

FREEDOM AND THE FUTURE

JOHN J. McNEILL

Woodstock College, New York City

THE MOST recent advances in scientific and technical knowledge have reopened the perennial problem of man's freedom and its limits. The new dimension of the age-old problem occasioned by the new biology deals specifically with man's newly-won freedom over his body and its genetic development. Man was always to some degree involved in a process of self-development. But until now his self-creation was limited for the most part to his spiritual and social relations. His freedom was exercised, as Rahner points out, "almost exclusively in the area of the contemplative knowledge of metaphysics and faith, and in the moral decisions by which man opened himself to God."¹ Today, for the first time, the possibility is opening up for man to change himself radically on the empirical level consciously and deliberately. "The power of self-creation, rooted in man's spiritual freedom, has now grasped the physical, psychological and social dimensions of his existence."² We are witnesses to a historical breakthrough from thought to practice, from self-awareness to self-creation.

The problems and the practical implications involved in man's new freedom in regard to his future were brought home to me in a somewhat different context almost two decades ago. At that time the Russians had succeeded in testing their first hydrogen bomb at least five years ahead of American expectations. Deplaning at LaGuardia Airport, I was approached by a chauffeur who told me: "His Excellency the Ambassador requests the pleasure of your company into New York." I joined His Excellency, the American Ambassador to Russia, who explained that he wished to speak to "someone of the cloth" concerning the recent events. What he wanted to know was whether I as a clergyman felt that the knowledge of atomic power was not somehow "forbidden knowledge," a sort of Pandora's box, and now that the lid was off, mankind was doomed to certain destruction.

I remember trying to convince His Excellency that, if he believed that God created the atom with an intelligible structure and so arranged that the human mind would evolve with the capacity to apprehend that structure, there could be no question of forbidden knowledge. On the contrary, one could more readily argue from a theological viewpoint that such knowledge, precisely as knowledge, represented a duty on man's part, since he is under obligation to fulfill all his God-given potentialities. There is perhaps a valid meaning for the statement "What man can know, he ought to know." But there was and remains a serious question as to the use man should make of that knowledge. It does not necessarily follow that what man can do, he ought to do. No doubt, any drastic advance in human knowledge calls for an equally drastic advance in moral consciousness. The knowledge of the atom placed in the hands of any human being the possibility of destroying all humanity. Consequently, the ideal principle underlying the evolving thrust of man's moral life, as Kant saw it, that we must "act in such a way that the maxim of our action could be a universal law for all men," can no longer remain an ideal in the order of intention but must become a reality in the order of action. We must, each of us, come to a practical realization of our personal responsibility to all humanity; for with the knowledge of the atom man won a radical freedom over his destiny: he is now in position to decide whether humanity itself will survive or whether it will be destroyed.

Once again a new form of knowledge has opened up new possibilities for human freedom and new risks for human survival. And once again voices are heard speaking of "forbidden knowledge" leading to the doom of humanity. Those theologians who embrace a metaphysics of freedom in Christian philosophy

¹Karl Rahner, "Experiment: Man," *Theology Digest* 16 (1968) 58.

²*Ibid.*

have been severely, if somewhat unjustly, criticized by certain scientists as selling out to Titanist technologists. Quoting Karl Rahner's statement, "Freedom enables man to determine himself irrevocably to be for all eternity what he himself has chosen to make himself," one scientist made this comment:

... the theologians have done the scientists one better. Most scientists talk about what we are now able or free to do, about technique and its possible uses. At most some take the fatalistic view that "what can be done, will be done." Those theologians-turned-technocrats sanctify the new freedoms: "What can be done, should be done." .. The notion of man as an open self-modifying system, as a "freedom event" to use one of Rahner's formulations, is problematic to say the least. The idea of man as that creature who is free to create himself is purely formal, not to say empty. It provides no boundaries that would indicate when what was sub-human became truly human, or when what was at first human became less than human. Moreover, the freedom to change one's nature includes the freedom to destroy (by genetic manipulation or brain modification) one's nature, including the capacity and the desire for freedom. It is literally a freedom to end all freedoms. Moreover, it provides no standards by which to measure whether the changes made are in fact improvements. Evolution simply means change-to measure progress requires a standard which this view cannot supply, and which it would not supply if it could.³

These scientists see in the new biology a new danger to humanity, the danger of "species-suicide." Although man may survive biologically, he will no longer be truly human, having destroyed through his own misguided freedom what is essentially the *humanum* in man.⁴

All the primary problems to be dealt with in this article are posed here. First, what are the nature and limits of human freedom—in particular, man's freedom over himself and his own genetic inheritance? Secondly, does a metaphysics and a theology of freedom represent a purely "formal" statement, offering no objective norms or direction for the exercise of that freedom, or can a proper metaphysical understanding of human freedom provide a priori some real directives for man's project of self-modification?

THE PROBLEM OF HUMAN FREEDOM

Christian anthropology has always defined man as a self-creating being. In Christian thought man is a free being before God, a person subject to himself and capable of freely determining his final condition. This self-determination is so complete that he can ultimately and absolutely become what he has chosen to be. Consequently, man as established by God is unfinished. He does not exist in some static pure essence, but freely determines his everlasting nature and bears responsibility for it. The ultimate meaning of man's freedom is to be found in the fact that it lies in his power to make God exist or refuse Him existence in his life according to the style of his own freely chosen existence. The recent breakthrough of man's self-creative freedom from the spiritual to the physical realm is not only consonant with Christian belief but dependent upon it:

This historical breakthrough ... arises essentially from Christianity no matter how many Christians may have stood in its way and tried to prevent its historical revelation. For modern science and technology have in fact grown up because the world and nature ceased to be numinous, thanks to Christian teaching. Believing it to be numinous, man could only feel dependent and humble. But when the world became mere creature and thus profane and finite, man realized his true position. As a true coworker of the transcendent God, man now knew he had the power and the duty to conquer nature and set it to his own purposes.⁵

The philosophical and theological problem of man's nature has always been present, but never before so clearly and urgently posed. If evolution is now a free moral process, it is no longer a question of

³Leon R. Kass, "New Beginnings in Life," Working Paper Series, The Hastings Center: Institute of Society, Ethics and the Life Sciences, 1971, pp. 32-33.

⁴Cf *ibid.*, p. 33.

⁵Rahner, *art. cit.*, p. 62.

“necessary progress.” Man can abuse his freedom. He is capable of absurd and contradictory action. And today he has the knowledge and techniques to place actions which will irretrievably affect the whole human species. Rahner even goes so far as to speak of the risk of a second fall of man.⁶ We must ask, then, what is the nature of man that should guide his self-creative activity, so that he may avoid a course leading to self-destruction.⁷ I believe a beginning, at least, of an answer to this question can be found in a philosophy of freedom, especially in Maurice Blondel's philosophy of action.⁸

THE NATURE OF HUMAN FREEDOM

If there is anything new in the thinking of philosophers of freedom, it is because their philosophy is based on a newer and deeper understanding, both psychological and metaphysical, of the nature and importance of human freedom.

