

A Comparative Study on the Ethics of John Dewey and Thomas Aquinas

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Abstract

Dewey rejects any idea of a universal good or a supreme good in his ethics. The reason is that the good is realized only in the individual situation. Thus only the individual good is real and has adverbial meaning. The idea of relatively universal good is just an idea, generalized from the individual good through the intellectual action. The idea of universal good is recognized as an instrument in solving the individual condition. Because a new situation is occurring at all times, the real good is determined in the continuing conduct of an individual situation. Good, thus, is determined in the continuing growth and not in the fixed condition.

Thomas Aquinas explains good and evil in terms of human nature. The human nature as an image of God [Imago Dei] is not changed ontologically but changed at the phenomenal dimension of self-realization in time and space, that is, environment. Therefore in the theory of ethics of Thomas Aquinas, natural law [lex naturalis], the highest (supreme) good, ultimately guide human ethics. I wish to use Aquinas to point out the weak points of Dewey's ethics. I will also appeal to the universal elements of Confucianism and Buddhism.

Introduction:

The reason that I chose this title is twofold: On the one hand, present-day Korea has been experiencing continuous political confusion, being claimed by the leaders of both the ruling party and the opposition party, arguing that they would lay out the policies based on a kind of pragmatism. However, I am worried whether they really know what pragmatism is, and that their actions will lead to an aggravation of the problems rather than to their solution. On the other hand, the increased development of the natural sciences, technology and commercialism, allows a kind of pragmatism to permeate

every aspect of life. Therefore, I would like to attempt to compare and investigate John Dewey's pragmatic theory of ethics, with St. Thomas's theory of ethics in order to provide some criticism. Because of the huge amount written on Dewey's ethics, I would like to focus upon the question of good and evil. In addition I will introduce some consideration of Confucianism and Buddhism as well.

Dewey's Ethics

Dewey makes many statements about the good. His theory of good is positioned at the very core of his ethics. Here I wish to investigate his theory of moral good by focusing on his later works, *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (1920), *Human Nature and Conduct* (1922) and *Ethics* (1932), and attempt to summarize his theory of the good.

1) Dewey, in the *Reconstruction in Philosophy*¹, explains briefly his reconstruction in moral conceptions (moral reconstructionism). Here, Dewey attempts to refute the *universal* approach to truth and morality, discussing instead the *particular* moral good. He believes that truth and morality occurs only in concrete and individual situations, and that all moral categories depend upon these individual situations. Therefore, Dewey denies the supreme good as the ultimate criterion or source of morality, because morality or good occurs only in special or individual situations. According to Dewey, the idea of morality or good might have initially originated from customs. With the development of social life, however, customs came into collision with each other in many areas. The Greeks thus attempted to define morality based on rationality rather than upon customs. In the West, at least, Ethical theories have thus approached moral problems through the idea of an ultimate purpose, ultimate good, and ultimate principle. This "ultimate" is expressed in a variety of ways: God's will, a ruler's will, or the sum of all pleasure.

However, Dewey holds that this ultimate end is a production of feudalism and should be changed in accordance with the changes within social systems and the development of natural science. As natural science deals with the concrete, special, and individual situations, so the definition of good and evil should be examined only in the concrete and individual situation. Therefore, an individual good rather than a universal good or supreme good should be

¹John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, New York, Henry Holt and Co., 1920, C. VII.

considered, because man lives a concrete and individual life in an individual situation rather than universal life in a universal situation. Good is performed in the action of the concrete moral subject under the individual situation. Ultimate end or supreme good is completely a product of human reason. Therefore, the supreme good as a moral criterion should be expelled from ethics. Instead, the individual and concrete situation should be introduced as the basis of moral criteria. The determination of the good should be restricted to the action of the moral subject, that is, of an individual under a given situation. The Good is done as the solution of an individual situation which is never clear and certain. The action towards a solution of a particular situation is always individual and special, concrete and personal, and unique. Therefore, the judgement of an action should be individual, resulting in the solution of an individual situation. The Good therefore has an *adverbial* character. For instance, when you ask for justice, it means you ask that someone acts *justly* in a concrete situation. As truth is considered as an adverb of *justly* in the solution of an uncertain situation, so good is regarded as an adverb rather than adjective in a moral situation.²

