

The Ethical Base of Community

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An organism is the realization
of a definite shape of value.

Alfred North Whitehead
(in *Science and the Modern World*)

I

IT IS PLATITUDINOUS to speak of the contemporary crisis in morals. From whatever side of the perennial disputes concerning ethics one chooses to assume a vantage point, ours is an age of moral confusion. There are various ways of accounting for this turmoil and uncertainty, but one factor worthy of note has been a preoccupation, intellectually and practically, with the problem of the moral dilemma viewed as a free-floating subjective circumstance. "How am I to live?" is a question that haunts the minds of contemporary men, either articulated or latent in their anxieties. No one would deny that it is a significant question; the problem arises from the ways in which the question is posed and the inclinations that shape the inquiry.

This personalistic orientation in thinking about morals both arises from and accelerates the withdrawal from consideration of what, for convenience, we might call the "civic ethic," the *nomos* of the community. I think it is justifiable to speak of a civic ethic, regardless of one's explicit viewpoint on the nature of society and the ontological status of value. In sheer operational terms, some forms of restraints and obligations appear to be indispensable concomitants of collective life. Social rules, whether objectively justified mandates or utilitarian fictions, are the universal concerns of social groups.

While the concern may be universal, distinct priorities are evident, judging from historical responses to the assignment of primacy to either the civic or the individual ethic. Indeed, certain historical parallels to our present situation come to mind, an obvious illustration being the atrophy of the idea of the Greek *polis*, last defended, in essence, by Aristotle, and the omnibus subjectivism encouraged by Cynicism, Epicureanism, Neo-Platonism and, in terms of elemental focus, Stoicism. One might be inclined to describe our age, thus, as being Alexandrine in ethical terms.

It is not expressly my purpose here to evaluate the merits of rival schools of thought regarding individual ethics—alternative answers to the question: "How am I to live?" Whether the climate of opinion concerning morals in our contemporary society is wholesome or pathological is, perhaps, a necessary judgment, but I am content to assert only two initial propositions:

1. The social *behavior* of men in our culture shows indications of aberration.

2. We are witnessing the demise of a viable civic ethic.

I would wish to contend that these two propositions are related.

I do not think that the first proposition requires an extended defense. I have chosen the word "aberration" cognizant of the implication that in order to sustain a judgment that a given phenomenon is aberrational one is obliged to provide a criterion

of normality. This I am prepared to attempt; indeed, this essay ultimately rests upon that effort, but I would like to defer for a time an exploration of that problem. As a matter of fact, the assertion that contemporary social behavior is, in some manner, unsatisfactory need not invoke such a presumably sophisticated justification. I think it is perfectly valid to appeal to a more obvious standard and certainly an ancient one. Contemporary social life is marked by savage disharmony and individual men in society far from enjoying some rudimentary contentment are wracked by anxiety, frustration, fear and only partially repressed anger. One can certainly say that such conditions are not optimum. But such a cultural state of affairs can be justly condemned, not on the basis of some theoretical formulation of an ideal condition, but by an appeal to historical reflection that leads one inevitably to the conclusion that, by and large, the instability of the social organism and the want of satisfaction endured by persons in the culture fall below nominal expectations. Even in this less rigorous sense, I am ready to accept the idea that contemporary social behavior reveals "indications of aberration."

The difficulty in speaking about something called the "civic ethic" emerges from the suggestion that it does not, in fact, exist, except as a totality of the ethical recognitions of individual men. One might hazard the charge that what is called a "civic ethic" is nothing but the individual ethic "writ large." A civic ethic, this argument might continue, is simply an extension of the subjective problem of the moral dilemma. In Kantian terms, the civic ethic might be conceived as the social extension of the principle of the "categorical imperative."

Three rebuttals can be entered against this viewpoint, which amount to a defense of the autonomy of the civic ethic:

1. The assumption that the civic ethic is finally reducible to the individual ethic rests upon the conviction that society can be adequately described atomistically, as a sum of its parts. I have no wish, at the

moment, to enter the complex debate regarding the opposing contentions of atomism *versus* organicism, but I think it is fair to say that the theory of social atomism is highly contentious, to say the least, and appears less credible as the empirical evidence of current science is recorded. Moreover, the entire discussion of the nature of culture is highly suggestive of the difficulties confronting a reductionistic hypothesis provided by the doctrine of social atomism.

2. It seems likely that the very awareness of the phenomenon of the moral dilemma and its consequent ethic arises from socially-conditioned, if not originated, definitions. This conclusion, of course, is suggestive of the interrelatedness of rules of social conduct and rules of individual behavior, but such interconnection sustains the separate identities of both on a cultural level.

3. In a problematic sense, the conditions requiring solution, in an ethical context, reveal a variance of classification between those expressly concerned with the commonweal and those centered about the value allocations of individuals. There are, I would suppose, value choices that confront the individual that are significant and pertinent to him that do not directly affect either the communal good or his relationship to it. Conversely, I assume that there are necessary protocols involved with the general good that are not specifically applicable to the moral situations of individuals.

