directors and officers and employees who are coordinated and controlled by “bureaucratic systems of rules”. While he recognises both legal and human aspects of the corporation, he does not go as far as to recognize that the corporation could be a *community*.³⁰ Were he a legal theorist, we might say he combines the perspectives of concession theory and aggregate theory. Perhaps, from a business ethics perspective, he is best placed alongside the contract theorists.

Finally, Korten, while agreeing that the corporation “... is not a person” though such an “illusion” is given by its legal standing and by public relations efforts, does not believe that it is a community. Rather, he sees it as “...a lifeless bundle of legally protected financial rights and relationships brilliantly designed to serve money and its imperatives”.³¹

Each of these above views has different implications for how we conceive of the ‘purpose’ of the corporation. In summary, the **nature** of the corporation has been variously conceptualised as:

- a legal entity
- a community
- a part of a community
- a citizen/juristic person/individual person
- a chance group

What is interesting is that while these perspectives come from diverse fields - business ethics, legal theory and economics - there are certain commonalities. One is that the corporation exists in law; a second is that it has to do with the human; a third that it does not exist in a vacuum but in the context of the wider community. This paper argues that the corporation has been constituted in law but is more than a legal entity. It is a community of persons situated in a wider community, of which it is part and which it cannot ignore on the grounds of being merely a ‘legal entity’.

Corporate moral agency

The ‘nature’ of the corporation is closely linked to the issue of corporate moral agency. Whether or not the corporation can be viewed as a ‘moral agent’ has important implications for the corporation’s purpose, its relationship with society, its responsibilities, its liability and its accountability³². However, as Solomon (1992:132) notes, this is “...one of the most prominent confusions and controversies in business ethics”.³³ There seem to be three main approaches to the debate on corporate moral agency:

Firstly, that the corporation is not a moral agent, does not have moral responsibilities or obligations, and carries only legal responsibility and accountability.

In legal theory, concession theorists take this view as do some, but not all, of those classified as espousing “real entity theory” (e.g. Ladd, Keeley). They claim that the corporation is not the sort of entity which can qualify as a moral agent despite being a real entity.³⁴ In economics, this view would be supported by the likes of Friedman, Hayek and Galbraith, in philosophy by John Ladd³⁵ and in business ethics, in work like that of Sternberg.³⁶ If, as this first approach suggests, the corporation is not a moral agent, then it follows that it is not capable of acting morally and has no moral responsibilities. Therefore, it cannot be held accountable for its practices or behaviors³⁷ other than for those that may be defined in law, moral or not.³⁸

Secondly, that moral agency does not reside in the entity ‘corporation’ per se, but in the individuals who comprise it or in the individuals personally and as community.

In legal theory this view is taken by aggregate theory which claims moral responsibility rests with individual officers, employees etc. and is determined under the normal standards applied to the natural person. Likewise, Catholic Social Thought does not place moral agency on the corporation *per se* and argues that *persons* carry the moral responsibility as individuals and as a human community. Melé and Fontrodona explain that only the human person

can be seen to be responsible, because only persons have morally free will and reason. Responsibility is the result of freedom and of “...the capacity to discover the moral good.”³⁹

However, in Church Teaching, reference is also made to “certain collective or community responsibilities...” This collective responsibility is based on the decisions and actions of individuals. Hence merit or culpability is always that of the individual person, even when acting together with others. Even when referring to ‘social sin’ i.e. where *collective* behavior is morally wrong, such sin is seen as the result of many personal sins on the part of many persons and it is the individual persons who are responsible, not merely the group.⁴⁰ Given that responsibility rests with the person, Melé and Fontrodona question the use of the terms ‘corporate moral agency’ and ‘corporate responsibility’, preferring to speak of ‘community responsibility’. Community responsibility is an integral part of being a member of the human community and encompasses more than one’s job or contract responsibilities, “Community responsibility, far from eliminating individual responsibility, expands it by making the individual aware that there is something which affects each and every person by virtue of their being united among themselves and forming part of society.”⁴¹

To attribute all responsibility to the corporation would be to deny the autonomy of the person who is acting within the corporation.⁴² The term ‘community responsibility’ then actually indicates, “...a responsibility to achieve something that must be accomplished among many people united by certain nexes, not to eliminate personal responsibility for the sake of the responsibility of a ‘moral agency.’”⁴³

Responsibility, therefore, is personal, but also includes responsibility carried out with others. The corporation per se cannot be said to be a moral agent, nor can it be claimed to be the equivalent of a human person for moral purposes, that is, an entity onto which we can project individual responsibility.

In the business ethics literature, we find a similar view in Solomon (1997:208) who states, “people in business are ultimately responsible as

individuals, but they are responsible as individuals in a corporate setting, where their responsibilities are at least in part defined by their role and duties in the company and, of course, by ‘the bottom line.’”⁴⁴ Bowie too contends that the “business firm” is a “moral community” where “each member of the organisation stands in a moral relationship to all others.”⁴⁵

A variation of this approach may be seen in Velasquez who disagrees both with those who claim the corporation is like an individual moral agent and those who claim it is like a ‘machine’ and can bear no moral responsibility.⁴⁶ In his view, the corporation is made up of individuals whom we agree by convention to treat as a unit. Corporations and their acts depend on individuals. As those acts originate in individuals those individuals are morally responsible. To this extent his view seems very like that of Catholic Social Thought. However, he adds, “organisations have moral duties and are morally responsible in a secondary sense: A corporation has a moral duty to do something only if some of its members have a moral duty to make sure it is done, and a corporation is morally responsible for something only if some of its members are morally responsible for what happened.”⁴⁷ Thus the situation could arise where no one is responsible! This view would be problematic in the context of our society today.

Werhane, like Velasquez, contends that the corporation is not an autonomous moral agent itself but, given that the acts of the corporation derive from the acts of persons, they must be evaluated morally.⁴⁸ Furthermore, the rights of the corporation are not primary as are those of persons, but are secondary *to* those of persons. The implications of this view are that the individual members of the corporation are the moral agents and for the purposes of accountability, are liable for the moral or immoral actions of the corporation. This is a complicated view where the corporation is large, as it is self-evident that individuals would bear differing degrees of moral responsibility as well as culpability for policies and practices. It would seem reasonable to think that the leaders of the corporation would be the responsible moral agents for policies and practices rather than the lower ranks of employees. Kaptein and Wempe criticise this view which they term the ‘functional model’, because it does not recognise the relevance of the culture and structure of the corporation and merely sees moral problems as the responsibility of

individuals.⁴⁹ What happens if these individuals are replaced by others? Does responsibility for behavior (e.g. pollution) cease when these individuals leave the corporation? Who is then responsible? Corporations are often enormous and complex in structure. Can management really be held responsible for all that the corporation does?⁵⁰

Thirdly, that the corporation is indeed a moral agent. In legal theory, some of the “real entity” supporters believe this. Phillips notes that French contends that the corporation is a moral person and that it has both intentionality and corporate moral agency because there is a decision making structure whose operations can be described in terms of intentions and actions.⁵¹ Van Gerwen (2000:65-6) believes that corporate moral agency is an issue which both exists and should be examined.⁵² While many deny it and claim that only individuals can be moral agents,⁵³ an alternative to this dominant paradigm of liberal philosophy is offered by the likes of MacIntyre.⁵⁴ This alternative has a communitarian view of social action, which leads to a development of an ethics of virtue including corporate virtues and vices.⁵⁵ This differs from the liberal model which combines the utilitarian and deontological arguments.⁵⁶ Some arguments of others who hold to the view that the corporation *is* a moral agent include:

- Elfstrom who notes, “Corporations, therefore, have the qualities required for moral agency, though in less elegant and more complex fashion than single human individuals.”⁵⁷ Additionally, he states that, “the contention that corporations are moral agents is supported by the fact that corporations clearly are held accountable in many ways... corporations themselves commonly acknowledge a distinct sense of *moral* responsibility when dealing with their employees and in their external business transactions.”⁵⁸ (:15)
- Bowman-Larsen who contends that, “the issue of corporate personhood and agency is not to be settled once and for all. But insofar as a company (or its board of directors) deliberates and decides upon company policy and company strategy and acts in the name of the company, and insofar as a corporation is a legal entity that can be held liable as such, there is absolutely no reason that it cannot be responsible for its ‘actions’ as well... I do not think we need to establish

metaphysical personhood in order to speak of corporations as moral actors.”⁵⁹

- Kenneth Goodpaster believes the corporation, like the individual, is a citizen and like the individual has moral responsibilities (Goodpaster 2001; see also Goodpaster and Matthews 2003). He gives a carefully nuanced examination of corporate moral agency and notes that, “our frame of reference does not imply that corporations are persons in a literal sense. It simply means that in certain respects concepts and functions normally attributed to persons can also be attributed to organisations made up of persons.”⁶⁰
- Donaldson believes that corporations like individuals are moral agents and that they can have moral responsibilities and rights albeit not identical to those of persons.⁶¹ Also representing this social contract approach to business ethics, are Kaptein and Wempe, who contend that it is justified to see a corporation as a moral subject, “the corporate social contract theory portrays the corporation as the focal point within a network of contracts on the basis of which moral responsibilities can be ascribed to the corporation as an independent entity.”⁶²
- Brown (2005:123) notes that, “because corporations have their own decision making structures, have choices and justify them with corporate reasons, it made sense to treat corporations as moral agents.”⁶³
- Morse views business as a “moral entity” and as a “moral member of the community” and contends business must view itself as such and acknowledge that it has considerable influence on the lives of people⁶⁴. Hence it has an “...added moral responsibility of reinforcing the ends and desires which help people flourish.”⁶⁵
- Corlett, arguing on the issue of corporate responsibility for environmental damage, contends that whether or not we conclude the corporation is a moral person, corporations as collectives are responsible for certain actions (e.g. environmental damage) and should be liable and punished as collectives. In other words she advocates *moral responsibility collectivism*.⁶⁶ Her article sets out the conditions, implications, objections and counter arguments to the objections.