*There is no being where there is only constraint. If I am not that which I will to be, I am not. At the very core of my being there is a will and a love of being, or there is nothing. If man's freedom is real, it is necessary that one have at present, or at least in the future, a knowledge and a will sufficient never to suffer any tyranny whatsoever.*⁹

For the objectifying intellect, first man is, then he acts. All actions are considered as functions which can only influence that unchanging reality on the phenomenal or accidental level of being. Thus, freedom is understood as limited to a choice of actions consequent on substantial determination.

Human freedom means something radically different to the philosopher of freedom. It implies that for man to be is to act, and in acting to freely mold his substantial reality. Man alone is capable of saying "I am," because in his actions he immediately seizes himself as free action. As a result, man is not totally nor authentically human unless in the depths of his being and action he seizes himself as free source, action itself, a constant self-positing. Human freedom, then, cannot be adequately understood as a mode of action posterior to being. Man's freedom must be understood beyond all particular actions as the radical self-positing of his own reality. Man must exist at every moment as a consequence of his freedom. If in the depths of his own subjective being man meets with any determinism whatsoever-biological, psychological, social, or even a determinism springing from the divine will, a determinism which lies radically outside the sphere of his free ability to determine himself-then one would be forced to accept the conclusion that the existence of the individual human person as such is an illusion.

This insight into human freedom carries with it as a necessary consequence a radical change in the method of moral philosophy. All objectivized systems, especially the traditional ideas of an ethics based on natural law, depend on the presupposition that man possesses a static, unchanging substantial nature as source of his actions. Such an idea has the advantage of rendering possible a moral philosophy of necessary, universal, and absolute principles. However, an overemphasis on these qualities of an objective system can lead and has led to a systematic misunderstanding of the existent person as such, and tends to deliver man from the ultimate risk of his freedom, which is his grandeur.

The entire movement of modern philosophy has been a continual movement toward a deeper understanding of the role the subject as such plays in human understanding and willing. This movement has led to the conclusion that there is only one possible manner to attain the existing subject as such in its unique freedom in a legitimate philosophical manner: we must renounce all attempts to make the

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 63-64.

⁸I have developed Blondel's philosophy of freedom and moral life in *The Blondelian Synthesis* (Leiden: Brill, 1966) and in "Necessary Structures of Freedom," *Proceedings: Jesuit Philosophical Association* (1968), and *Freedom of Conscience in Theological Perspective*, *Conscience: Its Freedom and Limitations* (New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 1971). All English translations of Blondel's thought are to be found in these works.

⁹Maurice Blondel, *L'Action* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1893) p. vii.

singular existing object into an objective content of knowledge, and be content to seize it in our immediate experiential awareness of self in the deployment of our free activity.

If one accepts this insight into human freedom and the human subject, then one must accept a radically different understanding of the role that truth and value play in human life. According to the traditional concept, truth and value represent objective norms of action which impose their necessary clarity on the judgment. For the contemporary philosopher of freedom, the human spirit, to be true to itself, cannot be totally passive before truth or value and totally determined by its object. Every affirmation, especially if it is closely linked with the problem of human destiny, must be an activity which has its source in man's radical freedom, in that self-positing which is the proper characteristic of a free being. It is necessary, then, in place of the problem of the harmony of thought with objective reality, to substitute the equivalent but radically different problem of the adequation of ourselves with ourselves. To be true means to become that which one really is. It represents a search for all the necessary conditions of interior self-adequation, a search from within self-consciousness for the meaning and direction of man's freely willed activity. In this context the moral self-fulfillment of man is understood as intrinsically connected with his ontological self-realization, rather than with his affective relation to reality understood as an object set off from himself.

Further, if freedom is at the source of all man's activities, my vision of the world can never be the result of a pure observation: it is necessarily also a commitment. Any discovery of meaning or absurdity is necessarily to some extent a construction of that same meaning or absurdity. The point of view in which I am situated becomes my situation: I make it my own, by the free attitude I assume in regard to it. Nothing could be more hypocritical than to believe that truths and values are imposed on me from without which are in fact to some extent at least the products of my own freedom.

It is this insight into the radical nature of human freedom that led Blondel to accept the principle of immanence as the fundamental methodological principle governing his moral philosophy of human action. He thus formulated this principle: "Nothing can impose itself on a man; nothing can demand the assent of his intellect or the consent of his will which does not find its source in man himself."¹⁰

*That necessity which appears to me as a tyrannous constraint, that obligation which at first appears despotic, in the last analysis it is necessary that I understand it as manifesting and activating the most profound reality of my own will; otherwise it will be my destruction.*¹¹

Blondel does not hesitate to apply this methodological principle of immanence to manifestation of the divine will. Although the divine will must manifest itself as in some way distinct from our finite will, yet that revelation, if it is not to destroy our freedom and integrity, must be made in some way from within our consciousness of self and prove capable of being assimilated into our free self-positing.

Having accepted the principle of immanence, Blondel was immediately aware of a dilemma to which that principle gives rise. To remain free, man must refuse any purely external and objective norm imposed on his actions. At the same time, unless one is willing to accept a totally irrational and amoral world of absurd and meaningless freedom, one must admit that freedom is dependent on a transcendent truth to which it must conform, that freedom is directed to values which, far from being man's exclusive creation, serve him as guide, norm, and sanction. Further, if a true moral science of right or wrong free human actions is possible, it is necessary that real, concrete facts be capable of receiving an absolute qualification. One must be able to establish an absolute difference between right and wrong, true and false. Yet, if we are to discover these truths and values without being unfaithful to man's freedom and existential subjectivity, we must discover the universality of truth and value from within our consciousness of our own existence. In Blondel's opinion, only a philosophy of free human action can effectively respond to these problems, because only a philosophy of action, by revealing the dialectic of

¹⁰Blondel, *The Letter on Apologetics and History and Dogma* (New York: Holt, Rhinehart and Winston, 1964) pp. 60-61

¹¹*L'Action*, p. xxii.

moral life itself, is capable of uncovering the necessary structures within human freedom without ceasing at the same time to recognize that life as a free, personal enterprise. Thus, only a philosophy of action permits one to discover the rational and determinate structures of life in reflection without in any way refusing to recognize the reciprocal transcendence of existence and freedom over thought.

Action, Blondel held, has its own a priori structure from which the whole of thought derives its meaning and direction. For this reason he proposed his counter-Copernican revolution toward an even greater degree of subjectivity: instead of assuming that it is thought that determines action, let us assume that it is action that determines thought. The center of perspective in philosophy should be transposed from the analytic element of thought into the synthetic element of action. What Blondel proposed was a study of ideogenesis, the process by which thought is derived from action. This study would result in an understanding of the a priori structure implicit in the human will itself. Blondel's search for moral principles took the form of a search for the all-embracing dialectical law which governs immanently the evolution of human life. Underneath the most aberrant projects, beneath the strangest deviations of the human will, there always remains the necessary élan of the will-willing from which it is impossible to deviate. There is a necessary logic of freedom. Human actions can be illogical; they can never be alogical. Either one conforms freely to the law which one carries within oneself, or one opposes it freely; one can never escape it.