If, then, one is willing to accept the legitimacy of the concept of the civic ethic, what credence is there to the belief that such a civic ethic is currently vitiated? Regardless of what account one chooses to accept as to the origins of the civic ethic—either viewing it as an actualization of objective value or as an internally postulated set of expedient ordinances—its principal function is to regulate the relationships between the subordinate parts of the social whole with the view of maximizing the well-being of the collectivity. The efficiency of such an ethic clearly depends upon the

vitality of its demand for recognition and obligation. The metaphysical base aside, the civic ethic is invariably deontological in the sense of its being "binding" upon those to whom it applies. The meaning of "deontological" that I employ is substantially that of W. D. Ross who argues for a direct experience of duty arising from situations of relationship.

This "binding" quality of the civic ethic may rest, preferably, upon a voluntary recognition of its mandate or upon the external restraints necessary to secure its recognition and implicit obligations and reciprocities. Realistically, in most societies it is a combination of the two in varying ratios. There is, I think, convincing evidence in our present society that the first form of "binding" is suffering from debilitation and the second from the paralysis of a will to govern.

In any case, one cannot "feel" bound to that of which one is not aware or does not appreciate in any significant degree. If a civic ethic is thought to exist, in the most elemental sense, so long as its corresponding social entity exists, this existence is not tantamount to its exercising its appropriate binding function, the latter being dependent upon some form of awareness. It may be more accurate, therefore, to say that it is not the civic ethic which is perishing, but its ability to bind, resting upon the general recognition of its mandate.

There are, in broad terms, two aspects of this awareness of the mandate of the social ethic which I should like to call *discursive* and *instinctual*. By discursive awareness, I mean the conscious, cognitive recognition of the actualizations of value that are manifest in the ethical artifacts of the culture, its laws, traditions, customs and articulated moral precepts. By instinctual awareness, I mean the subrational, non-cognitive responses to the underlying social paradigms that I shall later want to classify as ethical injunctions. I shall, presently, attempt a more detailed explication of these forms of moral awareness, but now I only wish to make the point that *both* forms of

awareness have been drastically damaged by the configurations of contemporary life to the degree that they approach an inoperative state.

What, at root, has caused this obliteration of man's discursive and instinctual response to moral order as embodied in the community? To catalogue the multitude of forces active in the obfuscation of the awareness of the civic ethic would be a complex project beyond the limitations of this essay, but in purely intellectual dimensions the blame might well be assigned to what I should like to call *pseudo-empiricism*. My contention will be that this pseudo-empiricism has not only been destructive of the awareness of the civic ethic, *per se*, but has also substantially attacked the very idea of community, thus rendering it difficult to conceptualize the social organism coincidental with the societal ethic. Indeed, the argument can well be made that any knowledge (and I use the word in a broad sense) of community is, *prima facie*, a knowledge of its ethical projections. It is awkward to frame a definition of community that is not, at base, an ethical definition, to the extent that any definition of community has at its fulcrum a concept of the regularity of relationships which are dependent upon reciprocities of restraint and the allocation of functions, such formulations I believe to be ethical in the sense of the word I will develop a bit further on.

The pseudo-empiricism of which I speak can be distinguished from what I take to be a genuine empiricism on the basis of the former's *a priori* commitment as to what constitutes valid experience. Put another way, a false empiricism is willing to accept as "givens" certain premises or protocols by which differentiation is made between forms of experience considered as evidential and those forms rejected as non-substantial. I am willing to call this attitude a "false" empiricism on the grounds that I have presumed empiricism must be, by definition, open-ended to the extent that it rejects a criterion of relevance or adequacy constructed by some other process than the

reception of experience. Moreover, there is quite evidently a difference between "experience" as a state of awareness and "experience" more tightly construed to mean some sensualistic encounter with the external world. It would be dubious to assert that an individual in the throes of psychotic delusion does not have the "experience" of conceiving himself as flying through space or being pursued by a flame-breathing monster. The question is not, after all, whether or not he experienced this awareness, but rather whether his awareness in any fashion could be described as a rational recital of demonstrable events.

The point I am somewhat laboriously endeavoring to make is that an honest empiricism does not suffer from a doctrinaire constriction of its outlook that results from its methodological fastidiousness becoming reified into ontological judgments. In addition, a pseudo-empiricism is prone to propound a view of verification that is constructed on an arbitrary conception of causal determinism that reduces itself to a stubborn physicalism. Put another way: pseudo-empiricism in disallowing the validity of arguments to logical necessity has placed itself in the distinctly uncomfortable position of brusquely turning its back on the very contemporary science it often alleges to admire and is in the paradoxical circumstance of assuming a rigid ontological stance that is ultimately in conflict with its putative claim to the empirical spirit. Empiricism, genuine and spurious, stands under the shadow of the double helix.