This third perspective is an interesting theoretical position but poses difficulties in the practical sense. Those who advocate it do not seem to define who exactly would be accountable or how to decide on who bears the moral responsibility. It is only really possible to communicate with persons not with an entity. Even in law, persons represent the organisation though they may not be held personally liable. Perhaps this is the advantage of this approach: individuals do not have to ‘foot the bill’ for recompense in the event that they *should* have taken more *moral* decisions.

This brief overview illustrates that there is considerable difference of opinion on the issue of corporate moral agency. In consequence, there will be differences in opinion as to whether the corporation can have any *moral* purpose or be held *morally responsible* for its actions at all. This paper does not support the position of those who claim that as the corporation is not a moral agent, it has no moral responsibility and bears only legal accountability. Given the ethical framework, we would argue that moral agency rests with individuals in the first instance, but rests also with the individuals *as community*. Likewise, moral responsibility and moral accountability for policies and practices of the corporation rest with the individuals (as individuals and as community) who comprise the corporation. It is these human persons who devise the policies and who perform the actions. The extent of each individual’s moral responsibility and culpability will differ.⁶⁷

The purpose of the corporation

Having examined the notions of the ‘nature’ and ‘moral agency’ of the corporation, we now consider the *purpose* of the corporation. It was Adolph A. Berle Jr. and Gardiner C. Means in their work *The Modern Corporation and Private Property* (1932) who first opened up the question of the purpose of the business corporation and concluded that it had to serve all of society.⁶⁸ However, this is by no means an accepted or unanimous view. The issue at stake in its simplest form seems to be whether the purpose or objective of the corporation is *only* to make a profit or whether it has some other *broader* purpose, (e.g. social or ecological or other).

Those who adhere to the classical liberal economic paradigm, and what is called ‘the financial theory of business’⁶⁹, like Friedman, Soros and Sternberg, and others, believe that the *only* purpose of business is to make a profit. Thus, “the neoclassical theory of the firm contends that the firm works best when it fulfils the task of maximising the shareholder value only.”⁷⁰ Friedman argues that the purpose of business, is “...to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits...in open and free competition without deception or fraud”.⁷¹ Soros (2000:161) contends that the *single* purpose of the publicly owned corporation is to make money - other purposes merely distract from this. In other words business does not have communal goals. Sternberg (2000:32) too states that “The defining purpose of business is maximizing owner value over the long term by selling goods and services”⁷². She is critical of the plethora of additional objectives which have been given to business and states categorically that the purpose of business is neither to promote the common good nor to improve employee well being nor to create jobs. While such things may be *side products* of business, they are not its key purpose.⁷³ This neoclassical economic perspective “...together with its applied “arm” finance, has dominated contemporary discussion of the theory of the firm, propagating Friedman’s view” (Cortright and Naughton 2002:24).⁷⁴ Clark who examines three efforts of this neoclassical theoretical paradigm to delineate the purpose of the firm, namely, that the firm is a market, a mental fiction and exists due to transaction costs, argues that all three are, “based on neoclassical theory’s individualistic and mechanical conception of society, its hedonistic conception of human nature, and its assumption of a tendency toward general equilibrium...”⁷⁵ He contends that these assumptions are unrealistic and are the weakness of this theory. Only in an economy which does not actually exist can maximisation of shareholder value promote equity and efficiency; likewise the assumptions about human beings and society “...are unsupportable either in theory or in fact.”⁷⁶

In contrast to the neoclassical/neoliberal view, there are a number of other conceptions which advocate a *broader approach* to the purpose of business and the corporation. Among these broader conceptions, the ‘profit-plus-extras’ contingent, is that of Catholic Social Thought. John Paul II links ‘purpose’ and ‘nature’, acknowledging profit as having a legitimate role in

business, but emphasising that, “in fact, the purpose of a business firm is not simply to make a profit, but is to be found in its very existence as a *community of persons* who in various ways are endeavoring to satisfy their basic needs, and who form a particular group at the service of the whole society.”⁷⁷ Community and the individual are interconnected.⁷⁸ Thus, business has a *social* function and “... is considered as a means to facilitate a wider sense of community. It is a community of persons who through the goods and services it produces stands at the service of the wider society and the common good.”⁷⁹

These views are echoed by others in this tradition. Riordan suggests that the purpose of the corporation is to contribute to the ultimate human good, and is strongly critical of Sternberg’s neoliberal/neoclassical view.⁸⁰ Zadek argues against the notion that profit is the *only* or even the *primary* purpose of all businesses, and argues for including “human and moral factors.”⁸¹ Kennedy (2002:57) too believes the purpose of the ‘firm’ is to “bring some human good into being” and to meet both economic criteria and those of becoming a true community contributing to the development of those who are involved in its activities.⁸²

Alford and Naughton (2002:28) note that while it is tempting to describe the corporation and its purpose only from a financial point of view because this is quantifiable, “the description is inevitably abstract and disconnected from the real world of business, compared to one which recognises the fact that the members of a business build their own common good and may contribute to the wider common good.”⁸³

They argue that acceptance of the principle of the common good enables people to move out of the dominant liberal paradigm. While business is not responsible *for* the common good, it is responsible *to* the common good and has its own common good.⁸⁴ The centre of the ‘common good model’ is a distinction between foundational/instrumental goods like profit and excellent/inherent goods like human development and community. The former are not supreme but are necessary only as a means to obtain the latter, not as an end in their own right. This is where the shareholder model errs – in

elevating such goods to being the sole goods.⁸⁵ In other words, business must create profit, but only as the first step to enabling human development.

However, contributing to the common good does *not* mean that business should be a social welfare agency, but that as part of the community, it ought to share with other social institutions and agencies in the responsibility for that common good.⁸⁶ Catholic Social Thought, then, promotes “an understanding of the firm based on how firms actually behave and second on how they can best promote the goals of human dignity and the common good.”⁸⁷ In contrast, “Friedman’s teleology remains truncated until profit making is seen – as the principle of subsidiary demands – in terms of its overall role in achieving the common good.”⁸⁸

In this respect, Koslowski makes an interesting observation: Catholic Social Thought is based on the belief that human beings *can* do good and can, in the context of the firm, for example, choose to foster the common good. However, he argues that the Protestant understanding of the purpose of the ‘firm’ would differ from this because Protestants, especially Lutherans, believe that human beings cannot *intend good* and so a contribution to the common good can only be made “as the invisible hand directs individuals’ inevitably selfish intentions and needs to ends beyond them.”⁸⁹ Therefore shareholder maximisation would be *the* primary purpose for the firm and *the* optimal way of contributing to the common good.

Let us examine other views on the purpose of the corporation. Firstly, Goodpaster, an advocate of corporate citizenship, agrees with the approach of Catholic Social Thought but combines it with his view that the corporation should be a good citizen.⁹⁰ Its purpose therefore is to fulfill not only its ‘functional’ role, i.e. specialised tasks like the production of goods, but also to share responsibility for the common good, “...for the community or the nation as a whole” (:57).⁹¹ King (2001:23), coming from the same perspective, believes that, as the corporation is part of the global and local communities, its purpose is to be a good citizen.⁹² In addition, because it is the ‘medium’ by means of which the gap between the rich and poor is widening, “if the corporation does not begin to act as a good citizen, it will be destroyed and capitalism will be destroyed with it.”⁹³

Secondly, Morse and Solomon reflect a virtue ethics approach to the corporation. Morse believes that business is not an end in itself but a means to promoting the good life of the citizens in the community in which it is situated. It must therefore, like society, produce good human beings. Merely focusing on profit alone would result in encouraging “vicious” persons.⁹⁴ Solomon states “We can no longer accept the amoral idea that “business is business...”⁹⁵ and that its purpose is merely “to make money.”⁹⁶ Rather its purpose is “...to serve society’s demands and the public good and be rewarded for doing so.”⁹⁷ For Solomon, Friedman’s “infamous” view is one which “...betrays a willful misunderstanding of the very nature of both social responsibility and business.”⁹⁸

Thirdly, there are a number of authors who view the purpose of the corporation from a ‘corporate social responsibility’ perspective. Samuelson and Nordhaus⁹⁹ imply the purpose of the corporation is to be financially successful, economically efficient and blend social responsibilities (like job creation, patronage of the arts, being a good corporate citizen), with profit making.¹⁰⁰ Post believes the corporation has *multiple* purposes which challenge its viability.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, its purpose must include profit as well as contributions to its stakeholders. Krueger (1997:27, 38) argues that generating wealth is the primary, but partial, purpose of the corporation.¹⁰² In addition, corporations must serve the common good by contributing to an ecologically sustainable society.¹⁰³ They must also serve as “engines of growth” to relieve poverty which is their key “moral challenge.”¹⁰⁴ This view is echoed by Thompson (2003:43) who points out that “multinational corporations can make valuable contributions to the alleviation of poverty, but their single-minded drive for profits often blinds them to the common good and the needs of the poor. Worse, the power that accompanies their size and wealth enables MNCs to manipulate the system in their favor so that the rules of the game oppress the poor.”¹⁰⁵

Finally, two contrary voices: Keely who contends that organisations per se have *no purpose* and have no goals at all – it is the individuals who have the goals for the organisation¹⁰⁶ and Drucker who argues that profit is not an absolute goal for business, because profit shifts according to social and

environmental factors.¹⁰⁷ Instead, the purpose of the business is “to create a customer”. All other purposes flow from this.