HUMAN FREEDOM AND THE EMPIRICAL SCIENCES

The preceding reflections on the meaning of human freedom and moral life will appear as ultimately meaningless and unverifiable assertions to a mind totally given over to the methodology of the empirical sciences. My purpose at this point is to relate what has been said to man's scientific knowledge. Many biologists claim that man is absolutely determined by his genetic inheritance, not just in his physical traits, but even in his highest qualities of intellect and will. At the same time these scientists claim an absolute freedom for man to do whatever he wishes in the way of genetic manipulation and control.¹²

If man is absolutely free, there is no question of a transcendent God; there is only the problem of man's continual movement of self-transcendence. Nor is there any question of the existence of an objective morality; there are no values in themselves, no pre-given human nature, no human destiny mapped out in advance: all there is is man and his freedom. To proclaim man absolutely free, as Sartre notes, is necessarily to proclaim him absurd and ultimately meaningless; it is necessarily to despair of man.¹³ The task for a philosopher of freedom is clear: Is it possible to preserve the undeniable exigencies of human freedom, subjectivity, and existence within the context of a philosophy which recognizes objective and universal truths and values, which alone can give any meaningful direction to human freedom and human life?

All too often we are tempted to conceive of freedom and determinism as contradictories: either man is determined or man is free. In an attempt to resolve this dilemma, many philosophers have embraced a form of dualism which sees man as flesh and spirit, given over to total determinism in the flesh, but free only in spirit. Such an understanding leads to a Kantian-style dichotomy between freedom of intention and determinism of action. However, from an evolutionary viewpoint man as a conscious free agent emerged in continuity with the evolution of the rest of material reality. Man did not choose to be free. In the evolutionary process a self-conscious, reflecting being emerged; man found himself determined to freedom; he is necessarily free.

¹²Paul Ramsey, *Fabricated Man: The Ethics of Genetic Control* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1971) p. 92.

¹³Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956) p. 556.

But the very concept "freedom" expresses not an absolute but a relative capacity. What was man freed from and for what was he freed? Because of his self-consciousness and power of reflection, man has the negative power to suspend the automatic operation of all determinisms, whether they be biological, psychological, or social. He also has the positive power to project ideal goals, which represent not that which is, i.e., that which is given from the past, but also that which ought to be. Since what ought to be does not yet exist, it cannot be understood as exercising a mechanistic style of determinism on the human actions it influences. Man's freedom, then, represents his power to transcend what is factually given from the past, precisely by projecting what ought to be as an ideal goal in the future. The possibility of incorporating the transcendent ideals of a metaphysics of action leads to an awareness of that action as a properly free moral action, and of self as a free moral agent. Man is, thus, freed from all predeterminism: "the will is led to place the center of its equilibrium beyond all factual realities, to live as it were on itself, to search in itself alone the purely formal reasons of its acts." The creative power of the moral act is to be found in the power of the will to synthesize a given set of ideals into the factual reality of its activity by free choice. Consequently, with the advent of man in the process of evolution, evolution itself changed its nature. It became no longer a blind process of chance, but a moral process of the free and intelligent pursuit of ideal goals. Man himself has become the instrument of evolution.

Moral life, then, is itself evolutionary. It is a dynamic dialectic of fact and possibility. We must look for ideal human nature not in the past but in the future. And the key to that future is the creative moral freedom of man. Some theologians suggest that the myth of man in the Garden of Eden does not necessarily represent an actual state of man in the past, but primitive man's primordial dream of what ought to be in the future, which he mistakenly projected into the past as something he had lost and must struggle to regain. In this evolutionary framework natural law should no longer be understood as based on a static structure or essence; rather, it represents a statement of the moral conditions for man's own growth individually and collectively, seen both as a possibility and a task to be freely accomplished.¹⁴ Man on the moral level is characterized by self-development. He perceives every choice as a choice between authentic and inauthentic humanity. He sees his life as having a meaning only he can give it through his free choice. Once man emerged as free, to allow deterministic processes from the past to compulsively determine behavior, to refuse to think, to refuse to project ideal goals or to make conscious choices is also an exercise of freedom. Modern man's refusal to philosophize, his systematic refusal to construct a metaphysics of value in the name of scientific methodology, represents just such a free negation of freedom and a free capitulation to blind determinism.

No doubt, there is a real continuity between man as free and his genetic inheritance from evolving nature. In fact, some philosophers have spoken of material nature becoming conscious of itself in man; man's collective consciousness can be legitimately understood as "nature's consciousness of itself."¹⁵ St. Paul even speaks about all nature groaning for its liberation which is to be revealed in the new man.¹⁶ Man's freedom to control his own future should not be understood as a freedom to give "entirely new directions to evolution." Rather, man must consciously enter into his own biological evolution to determine its given direction in order to enhance it. For example, if evolving nature produced man as conscious and free, then man must accept his role as free, self-creative agent to promote that consciousness and freedom and in no way to subvert it.

Rather than understand man's freedom as a contradiction of determinism, that freedom can perhaps be better understood as a new form of determinism, the substitution of the pull of ideals from ahead for the purely compulsive and unconscious *vis a tergo*. It is an objective fact of evolution that man's genetic inheritance, derived from the same blind, unconscious evolutionary process, represents the

¹⁴Cf. McNeill, "Freedom of Conscience in Theological Perspective," pp. 120-22.

¹⁵Cf. McNeill, *The Blondelian Synthesis*, pp. 247-48.

¹⁶Rom 8:19-23.

necessary material conditions of possibility for man's exercise of consciousness and freedom. Recent discoveries in genetic biology have demonstrated that man's genetic inheritance conditions the very quality of his conscious life in a way and to a degree undreamed of heretofore. However, the empirical scientist, due to his methodology, is always exposed to the temptation to confuse material conditions with determining cause. The first reason for this confusion is the methodological choice necessary for the very existence of empirical science as we know it—to bracket all questions of finality, and attempt to find a total explanation of any objective phenomenon in terms of its material conditions. The a priori methodological premise operating here is that the whole is always nothing more than the sum of its parts. Having traced all human qualities back to their genetic foundation, the scientist as such is satisfied that he has given a total explanation of those qualities.

In a brilliant lecture years ago at Louvain, the French phenomenologist Paul Ricoeur spoke about the relation between Freudian archeology of the human psyche and Hegelian teleology of the human psyche, making the point that an adequate explanation of the development of the human psyche cannot be had without the confirmation that one can give the other.¹⁷ For example, the Freudian discovery that in the first moments of its development the psyche necessarily constructs a superego by intersuscepting the will of its parents is meaningless unless we place that phenomenon in the teleological framework of the free, conscious substitution of the divine will for our own: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." However, in its turn the Hegelian teleological perspective of the movement of the isolated human psyche toward the unity of absolute spirit remains an unproven assumption without its foundation in turn in Freudian archeology.