The effects of over a century of social discourse largely predicated upon the narrowing confines of an abused empiricism have resulted, in sum, in an attack upon the idea of the human community and, in a larger realm, a drastic misrepresentation of nature. I shall later argue that the hope for the recrudescence of community and a reconciliation with nature hinge predominantly upon a recovery of a genuine empiricism, the grounds for which have already been laid in social thought by the ad-

vance of scientific discovery in this century.

The diminishment of the idea of community—the discursive awareness—under the bludgeonings of pseudo-empiricism, which in large part is represented by varieties of neo-positivism, is the by-product of its radically reductionistic explanations of human intercourse and, indeed, human nature itself. Its refusal to acknowledge the possibility of human (or, for that matter, mammalian) motivation as being other than the satisfaction of physical want or its derivatives, some variation of Feuerbach's well-known epigram, precludes the feasibility of its accepting a concept of community other than as a loose confederation of individuals voluntaristically banded together for purposes of collective consumption. Such a social vision, prominent since the seventeenth century, flies in the face of our growing knowledge of the roots of community in the natural order into which mankind must be placed. Even baboons, it seems, possess a more elevated view of the social imperative.

The pseudo-empiricist misrepresentation of nature was, if anything, more serious, since it encouraged the most unsettling malady of our times: a profound human alienation from the natural realm. Its influence struck hard at the instinctual awareness of the communal ethical mandate by reiterating its foundational premises that even if subrational awareness were granted, epistemologically speaking, it could not convey valuational elements; and the natural order was bereft of value, its processes describable in mechanistic and physicalistic terms.

I would like to argue that these premises are best refuted on empirical grounds. But in order to do so, I would like to clarify what I think to be a useful concept of ethical phenomena. I would construe a phenomenon or event to contain an ethical element if the behavior of the related parts are reciprocally restrained or obliged in terms of the possibilities for action by virtue of some directive mandate pertaining to the welfare of the participants or a cognizable

class or system to which the participants belong.

The effect of this definition is two-fold: first, it presumes that an ethical act need not be predicated upon the entertainment of conscious choice and, second, the definition includes as "participants" in ethical phenomena a wide spectrum of non-hominid entities.

Two defenses can be made for the first contention. One defense is ontological in nature and I shall merely indicate it, except to lay the foundation for the assertion that the ethical artifacts of a community are, in fact, novel actualizations of the more rudimentary paradigms of less differentiated strata; they are the manifestations of what Whitehead felicitously called the "creative advance." The issue turns upon the primacy of consciousness as being imperative to the moral experience. This identification of consciousness with ethics presents certain difficulties, not the least of which is that one must assume, somewhat radically, that the consciousness of which one is aware must be presumed to be an adequate account of its nature. The demonstration of a conscious state in another can only be ascertained by communicative means, which prompts us to identify the possession of consciousness with the possession of symbolic language. Considerable evidence is at hand to prompt skepticism regarding any sharp line of demarcation between the conscious and the subconscious state, but, in any case, we cannot entertain certainty regarding conscious states in entities who choose not to employ a symbolic language and certain non-hominid species apparently possess the functional capabilities to produce symbolic language. Moreover, human consciousness is not an infinite property; it presumably has emerged within the context of human evolution (unless one wants to speculate upon the ubiquitous consciousness of the denizens of the natural order). Additionally, it is possible to suppose that elements of that emergent consciousness must be thought of as primordial or archetypal.

The second defense is less abstract. In a sense, moral choices are in fact made that appear to elude a description of them in terms of conscious choice. To deny to acts a moral implication when their consequences are pregnant with moral significance solely because they were not motivated by conscious selection of alternatives appears simply arbitrary.

The position of consciousness in the type of ontology adequately explanatory of natural process and the manifestation of morally significant acts propelled by something other than conscious volition precludes, I think, the feasibility of supposing that man alone is the ethical animal. Recent empirical-grounded scholarship in a variety of naturalistic sciences gives ample grounds for two conclusions:

1. Non-hominid species obey an ethical order on an instinctual level.

2. Social forms exist in the natural realm that suggest a superorganic paradigm to which such systems conform.

These essentially empirically sustained premises not only cut through the debilitating effect of a doctrinaire pseudo-empiricism, but also provide a means for reasserting the idea of community—the discursive awareness—and for more fully understanding the role of instinctual awareness, thus reestablishing in refurbished garb a binding civic ethic.

II

TO TALK about the ethical base of community introduces two problems: the interrelationship of discursive and instinctual awareness and the ontological status of community. Both must be approached, I think, with a genuine empiricist sensitivity which distinguishes what I would call the "new naturalism," a synthesis of scientific and philosophic perspectives that shows all indications of culminating in a more adequate and less reductionistic teleologically centered anthropology. Less attention, perhaps, has been paid to the ethical implica-

tions of this increasingly provocative exploration of the natural order, particularly the behavioral and social characteristics of the higher mammals.

