

THE METAPHORICAL STRUCTURE OF NORMATIVITY

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[Editor's Note: What happens if we conceive of the relationship between person and nature in terms of metaphor? Would not an understanding of normativity's structure in light of metaphor help us see that natural-law arguments share in metaphor's revelatory character? Any action, whether sanctioned or prohibited by a moral norm, inevitably relates to a community's way of interacting with others. This study underscores that moral reasoning plays an active, creative role in shaping nature for the good of the human person. Metaphor emerges as a vehicle for historical change, and metaphorical redescription discloses new insights.]

AS MORAL THEOLOGIANS engage in the theological enterprise, they are responsible for the philosophical options and categories with which they work. They also must continue to justify and perhaps modify their philosophical tools in dialogue with other schools of thought without abandoning at the same time the coherency of their philosophical system as a whole. In this regard, one thinks of how malleable the neo-Scholastic tradition has been in light of developments in transcendental philosophy, the hermeneutical sciences, and the philosophy of language.¹ This scientific requirement provides the context and rationale for this article.

My focus here is the relationship of person and nature in natural-law arguments. I wish to elucidate that relationship through recent studies on the nature of metaphorical discourse. My overarching pur-

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¹ For a historical overview of the neo-Scholastic tradition, see John A. Gallagher, *Time Past, Time Future: An Historical Study of Catholic Moral Theology* (New York: Paulist, 1990). The influence of transcendental philosophy is seen in Franz Bückle, *Fundamental Moral Theology* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1980). Contemporary hermeneutical studies have been used extensively by Klaus Demmer, *Sittlich handeln aus Verstehen: Strukturen hermeneutisch orientierter Fundamentalmoral* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1979). An appreciation of linguistic analysis is shown by Bruno Schüller, *Wholly Human: Essays on the Theory and Language of Morality* (Washington: Georgetown University, 1986).

pose is to cast the relationship between person and nature in terms of metaphor in order to respect the essential unity of nature and person required by a proper understanding of the natural law; to retrieve the creative and active character of moral reasoning; and to sharpen our understanding of the historicity of natural-law arguments. My analysis is divided into three sections. First, I provide an overview of theoretical treatments of metaphor from various intellectual contexts. Second, I attempt to show how the mutual accommodation of person and nature allows for the contours of a metaphorical structure of normativity to emerge. Finally, I explain how the metaphorical structure of normativity provides a new point of departure for analyzing the moral act in general and the theory of intrinsic evil in particular.

STUDIES IN METAPHOR

In his essay on "The Nature of Language," Martin Heidegger offers an extended meditation and interpretation of Stephan George's poem, "The Word." The poet writes:

Wonder or dream from distant land
 I carried to my country's strand

 And waited till the twilit morn
 Had found the name within her bourn—

 Then I could grasp it close and strong
 It blooms and shines the front along . . .

 Once I returned from happy sail,
 I had a prize so rich and frail,

 She sought for long and tidings told:
 "No like of this these depths enfold."

 And straight it vanished from my hand,
 The treasure never graced my land . . .

 So I renounced and sadly see:
 Where word breaks off no thing may be.²

For Heidegger, the poet George caught an essential characteristic of language that had long been ignored or obscured by the positivist tendencies present in philosophers of science. The separation of the cognitive and expressive functions of language characteristic of positivism limited epistemic endeavors to the empirical sciences. Scientific language had a representative function for the positivist; scientific propositions had a direct reference to the world. The mutual

² Martin Heidegger, "The Nature of Language," in *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter Hertz (New York: Harper & Row, 1971) 60.

correlation between sense and reference gave scientific language a univocal or literal character. Lacking any referential significance, metaphor was "a wholly noncognitive, subjective, emotive, or stylistic use of language."³ For the positivist, the use of metaphor was equivalent to engaging in pretense, "that is, re-presenting the facts of one sort in the idioms appropriate to another."⁴

For George's voyager, however, language has a far richer role. Contact with language is an experience of the world. The vision that the poet enjoys from "distant land" is brought to "the twilit norn" to be named in order for the poet "to grasp it close and strong." Upon returning from "happy sail," the poet has a prize which is "rich and frail"; but since it is a prize that the goddess cannot identify ("no like of this these depths enfold"), it vanishes from the voyager's hand, a treasure that "never graced my land." The poet learns that "where word breaks off no thing may be."⁵

The poet, of course, is not describing an actual voyage but is writing figuratively or metaphorically. Aristotle, in his *Poetics*, holds that "metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else, the transference (*epi-phora*) being either from genus to species or from species to genus, or from species to species, or on grounds of analogy."⁶ Derived from the verb *metapherein* which means to carry something from one place to another, metaphor is the transposition or transfer of a name from one context to another. This transfer introduces an element of incongruity into language in a way that metaphor displaces the common usage of a name with a new and unfamiliar one. Like the voyager who encounters alien lands, metaphor allows the poet to move back and forth between contexts to find similarities and differences between them.