Good in Dewey, with the change and progress of an individual situation, should be concrete, individual, changeable and promotional. Moral situations include conflicting elements: that is, conflicting desires and, conflicting purposes and goods. Therefore, the correct action in a given situation, is not clear or self-evident in itself. Thus a judgement is needed to choose among one of several situation-solving propositions. In this very sense, the action of an intellect is required. Those who are in this situation, therefore, should consider the uprightness and real good [verum bonum] of an action. The standard for the right action and real good is: the thing which contributes to human advantage examined collectively. The action is justified by the result which follows, that is, the good is only determined when the initial idea is examined relative to the result. The initial idea is only a hypothesis until verified. So the standard of good in this

² John Dewey, *Ibid.*, pp.161–167.

"Action is always specific, concrete, individualized, unique. And consequently judgement as to acts to be performed must be similarly specific. To say that man seeks health or justice is only to say that he seeks to live healthily or justly. These things like truth, are adverbial. They are modifies of action in special cases"(p.167).

case, is determined when the anticipated moral result, in the solution to the situation, is consistent with the moral result which follows.³

Dewey refuses to draw a distinction between the intrinsic good, which is worthy in itself, and the instrumental good, which is of value only as an instrument for the intrinsic good.⁴ The distinction between the intrinsic good and extrinsic good is based upon a fixed value, or on an absolute good that Dewey rejects. Again, according to Dewey, this is because the good is confined to an individual and particular situation. Therefore, the distinction between intrinsic value and instrumental value can not be made. The good is just one, and is the supreme good in a particular situation. The instrumental good, which was recognized before as a lesser level of good, is now the same level of good as the ideal and intrinsic good.⁵ Dewey also rejects the distinction between moral good and physical or natural good. It is because physical good also has a moral value when contributed to a human being. The natural sciences, such as physics, chemistry, biology, medicine, and so on, become moral when they contribute to the elimination of agonies and disasters. Also natural science is examined from the viewpoint of social relations, that is, contributing to human well-being. In other words, it contributes to the benefit of human life.⁶

In summary, Dewey considers the good as an action directed towards solving a problem within a particular situation, through the reflection of the intellect. Thus the universal moral and the supreme good are rejected but the individual good is admitted. The final resolution of a

³ Ibid., pp.163–164

⁴ Ibid., pp.171

⁵ Ibid., pp.175–176.

⁶ Ibid., p.173.

"When physics, chemistry, biology, medicine, contribute to the detection of concrete human woes and to the development of plans for remedying them and receiving the human estate, they became moral; they become part of the apparatus of moral inquiry or science. The latter then loses its peculiar flavor of didactic and pedantic; its ultra moralistic hortatory tone. It loses its thinness and shrillness as well as its vagueness. It gains agencies that are efficacious. But the gain is not confined to the side of moral science. Natural science loses its divorce from humanity; it becomes itself humanistic in quality. It is something to be pursued not in a technical and specialized way for what is called truth for its own sake, but with the sense of its social bearing, its intellectual indispensableness. It is technical only in the sense that it provides the technique of social and moral engineering."

situation is not possible because a new problematic situation is occurring all the time. This solution, thus, is a continuing process. This is what we need to consider next.⁷

2) Dewey, in *Human Nature and Conduct*⁸, examines the moral good on the basis of action. Moral action is a continual process but not a fixed achievement. That is, the moral good is determined when the action grows into the meaning. The growth or expansion in this meaning occurs in the observation of the outcome and condition of a conduct.⁹ The good determined by the continuing conduct means performing the current action for an indeterminate situation. Therefore, good is determined in the organized process with growth. The present time includes various impulses and habits. It is something continuing, which includes memory, observation, foreseeing and so on. Moreover, the present time is a moral momentum and has the power which allows man to progress. Dewey thus examines the good in terms of progress and development of action. The good, that is, is determined in the action developed from the indeterminate to the determinate situation.