In summary, approaches to the purpose of the corporation suggest that it

- Should make a profit for shareholders/owners
- Should make a profit as well as develop individuals and serve the common good
- Should be a good citizen
- Should produce good human beings and contribute to the community as a whole
- Should be socially responsible in addition to making a profit (e.g. relieve poverty)
- Has no purpose

It would seem that current writing on the purpose of business inclines more to the ‘profit-plus-extras’ view than to the view that business and the corporation should merely have the making of profit as a sole purpose. Exactly how those ‘extras’ are defined varies considerably, as will the ways in which such purpose is fulfilled. This paper takes the view that business is part of the community and is made up of human persons, who themselves are part of this wider community as well as of the corporation *as community*. Therefore, part of the corporation’s purpose is to serve the common good, part is to develop the human beings who work within the corporation and part is to generate a profit/wealth.

The role of the corporation, its relationship with society and its responsibilities

The purpose of the corporation is not merely a matter of understanding goals and aims in a generalised manner. In addition to being conceptualized and defined, purpose must be realised and fulfilled. This process depends on how the corporation’s relationship (i.e. connection) with society is understood, its consequent responsibilities (i.e. what it is required to do as part of its role, moral or otherwise) and its role (i.e. function) in that society.¹⁰⁸

At the outset, it is worth noting that this area in the literature is one of the most complex and contentious and is difficult to clarify. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, the literature is prolific, yielding almost as many explanations of these issues as individual authors. Not even within the same theoretical paradigm is there agreement on what exactly the role and responsibilities of the corporation might be. While this indicates that the field is evolving and contains lively and interesting debate¹⁰⁹, it also means that it is difficult to be definitive and to evaluate corporations in these areas as there is no agreement on constituent elements. Secondly, terminology is used imprecisely and variously. Thus ‘role’, ‘purpose’, ‘responsibilities’ and ‘relationship’ are words differentiated in this paper, but may elsewhere be used interchangeably with one another. The ‘relationship’ with society may be explained in terms of *responsibilities* or the ‘role’ of the corporation may be illustrated by discussing *specific duties*. It is also extremely difficult to ‘pin down’ the meaning of either ‘corporate responsibility’ or of ‘corporate social responsibility’, a difficulty acknowledged in the literature. What the actual responsibilities of the corporation *are*, seem to be variously listed depending on the individual author’s preference and/or approach. Thirdly, the notion of ‘moral responsibility’ is slippery. Some do not acknowledge that business *has* such a responsibility. Others use the term to apply to certain *duties* of business. Yet those same duties may not be seen as ‘*moral*’ responsibilities/duties in another author’s work. For these reasons, it is important to note that while the section below attempts to give some idea of the diversity of views on the role of the corporation, its relationship with society and its responsibilities (moral or otherwise) and to acknowledge different ways of construing these concepts, it cannot cover all possibilities. We note further that the ‘ethical narrative’ of the present paper is that of Catholic Social Thought.

Danley (1994) provides a useful overview of the role and responsibilities of the modern corporation. He contends there are two main positions: the Classical and the Managerial business ideologies and that most writers use the assumptions of one or the other¹¹⁰. Both frameworks are grounded in the liberal tradition, the key values of which are liberty and equality. At base the ethical value lies in leading a good life and in having that which a good life contains.

The Classical perspective views the main *responsibility* of the ‘company’ as economic competition in the context of a limited government in order to make a profit for stockholders. Profit making is either the primary or the only responsibility¹¹¹. Some call this approach the neoclassical stockholder/shareholder theory, which, as observed by Cortright and Pierucci, “refuses to die,” however many versions of stakeholder theory appear to counteract it.¹¹² Those who adhere to this ‘profit-only’ paradigm, the ‘amoral’ position, or what McCann (2002:188) calls “the financial theory of business”¹¹³, opt for the “shareholder model” and claim that the role of the corporation centers on making a profit, while its chief or *only* relationship and responsibility is to shareholders and/or owners. This view is based on an economic paradigm which “...has its roots both in the individualistic philosophies of the past few centuries and in the heavily quantified economic theories of the twentieth century.”¹¹⁴ As Phillips notes, it endorses only the profit making responsibilities of business,¹¹⁵ argues that corporations are held responsible only for *legal purposes*¹¹⁶ and that they do not have moral responsibility.¹¹⁷

Kaptein and Wempe provide some clarification on the ambivalence towards the moral responsibility of the corporation¹¹⁸, noting that this can be traced to classical and neoclassical economics, where ethical questions are seen as inappropriate. The view that business is *amoral* seems to have its origins in the split between fact and value in the 17th and 18th centuries, as well as in the emphases on efficiency, functionality, the concept of equilibrium and the ‘scientific’ approach to business. Morality came to be seen as irrelevant or counterproductive to prosperity and as a force which disrupts the economic order. Business was to run independent of morality – economics was based on the natural sciences and was seen as “neutral” or value-free. Elfstrom, explaining this resistance to *moral responsibility* on the part of the corporation, outlines four types of argument used to claim that “... corporations cannot be expected to shoulder more than minimal moral responsibility”¹¹⁹. Rossouw, making a similar point, refers to business ‘myths’, which are used to discount the importance of ethical behavior and taking moral responsibility on the part of business¹²⁰. Sethi states, “there is considerable resistance to the injection of moral and ethical values in the

capitalistic system which depends on individual choices and is supposedly value neutral.” However, as Kaptein and Wempe (2002) point out, values have an important social role and influence on the corporation and cannot merely be discarded. No amount of efficiency will alter the fact that the manager is faced with moral demands.¹²²

However, adherents of the neoclassical approach like Friedman ask:

What does it mean to say that “business” has responsibilities? Only people can have responsibilities. A corporation is an artificial person and in this sense may have artificial responsibilities but “business” as a whole cannot be said to have responsibilities even in this vague sense...I share Adam Smith’s skepticism(sic) about the benefits that can be expected from “those who affected to trade for the public good”...the use of the cloak of social responsibility,...does clearly harm the foundations of a free society...In an ideal free market...there are no values, no “social responsibilities” in any sense other than the shared values and responsibilities of individuals....[social responsibility is a] “fundamentally subversive doctrine” in a free society...¹²³

Sternberg believes Friedman’s views on corporate social responsibility are *too mild* and argues that the value maximised must be financial not moral, that the use of business resources for corporate social responsibility is “theft”¹²⁴, and that stakeholder theory is a “mischaracterisation of business”¹²⁵, confusing its role with that of government as well as being confused about the nature of accountability. While business may be *affected* by many things or groups, it is nonsensical to say that business is *accountable* to all these things or groups. Furthermore, stakeholder theory has no criteria for *balancing* all the stakeholders’ interests.¹²⁶

Yet while Friedman and Sternberg claim that profit making is the *only* responsibility of the corporation, they also suggest it should be done according to fair competition, without fraud or deception and according to the rules of human decency. This means no lying, cheating, killing, stealing, coercion and so on and means being honest and fair.¹²⁷ Sternberg also endorses the principles of distributive justice and believes this “...incorporates the purpose of business into its very definition.”¹²⁸ This

seems to indicate that in carrying out its primary responsibility business/the corporation must *indeed* adhere to certain moral standards. This in turn suggests that corporations *do* have some limited *moral* responsibility and, dare we say it, moral accountability. Perhaps, therefore, the role of business is less ‘amoral’ than appears on the surface of this approach. Kaptein and Wempe, while criticising this approach, also note that, “the fact that the corporation is not the appropriate institution for pursuing social ideals (as Hayek and Friedman propose) does not mean that no norms at all should apply to the business context. There is a difference between the social responsibility and the moral responsibility of a corporation.”¹²⁹ However, they also argue that this ‘amoral model’ fails to take account of the corporate context, of the moral issues which arise in the course of a person’s job in the corporation and, because morality is viewed as a private and personal issue, real ethical problems in business are not acknowledged.

