

~~RECORDED~~ TAPED LECTURE ON "SCIENCE AND CONDUCT" BY CHARLES DE KONINCK
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I am going to talk to you on science and conduct tonight, to point out that good conduct is not a matter of knowledge alone. Pius XII pointed this out only a few years ago, that is, in 1950, in his address to the cardinals and bishops of the world; he said that right conduct is not a question of knowledge alone in the sense that if you knew enough you would always behave in the right way. I want to show to you that the first principles of our conduct, the knowledge of them, does not make us to be as we ~~we~~ should be. Nor do the particular precepts of the natural law make us to be as we should be, nor does moral knowledge, such as ethics or even moral theology, make us act as we ought. Human conduct, the conduct of all rational creatures in general, as long as they have to make their choices and so long as they have liberty of contrariety, will always be difficult, and the difficulty will never be quite overcome by knowledge alone.

Now we all know that it belongs to the scientific climate of our time that if people do not behave as they ought, it is because they still do not have enough knowledge. B Russell is one of these; he used to say "the trouble with the world is that people do not behave reasonably". All they have to do is behave reasonably and all their problems would be settled, as if we would know what it is to behave reasonably from scientific knowledge alone. He thinks that scientific knowledge had by the human community would inevitably make us to be as we should be. So let us go through all these various types of knowledge to show where they fall short, however necessary they may be. Let us consider first of all the natural law, and let us consider it in its most ^{universal} ~~necessary~~ precept, the one which everyone who can be held responsible for his actions knows and must know, namely that we should do good and avoid evil. Everyone knows this if he can be held responsible for his actions. It comes to us from the very perception, the practical perception, of the good. It follows immediately from the perception of the good, as St Thomas explains.

Now this principle is absolutely universal. It holds in all possible cases. There are no exceptions to this. We can never ~~we~~ do wrong. We are never permitted to do wrong. It's a universal principle. Now I am calling your attention to this because there has been developed in recent times a new kind of moral theology or philosophy, what is called "La Morale de Circonstance" ("Situation Ethics"? RJB SJ), which precisely errs in this, that it rejects the absolute universality of certain precepts of the natural law and makes them all relative. ^{It} There are less universal precepts of the natural law, but which still remain universal in their own domain. For instance, we must always be just. It is never permitted to be unjust. You can't imagine a particular case in which you would be allowed to act unjustly. You may, in a particular case, be allowed to take something that does not belong to you, and thus offend a certain person, but you must do this out of justice. For instance, if you are in great need, or your children are in great need, you may have to take the good of someone else without his permission, in order to be just towards your own. But the universal precept that we must be just, -- that remains.

There are precepts that are still more particular. Take one that is related ~~is~~ still to justice, namely: that we must pay our debts. Now this principle is no longer universal absolutely. As St Thomas would say, this is a kind of precept of natural law that holds good only ut in pluribus. He gives the following example: "Thus it is right and true that all should act according to reason and from this principle it follows as a quasi-proper conclusion that goods entrusted to another should be restored to their owner. Now this is true for the majority of cases. Hoc est verum ut in pluribus. But it may happen in a particular case that it would be injurious and therefore unreasonable to restore goods held in trust; for instance,

instance, if they are claimed for the purpose of fighting against one's country. And this principle will be found to fail the more, according as we descend further toward the particular. E.g. if one were to say that goods held in trust ~~should~~ be restored with such and such a guarantee or in such and such a way; because ~~the greater the~~ ^{the greater the} number of conditions added, the greater the number of ways in which the principle may fail so that it be not right to restore or not to restore, that is, as the ~~law becomes the~~ ^{precepts of the natural law} become more and more particular they become less and less certain in application. However, one thing that we must observe about all the precepts of the natural law is that the knowledge of these laws does not tell us what is right and what is wrong under these particular ~~ex~~ circumstances. There is only one virtue which will tell us what is right and what is wrong here and now, and this virtue is one that is not knowledge alone, as we shall see later on.