Human life includes various entangled elements and ambiguities. Development or progress is achieved when something moves from a lesser condition to a better condition. It is achieved in the process of the improvement of the situation, although it never reaches a final condition. Moral good, in the ethics of Dewey, refers to the action that is progressing towards a determinate and organic growth situation, from an indeterminate or confused situation of moral conduct. Dewey considers this conduct from the sufficiency of impulse and habit, and from the continuity. Dewey thus rejects the ideological moral good of Plato, Aristotle, and Spinoza. It is

⁷ Ibid., p.177.

"...the process of growth, of improvement and progress, rather than the static outcome and result, becomes the significant thing. Not health has an end fixed once and for all, but the need improvement in health...a continual process...is the end and good. The end is no longer a terminus or limit to be reached. It is the active process of transforming the existent situation. Not perfection as a final goal, but the ever-enduring process of perfecting, maturing, refining is the aim in living. Honesty, industry, temperance, justice, like health, wealth and learning, are not goods to be possessed as they would be if they expressed ends to be attained. They are directions of change in the quality of experience. Growth itself is the only moral 'end'."

⁸ John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct*, pp.278–332.

⁹ Ibid., p.280

"When we observe that morality is at home wherever considerations of the worse and better are involved, we are committed to noting that morality is a continuing process not a fixed achievement. Morals means growth of conduct in meaning; at least it means that kind of expansion in meaning which is consequent upon observations of conditions and outcome of conduct."

because they just claim the transcendental moral meaning to which experience is subordinate, not considering the morality within the limits of experience. Dewey also rejects the utilitarian theory of good. While he appreciates utilitarianism's concern with the good relative to earthly meaning, he criticizes that utilitarianism's consideration of the good as something separated from the present, or something ideal to be acquired, rather than something to be accomplished by present conduct.

Dewey also rejects the good of Epicureanism. While he appreciates how Epicureanism examines the good from the present, and not from an uncertain future, nevertheless, it does not consider good in relation to the total category of a particular conduct. Dewey investigates the good in the sufficiency of desire or impulse in connection with social environment.¹⁰ Dewey here questions how we think about others. According to him, the other self is worth as much as my own.¹¹ The good is determined in the growth of meaning of an activity. An activity has moral meaning in the degree in which it has variety and intimacy in relation to social environment.¹²

In short, the good in Dewey is determined in continuing conduct. This conduct is to improve a situation or to solve a problem. It is determined in the harmonious fulfillment of impulse and desire in the improvement of a continuous and problematic situation.

Dewey here mentions evil. Evil is not determined in itself. One good is chosen whereas others rejected among the competing good presented in the given problematic situation. Rejected good is regarded as evil within the situation.¹³

¹⁰ Ibid., p.288–291.

¹¹ Ibid., p.293.

"selfishness for selfishness, one is as good as another: our own is worth as much as another's ... It shows that good is the same in quality wherever it is found, whether in some other self or in one's own."

¹² Ibid.

"An activity has meaning in the degree in which it establishes and acknowledges variety and intimacy of connections."

¹³ Ibid., p.278.

"In deliberation and before choice no evil presents itself as evil. Until it is rejected, it is a competing good. After rejection, it figures not as a lesser good, but as the bad of that situation."

3) Dewey examines good in its relation to desire, and to thought. He considers it in its relation to an object to be attained and an idea of an object.¹⁴ This is the pursuit of a real good [verum bonum].

Dewey thinks that all good should also include an element of enjoyment. Otherwise it does not induce human conduct and remains neutral. Yet, all pleasure is not a good.¹⁵ We cannot consider some pleasures good, if the enjoyment is separated from the environmental condition, or not considered in harmonious relation with the conditions. In other words, some pleasures are not good if they are not considered from a problematic situation. The harmonious solution of the problematic situation is done through reflection or thought. Through the reflection of the intellect, pleasure or sufficiency is considered within a larger context of conduct and character.

Dewey names such pleasure happiness. This happiness is determined in the harmony of various desires and tendencies. In other words, this happiness is achieved through the harmony of self through the reflection of the intellect in an environment or even an adverse situation. Good is determined in this happiness.¹⁶ Evil, on the other hand, can be said to be determined in direct pleasure and the pleasure separated from the social relations.