There is, then, an equally true methodological perspective in the study of man which maintains that the whole is always more than the sum of its parts. While it is true that to know an acorn may tell us much about an oak tree, it is equally true that we can never really know what an acorn is all about until we know an oak tree. There is a real need for a teleological study, both philosophical and theological, of human evolution to be combined with the archeological investigations of human genetics. Until that teleological study is made, no meaningful direction can be given to human development both individual and collective.

There is another necessary aspect to the methodology of the empirical scientists in their study of man, which leads them to systematically disregard or deny the freedom of man and the role it must play in his future. It is a fact that all human actions, once placed, are fully determined. The empirical scientist is obliged by his methodology to view man and his actions objectively. However, the determinism of freedom by its very nature cannot be an object of empirical investigation. The scientist precisely as such must attempt to give a total explanation of all phenomena in terms of objective causal determinacy. Yet from another perspective, precisely in so far as man can determine ideal goals, he can be said to freely determine himself.

But what is the perspective and the methodology which allows man to include human freedom within his total explanation of himself and his evolutionary destiny? As we have seen, there is only one possible way to deal in a legitimate philosophical manner with the human subject as such: one must renounce the effort to make it a content of objective consciousness and be content to seize it in its activity as subject in our power of self-awareness. There is only one subject which is truly subject: the individual concrete subject, which of its very nature resists all efforts to reduce it to a content of consciousness. Because it is the "knowing," it can never be totally contained within the "known." If one pretends (as within scientific methodology one must) to make the subject a part of a system of objective knowledge, in which knower has become identified with the known, one has necessarily destroyed the unique nature of the human subject as such.

¹⁷Paul Ricoeur, "Archéologie et téléologie," *De l'interprétation: Essai sur Freud* (Paris: Seuil, 1965) pp. 444-75.

The problem has to do with the paradox of the container and the contained. All purely objective sciences of man which pretend to be a total comprehension of man are necessarily depersonalized and depersonalizing, precisely in so far as they try to reduce the existing subject to a content of consciousness. Human freedom can only be grasped from within oneself and from within one's self-awareness in the very act itself. A total explanation of man and his evolution must, therefore, include the input of a philosophy of human subjectivity and freedom as well as the objective data of the empirical sciences.

*The fact that man cannot be reduced to anything merely material or biological is safeguarded, without injury to his real connection with the total biological evolution, by man's knowledge "from within" about his absolute transcendentality, his spirit, his freedom, even before he has understood anything about the mere biosphere.*¹⁸

From this philosophical perspective of man as free agent, even the empirical sciences must be seen not as containing but as contained. Contrary to the exclusive Kantian perspective that it is the a priori of thought that determines action, it is equally true that the a priori of human free activity determines thought. There is a distinction here between the plane of action and existence and the plane of thought and reflection which must be respected. This is not a distinction on the psychological level between theory and external action or practice. The distinction must be applied to the very core of thought itself. We cannot accept the fact of thought separated from the act of thinking, as if thought were a being apart. To escape that error, we must go behind thought to its source in action.¹⁹

As act, thought participates in the spontaneity of the subject; it is commitment and freedom. As knowledge, thought reflects the objectively given and ascertains its necessary relations. A necessary truth is, as a consequence, never purely passively acknowledged but always freely recognized. This is true not only of spontaneous ideas but of the whole field of scientific knowledge. It is no less important to study the *fieri* than the *esse* of the sciences. The object of philosophy is not purely science already constituted; it is the genesis of the sciences, the processes of the human mind and will which spontaneously produce scientific ideas. One must, then, reverse perspectives: instead of trying to contain man within the objectivity of science with the resulting negation of his freedom, one must seek to understand science as an instrument the human will freely employs in its search for its destiny.

Although there is no ethics to be found in the content of any science, there is nonetheless a morality of science, an ethics which science presupposes.²⁰ H. J. Muller, for example, is most insistent upon the use of voluntary means only, and upon achieving his imperative goals by reliance on the exercise of responsible freedom.²¹ What, Ramsey asks, is the source and what is the ground of the ethics which governs eugenic proposals? The answer, he claims, must be found among the presuppositions of there being any science of genetics at all, not in its contents. There is an ethics and there is a view of man that makes science possible. "And, as Kant knew long ago, anything that is a necessary presupposition of scientific knowledge must be as certainly valid as that knowledge itself."²² Science itself is grounded, then, on a more adequate understanding of what it means to be a man than is contained in, or can be forthcoming from, the "doctrines" of the individual's genetic origins, or even from the habit of truth itself. We must search for the ethical laws governing man's self-creative evolution, not in the objective content of the sciences as already constituted, but in the a priori dynamism of the human will, which freely brings science itself into being.

¹⁸Karl Rahner, "The Secret of Life," *Theological Investigations* 6 (Baltimore: Helicon, 1969) 142.

¹⁹Blondel, *L'Action*, p. 213.

²⁰Ramsey, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-22.

²¹H. J. Muller, "Genetic Progress by Voluntarily Conducted Germinal Choice," in *Man and His Future* (London: Churchill, 1963) p. 257.

²²Ramsey, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

As Blondel prophetically pointed out: "If the indeterminate power [of our will] is defined by the fact *that* it wills freely, and not by that *which* it wills; further, if in the very activity itself of the will is revealed the end to which it necessarily tends and the series of means which it must use, then that rigorous continuity contains a scientific determinism; there is a *necessary logic of freedom*."²³ The very fact that man finds it necessary to freely construct the empirical sciences reveals one aspect of the direction and dynamism of the human will in search of its fulfillment; for these sciences rise up from the very foundation of human free activity and are spontaneously organized under the rule of that same interior law which governs all our life. Thus, even the empirical sciences will be seen as a form of the development of the human will. They necessarily enter into the series of means man freely employs to resolve the problem of human destiny.²⁴

THE EMPIRICAL SCIENCES AND THE INDIVIDUAL

Before we elucidate that necessary logic of freedom, it is important to reflect on the concept of the individual; for one of the key ethical issues occasioned by the recent advances in science and technology is the tension between the rights of the individual and the species and, consequently, a tension between the individuals living in the present and future generations. Rahner claims that man has begun to enter a postindividualistic phase of his history. The genuine unique person will be put into jeopardy, as will the dignity of the individual. However, the changes that are taking place need not extinguish the person and individual dignity; they may open a broader sphere for real freedom.²⁵ Many of the ethical objections against certain biological experiments in human life have been based on the traditional Western concept of the "dignity of the individual as such," which, it is claimed, would be violated. On the other hand, many technocrats feel that to limit their scientific research on such a value is unfounded and consequently to be ignored. What is meant by the individual as such? And what is his value? Is it purely relative, or is there something absolute about it?

Classical Greek philosophy, attempting to comprehend man in an act-potency framework derived from an objective study of material change, thought of him as a metaphysical composite of matter and form. Since in this framework form, which represented that which all men have in common and thus could be grasped in objective, universal concepts, was understood as the positive principle of act, all positive values were attached to the form of man, i.e., species-man. The material principle which accounted for man's individuation was, however, thought of as pure potency for the reception of form, having no actuality in itself. Consequently, the individual as such was considered a purely negative phenomenon, a material instance of a multipliable form.