Two cherished notions must be put to rest before we can proceed further: the vestigial remains of a dualistic view of human nature and the anthropocentric fixation that man is a wholly unique species. I do not want to belabor the point, but the grounds for the maintenance of distinctions of the sort implied above have been quite severely damaged by the course of contemporary science. The vital components of human nature are evidently neither reducible to physical categories nor can they be explained in purely ideational terms. The examination of the synaptic nervous systems of men and higher mammals, I submit, militates against either an intrinsic dualism or an assertion of man's appreciable separation from his non-hominid relations. The persistence in contemporary ethical thought of a *tabula rasa* theory of mind or its equivalents is remarkable, therefore, for its sheer tenacity.

Yet, for all that, it is obvious enough that the characteristics of the human species illustrate some manifest differences from the ethical phenomena of the non-hominid world. This is true both on the level of individual moral action and in terms of the ways in which the social bonding process operates.

We are rather well-convinced that the determinant factors which regulate non-hominid conduct and which reinforce social obligation are *instinctual* and I do not use the term necessarily in a strict ethological sense, but refer to a wider variety of sub-rational directives, e.g., IRMs, "imprinting," the molecular structure of DNA and so on. Put another way, animal conduct is governed by innate, preexperiential mechanisms—which may very well merit the label of "knowledge"—that impell it toward the recognition of obligatory acts.

A survey of the character of these ethical directives is instructive, particularly in the social realm. Contrary to the popular view

of nature as the scene of licentious struggle, certain motifs emerge. Let me suggest four:

1. recognition of hierarchy,
2. social loyalty and regard for communal continuity,
3. division of labor,
4. the promulgation of education.

These motifs are reflective of the social bonding process which is instinctually enacted. The social bond is deontological in two senses: it is binding, it solicits obedience and the mechanism of social bonding itself must be a projection of an ontologically-grounded paradigm. If the instinctual mandate is conceived to be a matter of "preprogramming," if the animal is "wired," so to speak, for social obligation, such a mechanism is clearly the result of some objective pattern which is not the result of the initiative of either the individual creature or the community itself. The mechanism is teleological; the instinctual mandate is "intentional," to revive the Aristotelian term.

It is tempting to go beyond the integration of man with the non-hominid order to explain human behavior by a set of extrapolations from more rudimentary mammalian practice. Such speculation often suffers from its dependency upon analogic argument, often defying the very empirical spirit which presumably prompted the search for meaning in the natural world. It is simply necessary to take into account the superstructure of human culture, man's cognitive, spiritual and aesthetic awareness, indeed, the phenomenon of human freedom. Man is the animal with the capability of disobedience. To borrow an old-fashioned word, a discussion of human ethics requires attention to the recognition of will, that ability to negate the instinctual summons.

While the communal life of animals and men enjoys certain parallels, one momentous event likely accounts for the metamorphosis of human culture. Consider this narrative: non-hominid species were both 'di-

rected and reinforced wholly by instinctual motivation. Minor adaptations took place, no doubt, but the degree of conformity to environmental requirements rendered adaptation functional below a level of the emergence of a distinct cognitive consciousness and will. But at some undisclosed point on the hominid scale of development, the instinctual mandate weakened, likely as a result of the severity of the problems of environmental adaptation faced by pre-*Homo sapiens*. The instinctual devices were no longer entirely sustaining, even in terms of overt survival.

It is at this point, then, that the human species, possessed of a large brain, but with few natural endowments for survival and with a diminishing instinctual reinforcement, entered a period of a new awareness. The species displayed unique features: a symbolic means of communication, perhaps a primitive animistic identification and the rudiments of a political system, stimulated, very likely, by the social complexities of big-game hunting. What was occurring was a profound transition from dependence upon subconscious obediences to conscious decision-making and included in the latter were the matters of intracommunal restraints and allocation of functions. Paramount among these new decisions to be made was the question of effectuating communal survival, the maintenance of internal security from the greatest societal jeopardy: internecine warfare.

The transition was by no means total. The instinctual imperative remained, but increasingly it became a matter of translation into deliberate social arrangement. The chthonic ethic was to be transfused into a cultural ethic, the archetypal community was to be projected into forms at least partially amenable to human will.

In another sense, what was emerging was human freedom, but yet a sharply delimited one, if only for the reason that the pre-conscious existence of immutable social goals created in their wake a natural and overarching authority. This freedom and, colaterally, this authority became expressed

in symbolic form or, put another way, the subrational rituals of non-hominid societies became symbolically postulated rituals in the human community, to include appeals to transcendental arbitration as the certainties of instinctual reinforcement waned. The freedom was a freedom to make rules, attempts to articulate in symbolic, mythic or magical form the instinctual directives.