In contrast to the comparative theory of metaphor found in Aristotle is what has been labeled a semantic interaction theory of metaphor. Comparison theories of metaphor maintain that there is an equivalence between literal and metaphorical expressions; interaction theories, on the other hand, focus on the tension that a metaphor creates between a literal context and figurative expression. As Searle observes, within comparison theories, metaphors draw a "similarity between two or more *objects*," while for interaction theories, metaphors create a tension between "two *semantic contents*, that of the

³ A concise critique of this view is provided by Mary Hesse, *Models and Analogies in Science* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1966) 164.

⁴ Colin Turbayne, *The Myth of Metaphor* (New Haven: Yale University, 1962) 17, with reference to Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (London: Hutchinson, 1949) 8.

⁵ See the commentaries of Walter Beigel, "Poetry and Language in Heidegger," in *On Heidegger and Language*, ed. Joseph J. Kockelmans (Evanston: Northwestern University, 1972) 82–88, and David Halliburton, *Poetic Thinking: An Approach to Heidegger* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1981) 178–80.

⁶ See Aristotle, *Poetics* 1457b 4.

expression used metaphorically, and that of the surrounding literal context."⁷

Proponents of the interaction theory of metaphor include philosophers of science Max Black, Thomas Kuhn, and Mary Hesse. In Black's *Models and Metaphors*, metaphors play a role similar to that of models in scientific inquiry. Models organize experience, exploit potential similarities within a field of discourse, and designate appropriate ways to speak and reason about the world. Similarly, Black writes that a metaphor "has the power to bring two separate domains into cognitive and emotional relation by using language directly appropriate to the one as a lens for seeing the other"; the power of metaphor lies in its ability "to enable us to see a new subject matter in a new way" or "to see new connections."⁸ By allowing us to approach a previously disclosed realm of experience with new purpose, metaphorical expressions reorganize and redescribe experience, which grows in complexity with each new purpose.⁹ By revealing new intimations of similarity, models and metaphors are means by which reality is reinterpreted, providing new boundaries for reason and discourse. For Black and others, "both (models and metaphors) are attempts to pour new content into old bottles."¹⁰

Building on his analysis of the historical episodes that he previously labeled scientific revolutions, Kuhn holds that metaphors in science are not merely pedagogical and heuristic, but substantive and constitutive of the theories they express. Metaphors establish the necessary links between scientific language and the world. For Kuhn, however, because "those links are not given once and for all," a change in metaphor will effect the mutual accommodation between experience and language allowing scientists to reason and speak about the world anew. Without regarding all readings of nature equal as if one could ignore nature, scientists recognize that the referent to "planet" will differ before and after Copernicus; and Aristotle's definition of "motion" will make little sense in the world of 17th-century mechanics.¹¹ As Hesse adds, "rationality consists just in the continu-

⁷ John Searle, *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1979) 85.

⁸ Max Black, *Models and Metaphors: Studies in Language and Philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1962) 236-37. In a similar way, James Edie asserts that with the help of metaphor, "we filter one field of experience through another, and thus create new realms of meaning and thereby enable ourselves to see what before could not be seen" (*Speaking and Meaning: The Phenomenology of Language* [Bloomington: Indiana University, 1976] 189-90).

⁹ *Ibid.* 188; see also Jean Ladrière, "On the Notion of Criterion," in *Is Being Human a Criterion of Being Christian?* ed. Jean-Pierre Jossua and Claude Geffré, Concilium 155 (New York: Seabury, 1982) 10-15.

¹⁰ Black, *Models and Metaphors* 238-39.

¹¹ Thomas S. Kuhn, "Metaphor in Science," in *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. A. Ortony (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1979) 416. See also his *The Essential Tension: Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1977).

ous adaptation of our language to our continually expanding world," and metaphorical redescription is the means by which this accomplished.¹²

A reconciliation and development of the two theories of metaphor are found in Paul Ricoeur's *The Rule of Metaphor*. For Ricoeur, discussions about metaphor entail the entwining of three themes. First, with metaphorical discourse the ordinary reference of language is suspended, eclipsed, or blurred. Second, this referential ambiguity allows for the redescription of common patterns of thinking and perceptions of reality. Third, the suspension of reference and the redescription of reality, however, involves a disclosure of something new. Metaphorical discourse means to tell us something new of reality. The metaphor, in other words, moves beyond the discovery of existing similarities to include the means of invention. Through metaphor, language not only organizes reality in a different way, but also discloses a way of being and dwelling in the world, which is brought to language thanks to semantic innovation. Ricoeur writes:

It would seem that the enigma of metaphorical discourse is that it "invents" in both senses of the word: what it creates, it discovers; and what it finds, it invents. . . . Reality brought to language unites manifestation and creation. . . . Metaphor is that strategy of discourse by which language divests itself of its function of direct description in order to reach the mythic level where its function of discovery is set free.¹³

For Ricoeur, metaphorical tension extends beyond semantic levels to the "relational function of the copula" in a way that the metaphorical *as* is inseparable from inquiry into what *is*. Metaphor has not only a comparative sense but an ontological sense. "The copula is not only relational; it implies besides, by means of the predicative relationship, that *what is* is redescribed: it says *that* things really are this way."¹⁴

PERSON AND NATURE

Ricoeur's theory of metaphor falls within the wider scope of hermeneutical analysis and presents two insights particularly relevant for moral reflection. First is the appreciation of metaphor as a revelatory mode of discourse, revealing "a proposed world, a world I may inhabit and wherein I can project my own most possibilities."¹⁵ Second is the creative and imaginative role of metaphor, whereby a new epistemic

¹² Hesse, *Models and Analogies in Science* 176–77.