Many philosophical ethical traditions continue to be built on this negative understanding of the individual as such. For example, when Kant came to the final formulation of the instinctive moral voice within man in his "categorical imperative," he chose the formula "Act in such a way that in your own person as well as in the person of all others you treat mankind as such as an end and never merely as a means."²⁶ Note that what for Kant was end-in-itself, and therefore can never morally be totally relativized, is not the individual person but mankind as such. "Respect," Kant tells us, "for the individual is respect for the law of which the individual is an example."²⁷ It is interesting to note that Feuerbach drew the logical conclusion from Kant's premises that not the individual but only "the species man" is

²³Blondel, *L'Action*, p. 213.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 183.

²⁵Rahner, "Experiment: Man," p. 66.

²⁶Immanuel Kant, *The Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Ethics* (New York: Appleton-Century, 1938) p. 48.

²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 30 n.

divine, i.e., of absolute value as end-in-itself.²⁸ And Marx in turn drew the practical political conclusion that the interest and even the life of any individual or group of individuals may be subordinated to the “class” interest. Even today we find one of the primary proponents of situation ethics, Joseph Fletcher, claiming that “all values are relative to persons, but all persons are relative to society.”²⁹

But there was and is another traditional understanding of the value of the individual as such in Western ethical tradition which stands in contradiction. This understanding factually had its origin in Christian revelation and in the concept of Christ as the God-man. The judgment against Christ, “Is it not good that one man should die rather than the people perish?” was understood in Christian theological tradition as a judgment of deicide, a relativizing of the true absolute to a relative value posed as a false absolute. Further, the Christian believes that every human person born into this world has the same inherent absolute dignity as did Christ. In fact, the ethical ground of final judgment is based precisely on the absolute value of the individual as such, independent of any judgment on his value relative to the human community. “Whatever you did to the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.” The categorical imperative implicit in Christianity should read: act in such a way that in your own person as well as in the person of all others you treat the individual person as such as an end and never merely as a means.

A true understanding of the value of the individual has only relatively recently emerged in philosophy. It was not until Aquinas reversed the act-potency relationship with his idea of the metaphysical distinction between essence and existence that a philosophical foundation was laid for an understanding of man as positively individual. In the essence-existence distinction essence, which alone can be objectively conceptualized in universal and abstract terms as that which all individuals of a given species have in common, was understood as the potential principle in man, whereas existence, representing the unique unconceptualizable act of being, was understood as the principle of act. Consequently, a metaphysical foundation had been laid for understanding the individual as such as something positive and unique and, therefore, incapable of being legitimately totally relativized from an ethical viewpoint. Thomas, however, lacked the philosophical methodology which would have allowed him to exploit that new metaphysical foundation in his ethical theory.³⁰

It was not until the rise of the modern philosophies of human subjectivity and freedom that such a methodology became available. For, as we have seen, the positive human individual in his freedom and uniqueness can only be grasped from within ourselves in our consciousness of our activity. No one has given better philosophical expression to the New Testament view of man and his unique value as a positive individual than has Kierkegaard. Man, he argues, is to be distinguished from all other species, not by some common quality of the species, whether that be thought or freedom of act-on or some other generalized characteristic, but because “every individual is more than the species.”³¹ The value of a Hereford cow lies in the fact that all members of that species, if healthy, produce an ample supply of rich milk. Similarly, many scientists argue that the dignity of man lies in his power of thought. Consequently, just as we can breed cattle to obtain a more perfect milk producer, so we should be able to breed man to produce a better thinker. All such thinking is obviously based on a purely functional view of value and makes the mistake of judging a man's value on what he does, rather than what he is. Man is positively an individual and not just a negative or material instance of a general nature. As a free personal being, man is more than the particular instance of a multipliable essence; he is more than the point of intersection of general truths and maxims or just the material bearer of certain forms of genetic inheritance.

28Cf. Frederick Copleston, *History of Philosophy* 7/2 (New York: Image Books, 1965) 63.

29Joseph Fletcher, *Situation Ethics: The New Morality* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1956) p. 50.

30Cf. Copleston, *op. cit.*, 2/2, 118-31.

31Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling* (New York: Princeton Univ. Press, 1941) pp. 80-82.

Consequently, no existing individual human as such can legitimately be purely relativized to the future of humanity as such as a mere means to an end that lies outside himself.

The only objective foundation for such an estimation of individual man lies in the theological belief that every human individual stands in an unmediated relation to the divine.³² Apart from that relation to God, man would be purely relative and could legitimately be relativized to the species and its future good, but in it each individual has an absolute and unique value as end-in-itself. However, from a philosophical viewpoint the truth of such a value of the individual can be grasped subjectively by every individual from within himself in his consciousness of his freedom. And the objective necessity of maintaining such a value can be indirectly proven independent of religious belief in the necessary consequences of its denial on human society; for an ethics of love and a true community of love can only exist where such a value of the individual is recognized.

It was no accident that Kant, who systematically denied the positive value of the individual as such, determined the highest ethical value in his system as "duty for duty's sake." Nor was it any accident that he understood love directed to the individual as such as "pathological" and reduced the Christian commandment to love to a new form of duty not directed to the individual at all but to "the law of which the individual is an example."³³ Nor was it an accident that Fletcher, having made the decision to base all ethical choices on empirical evidence, came to the conclusion that justice and love are identical, that justice is "love distributed." The traditional symbol of justice as a blindfolded woman holding the scales emphasizes the impersonal nature of the law of justice as its great virtue. Justice can only deal with that which all men have in common. In contrast, love is essentially personal and essentially free. Justice is concerned with the establishment of reciprocal rights and obligations; but the essential act of love is to make a free gift of that to which no one has a right in justice. "No greater love does any man have than to lay down his life for his friends." Love presupposes justice as an absolutely necessary condition; for love as free gift can only occur after justice is established. But a human community based on justice alone without love would be a community based on separation and alienation. Nor is it any accident, perhaps, that the future society which the technocrats plan has the appearance of a society of depersonalized robots, deprived of any capacity to love and valued and valuing only for their function and not for what they are. Since the positive individual is ignored in all these methodologies, no adequate reason can be found not to relativize the value and needs of the individual as such to the needs of society, or present individuals to the future of the species.