This neoclassical/neoliberal view¹³⁰ is in strong contrast to broader approaches to corporate responsibility and the role /part to be played by business in society (Danley’s Managerial perspective).¹³¹ The latter, includes stakeholder theory and holds the stockholder/shareholder theory of the classical approach to be both dated and morally wrong. Most business ethics researchers and social issues in management researchers, believe the company is *responsible* to a wide range of stakeholders and must weigh up their various interests before making a decision¹³². The role of the corporation in a free society is to be a good citizen and to act in a socially responsible way. As far as Danley is concerned, the discourse of this perspective is conceptually amorphous, with a high moral tone and little moral argument and the definitions of corporate social responsibility are vague, ‘vacuous’ and irrelevant because of a failure to take account of the system within which the modern corporation functions.¹³³ In addition, both frameworks are inadequate for answering the question of the *role* of the corporation, particularly given the changes of the global world and the powerful role of the multi-national corporation.¹³⁴ The *role* of the corporation in the new globalised world is *normative*, but exactly what this means needs to be worked out in conjunction with “...the development of a coherent and defensible theory of political economy.”¹³⁵ Danley’s analysis is useful because it confirms, at the broadest level, that we are dealing with the ‘profit-

only’ or ‘profit-plus-extras’ dichotomy once again. It also confirms the diversity and confusion in this area.

Let us examine then, some of the diverse approaches to the relationship, role and responsibilities of the corporation which cluster in this broader ‘profit-plus-extras’ perspective on how the corporation fulfils its purpose. We will examine here the notions of corporate *social* responsibility, the stakeholder model and approach, the corporate citizenship approach, the corporate governance approach, the social contract approach and the approach of Catholic Social Thought to this vexed question of how the corporation fulfils its purpose through its relationship with, responsibility to and role in society.

The notion of corporate social responsibility *per se* originated at the beginning of the 20th century when social protest at the extreme size, power and over-competitive nature of corporations, resulted in their being asked to consider using “...their power and influence voluntarily for broad social purposes rather than for profits alone.”¹³⁶ It was as a result of this new role of business that the principles of charity¹³⁷ and stewardship¹³⁸ emerged as the foundation for the modern notion of corporate social responsibility. It was the principle of stewardship that lay at the basis of the modern theory of stakeholder management.¹³⁹ Buchholz and Rosenthal (2002:303), contend that the issue of social responsibility grew particularly between 1960 and 1975 as a consequence of and in response to great social change and changing social values.¹⁴⁰ This “ethical” concept of social responsibility points to business corporations being both economic institutions and institutions which must play a role in assisting society solve its many social problems,¹⁴¹ some of which have been *caused* by business.¹⁴²

Corporate social responsibility challenges business to be accountable for the consequences of their actions affecting the firm’s stakeholders while they pursue traditional economic goals. The general public expects business to be socially responsible, and many companies have responded by making social goals a part of their overall business operations. Guidelines for acting in socially responsible ways are not always clear, thus producing controversy about what constitutes such behavior, how extensive it should be, and what it costs to be socially responsible.¹⁴³

This statement on corporate social responsibility bears out the criticisms of authors like Danley, Riordan and De George. De George criticizes corporate social responsibility as a modern myth.¹⁴⁴ No one can adequately define what it means to be socially responsible and so no one can apply standards to see if a corporation is or is not socially responsible. Therefore, corporate social responsibility ends up being little more than obeying the law, acts as a whitewash for amoral business practice and hides the real ethical and moral responsibilities of business. He states, “economic responsibilities are not basic, if this means that a company must make profits and then ask what its ethical responsibilities are. Its ethical responsibilities parallel its profit-making and should inform and be used to evaluate the means the company employs to make profits, the company’s ends and the profit itself. Similarly, the firm’s ethical responsibilities parallel the legal and discretionary ones and should inform them.”¹⁴⁵

The latter include operating according to consistent moral norms rather than changing these according to the country in which the corporation is operating and acknowledging that moral responsibilities (e.g. not to exploit workers) are obligatory. De George’s views are corroborated by Brown (2005:13) who states, “corporate social responsibility has become a popular notion in business circles, with a variety of meanings. As Richard De George has pointed out the notion can refer to either moral or non-moral obligations. It can also refer to obligations or to voluntary actions.”¹⁴⁶ Brown therefore chooses to use the term ‘corporate responsibility’ not ‘corporate social responsibility’ and suggests five theoretical approaches: the classic theory (includes Friedman, socially responsible investment adherents, corporate governance movement in financial institutions); the contractual theory (includes Donaldson and Dunfee); the stakeholder view (Freeman); the corporate agent theory and the corporate citizen theory¹⁴⁷

Robert Samuelson writing in *Newsweek* (July 5 1993) even went as far as to state that the corporation which could blend profit and social responsibility, like IBM had done in its heyday, would no longer exist in our globalised world.¹⁴⁸ Boatright argues that corporate social responsibility needs to be understood in the context of “...the new world of investor capitalism” rather

than in terms of “...a managerial philosophy that guides business executives and board directors”¹⁴⁹ and Sethi (1996:83) also refers to the “divergent nature of our expectations of a socially responsible corporation...”¹⁵⁰ As mentioned, this lack of agreement on the meaning and form of corporate social responsibility, is one of the biggest difficulties with this approach.

Because of these difficulties, Buchholz and Rosenthal contend that there was a shift to *social responsiveness* in the late 1970s,¹⁵¹ while Post, Lawrence and Weber date it the 1960s¹⁵². Carroll and Buchholz (2003:31) explain *social responsiveness* as a corporate citizenship concept along with corporate social responsibility and corporate social performance.¹⁵³ Despite these confusions, social responsiveness seems to have emphasised business’ response to social pressure rather than its *moral* responsibilities as well as action and activity rather than obligation and accountability. However, *how* such a response is to be carried out was also debated.¹⁵⁴

The stakeholder model/approach, which could be viewed as one attempt to clarify precisely what corporate social responsibility envisages, originated in the 1960s in the work of Management theorists like Rhenman, Ansoff and Ackhoff and is linked to a very old tradition which sees business as an integral part of society rather than as a separate economic institution.¹⁵⁵ The original idea of identifying all the constituents in a corporation, was expanded to include interaction with stakeholders and emerged in the 1980s as a method for taking into account in a systematic way the views of those who affect or are affected by corporate actions¹⁵⁶. Freeman, a key figure in the development of stakeholder theory, believes that, while this does not mean that business can solve all problems, it does mean that business can become a “truly human institution.”¹⁵⁷ Stakeholder theory has been used to describe and analyse the corporation’s relationship with society, and advocates that business take into account the interests of both primary and secondary stakeholders.¹⁵⁸ Business is seen to have responsibilities other than financial and legal ones, but the exact nature of these responsibilities and how they are understood varies according to the author/theorist. Therefore, as in the case of the term ‘corporate social responsibility’ we see once again that there are difficulties in clarification¹⁵⁹. However, some authors suggest that stakeholder theory has the advantage of embodying a relational view of the

firm, and its power lies in focusing management decision-making on the multiplicity and diversity of the relationships with which the corporation has its being, and of the multipurpose nature of the corporation as a vehicle for enriching those relationships in their various dimensions¹⁶⁰.

These advantages may outweigh the problems with the clarification of who is or is not a stakeholder. However, there are also other criticisms of this model such as that it goes *too far* in the responsibilities set out for companies; fails to distinguish sufficiently between fiduciary and non-fiduciary relationships; needs to have a hierarchy of stakeholder duties and needs to acknowledge that not all stakeholders are equal. Gordley (2002:65-6) points to these and states, “the trouble with it ... is that it does not indicate how to weigh the conflicting claims of ...groups. It does not explain why a management’s responsibility to make a profit for shareholders seems basically different from its other responsibilities. Moreover, ...the ethical foundation of the stakeholder model is not clear, particularly if we imagine each of these groups to be out for itself!”¹⁶¹ Similarly, Fort too contends that “...if a corporation must take into equal account *all* of the various constituents who are affected by its actions (which is the charge laid on it by R. Edward Freeman), it serves too many masters.”¹⁶² This could result in “gridlock or overreaching.”

In addition to stakeholder theory itself, there are other efforts to specify exactly what is involved in the *relationship* of business with *stakeholders* and what exactly its *responsibilities* are in this regard, including the corporate citizenship approach, the social contract approach and the virtue ethics approach.

The corporate citizenship approach originated in the 1990s and is based on “Building collaborative partnerships with stakeholder groups” with a focus on mutual business opportunities and management of social and financial performance. Those who advocate that the corporation be viewed as a citizen for purposes of outlining and monitoring its conduct in the context of society, include Zadek, Waddock, Goodpaster and King. Goodpaster argues that such conduct must fulfill both functional responsibilities and those for contributing to the common good (Goodpaster 2001:57).¹⁶³ Post, Lawrence

and Weber, discussing corporate citizenship, contend it is characterised by ethical business behavior, an attempt to balance stakeholder interests and environmental protection.¹⁶⁴ Ethical behavior includes fair and honest business practice, good corporate governance and high ethical standards for employee conduct. The corporation's relationship with society resembles the ordinary citizen's and it has similar responsibilities. King believes the corporation must act responsibly towards all stakeholders, while being accountable to the company itself.¹⁶⁵ It must also act fairly, transparently and with intellectual honesty. King, who also advocates good corporate governance, states "the inclusive approach [to corporate governance] recognises stakeholders other than shareowners. The relationship between the company and some of these stakeholders is contractual – as with the customer and supplier – while some are non-contractual, such as the community in which it operates."¹⁶⁶ Thus the corporation is a citizen and so to be a good citizen it must conform to good corporate governance standards as well as performing well – a difficult balancing act.