¹³ Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, trans. Robert Czerny (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1984) 239, 247.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 247–48.

¹⁵ Paul Ricoeur, *Essays in Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Lewis Mudge (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980) 102.

access to the world is achieved when significant features of the world are carried over, appropriated, and transformed in light of another. Both of these points from recent studies in metaphor can be illustrated by looking at the relationship between person and nature.

The relationship between person and nature is central to fundamental moral theology. In a Roman Catholic context, the relationship between person and nature has been used explicitly in fundamental and special questions of morality. The understanding of the relationship between person and nature in magisterial texts stands in the effective history of the neo-Scholastic tradition, and is marked with a strong personalist emphasis. The Catholic Church's teaching on the unity of the human being, *corpore et anima unus*, "does not allow for any division between freedom and nature. Indeed, these two realities are harmoniously bound together, and each is intimately linked to the other."¹⁶

With the tradition's emphasis on the "unified totality" of the person, it is important not to identify or reduce the meaning of normative nature or the natural moral law to the laws of nature as those laws are decided by the theories and hypotheses of other sciences. There is no doubt that the empirical sciences contribute to what is meant by normative nature, as attested to by the neo-Scholastics' epistemological realism. Moral theology certainly runs a risk of dealing in mere abstractions and formalities if it ignores the realities of the world. The uniqueness of the natural moral law, however, is obscured when approached with the cognitive criteria of the other sciences alone. Nor is the normativity of nature in a moral sense reducible to human nature as it is given or in human nature's facticity. The natural inclinations are necessary but not sufficient criteria for the determination of normativity. The normative meaning of the natural inclinations is variant; the natural inclinations are underdetermined in a normative sense. This does not mean, however, that we can approach nature without constraint; nature is more than the raw material for normativity. To think of nature as a field of unlimited potential for human intervention would be typical of *homo faber*, who, as Hannah Arendt observed in her classic account of the modern condition, "thinks of the whole of nature as of an immense fabric from which we can cut out whatever we want to renew it however we like."¹⁷ While not immediately normative, nature is a limit in the sense that freedom and rea-

¹⁶ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor* (Washington: United States Catholic Conference, 1993) para. 50. Within the neo-Scholastic tradition, the person is comprised of both intellect and will, which allows for a convergence of reason and freedom or the true and the good: "Verum et bonum se invicem includunt: nam verum est quoddam bonum, alioquin non esset appetibile; et bonum est quoddam verum, alioquin non esset intelligibile. . . ; ita obiectum intellectus practici est bonum ordinabile ad opus, sub ratione veri" (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 1, q. 79, a. 11 ad 2).

¹⁷ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1958) 305.

son are always *in* nature. Nature is an indispensable condition of freedom and reason; we cannot be freed from nature.

As indispensable as nature is, however, normativity is not a property of nature. Nature is better seen as the vehicle of normativity.¹⁸ Nature is a dynamic potential that requires interpretation. Within a more critical epistemological context, then, normativity results from nature being grasped, understood, and interpreted by the *ordinatio rationis*.¹⁹ Though both poles contribute to what is meant by normative nature, the rational order is the sufficient criterion of normativity. The mutually conditioning relationship between reason and nature is captured by Wilhelm Korff when he writes: "All human behavior remains universally determined by conditions which may not replace reason, since they need interpretation and to this extent do not present themselves as ethical norms, but which nevertheless eliminate arbitrariness from this behavior in all its realizations."²⁰ Again, nature is not infinitely malleable, but in a way that the order of nature is subordinated to the order of reason and freedom. In this sense, John Paul II can write that nature "acquires a moral significance in reference to the good of the person."²¹

Within the natural moral law, then, there is a principle of transcendence that is the rational and free nature of the person, and a principle of limit that is reason and freedom *in* nature. The principle of transcendence protects normativity from being reduced to a crude naturalism in the sense of an imitation of nature. The principle of limit avoids the equally disastrous alternatives of historicism or spiritualism in the sense of a purely autonomous ethic.²²

The mutual accommodation between person and nature was expressed in the neo-Scholastic formulation of a substantial union. The

¹⁸ Jean-François Malherbe writes, "In the end, although nature imposes on us the minimal conditions of our existence, in its biological sense it remains completely silent on the finality of our existence (*la finalité de notre survie*)." He then gives a helpful analogy: "Nature is to the person what the map and the car are to the traveler: indispensable conditions for travel but resolutely silent on the trip's destination" (*L'Éthique entre nature et culture*, *Le Supplément: Revue d'éthique et de théologie morale* 182–183 [1992] 320; my translation).