While these rules lacked the unequivocal rigor of instinctual command, they were altogether satisfactory, because if they were the common possession of the community they were reliable. They were, by the same token, particularized; they were, if you like, local actualizations of the universal. In short, communities began to acquire a history. The motif of preservation and continuity was enhanced by a motivation to preserve the historical continuity as well as the corpus of the group. One might speak of "social accumulations" containing not only symbolic materials, but also consciousness of territoriality and privilege. Thus, to consciousness was added the dimension of time and the objectivification of value.

The hierarchical social form was now malleable to human will, responsive to the historical awareness. The hunter-warrior may have given way to the shaman or totemistic prophet and he, in turn, may have relinquished authority to the politician-jurist in response to the unfolding character of social accumulation. Authority was now to be vested in those who became functional carriers of the accumulation. In brief, leadership emerges as a specialized classification where and when required, a class designated as specialists in the preservation and interpretation of the communal ethic as now embodied in the symbolic projections of the society.

The transition from a mythic or magical ethic to a legalistic one is not insignificant, because it represents a shift in the character of obligation. It represents a different concept of assent, although the foundation of social authority is not markedly altered. The injunctions of obedience are one step further removed from immediate instinc-

tual triggering. The ethical rules are now framed as discursive statements, as canons or codes of social behavior. Response to them lacks the impelling, all-embracing quality of the mythic ethic; reception becomes predominantly intellectual.

There are distinct advantages to the civic ethic construed to be a body of explicitly moral precepts. It permits a higher degree of refinement, versatility and selectivity, yet it suffers, too, from a series of palpable jeopardies. In allowing a greater range to the will, it places greater strain on the capacities of judgment, but of greater risk yet is the inherent possibility of conceiving the moral code as self-sufficient, as enjoying an intrinsic authority, of a *sui generis* origin.

It must be granted that a given moral code can be "wrong," that is, incompatible with its instinctual base. It can induce a discretionary predilection that encourages the bifurcation of the individual and the community, leading to a doctrine of particularized and temporary consent to the social bond. It can, in its very specificity, stimulate a destructive analysis that encourages hubristic skepticism that includes, finally, not only the presumed fragility of specific moral rules, but also the denial of the imminent authority of the civic ethic.

This is a risk mankind took, willy-nilly, in its progression from a mythic to a legalistic civic ethic on the assumption that the advantages enjoyed by the latter were decisive. I have no doubt that this was a sound and inevitable decision (if one can appropriately call it a "decision"). However, one can chart the gradual erosion of the vitality of the civic ethic even within the compass of the emergence of articulated moral codes. The process was a very gradual one, indeed, but in denigrating the civic ethic, the conception of the community itself faded and men increasingly became "uncivilized" in the original meaning of the word; they became creatures outside a recognition of the communal or civil bond.

The atrophy of the civic ethic can be illumined in three typographies:

1. Alienation of social rules from instinctual imperatives.

2. Severance of the civic ethic from an ontological base.

3. Diminishment of moral injunction and obligation as reinforcement, as a prime constituent of human satisfaction and gratification.

1. One precept seems now unchallengeable, regardless of the strictures of behaviorists, culturists and psychological mechanists of one variety or another: contemporary man, as he stands in the midst of his technologically-sophisticated environment, is not significantly altered from the basic definitions of his species. He remains biologically, genetically, neurophysiologically and psychologically essentially the same creature that he was in his primal experience. It is his behavior that has been modified, not his nature. His core "programming" remains constant. If his behavior, which is readily open to both extrinsic and intrinsic modification, is aberrational or even pathological, it is because in some fashion his act of willing expressed in social practice is ultimately irreconcilable with the configurations of his innate nature. One might speculate that the etiology of human diseases of the psyche can be located initially in displacements of roles and functions within the social set. The argument has been advanced in recent years that primordial hierarchy dislocations and resultant anxieties may lie at the root of mental disorder.

The aberrational effects of human defiance, conscious or otherwise, of the instinctual mandates (a condition reproducible artificially in other higher mammals) not only results in intolerable environmental conditions and artificially induced social arrangements, but also engenders deep-seated value conflicts in which the instinctual demands are in opposition to enforced moral regulations. Society represents, actualizes, a system of order which subsists in a regu-

larity of relationships. Virtually all ethical codes project a description and definition of these relationships. But ethical codes are only an elaboration, a refinement, of these relationships and the construction of a civic ethic cannot be an act of free-floating ingenuity.

The temporary triumph, from the Enlightenment to the twentieth century, of the view that ethics could proceed unencumbered by the presence of preexperiential data in the psyche not only produced a widespread acceptance of the subjectivity and relativity of value, but, as well, introduced the idea of human freedom as unrestricted individual volition. Society was seen as a shrewd bargain, a utilitarian covenant, and as a possible menace, too, to the primary of individual interest. That *ethos*, in a moral sense, brought the species directives into conflict with the prevailing ethic in which the unhappy alternatives were the gradual, if never complete, extirpation of instinctual command and satisfaction or the rebellion of the individual against the loosely-conceived social rules, which were, by and large, more "rules of the game" than they were substantive obligations and reciprocities. One began to see, simultaneously, a revolt against the community and a rebellion against the efficacy of moral restraint. The corresponding alternatives, sharply depicted in this century, were between a nonexistent civic ethic or an artificial one imposed by the harsh sanctions of repressive political coercion in lieu of naturalistic obligation.