And so you see how unjust is Reinhold Niebuhr a protestant theologian whom you've all heard about, when he says that according to the Catholic, and particularly the Thomistic, ~~interpretation~~ ^{conception} of the natural law anyone who knows the natural law can infer from it particular conclusions, right down to the last judgement which will tell us what to do here and now. That is not true. The natural law, no matter how determinate the precepts that we know, never, or by itself automatically, tells us what to do here and now. We must be just here and now. But what must I do to be just here and now? Must I pay my debts to this man, who, I have been informed, is going to use this money to pay someone to plant a bomb in an air-plane so that the plane will explode, so that he can collect the insurance. If I pay my debt then, I am unjust. Now according to Niebuhr such cases do not exist for us. We have a kind of general catalog of index cards telling us how to behave in all possible circumstances of life. If you think that I am exaggerating, here is the passage from his Gifford Lectures, given a few years ago. "The difficulty" he says "with this impressive structure of Catholic ethics, finely elaborated into a detailed casuistic application of general moral standards to every conceivable particular situation, is that it constantly insinuates religious absolutes into highly contingent and historical moral judgments." And so he speaks of "the mistake of Catholic moral casuistry is to derive relative moral judgments too simply from the presuppositions of its natural law." Perhaps we should add that this same author considers Thomistic ethics to be an instance of this same type of rationalization. According to Niebuhr, "if Catholics knew all the precepts of the natural law, they would by that very knowledge know how to behave here and now". And we say there is no such thing. That is to "bruler les étapes", -- to (in English) put the cart before the horse? (Here a lengthy apology for the ~~author's~~ speaker's deficiencies in English, with reasons why the audience should be warned of this).

All this knowledge as to what we should do here and now is had only in the prudential judgement. And prudence is not something of reason alone, as we shall point out in further detail later on in this talk.

Now what, to St Thomas, is the natural law? Of course we all know that it is "a participation in the eternal law". But what is it in us? The natural law is not our nature; it is in no sense our nature. Of course it is because of our nature that we need a natural law, to guide ourselves in our conduct. But the natural law is a universal proposition (judgement) in the practical intellect, whose most universal precept is gathered (derived) from the ^{very} notion of good, seen as practical (i.e. good must be done) as I have said before. But "lex naturalis est quaedam propositio universalis in ~~ratione~~ ^{ratione} / practica, ordinata ad actionem." But it remains universal; and in the order of action whatever is universal is ~~inadequate~~ ^{inadequate}. It is adequate as a universal proposition, but that proposition will never be able to tell us what to do here and now, because our actions are in the singular, and to know how to act here and now we must know the singular circumstances of our action.

We cannot know them all; that's impossible; but we must know what happens ut in pluribus, when we do such and such a thing. As, say, when we want to cross a street, it is good to look in both directions, even if it is ^aone-way street, especially in Quebec, at least; I don't know how it is in St Paul. You have to look in both directions if you want to be prudent. Now you can't take into account all possibilities, for instance, that some gas explosion may happen in the house across the street just as you get there. You can't take all that into account; that's impossible and it would be unreasonable to try to do so. As a matter of fact, if you had to take into account all possible circumstances you could never cross the street. ^{You couldn't stand reasonably at the curb} Even while you are standing at the curb something might happen there too. You ^{because} could neither move nor not-move, reasonably.

These general precepts never tell us what to do here and now. As a matter of fact they are in the practical reason; they are not in the appetite, altho of course our appetite by its nature inclines us to the good, especially in regard to the general proposition that we must do the good. We can all agree upon this. Very few people say "I shall commit evil as often as I can." ~~But~~ On the whole we all feel inclined to do the good. But the general knowledge that we must do good or must be just or temperate is not sufficient to make us do good or be just or temperate, altho this knowledge is an essential condition of acting properly.

In brief, neither the most general, nor even the most particular, precepts of the natural law, which are all universal propositions in the practical right reason, tell us what to do in the contingent circumstances of life. They tell us to be always good, no matter what the circumstances. But here I am, at this particular moment, under these particular circumstances, very hungry, and there is this and that and the other to eat. What am I to do here and now? I must do good; I must be temperate; that's all right. I know that. But what is it to be temperate here and now? That's the particular difficulty. And that difficulty is not solved by the general proposition. It is not mere knowledge of the natural law that makes us just, courageous, and temperate. ~~That~~ That would be too easy.