Another way of conceptualising this relationship between stakeholders and business is in terms of a social contract i.e. an agreement as to what obligations and responsibilities business owes society and what are owed by society to business. The social contract perspective originated in the 1980s¹⁶⁷ and is the only approach other than stakeholder theory and Friedman's market-based morality to establish itself as a core paradigm in the field of business ethics (Dunfee and Donaldson).¹⁶⁸ It emphasises those fundamental or basic commitments necessary to co-exist as social agents. Its roots lie in Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau and Kant. The assumption underlying the approach is that we can best understand the obligations of social institutions like business and government by trying to comprehend what a fair contract between these institutions and society, or among different communities within these, entails.¹⁶⁹

While the old contract between business and society was based on the notion that economic growth was the basis for both social and economic progress and that business drove this growth by fulfilling its purpose to produce goods and services at a profit thereby also fulfilling its responsibilities to society, the new, emerging social contract is somewhat different. It suggests that

pursuing growth in this way imposes detrimental social costs and does not automatically result in progress –in some cases, for example, it causes damage to the environment. The *new* contract between business and society aims to oblige business to work for social *and* economic goals and redress these detrimental effects. Buchholz and Rosenthal (2002:317) contend that the contract between business and society which incorporates the social responsibilities of business is changing to reflect the altered social expectations of business by society. In addition, there are laws and regulations now to ensure business obeys the new rules.¹⁷⁰ This approach therefore emphasises social obligations to consumers and employees. Post (2000:51) too contends that a ‘new social contract’ is ‘emerging’ between *business and employees* which affects and has implications for its relationship with society.¹⁷¹ Business must indeed contribute economically to society but in taking action must take into account the benefits both to the society and to the corporation. He believes that while corporations are certainly responsible to stockholders, they must also discharge social responsibilities and be held accountable for actions which affect people, their communities and their environment. This does not mean that the company must abandon its economic and legal responsibilities, but rather that corporations have great responsibilities because they affect many lives. Therefore, they must balance these responsibilities and weigh the costs and benefits.¹⁷² Kaptein and Wempe (2002), who also favor social contract theory, say it “portrays the corporation as the focal point within a network of contracts on the basis of which moral responsibilities can be ascribed to the corporation as an independent moral entity.”¹⁷³

However, Koehn (1993:177) on a critical note points out that Donaldson, “insists on the corporation’s peculiar moral status: the corporation cannot be expected to accomplish social purposes such as the just redistribution of wealth within the community because it has not been designed as a political unit. Instead, Donaldson argues, the corporation’s social responsibilities must be interpreted as those which can reasonably be imputed to a primarily economic entity.”¹⁷⁴ Consequently, from a social contract perspective, corporate responsibility would be seen in terms of rights and duties of an *economic* entity and would not include ‘social purposes’ like economic justice. Yet, having said this, we note that Dunfee and Hess, also adherents of

the social contract approach, contend that business *cannot* turn a blind eye to the enormous human misery on our planet.¹⁷⁵ They therefore advocate Direct Corporate Humanitarian Investment which “...involves a firm using its resources and know-how to alleviate a particular instance of human misery.”¹⁷⁶ This is not just a matter of a cash donation but involvement in specific projects, such as that of Merck and River Blindness, a well known example of such a project. For Dunfee and Hess, such involvement is compatible with the social contract approach, as it is voluntary, does not contend that such responsibility is the primary responsibility of the corporation, nor does it demand resources which the company does not have. Again, we are faced with various views on the nature of corporate (social) responsibility, within the same paradigm.

An argument along the same lines, albeit from a utilitarian rather than a social contract approach, is given by Elfstrom.¹⁷⁷ He believes that a corporation, like an individual, must provide for the *basic* wants of others, but does not have as much obligation, if any, to provide for *secondary* wants.¹⁷⁸ In his view, the corporation should make a contribution to society by creating jobs, providing goods and services and managing resources. Its contribution should come from its commercial efforts and it should leave alone other areas like social problems which are better suited to government to deal with. Business should not deal with social problems unless government has set priorities. This of course begs the question that if government never sets priorities or sets unjust priorities should business merely note that social issues are not part of its purpose and not part of its responsibility?

A further variation on the social contract approach and one which has been given much emphasis in South Africa during the post-democracy period is that of corporate governance. Van Gerwen contends that the corporate governance approach is based on the social contract approach and Kantian deontology. In his view, it emerged in the Anglo-Saxon context and aimed to define a moral framework for corporate conduct.¹⁷⁹ It differed from previous models in that it did not want managers to have a central role in corporate conduct, but rather wanted to have greater stockholder control, and to focus on balanced control of power and ownership between stockholders and

management. Therefore, property becomes the centre of ethical reflection. Considerations include corporate structure, statutory rules and corporate law as well as the debate on the link between ownership and the responsibility for the consequences and effects of corporate action. In South Africa, the so-called King Code of corporate governance has been formulated to guide business conduct, but is neither statutory nor mandatory. Calls for better corporate governance are often couched in terms of the so-called “triple bottom line”, that is, reporting on financial, social and environmental issues, contributions and/or behaviors. What is interesting about the *King Report on Corporate Governance for South Africa* (2002) is that it advocates good corporate citizenship (see 2002:6). This seems to contradict VanGerwen’s notion that corporate governance is based on the social contract approach.

Some writers seem to suggest a virtue ethics approach to the role, relationship and responsibility of the corporation. Thus Morse, like Post, contends that business has a great influence on the lives of people and on “...all aspects of human existence.”¹⁸⁰ As such it has an “...added moral responsibility of reinforcing the ends and desires which help people flourish”¹⁸¹ and so is responsible for developing virtue and virtuous conduct. This will lead to the happiness of all persons in society. Solomon likewise points to the great power of corporations - so great that the future of the world lies in their hands. Therefore their conduct is not purely a *business* matter. Solomon’s concern for the future arises because policies, decisions and behavior in business continue to be based on profit making and stockholder return *alone*. Yet, those in business know well “...that business is a human and social enterprise,”¹⁸² that there is no law of nature which *insists* profit must be made no matter what, that corporations do have responsibilities to stakeholders and the community who have helped their success and that returns for stockholders cannot eclipse other obligations. The corporation must, in the global context, care about the less fortunate. It must look to long term not short term goals within the context of a global future which will be shared. However, there are also those like MacIntyre and Dobson who contend that the current market system, with its emphasis on individualism and acquisitiveness, excludes the development or even the possibility of ‘virtuous’ behavior. As Dobson contends, a *truly* virtuous corporation would not be suited to economic activity at all.

Given this variety and somewhat contradictory plethora of views, what then is the approach of Catholic Social Thought to the corporation's role, responsibilities and relationship with society? Melé contends, "the Catholic Social tradition considers the common good as the basic reference point for any human society, and for business as well. In this regard, John Paul II does not hesitate to affirm that the Church 'recognises the positive values of the market and of the enterprise but at the same time points out that these need to be oriented towards the common good.'"¹⁸³ (Melé 2002:194)

Therefore the corporation has responsibilities that go beyond itself. It enables the human person to express his/her freedom and talents, gives each person an opportunity to work, which is part of the dignity of the human person, and advances the spirit of solidarity enabling the individual to make a contribution to others, "the role of business in the modern economy demands the person's best qualities: the capacity to investigate and to know, the capacity for solidarity in the organisation, and the capacity to work toward the satisfaction of the needs of fellow employees. Unfortunately, however, not enough businesses reach their full potential for developing people and instead they alienate them."¹⁸⁴ (Calvez and Naughton 2002:12).

Kennedy notes that for business to make a contribution to others as advocated by Catholic Social Thought does not require that it use its resources to solve whatever problems exist in the community, as appears to be advocated by the corporate social responsibility approach. Rather, businesses have a duty to conduct their operations by choosing courses of action that deliberately support not only the common good of the business itself, but the common good of the society as well.¹⁸⁵ This may mean, for example, making a bit less profit or not producing goods that can harm people. In other words, decisions are to be taken in solidarity with others¹⁸⁶. Melé says there are three "essential elements" in the common good: respect for humans and their rights, "social well-being and group development," and, "stability and security within a just order."¹⁸⁷ Serving the common good can be achieved through the products or services offered; through the work done by the company; through the organisational culture and leadership; by providing investment channels; by "creating and distributing economic value

added” and by “providing continuity to the company itself.”¹⁸⁸ To evaluate the responsibility in the corporation means to weigh actions taken or omitted in terms of the principles of justice, solidarity and their consequences.¹⁸⁹

Goulet, too, makes a number of important observations on the corporation and its role and responsibilities in society. Firstly, he notes that corporations, like other large, powerful institutions in society “...have an inherent tendency to impose their own dynamics and rules upon society at large,”¹⁹⁰ (:142) and that this is especially the case with the transnational corporations. Secondly, he observes that one of the challenges faced by the church, is how to get these corporations to behave ethically – the implications being both that ethical behavior is desirable and that it is absent from corporate conduct. However, as the corporation and the church have different goals and criteria for success, conflict over values is inevitable. Thirdly, he notes that the Gospel does not show approval or condemnation for corporations, but that Christians should view these and other powerful, wealthy organisations critically as being human creations which do not automatically deserve legitimacy in society. Such legitimacy cannot be taken for granted, but must be negotiated with society in general.