¹⁹ Klaus Demmer, "Natur und Person: Brennpunkte gegenwärtiger moraltheologischer Auseinandersetzung," in *Natur im ethischen Argument*, ed. Bernhard Fraling, *Studien zur theologischen Ethik* 31 (Freiburg: Herder, 1990) 61; see also, Karl-Wilhelm Merks, "Autonome Moral," in *Moraltheologie im Abseits? Antwort auf die Enzyklika "Veritatis Splendor"*, ed. Dietmar Mieth, *Quaestiones Disputatae* 153 (Freiburg: Herder, 1994) 59–61. From a Lonerganian perspective, see the helpful work of Cynthia Crysdale, "Revisioning Natural Law," *TS* 56 (1995) 464–84.

²⁰ Wilhelm Korff, "Nature or Reason as the Criterion for the Univesality of Moral Judgment?" in *Christian Ethics: Uniformity, Universality, Pluralism*, ed. Jacques Pohier and Dietmar Mieth, *Concilium* 150 (New York: Seabury, 1981) 87. See also the foundational study of Franz Böckle, "Nature as the Basis for Morality," in *Readings in Moral Theology 7: The Natural Law and Theology*, ed. Charles Curran and Richard McCormick (New York: Paulist, 1991) 407–10.

²¹ *Veritatis splendor* no. 50.

²² From a similar perspective, see Crysdale, "Revisioning Natural Law" 480.

substantial union of person and nature expresses an integral vision of human nature. This integral nature of the person is what Malherbe labels *nature métaphorique*, which means that the givenness of nature is carried over (*metapherein*), integrated into, and transformed by the order of freedom and reason.²³ As a result of a metaphorical activity, normativity emerges out of an act of transcendence, discovery, or creativity. The normativity of nature does not refer to nature as it is in itself; nor is normativity the result of a naive *imitatio naturae*. The normative character of nature is discovered and created by moral reasoning in the way metaphorical discourse invents and discovers reality.²⁴

For Malherbe, construing normative nature in terms of the metaphorical fusion of person and nature means that natural-law arguments share in the revelatory nature of metaphorical discourse. Natural-law arguments reveal the scope and established limits of the community's interaction with nature. This means that the metaphorical structure of normativity allows natural-law arguments to be deconstructed to show all the tacit presuppositions that shape the freedom and reason of the members of the community. The process of deconstruction will reveal the community's legitimate expectations of freedom in a way that natural-law arguments promote and protect the community's conception of human flourishing, or what Gibson Winter has labelled "the ideology of human fulfillment."²⁵ There is a mutually conditioning relationship between the moral good and freedom. On the one hand, the ideology of human fulfillment sets the normative boundaries of freedom and insight; on the other hand, freedom and insight serve the attainment of the ideology of human fulfillment.²⁶ Consensus on natural-law arguments does not depend so much on nature as it is in itself, but on the community's shared expectations of freedom which sculpture, fashion, and redefine nature in a normative sense. In this way, Demmer can assert that "we watch over and protect nature when it protects us; we define its limits when it threatens us; and we nurture and improve upon it when such an in-

²³ Malherbe, "L'Éthique entre nature et culture" 321–22; Josef Fuchs, "Historicity and Moral Norm," in his *Moral Demands and Personal Obligations* (Washington: Georgetown University, 1993) 95.

²⁴ This builds on the Thomistic understanding of the natural law where "lex naturalis est aliquid a ratione constitutum" (*Summa theologiae* 1–2, q. 94, a.1). As Demmer writes, "Moral reasoning establishes the objective moral claim in the sense of a progressive discovery. The establishment (*costituzione*) and the discovery of a moral claim are entwined together; the one does not exist without the other" (Klaus Demmer, "Il 'nuovo' nell'attuale problematica intorno allo specifico dell'etica cristiana," in *Il problema del nuovo nella teologia morale*, ed. Lorenzo Alvarez-Verdes, Quaestiones Morales Accademia Alfonsiana 2 [Rome: Editrice Rogata, 1986] 82; my translation).

²⁵ Gibson Winter, *Liberating Creation: Foundations of Religious Social Ethics* (New York: Crossroad, 1981) 126.

²⁶ Klaus Demmer, *Moraltheologische Methodenlehre*, Studien zur theologischen Ethik 27 (Freiburg: Herder, 1989) 61.

tervention leads to a higher quality of life for us."²⁷ In other terms, natural-law arguments can be interpreted as a moral shorthand for the community's normative self understanding, or the community's way of being and acting with others in the world.

The metaphorical structure of normativity also allows for an insight gained from general contemporary hermeneutical theory to be introduced into the understanding of normative nature. A similarity can be drawn between a text and nature. Nature, like a literary text, is ambivalent. Both have an element of indeterminacy; both are in need of interpretation. Like the meaning of a text, the normative meaning of nature is disclosed through the hermeneutical process of reading. In a way reminiscent of the experience of George's voyager, Gadamer reminds us that "the text brings a subject matter into language, but that it does so is ultimately the achievement of the interpreter." Neither the text alone nor the reader totally determines the reading. "Both have to share in it."²⁸ This hermeneutical insight protects nature from being interpreted arbitrarily by freedom; it also protects freedom from being restricted arbitrarily by nature. The metaphorical structure of normativity, then, serves as an antidote to any sort of dualism between person and nature.