Yet all that I have said thus far may be considered extremely banal or trite, and something that everyone knows. But it has not always been known to the philosophers, especially not to the modern philosophers, who have all attempted to establish some kind of system of knowledge such that, if we have this ~~system~~ ^{system} in our minds, we will automatically and inevitably behave as we ought to behave. This was true of Hobbes, Locke, Spinoza, -- then we have new systems that we shall go into later on. I just want to mention this. ~~this fact is that~~ And you have perhaps been unaware of the fact that most scholastic textbooks of ethics, of moral philosophy, -- and one example would be Father Gredt, -- proceed in moral science as if it were a speculative science. Father Gredt knows very well that the knowledge of moral philosophy will not make a man to be good. But he proceeds in an ~~an~~ analytical fashion in his Ethics. Which is a very profound corruption, a confusion between speculative science and practical science, as we shall see later on.

We have mentioned the moral law, or rather the natural law. What do we mean by practical science of a moral kind? since it is these authors that I have mentioned who would try to present us with a system that would inevitably lead to right behavior in the one who possesses that system. Moral science differs from the natural law in this: the natural law furnishes us with universal, with common principles, which in their community (universality) are always true, tho the more particular ones suffer exceptions, as in the case of "you must pay your debts". Moral science is something quite different, as moral science. The aim of moral science is to know how one achieves action as one should act, the proper kind of action. Or, more briefly, how does one acquire virtue; for it is only when we act according to virtue that we observe the natural law. How does one go about becoming

temperate? How does one go about becoming just and courageous? That is what Moral Science tries to teach us. Moral science does not try to teach us the Natural Law except incidentally, except inasmuch as some particular precepts of the natural law are especially studied by the moral philosopher. But the precepts will never be precepts of moral philosophy inasmuch as they belong to the natural law. Moral philosophy may help us to see certain things in the natural law that were obscure before we applied ourselves to this but ^{actually principle} when a precept belongs to the natural law it has a kind of generality and a kind of certainty that you cannot find in the particular precepts of moral philosophy. We try in moral philosophy, in ethics, -- let us keep ethics in mind; it is the part of moral philosophy that is best known; ~~politics~~ politics is more obscure, and it is better to go from what is more known to us than to start with what is not so well known to us, -- . Moral science, ^{such as} ~~in~~ ethics, tries to establish means of observing natural law, that is, the things we should do to acquire virtue. Where do we find this knowledge; where do we find these rules/?

01. The answer of Aristotle, and of St Thomas, is a little astonishing. The only way to learn how to practice virtue, even before you possess it, is to listen to the men who have experience of life, the elderly men, "Senes" -- and those who are considered, and especially have been considered, to be prudent. They are the ones who furnish us with the proper principles of moral science, and it is by behaving as they do that we will know how we ourselves should behave in our actions. You see that we are very far removed from Reinhold Niebuhr's ~~concept~~ description of our conception of ethics of moral action. He thinks that we, like the philosophers of Natural Law of a few centuries ago, think that it is enough to scrutinise human nature in the abstract, in an analytical fashion, by defining human nature, by dividing, and so on, that by considering human nature, ^{as to} ~~its structure~~ ^{quod quid erat esse} and its "esse" (?), that ^{from} ~~by~~ this we can derive all the laws of human behavior, and that it would be enough to know all these laws, to know exactly what to do here and now; just as, say, in the experimental sciences; with, perhaps, a little more certitude; because ^{the} experimental scientist ~~exper~~ is a bit more modest in this, when he applies his knowledge to the fabrication of some machine. Do you see my point? Reinhold Niebuhr believes that ^{our} knowledge of the natural law is obtained in an analytical fashion, that is, by way of demonstrating from human nature, just as the geometer obtains knowledge that the sum of the internal ~~int~~ angles of any plane triangle is equal to two right angles, and he obtains this from the very definition of a triangle. So many of our critics believe that this is exactly how we proceed in moral philosophy, ^{and in moral theology} we consider the nature of man, and from the knowledge of the nature of man, as a rational animal, we infer exactly how he is to behave in all possible circumstances of his life. But the moral law is not derived in that fashion, if what I have said so far is true. And moral philosophy does not proceed in this fashion either. Moral philosophy, the proper principles of ethics, are ^{is} derived from observation of human behavior, and not from observation made by just anyone, but from observation by people whom we consider qualified to do so, those who have experience, those who have a certain age, especially the ~~firm~~ elderly people, those whose passions are now more or less dormant, -- ut in pluribus, not in all cases; ut in pluribus, at a certain age you are no longer subject to violent passions. And then finally, the men who are considered prudent, the good men, they are norms of conduct used in ethics, and most of Aristotle's ethics is derived from observation of this nature. Nowhere does he tell us how to become just by defining the virtue of justice; no, the business of the moral philosopher is not to divide and to define; that is to proceed in analytical fashion. The business of the moral philosopher is to give us a composite knowledge which will allow us to see what to do in order to attain such an end; not such an end as in the case of the arts; but an end of human behavior, that is, how to become a good man. This is derived from observation, and that is why, because it is a kind of knowledge derived from observation, that