But before we investigate further these consequences, let us investigate why the truth of this value judgment, as well as all other ethical values, necessarily falls outside the content of empirical science as such, while perhaps it remains a necessary condition and presupposition of the scientific endeavor as such. It is true that modern empirical science took its rise when the choice was made to abandon the metaphysical quest for the form, essence, nature, or substance of reality --- a choice made for the obvious reason that there could be no objective, empirical test of the truth of such insights. In its place the scientist chose to adopt a method which studied the objective laws governing the material interconnection of things, and only those laws capable of objective empirical verification. Just as the human subject and human freedom cannot be the object of any or all empirical science, neither can the positive and unique individual be grasped within the objective methodology of science. Some biologists believe they can give an empirical explanation of the uniqueness of the individual as such in terms of the infinite complexity of human genetic structures, which make the recurrence of exactly the same configuration a statistical improbability, if not an impossibility. But such an individual remains purely negative; he is still understood as nothing more than the unique intersection of an infinitely complex number of general structures. It is interesting to note that just at the moment when human technology poses an

³²*Ibid.*

³³Kant, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-26.

unprecedented threat to the freedom and dignity of the individual as such, a truly new awareness has sprung up in humanity of the true freedom and dignity of the individual.³⁴ It is perhaps no pure coincidence that a true philosophical understanding of the individual and his freedom should arise at the same historical moment when it is most in jeopardy due to scientific and technological advances; for, as we have seen, human evolution is moral of its very essence.

FREEDOM FROM THE TYRANNY OF TIME

From the perspective of a philosophy and theology of freedom, man not only necessarily seeks to free himself from the determinisms of the past by means of projecting ideal goals for the future; man is also necessarily driven to try to escape time altogether. However, the empirical scientist as such can only comprehend man within time; the type of functional material interconnection which he studies is temporal of its very essence. Since science of its very nature is future-oriented, it tends to view the present and the thing in the present as merely a functional moment in a drive toward the future. As a result, many theorists of biological, psychological, and social self-creation do not express much concern for the individual now living, but tend to see him merely as the raw material for projects to be realized in the future.

One theorist, Gerald Feinberg, in *The Prometheus Project*, sees the essential flaw in the human condition as "man's conscious awareness of his own finitude."³⁵ Feinberg locates that essential flaw in the fact that man is "beset by the specter of impending death, which always threatens to put an end to all our thinking and doing." Consequently, Feinberg proposes to overcome that flaw by proceeding to a radical reconstruction of man. He evidently believes that the techniques will soon be available by which man could be kept indefinitely alive, e.g., by the conquest of aging, replacement of worn-out parts, creation of intelligent machines and their association with organic systems, etc. Of interest here is the assumption that man's necessary drive toward immortal existence can somehow be fulfilled by granting him an unlimited future.³⁶ However, man experiences time itself as the very essence of his finitude and the primary negation of his value and meaning.

The past never really exists in the present, and precisely in so far as man is caught into the determinisms of the past, he experiences himself as nonexistent. So too the future never really exists, and in so far as man is caught up into an endless future, he would be involved in a living death. The objective concept of the present is that fleeting moment between the nonbeing of the past and future which, like the geometrician's point, has itself no dimension. In denying man a true present, the scientist denies him a true existence. Even those future generations, when their time comes, must relativize themselves to their future.

Not only is the scientist caught by reason of his methodology into the tyranny of time, but even the Christian ethicist sometimes falls victim to that same tyranny. Fletcher grants the Christian principle that love is the only absolute in the ethical order; but he defines love not as a way of being but as a style of doing. The loving thing to do is "that which does the greatest good for the greatest number."³⁷ Thus, the only question to be asked concerning the moral quality of any action is what future good will come of it. All values, then, are referred to the future. There is no understanding of the expression of love as a

³⁴Louis Monden, *Sin, Liberty and Law* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1965) p. 75.

³⁵New York: Doubleday, 1968, p. 43.

³⁶Even Feinberg seems to doubt intuitively that unlimited time could procure true human happiness, so he suggests a total reconstruction of man (*ibid.*, pp. 50-51).

³⁷Fletcher, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-56.

value in itself in the present situation. Christian love is reduced to a form of pragmatism, "a calculating process"; we must carefully figure out in every choice what will produce the greatest good for the greatest number. Love, then, is understood in such a way that it has no value for the here-and-now, and any concept of love as a vital bond uniting human beings in the present is discarded. It follows that life can have no value in the present moment apart from its relation to the future.

The moral message of the New Testament, however, was a message of liberation from the tyranny of time. The new freedom announced to the children of God was the freedom to be able to live in the present moment fully through a life of love. The man of faith can be liberated from the past with its determinism and guilt. The man of hope can be liberated from anxiety concerning the future: prudent concern, yes; anxiety, no. Without faith or hope a man is necessarily dispersed over time, a victim of the tyranny of time. He has no present moment. And since the past and the future never really exist, to the extent that he has no present moment he has no real existence. There is more than a mere semantic connection between the words "present" and "presence"; the man of faith and hope is the man who is capable of entering into the presence of his fellow human beings in the present moment in order to establish in its fullness the bond of love. The results of such an ability are precisely those forms of human relationship and community based not on rules or laws or functional interrelations but in vital, meaningful human bonds.

It is important to note that the present moment is only meaningful in itself in so far as one can encounter something that is truly of absolute value, something that is end-in-itself in that present moment. As Peter Berger points out, there are certain forms of human behavior which give man the experience of transcending his finitude in time, and therefore give man an extraordinary sense of fulfillment.³⁸ Among them are the aesthetic experience, the experience of play, and the experience of love. In each of these experiences what is being done now is experienced as totally meaningful in itself, not just related in a functional way to something else in the future. For the present moment to have value for me, I must be able to encounter something as end-in-itself in that moment. Human love has its necessary foundation and a priori condition in the value of every individual as end-in-himself. And love represents the only absolute in Christian ethics because only in the activity of loving is there a real encounter with the living reality of the one true absolute, God. "If any man loves, he knows God, because God is love."

From a theological perspective Rahner makes an important distinction between man's religious anticipations toward an absolute, eschatological future outside of time, and his anticipation of a this-worldly historical future to be achieved by planning and autocreations. "Man's absolute future, given into his hands by God, does not aim at what can be planned and made of the manifold possibilities of the world. That absolute future surpasses, censors and deprives our historical future of any appearance of absoluteness."³⁹ Consequently, all human planning, all active self-fulfillment, is embraced by a future which is not subject to our purposes. The absolute future arrives in its fullness only in the act of dying, which is the only route to the fullness of life; and the only ultimate escape from the finitude of time is through the nothingness of death.

Although there is a radical discontinuity between man's absolute and historical future, there is nonetheless a definite positive relation between them. Unfortunately, all too often religious believers have moved from a radical dichotomy of flesh and spirit to a radical dichotomy between man's historical and absolute future. This dichotomy finds its expression in the popular understanding of the theological distinction between particular and general judgment. The believer is inclined to view this distinction exclusively from within time, with the result that he sees particular judgment as a purely spiritual judgment on his individual soul in isolation from the flesh of human history. Even if the believer accepts the idea of a material resurrection at the end of time in the general judgment, he is inclined to see it as

³⁸Peter Berger, *Rumor of Angels* (New York: Doubleday, 1969) *passim*.

³⁹Rahner, *art. cit.*, p. 66.

icing on the cake, in no way substantially related to his beatitude. The traditional theological concept of a general judgment was that man is to be judged in his totality, body and soul, in the context of the totality of human history.⁴⁰ In general judgment the absolute future and the historical future coincide. However, the believer is frequently disposed to see the building of man's historical future as merely an interim occupation.