Moreover, the indeterminacy of the text or its dynamic potential forms the basis for the active and creative side of reading. In the act of interpretation, the reader is entangled in the text and caught up in the very thing produced, which is the meaning of the text. In a moral context, behind the creative reading or normative redescription of nature is the ideology of human fulfillment, so that what is reflected in the normativity of nature are our possibilities of being and acting in the world. The criteria by which nature is transcended and normatively redescended are the legitimate expectations of freedom that condition and guide insight. This means that the metaphorical structure of normativity provides a critical account of the natural law in that moral reasoning is not merely passive or receptive in face of nature, but moral reasoning has an active, imaginative, and a creative role in fashioning human goods in the service of the ideology of human fulfillment. As the meaning of a text is determined in part by the horizon of the reader, the legitimate expectations of freedom condition the perception and fashioning of premoral but morally relevant goods.²⁹ The weighing of moral goods is never done in an abstract

²⁷ Klaus Demmer, *Deuten und handeln: Grundlagen und Grundfragen der Fundamentalmoral*, Studien zur theologischen Ethik 15 (Freiburg: Herder, 1985) 136; my translation.

²⁸ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Crossroad, 1992) 388. For the structure of reading, see Werner G. Jeanrond, *Text and Interpretation as Categories of Theological Thinking*, trans. Thomas J. Wilson (New York: Crossroad, 1988) 105–14.

²⁹ As Demmer writes, "all individual human goods function in light of the given end; the part is in service of the whole" ("Natur und Person" 61; my translation); see also

way, but always within the boundaries established by the legitimate expectations of freedom.

Finally, reflective of the finitude of every reading, the metaphorical structure of normativity means that *natura normativa* shares in the effective history of freedom. The metaphorical structure of normativity reflects the mutual accommodation between freedom and nature in a way that allows for truly new meanings of normativity to arise from the dialectical structure of insight and experience.³⁰ As what Rorty has labelled a "final vocabulary"—"the words in which we tell . . . the story of our lives"—can be cast into doubt, forcing at least some in the language community to become philosophers to enrich the present vocabulary and to revise traditional narratives, so too, commonplace configurations of normativity can be disrupted as a prelude to a new constellation between freedom and nature.³¹ As biases in the community's narrative are brought to light and reversed (similar perhaps to a shift of paradigm in the philosophy of science), new similarities between the realms of freedom and nature are recognized, or new resemblances are invented by the creative power of moral reasoning. Through the formation of a new kinship, the limits and possibilities of nature and freedom are reconfigured in such a way that new alternatives of moral action emerge.

ANALYSIS OF MORAL ACTION

Contemporary hermeneutical theory has provided a critical perspective of our historical situation where technology has eclipsed other forms of knowledge. Sharing in this hermeneutical interest allows the metaphorical structure of normativity to retrieve and enrich our understanding of practical reasoning. As a practical science, moral discourse is distinguished from both *episteme* and *techne*.³² Practical knowledge or *phronesis* differs from theoretical knowledge in that theoretical knowledge is a characteristic of the *vita contem-*

Enrico Chiavacci, "Für eine Neuinterpretation des Naturbegriffs," in *Moraltheologie im Abseits?* 126–27.

³⁰ See, e.g., Josef Fuchs, "Innovative Morality," in *Moral Demands and Personal Obligations* 107–21.

³¹ For the notion of a final vocabulary see Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1989) 73. Many fine studies from a feminist perspective have emphasized the transformation of traditional moral narratives, see, e.g., Anne Patrick, "Narrative and the Social Dynamics of Virtue," in *Changing Values and Virtues*, ed. Dietmar Mieth and Jacques Pohier, Concilium 191 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1987) 69–80; and Sidney Callahan, *In Good Conscience: Reason and Emotion in Moral Decision Making* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991) 129–33, 138–42.

³² See, e.g., P. Christopher Smith, *Hermeneutics and Human Finitude: Toward a Theory of Ethical Understanding* (New York: Fordham University, 1991) 69–76; also Albert R. Jonsen and Stephen Toulmin, *The Abuse of Casuistry: A History of Moral Reasoning* (Berkeley: University of California, 1988) 64–68; Richard J. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1983) 146–50.

plativa. Practical knowledge differs from technical reasoning in that the practical knowledge does not guide the fabrication of an artificial object, but is concerned with action as a mode of revealing the ideology of human fulfillment.³³ Through our actions our moral identities and characters are formed, or, as Bernstein writes, “*phronesis* determines the being of the *phronimos*.”³⁴

The particularity of moral reasoning allows for a more nuanced consideration of the distinction that is often made in epistemological discussions between the logic of genesis and justification of a moral norm.³⁵ The justification of a moral norm cannot be modeled on the abstract arguments of theoretical knowledge or the monological control of some theories of science. As a form of practical knowledge, the justification of a moral norm depends upon the legitimate expectations of freedom in a way that the logic of genesis or discovery is not accidental to but constitutive of moral truth.