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both Aristotle, and St Thomas repeatedly, -not only in his commentary on Aristotle's Ethics, but also in his own Summa, in the I-II, and also in II-II, will say repeatedly, that the proper principles of moral science are uncertain, and have no more than probability; and by this he means that, when you consider them in their universality, it is not enough to apply this universality to every possible instance, but that there are instances where this universality is insufficient, where what we say is true only for the most part.

At this juncture, I think that we must note the difference between the case of the arts, and the case of the virtues, that is, the moral virtues. This has been so clearly pointed out by Aristotle in his ethics, that you ought to allow me to read the passage; and this passage is very relevant, because, on the one hand, some modern philosophers have tried to proceed in a speculative ^{and demonstrative} fashion in matters of conduct, on the other hand we have a whole school which tries to solve the problems of human behavior in terms of art. Here is what Aristotle says in the Ethics, Book II chapter 3: "The case of the arts and that of the virtues," ~~xxx~~ and by virtues he means the virtues of conduct, "are not similar, for the products of the arts have their goodness in themselves." This, say, ~~we don't care who made it.~~ ^{is a good house,} the man who built it knew how to build a house. He may be a very bad man. He may have cheated you while building the house. But the house is a good one. And he may be a drunkard. He may be all kinds of things. The important thing in the arts is the good of the work. The good of the worker is not concerned. A bad man may be a good artisan. (Of course if he drinks too much he will always be asleep and never be able to make anything.) For the products of the arts have their goodness in themselves, so that it is enough if they have a certain character. ~~But if the acts that are in accordance with the virtues have themselves a certain character it does not follow that they are done justly or temperately. The agent must also be in a certain condition when he does them. I mean the agent in the case of moral actions. In the first place he must have knowledge. Secondly he must choose the acts, and choose them for their own sakes. He should try to act justly for the sake of being just. to act temperately for the sake of being temperate; and choose them for their own sakes. And thirdly, the action must proceed from a firm and unchangeable character, that is, must proceed from an "habitus", that from a stable disposition of the subject. These are not reckoned in as conditions of the possession of the arts. That's the difference, except the bare knowledge. If a man knows how to build a house, that's enough. If you know how to act that's not enough. You still have to act. The surgeon does not become a bad surgeon in ratione surgicali (?), as a surgeon, just because he is too lazy today to do this, altho he knows that if he did ~~he~~ it he would do it properly. That makes him a bad man. It does not make him a bad surgeon. But in the case of action, if you do not do what you ought to do, then you do not have virtue, and your action is not virtuous. But as a condition of the possession of the virtues, knowledge has little or no weight, and this St Thomas repeats several times, especially in the Question de Virtutibus in Communi, where he says: "Scientia practica (practical science) parum confert ad virtutem," contributes little to virtue. He does not mean by this that practical science is negligible. He means only this, that when we do have practical science, then we still have the most difficult step to make, namely to act properly, to act in accordance with truth. But as a condition of the possession of virtue knowledge has little or no weight. But the other conditions count ~~for a little but for everything, i.e. the very conditions which result from often doing just and temperate acts. That is the only way one may acquire virtue, by repeating proper actions, by repeating temperate actions, by repeating just actions. Or if, say, one cannot drink properly, by ceasing to drink altogether and repeating the refusal to drink. There is no other way out, ut in pluribus. Actions, then are called just and temperate when they are such as the just or~~~~