Correspondingly, the level of human gratification declined drastically, since this adumbrated vision of human freedom (as the abrogation of the bonds of mutual obligation) did not amount to freedom at all. The joys of insurrection—ethical and cosmic—were ephemeral, indeed. The freedom to be identified with creative advance (the most elevated by-product of man's novel emergence from total instinctual domination) that arose from participation in the corporate reciprocities became virtually unknown by the present century. Attempts to

recover this creativity and freedom, this psychic reintegration, were often angry, irrational and even savage. Nietzsche sounded the alarm, but the response was frequently a bellicose atavism or the brutality of Fascist amorality.

The hubristic morality of societies nurtured upon a diet of positivism and social atomism consciously sought to dominate and, by implication, destroy the lingering vestiges of the natural man, as such moral viewpoints had encouraged the subordination of nature itself to their mechanistic transmutations of anthropomorphism. This enterprise of eradication has not been successful and the frustration of the neopositivists usually takes the form of laments regarding the stubborn perversity of the human race. The result has not been to totally purge men of their instinctual component, but to impose upon them a morality devoid of satisfaction and incapable of instilling the requisite securities and harmonies of communal life.

2. The civic ethic no longer rests upon an ontological awareness or conviction. The legally-postulated principles of social regularity and decorum have progressively retreated from the assumption that the social paradigm and its corresponding ethic are projections of cosmic order. Indeed, this can be seen in the history of jurisprudence from the *Institutes* of Justinian to the animadversions of sociological jurisprudence. The argument on behalf of the ubiquity of ontic structure need not be made by an appeal to the contentious speculations of metaphysics, but can be advanced on the more modest grounds of scientific evidence. The collapse of mechanism and materialism in contemporary science is sufficiently striking to require both the reinstatement of ontological investigation and an acceptance of an ontologically-predicated conception of the natural order.

What constitutes the most rudimentary factors of the social bond are actualizations of ontologically-rooted natural relationships that interrelate the entities comprising the strata of existence. Society, in that sense,

is not the sole possession of intelligent social animals, but is a word denoting systems of relationship applicable from the bottom to the top of the hierarchy of existence. The civic ethic as the novel manifestation of instinctual universals and social accumulations preserves a contact with the most elemental and nondifferentiated strata of being. The ethical mandate is a summons to participation in the nature of nature.

3. The pre-experiential character of the human psyche—the presence of what Santayana called the “Primal Will”—not only solicits obligation, it is not merely binding, but is the primal source of satisfaction. Wise moralists in the history of thought have, in one way or another, acknowledged the potency and legitimacy of satisfaction or its more fulsome advent, happiness. Our modern difficulties have arisen from a tendency to equate the state of gratification with egocentrism, a notion of gratification that becomes a narrow hedonism, psychological and ethical. In rather oversimplified language, we have come to believe that individual gratification is gained *in spite* of social involvement and that obligation—duty—is anathema to that self-aggrandisement that is presumed to constitute individual satisfaction. The threat of morally restraining rules, thus, is that they constrict desire and gratification. This response finally is an attempt to argue that there are no moral rules, except those subjectively postulated and, hence, reconcilable with self-defined appetition. It is clear that no deontological social ethic can exist on this basis; what remains is a concept of rule akin to the rules of contract bridge or tennis, in which the only binding character is supplied by the sanction of excluding the participant who chooses to violate the rules from an activity otherwise gratifying. Such rules are in no sense themselves reinforcing.

Moral rules that are reinforcing, gratifying, are those which permit the individual to effectively discharge his latent motivations. They are *positive* rules even if their

effect is restraint upon the will. This is not to argue that the rules of the civic ethic are simply invitations of felt motivations. Rules have a hueristic or didactic quality. They articulate with reasonable clarity and precision the non-cognitive and latent predispositions of the self, such foundations of action frequently obscured by the intervention of the will, the subjectivization of a universal mandate only dimly perceived or prebended by the cognitive faculties.

Moral rules, as embodied in the civic ethic, enforce, often stringently, both the latent instinctual demands of the individual psyche and the communal paradigms and objectives. It enforces the social preservation and continuity, hierarchy and allocation of function and all of these at times at variance with the subjectivized will. It, at times, sponsors in regard to individuals temporary exclusions and suppressions; it restricts egocentric aspiration.