In the Christian perspective it has always been understood that there can be no radical separation of love of God from love of neighbor. But what is being understood in a new way is that the love of neighbor is no longer achievable exclusively in intentions or merely in the sphere of private interpersonal relationships. Man must achieve higher forms of socialization, of social and political unity. And the historical struggle to achieve these forms represents a "necessary mediation by which man is to open himself, through action and suffering, to the absolute future."⁴¹ The unity of mankind as such can no longer remain an idea but must become a reality incarnated in the social and political institutions of our world. Man is under an obligation to create in time the concrete context in which active love of mankind is to be realized.

THE NECESSARY IDENTITY OF MEANS WITH ENDS

It should be obvious that a philosophical and theological investigation of the teleology of human freedom cannot provide the material evidence as to what concrete ethical choices are to be made concerning man's future. "Love of mankind cannot offer the material principle from which the concrete goals and shapes of this worldly self-creation can be deduced."⁴² This is precisely the legitimate task of the scientist and the technologist. But by moving behind the context of science to the teleological élan of the human will which makes science possible, we are able to discern certain a priori by which man's scientific endeavor can be judged as leading to authentic humanity or to its destruction. From his awareness of himself in his actions man can become aware that there is a necessary élan within the human will out of isolation and alienation toward unity: with himself, his world, his fellow man, and ultimately with God.

This is also the central message of Christian revelation: "May they be one, Father, even as you and I are one." It is also clear that the model for that unity is not to be found in the mechanical, functional unity of a machine or an anthill. Christ is one with His Father through a unity of love. The only unity that will promote humanity, not destroy it, is one which will respect the freedom and absolute value of the individual. The supreme, prophetic religious symbol of that unity is to be found in Holy Communion; through oneness with the body and blood of Christ we become simultaneously one with God and one with each other.

With the appearance of human self-consciousness in evolution, as Kant observed, man became aware of the necessary thrust of moral conscience as a thrust toward unity; we are morally obliged to act as if humanity were one. Moral principles and values, however, do not exist for their own sake. Rather, it is only by acting in accordance with those principles and values that man can achieve the oneness of humanity in a truly human community. Every effort at human communication—a handshake or human speech—is an incarnated expression of that drive toward unity. In searching for the foundation of the moral imperative of truth, Kant observed that to lie is to involve oneself in a contradiction. That

⁴⁰The tendency to view particular and general judgment as two separate events seems valid only within the phenomenal dimension of time. If, as Augustine suggests, after death we shall know God as God knows Himself and all else through God, the moment of the individual's death and particular judgment must be seen as identical with the end of time, the individual's entry into the absolute future is identical with the collective end of humanity's historical future.

⁴¹Rahner, *ibid.*, p. 66.

⁴²*Ibid.*, p. 67.

contradiction, however, does not pertain exclusively to reason and the order of intentions, as Kant believed; it also lies in the will of one who uses speech, which has as its necessary goal to promote the unity of man, as a means of further division and separation.

Again, when Bronowski attempts to formulate in general terms the presuppositional status of a scientific ethics, he finds the central presupposition in the habit of truth, and thus forms the categorical imperative of science: "We ought to act in such a way that what is true can be verified as such."⁴³ But Bronowski, like Kant, is tempted to see truth as an end-in-itself. Thus he fails to see the relation between man's drive toward truth with his drive toward the unity of humanity in a community of love. Truth is a real value for man precisely because man is a necessary drive for unity. It is perhaps no coincidence that the practical result of the progress of man's science and technology has been the actual conquest of space and time, with the result that the true unity of mankind on the political and social level has become a practical necessity for the survival of man. Kant had a premonition of that consequence when he pointed out that if the moral voice speaks in the name of humanity as if humanity were one, then man is under a moral obligation to so evolve his political structures to the point of world government.⁴⁴ For if only he who acts in the name of all humanity performs a moral action, only he who legislates in the name of all humanity creates truly moral laws. Still, political unity and the unity of human institutions are only the external form and the condition of possibility of true human unity. That unity can only be attained through human freedom and self-gift, i.e., through love.

A similar tendency to separate moral means and principles from their consequences and to give them a value in themselves can be observed in Paul Ramsey's thought. In fact, Ramsey believes that an independent ethics of means regardless of their consequences is the specific feature of a Christian morality as such. Further, he explicitly bases this dichotomy between means and end on what he understands as the necessary theological dichotomy between man's absolute future and his historical future. "In essence, an independent morality of means or righteousness is collapsed into utilitarianism when the eschaton or man's *supernatural end* is replaced by any future *telos*."⁴⁵ Ramsey, interestingly enough, never mentions the equally traditional Christian perspective of resurrection and general judgment in this context, a tradition which envisages not a substitution but a coordination of man's supernatural end with his historical future. On the contrary, he makes the rather remarkable statement: "Man is no more bound to succeed in preventing genetic deterioration than he would be bound to retard entropy. Religious people have never denied, indeed they have affirmed that God means to kill us all in the end and in the end he is going to succeed."⁴⁶ Having stated his theologically based pessimism concerning man's historical future, he concludes that the Christian in doing his duty in regard to future generations will not begin with the desired end and deduce his obligation exclusively from that end; nor will he define right merely in terms of conduciveness to the good end; he will not decide what ought to be done simply by calculating what actions are most likely to succeed in achieving the absolutely imperative end of genetic control or improvement.⁴⁷

Ramsey is correct in seeing a contradiction of Christian values in any action which would totally relativize existing humanity to some remote future. He is right because man himself can never be a mere means but must be understood as end-in-himself. But he is wrong in seeing no necessary, organic relation between present respect for freedom and dignity and the consequences of that respect for man's historical future. Because of the fundamental theological dualism he holds between man's absolute and historical future, and his theologically-based pessimism concerning man's earthly future, he is inclined to

43J. Bronowski, *Science and Human Values* (New York: Harper, 1959) p. 74.

44Kant, *Perpetual Peace* (New York: MacMillan, 1915) *passim*.

45Ramsey, *op. cit.*, p. 28, n. 40.

46*Ibid.*, p. 27.

47*Ibid.*, p. 30.

see the Christian's effort to maintain such principles as the freedom and dignity of the human individual as in essential conflict with the scientific judgment as to what would be best for man's historical future. Consequently, he fails to see that respect for such ethical principles is not just relevant to man's absolute future; it is just as relevant, if not more so, to man's historical future as are questions concerning his genetic health.

Ramsey's position stands in sharp contrast to Rahner's. While Rahner is aware of the abuse man can make of his new biological freedom and is equally aware with Ramsey that the necessary path to man's absolute future lies through death (and resurrection), he is optimistic about man's historical future: he does not see it as necessarily predestined to failure and doom. Mankind is not predestined to failure in time independent of his moral choice; man has the moral freedom to decide his historical destiny, individually and collectively.