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temperate man would do. You see how dependent we are here upon the just ~~man~~ and the temperate man. And how relatively contingent remain the principles of ethics. And how we cannot derive the principles of ~~human nature~~ ethics from a mere inspection of human nature, as to what it is. That's not enough. Human nature must be observed in action. And so we choose for our principles the observation of people who are supposed to know because they have experience, who are of a certain age, and who are considered generally to be prudent men. "Such as the just and temperate man would do. But it is not the man who does these who is just and temperate, but the man who also does them as the just and temperate man would do them." For a man will not be just merely because he observes the laws of the country in which he lives. If he observes them merely because he is afraid of the police, his acts of justice are not proceeding from virtue, and they are not quite as they ought to be, altho he is more tolerable than the fellow who deliberately acts as he ~~should~~ should not act, who deliberately offends against the laws of the country in which he lives. But the man who does just and temperate acts ~~in~~ as the just and temperate man would do them, i.e. for the sake of being just and for the sake of being temperate, ~~it is~~ it is this man who is good. "It is well said then that it is by doing just acts that the ~~just~~ just man is produced, and by doing temperate acts the temperate man is produced." Without doing these, no one would have even a prospect of becoming good. This, of course, is very contrary to what we often think of ourselves, viz. that we were sort of established in the state of perfect virtue from the beginning, and that everybody ought to behave as we do. "But most people do not do these but take refuge in theory." And here we run into our modern philosophers. That is, they do not apply themselves to performing the acts of justice and of temperance. They have their difficulties, and to solve these difficulties they take refuge in theory and think they are being philosophers and will become good in this way, behaving somewhat like patients who listen attentively to their doctor but do none of the things they are ordered to do. They understand; it is very reasonable: I have high blood pressure, I must lose some ~~weight~~ weight, -- that is very fine; I must eat less; and he goes on eating twice as much as before. It is not enough to understand that he ought to do this rather than that; he still has to do it. There is our difficulty; that no philosophy will ever solve. "As the latter will not be made well in body by such a course of treatment, the former will not be made well in soul by such a course of philosophy." As St Thomas says in his commentary: "Nobody becomes good just by philosophizing ~~about~~ about what he ought to do." Yet today people are trying to discover a philosophy that would do just that. But we will come to them later. Note then that the rule of behavior which we seek in moral science, -- and I am thinking mainly of ethics now, -- that the rules of behavior are derived from the ~~experience~~ ~~(22222)~~ experti, et senes, et prudentes. This is very important, and so much recognized by the Church, as you can see in the canonizations. Through the canonizations, -- because a man is canonized because of the ~~life~~ ^{or} ~~life~~ ~~he led after his conversion~~ ~~which he began sometime after his conversion~~ which he began sometime after his conversion, -- that is set forth to us as a rule. The Church does not canonize saints to send them into heaven. Some people believe that a saint enters heaven when the Holy Father canonizes him. In some Protestant literature this seems to be what we believe. No; it is that we recognize that he is there. But why should it be so important that we recognize that he is there? Of course there is always the question of praying to him that he may intercede for us. But there is always the extremely important question that here we have a kind of rule of behavior. We should act as the saints did; that is giving emphasis, -- a kind of supernatural recognition, -- to the principle of Aristotle in establishing ethics. And you can also see why, in general, the Protestants do not recognize this. They do not recognize canonizations. They don't need the saints, where you have that each individual is, as it were, the ultimate norm of his own conduct.

which he derives somehow by inspiration, or which his faith alone gives him sufficiently. Now we have recourse to the saints to know how we should behave. Their life becomes a rule for our life. And we have so many different kinds of saints, who behaved in so many different kinds of ways, that there is always one whom it is better for you to imitate than another. We can't all imitate St John the Baptist. If you want to imitate him, go ahead. But I won't. Because he came here neque bibens, neque manducans, and still they said that he had a devil; just as Our Lord came, and he ate and drank, and of him too they said he was possessed by the devil. So what can you do? At least we have two good examples right here. Apropos of Our Lord, it is interesting to note that St Thomas, in book IV Contra Gentiles Chapter 54, where he gives various motives for the Incarnation; amongst them he gives one that is relevant to our subject this evening; he said that it was fitting that God Himself should come amongst us so that He might give us a perfect example of conduct, because no saint is perfect enough to be a perfect rule of human conduct. I'll read the passage to you: "Et quia nullus homo sufficienter perfectus est sed semper habet aliquem ~~parvum~~ defectum, ideo oportebat quod ipse Deus,..." etc., that God should come amongst us, and be a rule of conduct so perfect that no restriction whatsoever has to be made. Of course we can add the same for the Blessed Virgin, that we can never show the slightest fault in her conduct, and all her actions, -- those that we can imitate somehow, -- are really imitable. She is a perfect rule of conduct in her order as Christ is in His Own order. But that is owing to Christ, because he made her that good. But all the other saints may show some defect. Think of St Jerome; he got too sore at St Augustine. Think of, -- well, anyone may have some slight excess; if you read a scientific life of a ~~the~~ saints, one that is not too scientific, but some good life of a saint, you will always detect some fault here or there, that was carried on to the end. While it did not carry him into sin, still he certainly did some things that we do not have to imitate to be as we should be.