Finally, Novak (1996:192-5) contends that business, just by being what it is, serves the common good and has seven corporate responsibilities which emerge from its very nature.¹⁹¹ These he lists as satisfying customers with really valuable goods and services; making reasonable profits for shareholders; creating new wealth; creating new jobs; enabling upward mobility and demonstrating that hard work is rewarded and so dissipating envy; promoting invention, ingenuity and progress in arts and sciences and diversifying interests of all in the country. Whether this list could be seen as representative in terms of Catholic Social Thought, is doubtful: Novak’s perspective is one which doubtless would be countered by those of a more radical persuasion, particularly those from the third, rather than the first world environment.

Conclusion

It can be seen from the discussion above that the issue of the role, relationship and responsibilities of the corporation vis-à-vis society is both complex and contentious. Even within the same approach, we find a variety of lists of corporate responsibilities. For our purposes, we argue that the corporation is a part of the society and that, while its profit-making role is clearly important, this role may not eclipse its relationship or role with regard to human beings, be they employees or those others affected by the policies and practices of the corporation. Responsibilities to the common good include responsibilities for the environment in which the corporation operates and for environmental damage that these operations may have caused. The corporation for our purposes bears both legal responsibilities and *moral* responsibilities and cannot merely have recourse to carrying only legal responsibility and obligations.

NOTES

¹ For example, where the only purpose of the corporation is to maximise profits for the owners/shareholders, it is seen as having only legal obligations to society and the obligations of fair competition to the market and is conceptualised on the 'shareholder model'. Another example: where the purpose of the corporation must include social, financial and ecological contributions, it must take account of the interests of all its stakeholders, balancing these and delivering on the basis of the so-called 'triple bottom line'. This approach is represented by the stakeholder model. Related to the latter model is the social contract model, and the corporate citizenship view. A further possibility found in the literature is that of 'virtue ethics' and the 'virtuous corporation'.

² Note that only selected examples will be given in support of our analysis of each issue.

³ Kennedy, R. G. "Does a Business Corporation have a Responsibility to Society?" *Religion and Liberty*. 13 no. 6 (November and December 2003). Available at http://www.acton.org/publicat/randl/print_article.php?id=479 (last accessed April 2007).

⁴Phillips, M. "Corporate Moral Personhood and Three Conceptions of the Corporation". *Business Ethics Quarterly* 2 no. 4 (1992): 439.

⁵ What exactly these units are, varies according the theorist: e.g. Robert Hessen believes that human beings are the most vital constituents. However, other non-human constituents may be chosen, e.g. contracts. See Phillips "Corporate Moral Personhood and Three Conceptions of the Corporation", 439.

⁶ Samuelson, P.A. and W. D. Nordhaus. *Economics*. 12th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill,1985).

⁷ Robbins, R. H. ed. *Global Problems and the Culture of Capitalism*. 3rd edition (Boston: Pearson, 2005).

⁸ Lutz, M. A. *Economics for the Common Good: Two Centuries of Social Economic Thought in the Humanistic Tradition* (London:Routledge, 1999).

⁹Abrahams notes: "It is generally accepted that all ethical reflection takes place within a particular tradition, or what some scholars call 'an ethical narrative.'" Catholic Social Thought is, then, the "ethical narrative" of the present paper. See Abrahams, M.'Responsibility in Business'. *Grace and Truth* 20 no. 3, (2003): 38-49.

¹⁰Clark, M. A. "Competing Visions: Equity and Efficiency in the Firm" in *Rethinking the Purpose of Business. Interdisciplinary Essays from the Catholic Social Tradition*, edited by S. A. Cortright and M. J. Naughton, 81-101 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002). This in turn means that the neoclassical theory of the 'firm' merely extends the values and value judgments of neoclassical economic theory, namely, individualism, a hedonistic concept of human nature, and market competition, as *the* way of resolving the conflicting desires of human beings.

¹¹Pope John Paul II *Centesimus Annus*: 35 1991. This idea is also found in Pope JohnXXIII *Mater et Magistra* 92 1961, and Vatican II 68 1965.

¹²Abrahams, "Responsibility," 40.44

¹³ Calvez, J. "The Catholic Social Tradition and the Purpose of the Corporate Enterprise." *International Symposium on Catholic Social Thought and Management Education*:Antwerp, (1997): 2.

¹⁴Calvez, J. and M. J. Naughton. "Catholic Social Teaching and the Purpose of theBusiness Organization: A Developing Tradition" in Cortright, S. A. and Naughton, M. J.(eds) in *Rethinking the Purpose of Business. Interdisciplinary Essays from the Catholic Social Tradition*, edited by S. A. Cortright and M. J. Naughton, 3-19 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002).

¹⁵Mel, D. and J. Fontrodona. "Individual and Corporate Responsibilities in the Social Teaching of the Church". *International Symposium on Catholic Social Thought and Management Education*'. Antwerp (1997).

- ¹⁶Solomon, R. C. "Business with Virtues: Maybe Next Year?" *Business Ethics Quarterly*. 10 no. 1, (2000): 340.
- ¹⁷ Solomon, R. C. *Ethics and Excellence. Cooperation and Integrity in Business*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 109.
- ¹⁸ Bowie, N. E. "A Kantian Approach to Business Ethics." in *Ethical Issues in Business: A Philosophical Approach*. 7th edition, edited by Donaldson, T. and P. H. Werhane, 61-71. (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002).
- ¹⁹ Kelly, M. *The Divine Right of Capital: Dethroning the Corporate Aristocracy*. (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publications, 2001,2003).
- ²⁰ Goodpaster, K. E. and J. B. Matthews Jr. "Can a Corporation have a Conscience?" in *Harvard Business Review on Corporate Social Responsibility*. Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing Corporation, (2003): 131-155.
- ²¹ Waddock, S. *Leading Corporate Citizens: Vision, Values, Value Added*. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2002).
- ²² King, M. 2001. "Good Corporate Governance: A Fundamental Value for New Citizenship in South Africa" in Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Seminar Report *Defining a New Citizenship for South Africa and the Fundamental Values That will Shape It*, 21-27.
- ²³Koehn, D. "Rethinking the Responsibility of International Corporations. A Response to Donaldson." *Business Quarterly*, 3 no. 2, (1993): 177-183.
- ²⁴Verstraeten, J. ed. *Business Ethics. Broadening the Perspectives*. (Leuven: Peeters, 2000).
- ²⁵ cited in Mele and Fontradana "Individual and Corporate Responsibilities," 2.
- ²⁶ Van Gerwen, J. "Corporate Culture and Ethics" in *Business Ethics. Broadening the Perspectives*, edited by J. Verstraeten, 42-78. (Leuven: Peeters, 2000a).
- ²⁷ Ibid., 48.
- ²⁸ Ibid.
- ²⁹Donaldson, T. *The Ethics of International Business*. Oxford: (Oxford University Press, 1989).
- ³⁰Velasquez, M. G. 2002. *Business Ethics: Concepts and Cases*. 5th edition. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002).
- ³¹Korten, D. C. *The Post-Corporate World: Life After Capitalism*, (San Francisco: Berret-Koehler Publishers, 1999), 75.
- ³²Note that the term 'moral agent' as used in philosophy implies that the individual can be responsible and held accountable.
- ³³*Solomon Ethics and Excellence*, 132.
- ³⁴ See Phillips "Corporate Personhood."