*There is no reason why man should not do whatever he is really able to do. A truly alert morality would, therefore, attempt to show contemporary man that what he ought not to do is, even today, impracticable. This holds true even on the historical, this-worldly level, where he may think it is possible to go against his moral duty.*⁴⁸

Rahner's point is not that actions contrary to moral principles are physically impossible. His point is the moral impossibility of achieving mankind's historical good by immoral means, the impossibility of achieving a more perfect human society in the future by using immoral means in the present. He sees a necessary identity of moral means with their consequences. Any moral contradiction in the means man uses to achieve his future will necessarily result in a living contradiction in the future human society achieved by those means.

Ramsey goes one step further in attempting to discover the a priori limits imposed on the means to be used in genetic control from a Christian theological viewpoint. He observes that the original creative act of God is understood in Christian thought as taking place in a context of love. "God created nothing apart from his love, and without divine love was not anything made that was made."⁴⁹ In like manner, we humans have always cocreated new beings like ourselves in the midst of our love for one another. In this there is a trace of the original mystery by which God created the world from love. Consequently, a reflection of God's love binding Himself to the world and the world to Himself is found in the claim He places upon men and women in their creation, when He bound the mystery of marital love and procreation together in the nature of human sexuality.⁵⁰

I agree with Ramsey that human life ought not to be brought into existence apart from a community of love into which that life can be received, a community normally provided by the sexual love of the parents. When reading of the possibilities of creating human life in the laboratory, I was reminded of a story circulating among the intellectual community in Paris about ten years ago about an experiment in which human babies after birth were placed in a mechanical incubator, where they were fed, bathed, etc., without any human contact whatsoever. According to the story, the infants began to die in great numbers for no other reason but a loss of the will to live. Perhaps we have an apt illustration here of Rahner's point that what is truly immoral is in the end impractical. Certainly, there is sufficient psychiatric evidence that the potential for full human development of a child is dependent on the ability to love of both parents.

However, Ramsey's key point is not just the necessary moral connection of human procreation with human love, but the further connection which he claims was irrevocably established by God between human procreation and the biological union in one flesh of man and woman.⁵¹ An ethics that in

⁴⁸Rahner, *art. cit.*, p. 64.

⁴⁹Ramsey, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-38.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, p. 32.

principle separates these two goals would, according to Ramsey, be contrary to the covenant between God and man revealed in Scripture. It is for this reason that Ramsey would judge essentially immoral from a Christian viewpoint any procreation of human life apart from the union in flesh of man and woman; this moral condemnation would include all artificial insemination, all transplanting of ova into a host mother, all efforts to produce life in the laboratory.

I seriously doubt that such an absolute connection of human procreation with human sexuality can be maintained as the revealed will of God. As DeKruif points out, there is a very important difference between the Old and the New Testament as to the role marriage and procreation play in man's covenant relation to God. In the Old Testament "contact with God was connected with their being within the people of God, because in this chosen people God dealt with man. Therefore, it was important for every man and woman in Israel to receive this life and pass it on in marriage."⁵² To understand the difference of viewpoint in the New Testament, it is important to remember that membership in the new people of God is not a question of human descent. Consequently, marriage no longer occupies the central place it had in Israel. "In the New Covenant it is given to anyone to be fertile in the new people of God through a love which surpasses even marital love in value and therefore in fertility."⁵³ It is this new understanding of love that lies at the origin of other vocational choices, e.g., a life of sexual abstinence, and other forms of human community. Consequently, one can no longer identify the love between men that makes them the likeness of God univocally with the marriage relationship between man and woman, as Ramsey seems to hold; for in the New Testament itself there is a real distinction between the human community based in a union of the flesh and the new people of God based in love. In the light of the new possibilities for bringing human life into existence, it is interesting to note the challenge of Christ to blood descendants of Abraham: "I could raise up descendants to Abraham from these stones!" Christ opened up the possibility for man to be truly "procreative" by other means than the purely biological process of bearing children. The ancient Christian tradition of celibate communities was based on that possibility.

One must also call to mind Christ's teaching on baptism. It is a psychological fact that every child born into this world needs to know that he has his origin in love; for on this awareness is based his sense of his dignity and value, which frees him to be able to love in turn. But human sexuality is always essentially ambiguous. One can give birth to a child from love for one's partner in sex, but also out of lust and selfishness, as an unwanted accident, even as a result of an act of hatred. But the sacrament of baptism has the power to remove the ambiguity that always accompanies human birth. Every human being born into this world is offered the possibility to be "born again," this time unambiguously from love.

It is impossible to argue directly from Scripture and revelation to a theological moral condemnation of the new possibilities of bringing human life into existence. This would be true if for no other reason than that the biblical authors never envisioned such a possibility. However, there is both biblical and psychological evidence that truly human life cannot be bred apart from the context of love. It is perhaps no coincidence that just when the possibility has arisen of generating human life apart from sexual union, the Church is struggling to bring into existence new forms of total Christian community based in something other than the exclusive concept of the nuclear family and blood relationship. Perhaps the traditional Christian concept of Godparents must be resurrected from being only a symbolic relation and become a real form of human community. In any case, the Christian community will be morally obliged to provide any child born outside the context of sexual union with a new style of human community, perhaps a godfather and godmother who would have total responsibility for the upbringing of the child in a context of love. Unless such a community can be provided, it would be a crime against humanity to foster human life in a laboratory purely as a scientific experiment.

⁵²T. C. DeKruif, *The Bible on Sexuality* (De Pere, Wis.: St. Norbert Abbey, 1966) pp. 67-68.

⁵³*Ibid.*, p. 69.

In conclusion, I emphasize again the duty of the Christian philosopher and theologian to make much clearer that within the a priori metaphysical and Christian boundaries he cannot, nor does he intend to, imply that he knows and can predict the concrete possibilities to be faced by man in the future; nor can he supply the material data concerning which concrete choices are to be made. This is precisely the irreplaceable task and the responsibility of the scientist. Also, in searching for those a priori boundaries, the philosopher and the theologian must avoid imposing false limits on man's freedom from some mistaken reading of nature and/or God's will.

It is, however, the positive responsibility of the Christian philosopher and theologian "to say more clearly than ever that the most radical human self-creation must be carried forward ontologically and ethically within a certain set framework which man has not fashioned and which can never be transcended. Otherwise it will eliminate man as a historical being."⁵⁴ An effort has been made in this article to begin to discern the methodology by which that framework can be discovered and some of its content. We have attempted to demonstrate that an ethical evaluation of man's self-creation can only be made by moving behind the sciences of man and their content to their necessary conditions of possibility through a teleological study of the human will. Man must be understood as evolving toward an ideal goal which is necessary for him and which he must freely affirm. Such a study of ideal goals can only be made from within man's self-awareness and subjectivity. The central goal of man's will, which has been discerned in this study, and which in turn determines all other conditions of possibility, is man's drive toward the unity of a community of love. The necessary conditions for such a community were discovered in man's self-consciousness, his freedom, his positive individuality, his value as end-in-itself, his ability to transcend what is given in terms of the future, and his ability to transcend time itself in terms of an absolute future. This goal and these conditions provide the a priori moral direction for all human self-creation.

⁵⁴Rahner, *art. cit.*, p. 68.