So that the ultimate solution of the real difficulty in human action is to be found ^{in action} not just in thinking and not just in knowing, ~~but~~ nor even in knowing what one ought to do in order to become what one ought to be, -- that is not enough; we have to do it here and now; that's sufficient (?).

Now it seems that there is an apparent circularity in all this. Remember that Aristotle says that we should act like the ^{virtuous} ~~just~~ man acts, namely that, if we do not have the virtue of justice, we should ~~nevertheless~~ nevertheless perform the works that the just man performs, and on the other hand he says that the right action proceeds from virtue. But we do not have the virtue as yet! How do we acquire it? It seems that the action is supposed to proceed from virtue, and in order to have the virtue we must acquire it, and in order to acquire it we must perform acts that do not yet proceed from virtue! ^{well} ~~this~~ this merely ~~shows~~ shows that the first principles of our action in the order of ethics are extrinsic to us, extrinsic to our behavior. We must begin by behaving as the just man behaves. And eventually we must attain the virtue from which he behaves, -- that is acquire the virtue which makes us act as we ought to act for the sake of acting rightly. First we do it for the sake of acquiring a virtue, and we ^(observe?) ~~inspect~~ him, as it were, and of course it must be presupposed that we have the ^{right} ~~will~~ will to do so. But gradually, through repetition, we acquire it. In other words, we must perform the act of virtue before we have the virtue. Then the rule of our action is extrinsic to us. But eventually this rule becomes intrinsic to us, ~~when we have the virtue~~ when we have the virtue, and that is why Aristotle can say that the virtuous man is his own rule of conduct. The virtuous man is the one that has the virtue, and the virtue becomes the norm of his conduct, as it were; and St Paul carries this farther, even into the supernatural order, when he says that "the free man is a law unto himself", that the good man is a law unto himself, that is that the right principle of his action has become part and parcel of himself. Then it is intrinsic. But in the beginning it is extrinsic.

Q. 4 This, as Aristotle points out in this same book II of the Ethics, shows how important is the early education of our children. We say "the world is in a mess" etc etc., but the last thing we think of is the importance of instilling into children the right habits, before they have the age of reason. ~~xxxxxximportantxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxearlyeducationofxxxxxxchildrenxxxxxx~~ We think that it becomes important to teach children to like the right things and to dislike the wrong things when they have attained the age of reason. But actually then it is too late. We must not forget that the first principles of right conduct in this order, that is, the proper principles of ethics, which apply ut in pluribus, the nature of ethical science, teaches us that the first principles of our action, ~~xxxxxxfirstxxxxxxprinciplesxxxxxx~~ the first proper and proximate principles of our action (here and now?) are, in the beginning, extrinsic principles. And it is only later, when we actually have the virtue, have some virtue, that they become intrinsic. This applies to education. There are principles of action extrinsic to the child, extrinsic to his reason because he does not as yet have the use of his reason, which must already be applied, so that he gradually learns by the repetition of action, the things that are right and the things that are wrong, even if he himself cannot judge that they are right or that they are wrong. The parent judges in his stead, and it is only by this kind of repetition that the child will be capable normally, of acquiring virtue later on; which puts us all in an awful state; if we did not get the right education, where are we? As Aristotle says: This is why the activities we exhibit (perform?) -- because he has been insisting on the importance of repeating good action, ~~xx~~ and of repeatedly refusing the wrong, -- must be of a certain kind; it is because ~~xx~~ the states of character correspond to the differences between these; "it makes no small difference then, whether we form habits of one kind or of another from our very childhood; it makes a very great difference for the acquisition of virtue, and for the life of happiness thereafter; it makes a very great difference, or, rather, all the difference." And St Thomas in his commentary uses the following expression: Quia potius totum ex hoc dependet; that is, in a sense everything depends on the education we got in our family or in school before we were held responsible for our actions, before the age of reason; that is so important. It is so important that the people who refuse this teaching usually ~~xx~~ refuse it because they have been so confused by the improper education that they received that they cannot see the point. So far then; the most, -- now since I am speaking before a Catholic audience here tonight, I think I can point out an example that is very striking. Look how much importance the Church attaches to giving little children a Catholic education right from the beginning and having our own private schools, the grammar schools, and giving them a complete Catholic education right from the beginning, starting from kindergarten. Why? because the things that we hear often repeated, even if they are not clear, if they are not self-evident at all, we will receive as first principles, and they will be carried on for the rest of our lives. That's why Catholic education right ~~xxxxxx~~ from the beginning is so important. It is more important in grade school than in high school, in high school than in college, and in college than in the university. I'm sticking out my neck, but I don't mind.