Yet in so doing, the civic ethic ultimately enhances satisfaction, its effects are hedonic. In asserting the social bond, in enunciating obligation, it reinforces both belonging and self-identification. It offers the vital security of social membership, while, at the same time, provides the foundation for novel, creative transcendence. The latter potentiality is dependent upon the successful integration of objective data; creativity is an extension of inheritance. The creative act by which there is a novel transcendence of the actual arises from a subjective incorporation of a number of factors: instinctual knowledge, social accumulations, cognitively and non-cognitively transmitted, awareness of the artifactual *nomos* of the community, plus the psychic stability provided by meaningful social integration. The creative act is an extension of the civic ethic, indeed, it is, in part, compounded of the same elements. The creative act is the highest ethical act, because it subsums the totality of the less differentiated ethical base and amplifies it, symbolically reconstituting the universal motifs in the social evolutionary advance. The human urge for creation substantially emanates from a

sense of primordial loss, the need to recapitulate in novel configurations the sureties of the instinctual life, to give renewed vitality to the symbolic inheritance of the community.

III

THE REVIVAL of the civic ethic, a recovery of a prehensive grasp of the ethical base of community, involves an understanding of the transmutation of universal, instinctually-conveyed directives into the tangible corpus of social morality, its legal and axiological precepts and conventions. To recommend its understanding is to take on the obligation of showing that, in fact, such a relationship exists. Such an explanation entails a discussion of the separation and interrelation of *value* and *actualization*.

Such an undertaking does not appear particularly striking or original. Since Plato, at least, moral realists of various persuasions have been endeavoring to make a similar case and I would not be so presumptuous as to suggest a series of observations I would deem to be more cogent. However, it seems that, contemporaneously, the case for ethical realism has suffered from a hyper-anxiety about pressing empiricism into the lists on its behalf. Much of twentieth century ethical realism seems to me to divide into two different stances. The first is to stand fast with an idealistic ontology and defend the eternal verities in terms of verbal propositions or canons of presumed moral universals. The second approach is to hold back from an enunciation of moral law, but allude to an indefinable good which, in some fashion, is to be intuitively perceived. The first posture suffers from questionable metaphysical assumptions, the second from a dubious epistemology.

Put another way, hostile analysts have had little trouble in submitting canons of immutable moral rules to a devastating critique. The attack on the epistemological premises of intuitionism have been no less disquieting.

More promising, I think, is an essentially empirical defense of the objective status of value and the universality of ethical injunction. The postulation of objective value—what Whitehead termed “eternal objects”—can be sustained by a recognition of the pervasively teleological character of what we have divined regarding the universe. I am aware that the ways by which we can conceptualize that universe may be virtually infinite, but a criterion of adequacy applied to these conceptualizations strongly suggests the presence of design. A tychistic account of process appears unsatisfactory. The presence of design denotes purpose, if a controlling element within the design can be shown to effectuate intentional results.

My assumption, at base, must be that the design inherent in process is value-saturated, in the sense such design regulates conduct in terms of differentiated standards. My task, however, is to indicate in what manner the values inherent in ontic process are actualized in a civic ethic. Permit me to begin with two brief statements from Whitehead:

. . . there are no rational principles which penetrate from the veil to the dark background of reality. (*Process and Reality*, p. 216.)

An organism is the realization of a definite shape of value. (*Science and the Modern World*, p. 193.)

What the first statement seeks to convey is the difference, in my understanding of the ontological status of value, from the conception embraced by a more or less traditional natural law position. If the revival of honest empiricism supports the view of the value character of the natural order, it also supports a monistic conception of nature, albeit a vastly richer interpretation of that nature than that of reductionistic naturalists. I cannot, therefore, lucidly conceive of the valuational character of the

natural order as a system of essences enjoying a phenomenological independence from events. Value lies within the stratum or process, not as an autonomous, superinforming entity or category. Value is a constituent element in the organismic foundations of being. Value is not, then, represented by a superphenomenal code, which, in turn, is penetrated or contacted by rational means. Value does become actualized in the subjective aims of the plethora of organic forms, "societies," that are at root conformed by the teleological advance.

I make this point, however crudely, to insist upon the rejection of the civic ethic as in any way conceived to be a discursive translation of some explicit code of moral law involving such abstractions as "justice," "dignity" or "compassion," to say nothing of more concrete sociopolitical tenets. The route from the ontological order to the civic ethic is more circuitous and is suggested by Whitehead's observation that "an organism is the realization of a definite shape of value." Value becomes objectified, concretized, through the actuality of organisms, its substantial existence dependent upon the immediate temporality of organisms and events. The organism itself—the society of the self or of the community—is an actualization of value; it is not only a consumer of value, but a carrier of it.