- ³⁵ Solomon, *Ethics and Excellence*, 132.
- ³⁶ Sternberg, E. *Just Business: Business Ethics in Action*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
- ³⁷ Even if these are not ethical or moral.
- ³⁸ So, for example, in the case of economic justice in South Africa, this would mean that the corporation has no moral responsibility to contribute to remedying economic injustices and cannot be held accountable for not doing so. Any contribution in this sphere would be entirely voluntary.
- ³⁹ Mele and Fontradana, "Individual and Corporate Responsibilities," 4.
- ⁴⁰ Pope John Paul II. 1984. *Reconciliation and Penance*. Available at <http://www.cin.org/ipZeney/reconcil.html>. (last accessed August 2004)
- ⁴¹ Mele and Fontradana, "Individual and Corporate Responsibilities," 6.
- ⁴² Kaufman, L. "Mining the Sources of Moral Values". *Grace and Truth* 20 no. 3, (2003): 5-15.
- ⁴³ Mele and Fontradana, "Individual and Corporate Responsibilities," 6.
- ⁴⁴ Solomon, "Corporate Roles," 209.
- ⁴⁵ Bowie, "A Kantian Approach," 67-68.
- ⁴⁶ Velasquez, *Business Ethics*, 17-18.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 18.
- ⁴⁸ In Mele and Fontradana, "individual and Corporate Responsibilities," 3.
- ⁴⁹ Kaptein, M. and J. Wempe. *The Balanced Company: A Theory of Corporate Integrity*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 121.
- ⁵⁰ Kaptein and Wempe give a very comprehensive treatment of this complicated area of corporate moral agency in *The Balanced Company*.
- ⁵¹ Phillips, *Corporate Personhood*, see also Bowman-Larsen, L. "Reconstructing the Principle of Double Effect: Towards Fixing the Goalposts of Corporate Responsibility" in *World Business: Managing Harmful Side-effects of Corporate Activity*, edited by Bowman-Larsen, L., and O. Wiggen, 82-98, (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2004).
- ⁵² Van Gerwen, "Corporate Culture", 65-66.
- ⁵³ A claim based on methodological individualism and Kantian ethics which stresses human reason and personal autonomy.
- ⁵⁴ MacIntyre, A. *After Virtue*. 2nd ed. (Great Britain: Duckworth, 1985).
- ⁵⁵ Van Gerwen, "Corporate Culture", 44.

- ⁵⁶ Lonzano, J. M. "Companies and Society, Ethical Responsibilities" in Verstraeten, J. (ed) *Business Ethics. Broadening the Perspectives*, edited by Verstraeten, J., 11-40, (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), also deals with the communitarian model of ethics.
- ⁵⁷ Elfstrom, G. *Moral Issues and Multinational Corporations*. (New York: St Martin's Press, 1991), 14.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid., 15. (italics in the original).
- ⁵⁹ Bowman-Larsen, *Reconstructing the Principle*, 86.
- ⁶⁰ Goodpaster and Mathews, "Can a Corporation Have a Conscience," 147.
- ⁶¹ Donaldson, *Ethics of International Business*, xvii.
- ⁶² Kaptein and Wempe, *The Balanced Company*, 208.
- ⁶³ Brown, M. T. *Corporate Integrity. Rethinking Organizational Ethics and Leadership*. (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 128.
- ⁶⁴ Morse, J. "The Missing Link between Virtue Theory and Business Ethics". *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 16 no. 1, (1999): 48.
- ⁶⁵ Ibid., 56.
- ⁶⁶ Corlett J. A. "Corporate responsibility for Environmental Damage". *Environmental Ethics* 18 (Summer 1996): 197.
- ⁶⁷ (see Velasquez 2002: 46-54 for detail on this issue).
- ⁶⁸ Cortright, S. A. and Naughton, M. J. eds. *Rethinking the Purpose of Business. Interdisciplinary Essays from the Catholic Social Tradition*. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 131.
- ⁶⁹ See McCann, D. P. 2002. "Business Corporations and the Principle of Subsidiarity" in. *Rethinking the Purpose of Business: Interdisciplinary Essays from the Catholic Social Tradition*, edited by Cortright, S. A. and M. J. Naughton, 169-189, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002).
- ⁷⁰ Koslowski, P. 2002. "The Shareholder Value Principle and the Purpose of the Firm: Limits to Shareholder Value" in *Rethinking the Purpose of Business: Interdisciplinary Essays from the Catholic Social Tradition*, edited by Cortright, S. A. and M. J. Naughton, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 102.
- ⁷¹ Friedman, M. "The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits". *New York Times Magazine* (September 13 1970).
- ⁷² Sternberg, *Just Business*, 32. She points out that owners may not be synonymous with shareholders.
- ⁷³ Ibid., 35-36. However, that it is not the purpose of business to foster moral good, is not the same as saying that business is immoral.

- ⁷⁴ Cortright and Naughton, *Rethinking the Purpose*, 24. For a thorough discussion on the normative presuppositions underlying this view see Alford, H. J. and Naughton, M. J. "Beyond the Shareholder Model of the Firm: Working toward the Common Good of a Business," *Rethinking the Purpose of Business. Interdisciplinary Essays from the Catholic Social Tradition*, edited by Cortright, S. A. and J. M. Naughton, 27-47, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 29-35.
- ⁷⁵ Clark, "Competing Visions," 87.
- ⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 92.
- ⁷⁷ Pope John Paul II. *On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum*. (Boston: St. Paul Books and Media, 1991), 35.
- ⁷⁸ Clark, "Competing Visions," 94.
- ⁷⁹ Abrahams, "Responsibility," 41. Mele and Fontrodona make the same point: "The firm, like every human community, has not only certain goals selected by its senior executives, but also a mission to fulfill in society in the service of the common good" in *Individual and Corporate Responsibilities*, 7. The common good is "... *the promotion of all the goods necessary for integral human development in the organization, in such a way as to respect the proper ordering of these goods,*" Alford and Naughton *Beyond the Shareholder Model*, 38 (italics in the original).
- ⁸⁰ Riordan, P. "The Purpose of Business and the Human Good". *International Symposium on Catholic Social Thought and Management Education*: (Antwerp, 1997).
- ⁸¹ Zadek, S. *The Civil Corporation: The New Economy of Corporate Citizenship*. (London: Earthscan, 2004), 138-140.
- ⁸² Kennedy, R. G. "The Virtue of Solidarity and the Purpose of the Firm" in *Rethinking the Purpose of Business. Interdisciplinary Essays from the Catholic Social Tradition*, edited by Cortright, S. A. and M. J. Naughton, 48-64, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 57.
- ⁸³ Alford and Naughton "Beyond the Shareholder Model," 28.
- ⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 28-29.
- ⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 35-36. See also Clark "Competing Visions," 94 and 97.
- ⁸⁶ Abrahams, "Responsibility," 43.
- ⁸⁷ Clark, "Competing Visions," 97.
- ⁸⁸ McCann, "Business Corporations," 183.
- ⁸⁹ Koslowski, "Shareholder Value," 123.
- ⁹⁰ Goodpaster, "Can a Corporation Have a Conscience."
- ⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 57.
- ⁹² King, "Good Corporate Governance," 23.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Morse, "The Missing Link."

⁹⁵ Solomon, *Ethics*, 102.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 110.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 149.

⁹⁹ Despite their very neoclassical definition of the corporation

¹⁰⁰ Samuelson and Nordhaus, *Economics*.

¹⁰¹ Post, J. E., A. T. Lawrence, and J. Weber *Business and Society. Corporate Strategy, Public Policy, Ethics*. 10th ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill Irwin, 2002), 50.

¹⁰² Krueger, D. A. (*The Business Corporation and Productive Justice*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 38.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 54.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 43.

¹⁰⁵ Thompson, J. M. *Justice and Peace. A Christian Primer*, 2nd edition (New York: Orbis Books, 2003), 43.

¹⁰⁶ Cited in Mete and Fontrada "Individual and Corporate Responsibilities," 2.

¹⁰⁷ McCann, "Business Corporations," 183.

¹⁰⁸ The way these are viewed depends in turn on the view adopted towards the nature and corporate moral agency notions previously discussed. While it may seem that the choice is between 'shareholder' and 'stakeholder' versions of this relationship, a number of writers point out that this choice is a false one, especially given our global economy. In fact, business must be both profitable and take into account other responsibilities.

¹⁰⁹ For example, the revival of the "shareholder-stakeholder conversation", initiated by Freeman, which remains "inconclusive" even while being "compelling" see Cortright, S. A. and E. S. Pierucci "Clearing Ground: Toward a Social Ethic of Corporate Management" *Rethinking the Purpose of Business: Interdisciplinary Essays from the Catholic Social Tradition*, edited by Cortright, S. A. and M. J. Naughton, 163-168, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 136.

¹¹⁰ Danley, J. R. *The Role of the Modern Corporation in a Free Society*. (Notre Dame USA: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994). While claiming there are only two approaches may seem to be an oversimplification, Danley believes they deal with the main issues.

¹¹¹ Ibid. Writers in this tradition include Adam Smith, David Ricardo, Jeremy Bentham and the Social Darwinists. However, over time, much of the richness and nuance of these

writers was lost and so classical liberalism today advocates a free market capitalist economy and a laissez-faire government policy on the economy.

¹¹² Cortright and Pierucci, "Clearing Ground," 138.

¹¹³ McCann, "Business Corporations," 188.

¹¹⁴ Kennedy, "Virtue," 49.

¹¹⁵ represented in legal theory by concession theory.

¹¹⁶ (e.g. for failing to avoid foreseeable harm).

¹¹⁷ Phillips, "Corporate Moral Personhood."

¹¹⁸ Kaptein and Wempe, *The Balanced Company*. Their view is that on the one hand, the corporation is held morally responsible, but on the other this responsibility is not seen as that of a person.

¹¹⁹ Elfstrom, *Moral Issues*, 12. One of these issues is the view that the corporation cannot be a moral agent; another that the pressurised, competitive nature of the business environment precludes time or energy for moral considerations; a third is that profit making is the only responsibility, moral or otherwise, of business, and a final one that corporations are not individuals and so persons in the corporation cannot accept moral responsibility on behalf of the organisation, other than that pertaining to their particular corporate role.