Q. 5 Well all this gives us at least a vague idea of the difficulty of human action. The problem can be solved only by action, and by doing here and now what we should do. You know that the matter is not so simple. I know it too. Look at the way people behave. As St Thomas says, after (following?) Aristotle:--- St Thomas was a good disciple of Aristotle, and in many respects revelation merely confirms him (Aristotle?) in this---that human beings, for the most part, following the inclination of the senses, over and against the good of reason,-- malum ut in pluribus in specie humana,--and in such a humanity we must act, and acquire virtue, and do as we ought. But that's not so easy, because that "malum ut in pluribus" comprises the majority of parents! Do you see what I mean? There is what we call the "lex fomitis", which is sometimes translated by "the law of unruly concupiscence", meaning that people, for the most part will follow the inclination of the senses against the good of reason. Now

practically all advertising is based on this law, -- publicity, I mean. For instance, if you want cigarettes to sell you have to associate something with the cigarette that does not just appeal to the sense of taste but to other things as well. You have to associate it with, say, someone who is almost completely stripped; even ice-boxes are sold on the basis of sex-appeal, -- next to the ice-box you have some woman standing there elegantly dressed, and looking into the void, -- you know what she's after, -- this is all to get you to buy an ice-box. What a detour! No one seems to protest; everyone catches on, and in this everyone is recognising lex fomitis. As a matter of fact, the lex fomitis is so rigorous that, since the majority of people follow primarily the inclination of the ~~xxx~~ senses over and against the good of reason, -- I say the majority, -- altho every individual of this majority could, if he wanted to, resist, since he is a free being; but, as a matter of fact, the behavior of the masses in this regard will be predictable. And this is something that has been exploited by socialism in general and by Karl Marx in particular, by communism in particular. Thanks to the lex fomitis we have a social constant which allows us to predict the behavior of the multitude. We know that if the multitude is placed in such and such circumstances, this is how it is going to behave. So that the lex fomitis has, from the viewpoint of social science, a kind of scientific character inasmuch as it allows prediction. Philosophers, of course, will try to uproot the lex fomitis by the various systems which they devise, and whose mere knowledge or whose mechanical application would make men to be as they ought to be. All these philosophies are attempts to sidestep the real difficulty of action, which is to act here and now as we ought. Let us consider some of these attempts.

We will have to go through them rather briefly. First of all there is the analytical attempt to sidestep the difficulty of human action. We find it in Hobbes' "Moral Philosophy More Arithmetico Demonstrata". He is going to construct an Ethics just as we proceed in arithmetic. Now there is no science more rigorous than arithmetic. But the whole point is that, according to him, if we could acquire this science and get our ideas clarified sufficiently, then just as Bertrand Russell thinks, we would behave as we ought, we would behave reasonably. Locke, who came a little later, did something along the same line, or at least attempted it. But the ideal of this attempt is certainly to be found in a very classical treatise of Spinoza, namely in his Ethica Ordine Geometrico Demonstrata. Now you all have some idea of the Ethics of Spinoza. He proceeds by way of division and definition, as we do in geometry. And he thinks that he can establish the rules of conduct in this fashion, analytically, as we do in a speculative science. He doesn't turn to the men of experience, or to the aged, or to the prudent man. He wants to derive all this knowledge a priori, -- per demonstrationem a priori, -- not in the Kantian sense of "a priori", but in the Aristotelian sense of "a priori", something that Aristotle fortunately never attempted when he entered into the field of human behavior. Now Spinoza says very explicitly that his aim is to clarify our ideas concerning human action in such a fashion that, in virtue of this clarification, we shall become happy, which means that we shall act as we ought to act and take things as we ought to take them. Now wouldn't that be easy? All you would have to do would be to study this Ethics and then you would be as you ought to be. That would be the end of it, -- philosophando fieri bonus, as St Thomas says; some people think we can become good by philosophising.