If the civic ethic is a response of some sort, partly instinctual, partly discursive, of the community to the imperative of ontic value, a reiteration of species determinants, it is an expression of *formal* rather than cognitive values. By this I mean that the ethical artifacts of the society are shaped by responses to formal or categoreal imperatives rather than to explicit moral propositions. If the human social ethic is essentially shaped by ontologically universal motifs, these must be wrenched into the communicative categories particular to human consciousness and discourse. Natural obligation must be transliterated into forms, symbolic and verbal, that are cognizable to human apprehension. Such a conception precludes the possibility that

ethical artifacts are reconstitutions of categories determinantly human in genesis. Justice, for example, is an awkward category, to say the least, to apply to the ethical life of non-hominid nature.

The process of transliteration is more comprehensible if it is presumed that the values actualized in ethical artifacts are what I have called "formal" or "categoreal" rather than substantive. In fact, empirical attention to the monistic unity of human social ethics and the ethical structure of nature reveal two predominant formal value actualizations, the motifs that I would term, for convenience, the *harmonic* and the *epimiletic*.

The harmonic value is an inexorable inclination toward order, toward the reassertion of regularity. The epimiletic—a term borrowed from the literature of the primatologists—refers to the equally ubiquitous obligation of "caretaking" or preservation. Human civic ethics, save for aberrational transgressions of the will, are particularized and incomplete realizations of order and preservation. Such manifestations are incomplete, because they necessarily incorporate the subjectivity of the actualizing organism, a condition which contains the potentiality for creative advance, an ability to react and reform from contact with other organisms. This is, in quite different language, the glorious risk of human community, its superiority in one dimension to the molecular society.

Civic ethics as an expression of the harmonic and epimiletic motifs contain in their particularity varying ratios between instinctual awareness and discursive awareness. Primitive social groups clearly reveal a dependence upon instinctual awareness, a condition pertaining with greater intensity to non-hominid societies in the ontological hierarchy. Civilization, in sum, is the greater reliance upon discursive awareness as a postulate for communal ethics; indeed, the increase of subjectivity in social organisms leads both to the possibility of enhanced novelty and creativity and to an

aberrational rejection of the harmonic and epimiletic obligations.

The subjective principle produces a situation in which, in a normative context, there are constructive parameters assigned to the relative reliance on instinctual and discursive understanding as the ethical base of community. There are limits, in other words, on how far the instinctual can be repressed by the will and how far the urge for subjective novelty can, optimally, be subjugated to instinctual determination. On one side looms the horror of the social arrangements advocated by B. F. Skinner and others and on the other appears the visage of a hominid culture equatable to the creative monotony of the Bushmen of the Kalahari. Man is neither simply a "naked ape" or a version of *Australopithecus Prometheus* with an electric toothbrush for the reason that he has a history, an inheritance that is not only chromosomal and psychic, but also cognizable and recreatable. That history—the social accumulations—is neither an abstraction nor a fiction nor an ontological irregularity; it is itself a society of events in which the immemorial motifs' linger in its fabric.

IV

WE HAVE come close, I would conclude, to breaking the pattern, to comprehensively denying the interdict of the harmonic and epimiletic base of society to the extent that we have lost not only an operational civic ethic, but a consciousness of the social bond. We have not truly lost our link with non-hominid nature (which rests upon factors largely beyond our will), but we have turned upon it with increasing savagery. This attack upon nature is not, I think, adequately explained by human greed and ignorance, but represents an act of revenge, the infliction upon nature of a churlish punishment for reminding us of our loss, our alienation from the satisfactions necessary to our species, gratifications that can only be attained by the reciprocities of the com-

munal bond, the obligations of harmony and mutual caretaking.

Our accelerating aggressiveness (which includes the hyper-aggressive, disingenuous predation of the natural realm) arises not only from a desperation bred of a collapsed civic ethic, but also from an inability to incorporate this aggressive inclination functionally and prudentially within the paradigms of social order. In a sense, it becomes a licentious aggressiveness, stripped of honor, the violations of which, in a rhetorical sense, are rare, indeed, in the patterns of the non-human world. We confront a retrogressive inclination: while we extend or seek to extend the idea of community spatially, to include more and more of the race under the protections and securities offered by the community and its enforcement of an intra-societal prohibition against warfare, the cores of our communities wither away in a maelstrom of internecine strife and fear. No stronger indicator is needed to illustrate the demise of the obligatory force of harmony and caretaking.

We do not decimate the communal bond in a dumb fury. We pronounce its death sentence in the sententious language of philosophy, convincing ourselves that the Promethean promise is valid, that we can dispense with the presumably inconvenient subordinations that are the common lot of all other beings. We snuff out the candle of our humanity, entoning the liturgy of freedom and progress.

But there are yet those who speak for community and thus speak for man and do so not in the veiled language of the anchorite, but in the measured tones of the empirically disciplined. Our hope for the recovery of the obligating and satisfying awarenesses of the ethical base of community lies in a revivification of an ethic, modest and yet majestic, in which the mundane once again takes on significance and in which creature-longings become, anew, the rich foundation of the creative thrust and in which social peace and fraternal love are no longer retreating recollections.