The distinction between the context of genesis and the justification of a moral norm shadows the contemporary debate between virtue ethics and discourse ethics, or the understanding of the relationship between moral goodness and rightness. For virtue ethicists, the liberal commitment to justice ignores the constitutive role tradition and conceptions of the good have in any account of the justification of moral norms. Discourse ethics reflects a procedural rationality and notion of justice that transcend and govern conflicts among competing ideologies of human fulfillment. The relationship between virtue ethics and discourse ethics is best expressed hermeneutically in order to avoid any hint of empty formalism or chaotic relativism. On the one hand, because discourse ethics is abstracted from the communication practices of individual traditions, it is dependent upon substantive conceptions of the good. On the other hand, though the universal ethic of communication cannot generate substantive conceptions of the good, it supplies the criteria by which to govern, test, and rationally critique them.³⁶

³³ *Phronesis* also differs from *techne* in that moral knowledge involves a concern for others; see the fine study of Paul Wadell, *Friendship and the Moral Life* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1989).

³⁴ Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism* 150.

³⁵ Compare Bruno Schüller, “The Debate on the Specific Character of a Christian Ethics: Some Remarks,” in *Wholly Human* 37–38; and Klaus Demmer, *Deuten und handeln* 17.

³⁶ As Jürgen Habermas asserts, legitimate “insights cannot be forgotten at will; they can only be repressed or corrected by better insights” (*The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Frederick Lawrence [Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1987] 84). Compare Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1989) 27; see also Jürgen Habermas, *Justification and Application: Remarks on Discourse Ethics*, trans. Ciaran P. Cronin (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1993) 150; and Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopedia, Genealogy, and Tradition* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1990) 46.

The phronetic character of moral reasoning provides an insight into the meaning of history which itself parallels the metaphorical structure of normativity. As normative nature is distinguished from the facticity of nature, history can be distinguished from the more primordial category of time. Time is the passing moments of the day; time recounts the succession of one moment to the next; time is a cosmocentric category. History, however, is an anthropocentric category; history is the progressive mediation of freedom's possibilities into time; history is the day as it contributes to and is interpreted by our life projects.³⁷ That is what Lonergan means when he observes that, "History is man's making of man."³⁸ As nature is carried over, molded, and transformed by the personal order, time is the medium for the exertion of human transcendence. Like the metaphorical structure of normativity, history reflects the imaginative and creative impulse of moral reasoning.

The difference between a cosmocentric and an anthropocentric conception of history is seen not only in different understandings of normative nature but also in different analyses of moral action. This means that the same critical approach to the natural law entailed in the metaphorical structure of normativity can be carried through in the determination of the moral object. As theory and praxis mutually condition each other, so too, an analysis of moral action presupposes and reflects a theory of normative nature.³⁹

Within the neo-Scholastic manualist tradition, the metaphysics of the moral act centered on the meaning of the moral object.⁴⁰ The point of departure for the determination of the moral object was the *finis operis*. This of course made sense when the determination of the moral object was made within the epistemological tradition of realism. Nevertheless, this realist tradition was restricted by a modern notion of science and the casuistic categories of jurisprudence.⁴¹ Within such a state of affairs, the *finis operantis* or the end of the

³⁷ "History is time that is understood, interpreted and formed by insight and freedom" (Demmer, *Deuten und handeln* 52; my translation); see also Demmer, *Moraltheologische Methodenlehre* 144–46.

³⁸ Bernard Lonergan, "Natural Right and Historical Mindedness," in *A Third Collection*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe (New York: Paulist, 1985) 170.

³⁹ "Whoever formulates and proposes a moral norm must also anticipate how the norm is to be actually embodied. In this way, there is no normative theory which does not entail a theory of action; the one conditions the other" (Klaus Demmer, *Christliche Existenz unter dem Anspruch des Rechts: Ethische Bausteine der Rechts-theologie*, Studien zur theologischen Ethik 67 [Freiburg: Herder, 1995] 93; my translation).

⁴⁰ Gerhard Höver, *Sittlich handeln im Medium der Zeit: Ansätze zur handlungstheoretischen Neuorientierung der Moraltheologie* (Würzburg: Echter, 1988) 10–49; also Gerhard Stanke, *Die Lehre von den 'Quellen der Moralität': Darstellung und Diskussion der neuscholastischen Aussagen und neuerer Ansätze*, Studien zur Geschichte der katholischen Moraltheologie 26 (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1984).

⁴¹ See, e.g., Norbert J. Rigali, "Reimagining Morality: A Matter of Metaphors," *Heythrop Journal* 35 (1994) 3–4; Jonsen and Toulmin, *The Abuse of Casuistry* 275–76.

agent was relegated to the psychology of action. The intention of the agent was a *circumstantia principalis* and could modify the moral act only accidentally.⁴²

This traditional analysis of moral action had at least two important effects. First, moral objectivity was attributed to the phenomenal structure of the act, which in turn circumscribed the possible interpretations of the action.⁴³ Second, while this circumspection protected a high level of communicability in conformity to the modern ideal of science, the price that this communicability exacted was the impression that moral action no longer presupposed a human subject. There was a clear line drawn between objective and subjective spheres of reality.