P -- We have something comparable to this in our own time. But, instead of proceeding in moral knowledge analytically, as Spinoza did, they proceed on the basis of experimental science alone, and try to tell us what the natural law is by observing what human beings do for the most part. There is a confusion here between the natural law, the laws of nature, and the law of unruly concupiscence. We distinguish between a "law of nature" (physical law?) and "natural law" (moral law?); altho we could, if we wanted to, providing we explained the use of our terms, we could say that the laws of nature are natural laws, and that natural law is a law of nature. We could do that, But actually they are very different. The laws of nature are revealed in what happens for the most part

in natural beings. For instance it is a law that after a certain number of years an animal should die. An animal develops from the beginning according to an orderly pattern, and we call this a lawful process. That's all right. And we observe that we can get at these laws, -- of course in a confused fashion, -- by observing the regularities of nature. Then we explain them by a theory. But the basis of the theory is always the observation of some regularity in nature. Now in the human order when we consider human beings merely as animals the same thing applies. But when we step into the order of behavior we have something very different. Whereas nature proceeds as it ought for the most part, human beings do not act as they ought for the most part, -- it's just the reverse. We have a regularity there, but the regularity is not the norm of conduct. Yet, as you know, some scientists, anthropologists ~~for~~ among others, would like us to establish the rules of ^{human} behavior according to what human beings do for the most part. We say that of course in establishing rules, we ought to realize what people do for the most part. But what they do for the most part is not a norm of conduct. Thus the late Professor Kinsey wanted marriage abolished simply because adultery is so frequent. Here you have a kind of constant in human behavior. He gave a certain percentage of adultery, -- I don't know what it was; it was pretty high, ~~it~~ maybe a little too high; I don't know, ~~it~~ but it was fairly high -- but he said: "now this, according to our present laws, is unfitting conduct, and punishable by law. But ~~if~~ if we abolished the law and permitted it, seeing that people behave in this way for the most part, it must be a law of nature. And so our marriage laws are contrary to the law of nature." ~~A~~ Why? Because people behave for the most part in such and such a fashion. That ~~would~~ would make things very easy, wouldn't it? Do you see what I mean? the importance ~~between~~ of distinguishing between the law of nature, ~~and~~ the natural law, and the lex fomitis. We have our lex fomitis; we are faced with our lex fomitis, and the only way we can overcome that is in singulari, not by, say, general reforms, such as those undertaken by Luther, or undertaken by Karl Marx, etc. But we will come to this later.

That is what I would call the strictly scientific attempt to overcome or sidestep the difficulties of human action.

Then we have an attempt made by the liberal arts. And I think Hegel is characteristic of this. Hegel wanted to reconcile things as they are with things as they ought to be, by asserting that things as they are cannot be otherwise than they are, so that whatever we believe they ought to be, since they cannot be otherwise than they are, being as they are, they are as they ought to be. So he just stopped there. And withdraws in the order of representation, and his ultimate view on reality is a kind of view of the general cursedness of things that we meet when we see a tragedy in the theater. There we can enjoy the most awful things, so much so that we pay high prices just to see them. But I'm sorry I cannot do justice to Hegel here tonight. I merely wanted to point out and name the various domains in which an escape has been sought from the various difficulties of human action.

Then we have the mechanical arts, which are offered as a means of side-stepping the difficulties of human action, and this is exemplified by Marxism. In Marxism it is the practice of the mechanical arts, in which we transform matter for the benefit of man, in making, say, bread, en (?) le blé, in using the hammer and the sickle, say, the extensions of machinery, etc., in transforming matter by our own mechanical operations, man is ultimately to become as he ought to be. So we have two attempts made in the field of art in order to overcome the difficulty of human existence, of human action, which is the highest form of existence, by the way, *according to Marx*.

Finally, -- you can question me on these various points later on, -- we have existentialism, which has, in some instances, resulted in a kind of ethics or moral philosophy, which I have named in the beginning of this talk "La Morale de Circonstance". I don't know how you translate it in English ("situation ethics"?) but I am sure all those in their field of moral philosophy