¹²⁰ Rossouw, D. *Business Ethics in Africa*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University, 2002), 11-21.

¹²¹ Sethi, S. P. "Moving from a Socially Responsible to a Socially Accountable Corporation" in *Is the Good Corporation Dead? Social Responsibility in a Global Economy*, edited by Houck, J. W. and O. F. Williams, 83-100, (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc., 1996), 90.

¹²² Kaptein and Wempe *The Balanced Company*, 109-110. They note three positions on corporate moral responsibility:

- the amoral where it is believed that there is no such responsibility for the corporation or for individuals who perform certain functions there (e.g. M. Friedman, F. Hayek, J.K. Galbraith).
- the functional, where it is believed that the individual company representatives are morally, responsible
- the autonomous where the corporation is seen as a 'social entity' and corporate social responsibility is seen as being separate from those individuals who represent the company.

¹²³ Friedman, "Social Responsibility," 1-5.

¹²⁴ Sternberg, *Just Business*, 41.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 49.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 54.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 79.

¹²⁸ Ibid. 80.

¹²⁹ Kaptein and Wempe, "The Balanced Company," 117.

¹³⁰ i.e. that corporate responsibility is only to the shareholders for whom one is bound to make a profit, that the relationship with them is paramount and that it is to them that business is accountable (other than being accountable to obey the law of the land).

¹³¹ Danley, *Role*.

¹³² Writing within this framework includes John Dewey's pragmatism, Frederick Taylor's scientific management, Elton Mayo's social responsibility and Jon M. Keynes' 'new economy'.

¹³³ Danley, *Role*. 144.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 288.

¹³⁶ Post, et al., *Business*, 60.

¹³⁷ i.e. voluntary actions to promote social good, Ibid., 61-64.

¹³⁸ i.e. acknowledging the interdependence of business and society and balancing the interests and needs of many diverse. It incorporates the duty to ensure that resources are used for the good of society and not only for profits. Ibid., 63.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Buchholz, R. A. and Rosenthal, "Social Responsibility and Business Ethics," in *A Companion to Business Ethics*, edited by Frederick, R. E., 303-321, (Oxford: Blackwell's Publishers, 2002), 303.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 304.

¹⁴² According to Buchholz and Rosenthal while social responsibility has numerous ethical facets, proponents argued seven points:

- that business should adapt to social change if it was to survive
- that business should view self-interest from a long-term perspective and contribute to solving social problems and so create a better environment for itself
- that being socially responsible would improve business' social image
- that government regulation could be avoided if business voluntarily met social expectations
- that business has huge resources that could assist in solving social problems
- that social problems could be profitable business opportunities
- that business is morally obliged to assist in solving social problems which it has

caused/perpetuated

From this account, corporate social responsibility seems to be a variation on the theme of self-interest and represents the views that Riordan so roundly condemns. However, not all authors treat social responsibility in this way.

¹⁴³ Post, et al., *Business*, 56.

¹⁴⁴ De George, R. T. "The Myth of Corporate Social Responsibility" in *Is the Good Corporation Dead? Social Responsibility in a Global Economy*, edited by Houck, J. W. and F. O. Williams, 17-33, (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc, 1996), 17.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁴⁶ Brown, *Corporate Integrity*, 13.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 14-22.

¹⁴⁸ Cited in Houck and Williams, *Is the Good Corporation*, vii.

¹⁴⁹ Boatright, J. R. "The Future of Corporate Social Responsibility". *Business and Professional Ethics Journal* 20 no. 3 and 4, (2001): 12.

¹⁵⁰ Sethi, "Moving," 83.

¹⁵¹ Buchholz and Rosenthal, "Social Responsibility," 303.

¹⁵² Post et al, *Business*, 83.

¹⁵³ Carroll, A. B. and A. K. Buchholtz. *Business and Society: Ethics and Stakeholder Management*, (United States: Thomson South Western, 2002), 31.

¹⁵⁴ See Buchholz and Rosenthal, "Social Responsibility," 307; Carroll, and Buchholtz. *Business and Society*, 31; and Post, et al. *Business*, 83.

¹⁵⁵ Freeman R. E. "The Possibility of Stakeholder Capitalism" in Zsolnai, L. (ed) *Ethics and the Future of Capitalism. Praxiology: The International Annual of Practical Philosophy and Methodology Volume*, edited by Zsolnai, L., 111-116, (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2002), 111.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 112.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 116.

¹⁵⁸ Primary stakeholders: e.g. customers, suppliers, employees, stockholders etc. and secondary stakeholders : e.g. local communities, the general public, media, business support groups, government, social activist groups etc. Stakeholders are the people and groups affected by or that affect an organisation's decisions, politics and operations

¹⁵⁹ see Buchholz and Rosenthal, "Social Responsibility," 315-316.

¹⁶⁰ Buchholz and Rosenthal, "Social Responsibility," 316.

¹⁶¹ Gordley, J. 2002. "Virtue and the Ethics of Profit Seeking" in *Rethinking the Purpose of Business: Interdisciplinary Essays from the Catholic Social Tradition*, edited by

- Cortright, S. A. and M. J. Naughton, 65-80, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 65-66.
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- ¹⁶³ Goodpaster, "Can a Corporation Have a Conscience," 57.
- ¹⁶⁴ Post et al., *Business*, 81-83.
- ¹⁶⁵ King, M. "Good Corporate Governance: A Fundamental Value for New Citizenship in South Africa" in Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Seminar Report *Defining a New Citizenship for South Africa and the Fundamental Values That will Shape It*, (2001) 21-27.
- ¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 24. Insert in brackets mine.
- ¹⁶⁷ Dunfee, T. W. and T. Donaldson. "Social Contract Approaches to Business Ethics: Bridging the "is-ought" Gap" in *A Companion to Business Ethics*, edited by Frederick, R. E., 38-55, (London: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 38.
- ¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 41.
- ¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 38.
- ¹⁷⁰ Buchholz and Rosenthal, "Social Responsibility," 317.
- ¹⁷¹ Post et al., *Business*, 51.
- ¹⁷² Ibid., 71-72.
- ¹⁷³ Kaptein and Wempe, *The Balanced Company*, 208.
- ¹⁷⁴ Koehn, "Rethinking the Responsibility," 177.
- ¹⁷⁵ Dunfee, T. W. and D. Hess. "The Legitimacy of Direct Corporate Humanitarian Investment". *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 10 no. 1, (2000): 95-109.
- ¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 95.
- ¹⁷⁷ Elfstrom, *Moral Issues*.
- ¹⁷⁸ By *basic* wants he refers to sustaining life, having a basic diet, shelter, clothing, and basic medical care. These items are, in his view, not so costly that that the industrial nations could not afford to support the whole world. *Secondary* wants (e.g. a satisfactory career, a rich cultural life) vary and change and derive from *basic* wants - they cannot exist if the *basic* wants are not fulfilled.
- ¹⁷⁹ Van Gerwen, "Corporate Culture," 57-62.
- ¹⁸⁰ Morse, "The Missing Link," 55.
- ¹⁸¹ Ibid., 56.
- ¹⁸² Solomon, "Business with Virtues," 340.

- ¹⁸³ Mele, D. "Not only Stakeholder Interests: the Firm Oriented toward the Common Good" in *Rethinking the Purpose of Business: Interdisciplinary Essays from the Catholic Social Tradition*, edited by Cortright, S. A. and M. J. Naughton, 169-189, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 194.
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- ¹⁸⁵ Kennedy, "Virtue," 61.
- ¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 62.
- ¹⁸⁷ Mele, "Not only Stakeholder," 194-195.
- ¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 197-198.
- ¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 202.
- ¹⁹⁰ Goulet, D. "Economic Systems, Middle Way Theories, and Third World Realities," *Co-Creation and Capitalism. John Paul IP's "Laborem Exercen,s"* edited by Houck, J. W. and O. F. Williams, 141-169, (Washington: University Press of America, 1983), 142.
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The idea of founding a Catholic university in South Africa was first mooted in 1993 by a group of academics, clergy and business people. It culminated in the establishment of St Augustine College of South Africa in July 1999, when it was registered by the Minister of Education as a private higher education institution and started teaching students registered for the degree of Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy.

It is situated in Victory Park, Johannesburg and operates as a university offering values-based education to students of any faith or denomination, to develop leaders in Africa for Africa.

The name 'St Augustine' was chosen in order to indicate the African identity of the College since St Augustine of Hippo (354-430 AD) was one of the first great Christian scholars of Africa.

As a Catholic educational institution, St Augustine College is committed to making moral values the foundation and inspiration for all its teaching and research. In this way it offers a new and unique contribution to education, much needed in our South African society.

It aims to be a community that studies and teaches disciplines that are necessary for the true human development and flourishing of individuals and society in South Africa. The College's engagement with questions of values is in no sense sectarian or dogmatic but is both critical and creative. It will explore the African contribution to Christian thought and vice versa. Ethical values will underpin all its educational programmes in order to produce leaders who remain sensitive to current moral issues.

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