The metaphorical structure of normativity, however, provides the context in which to revise the traditional understanding of the relationship between the *finis operis* and the *finis operantis* in moral action. What was said of nature and person provides the basis for a renewed analysis of moral action which is freed from the tradition's stark and essentialist categories. Like nature as it is given, the ontic structure of the action is morally ambivalent and capable of various interpretations. Like nature, in other words, the ontic structure of the act is underdetermined. When normative nature is construed metaphorically, the meaning of the moral act is known only when read against the background of the ideology of human fulfillment. Our actions are not limited or defined by nature alone, but the legitimate expectations of freedom and insight *in* nature. The legitimate expectations of freedom form the subjective and transcendental ground for the objective meaning of the act. Now when the moral determination of the act depends on the moral object, the moral object is seen under the sway of the life project that predetermines freedom and insight.⁴⁴ The moral object is the result of a metaphorical redescription of the ontic structure of the act in light of the ideology of human fulfillment. In this sense, moral actions can be said to be a mimesis of the legitimate expectations of freedom.⁴⁵ In the context of a more critical theory of normative nature, then, the *finis operantis* can no longer be relegated to the psychology of action as in a reductive normative theory, but it now plays an active and constitutive role in the determination

⁴² This trend continues in William E. May, *Moral Absolutes: Catholic Tradition, Current Trends and the Truth* (Milwaukee: Marquette University, 1989).

⁴³ Stanke, *Die Lehre von den 'Quellen der Moralität'* 23.

⁴⁴ Klaus Demmer, *Die Wahrheit leben: Theorie des Handelns* (Freiburg: Herder, 1991) 208.

⁴⁵ William Schweiker, *Mimetic Reflections: A Study in Hermeneutics, Theology and Ethics* (New York: Fordham University, 1990) 62–68; see also Smith, *Hermeneutics and Human Finitude* 243–44. The mutually conditioning relationship between the legitimate expectations of freedom and moral casuistry is detailed in the recent studies of James F. Keenan, S.J., "The Function of the Principle of Double Effect," *TS* 54 (1993) 307–11, and Thomas R. Kopfensteiner, "Science, Metaphor, and Moral Casuistry," in *The Context of Casuistry*, ed. Thomas A. Shannon and James F. Keenan, S.J. (Washington: Georgetown University, 1995) 207–18.

of the moral object of the act. *What* is done is always viewed from *why* it is done; that is, the *finis operatis* becomes the true *finis operis* of an act.⁴⁶

In the neo-Scholastic manuals of moral theology, the theory of intrinsically evil acts were treated under the analysis of moral action. A renewed analysis of action that is based on the metaphorical structure of normativity, then, will have repercussions on the much debated theory of intrinsically evil acts.⁴⁷ It must be remembered that the theory of intrinsically evil acts refers to the *moral* character of an action. As such, the theory of intrinsic evil refers to an action's ontological character and can never be reduced to or designated by a purely descriptive or ontic category. This prevents the theory of intrinsic evil from being equated with the naturalistic fallacy that is based on a positivist separation of fact and value.⁴⁸ Moral actions contain both evaluative and descriptive elements. Rather, as we have seen, entailed in normative theory and act analysis is a conception of history, so that a distinction can be drawn between the adequacy of the theory of intrinsic evil and the inadequacy of certain epistemological contexts in which the moral act is analyzed.

Within the cosmocentric notion of history, for instance, the analysis of intrinsically evil acts focuses on the ontic or phenomenal structure of the act in face of which the subject is a passive and accidental observer. This cosmocentric conception of history entails an uncritical understanding of normative nature in which the object of the moral act is strictly circumscribed, and moral language takes on a univocal character.⁴⁹ Within a cosmocentric notion of history, the theory of intrinsically evil acts is restricted by a naïve realist epistemology and a truncated normative theory.

Within an anthropocentric conception of history, however, the focus of the analysis of the moral act is the legitimate expectations of free-

⁴⁶ Klaus Demmer, *Sein und Gebot: Die Bedeutsamkeit des transzendentalphilosophischen Denkansatzes in der Scholastik der Gegenwart für den formalen Aufriss der Fundamentalmoral* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1971) 101.

⁴⁷ Josef Fuchs, "An Ongoing Discussion in Christian Ethics: Intrinsically Evil Acts?" in his *Christian Ethics in a Secular Arena* (Washington: Georgetown University, 1984) 71–90; Klaus Demmer, "Erwägungen zum intrinsece malum," *Gregorianum* 68 (1987) 613–37; Bernard Hoose, "Circumstances, Intentions and Intrinsically Evil Acts," in *The Splendor of Accuracy: An Examination of the Assertions Made by Veritatis Splendor*, ed. Joseph A. Selling and Jan Jans (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) 136–52.

⁴⁸ *Veritatis splendor* no. 47. As Demmer reminds us, it is one thing to work with an ahistorical and essentialist metaphysics of human nature, it is quite another to commit the naturalistic fallacy; compare Klaus Demmer, *Die Wahrheit leben* 209–12 and Josef Fuchs, "Natural Law or Naturalistic Fallacy?" in *Moral Demands and Personal Obligations* 34–41.

⁴⁹ Because of the latent objectivism that this conception of history entails, "it can be forgotten . . . that human goods are transformed, cultivated and modified for the better by moral reasoning" (Demmer, "Natur und Person" 62; my translation). Again, this conception of history is based on an essentialist metaphysics of human nature, the consequence of which is seen in a reductive analysis of moral action.

dom that are constitutive of the moral object. As an anthropocentric category, history is reflective of the metaphorical structure of normativity that is based on a critical realist epistemology where nature is interpreted and ordered in terms of the person. Within the metaphorical structure of normativity and its concomitant analysis of moral action where moral acts are mimetic reflections of freedom, then, the theory of intrinsic evil does not refer to those acts abstracted from history and without regard to the moral subject, but to those acts that fall behind achieved standards of freedom according to which we shape our lives in a human way.⁵⁰ The debate about the theory of intrinsic evil is not a question of the theory's validity. The debate, rather, is over the adequacy of the neo-Scholastic tradition's understanding of normative nature and its analysis of moral action in light of the requirements of history.⁵¹

This shift in contexts does not mean that the phenomenal character of the action can be ignored, any more than freedom and insight can be untethered from nature or (to invoke the parallel to hermeneutical theory again) any more than the text could be ignored in its valid interpretation. The shift in contexts means, rather, that within the metaphorical structure of normativity the theory of intrinsic evil is understood in a way that the moral object shares in the dialectical relationship between experience and insight. The moral object is not portable to any context as the tradition assumed, but reflects the scope and established limits of freedom's legitimate possibilities. As freedom's legitimate possibilities expand through experience and insight, a flexibility is introduced into the determination of the moral object that is not possible within an essentialist and epistemologically naïve normative theory or analysis of action.

Another point should be clarified to avoid any hint of relativism or historicism in regard to the theory of intrinsic evil. The theory of intrinsic evil is invoked at times to refer to those acts that cannot be justified under any circumstances. The theory assumes that there are no possible circumstances in which such an action could be justified. Such actions are often described in formal moral terms. The issue, however, is not whether actions like lying or murder or adultery can ever be justified, but what constitutes those actions.⁵² Formal moral terms stand in need of interpretation. Their meaning always stands between a hermeneutic of tradition and a critique of ideology which gives them a hypothetical character.⁵³ Their colloquial and unques-

⁵⁰ On the issue of moral progress, see Thomas R. Kopfensteiner, "Historical Epistemology and Moral Progress," *Heythrop Journal* 33 (1992) 54–57; also John Kekes, *The Morality of Pluralism* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1993) 139–41.

⁵¹ Demmer, *Die Wahrheit leben* 211.

⁵² Böckle, "Nature as the Basis for Morality" 397–98.

⁵³ Paul Ricoeur, "Ethics and Culture: Habermas and Gadamer in Dialogue," *Philosophy Today* 17 (1973) 153–65.

tioned usage cannot be evidence against the fact that their meaning shares in the effective history of moral insight. What is meant by formal moral terms can be known only when one knows the goods that they are meant to protect. When the meaning attributed to a moral term is seen as a continual historical accomplishment, it can be asked whether heretofore unanticipated circumstances provide the opportunity for moral reasoning to weigh the goods anew in order to nuance the meaning of a formal term. What is the nature of the good to be gained or lost? What actions are possible here and now? The revision of a term's meaning does not reflect the dissolution of its obligatory force, as one might suspect when working with a cosmocentric conception of history and its univocal conception of language. The ability of moral language to be enriched hermeneutically reflects language's polysemantic character which allows new standards of freedom to be achieved by moral insight and carried through in moral action.

CONCLUSION

This brief survey of literature has shown that the legacy of metaphor extends from the traditional notion of transfer and comparison to a stronger accent on the creative tension within a cognitive field and the role of metaphor as a heuristic model, and from here, to its ontological significance where there is a mutual accommodation between language and the world. Metaphors are, in this final regard, ways of knowing; they give an understanding of the world. But as Gibson Winter observed, this means that "different metaphors present different worlds" in a way that "a shift in metaphors may mean new insights into the nature of life and new possibilities of human dwelling."⁵⁴

My purpose in this article has been to cast the relationship between person and nature in terms of metaphor not only to respect their essential unity but to gain a number of other insights into moral reasoning. The metaphorical structure of normativity guarantees that natural-law arguments share in the revelatory character of metaphor, in that the praxis sanctioned or prohibited by a moral norm reveals and introduces one into the community's legitimate expectations of freedom, the community's way of being and acting with others in the world. The metaphorical structure of normativity also retrieves the phronetic character of moral reasoning and underscores that moral reasoning plays an active and creative role in shaping nature in the service of the good of the person. And finally, metaphor is the vehicle for historical change, so that metaphorical redescription is the means for the disclosure of "new insights into the nature of life and new possibilities of human dwelling." This means that nature is always redescrbed in light of the ideology of human fulfillment in such a way that normative nature is not a univocal reality but shares in the dialectical structure of experience and insight.

⁵⁴ Winter, *Liberating Creation* 8.