Dewey, in this way, examines the real good in social relations. It is because a human being is social, and because the morality of a man is also social in essence. An individual is born in a certain social environment in which he acts and is shaped intellectually and morally. An individual also acts on his environment.¹⁷ Material for reflection and choice comes from social

¹⁴ John Dewey & H. Tufts, *Ethics*, pp.204–205.

"In its relation to desire, it requires a theory of the good; The good is that which satisfies want, craving, which fulfills or makes complete the need which stirs to action. In its relation to thought, or as an idea of an object to be attained, it imposes upon those about to act the necessity for rational insight, or moral wisdom."

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.210.

"It is true that there is nothing to us which does not include an element of enjoyment and nothing bad which does not contain an element of the disagreeable and repulsive. Otherwise the act of object is merely indifferent. It is passed by. But the statement that all good has enjoyment as an ingredient is not equivalent to the statement that all pleasure is a good."

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.210–215

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.350.

environment and system.¹⁸ The social environment is here considered from a material perspective.¹⁹

An idea of good is formed in relation to social elements. It is when the sufficiency of desire is considered in the improvement of the social situation.²⁰

4) Dewey also acknowledges the collision between individual and social happiness. Social or common happiness often requires the sacrifice of an individual happiness. Thus the question of why one should sacrifice one's individual happiness for the common good, or other's happiness is raised. Dewey, rejecting all the objective elements or law of duty, attempts to approach it from the consciousness of happiness. He maintains that one who chooses social happiness rather than individual happiness feels happiness although social happiness has less density than the sufficiency of individual desire.

Dewey attempts to provide some rational motive in choosing social happiness at the cost of individual happiness. For him, social happiness evaluated and chosen by the agent as the noblest value, and the value which cannot be compared with any other happiness. This is his only reason why one should sacrifice one's individual happiness for the social happiness.²¹

It seems that Dewey here has a critical weakness in his ethical theory. It is because his ethics does not admit the objectivity of duty in itself [qua talis]. In fact, the sense of sufficiency, from the viewpoint of completion of social happiness, is not enough for sacrificing the sufficiency of stronger tendency and passion of egoism. In fact, individual happiness, which is direct, has higher and deeper density than social happiness. Furthermore, social or communal happiness requires the biggest sacrifice of an individual in some cases. For instance, it can even require the sacrifice or death of an individual life. For this sacrifice, some reason or principle of more fundamental duty is required than some sense of social happiness self-imposed at the cost of individual happiness. One needs the objective imposition of external duty. In fact, nobody imposes his or her own duty, duty is characterized by being externally imposed. Yet, we do have

¹⁸ Ibid., p.351.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.347.

"The analysis of the previous part(Par. II) may be called formal, since it deals with basic conceptions of morals, such as good, right, duty, approbation, standard, virtue, etc. Now we shall consider the content or material of these ideas which is provided by contemporary organization of life."

²⁰ Ibid., pp.352-354

²¹ Ibid., p.272

the consciousness of duty - or conscience – where we experience the externally imposed duty from the inside - that is, conscience which tells us to act for communal good at the cost of one's individual good.

Now, I will try to summarize briefly the theory of good in Dewey's ethics. The universal good or the supreme good is not admitted in Dewey's ethics. The reason is that the good is realized only in the individual situation. Thus only the individual good is real and has adverbial meaning. The idea of relatively universal good is just an idea, generalized from the individual good through intellectual action. The idea of universal good is recognized as an instrument for solving the individual situations. Thus the good is achieved through continuing action. That is, because a new situation is occurring at all times, the real good is determined in the continuing conduct of an individual within an individual situation. It is realized in the sufficiency of individual desire in solving and improving the individual situation, done in the viewpoint of social relations. In other words, Dewey's moral real good [verum bonum] is realized in filling up the individual desire from the viewpoint of improving the life of human beings. Thus, Dewey's theory of good follows utilitarianism, which, in a way, he further developed.

2. On Human Nature and the Changeability of Morality

Human nature in Dewey's theory is considered from the three perspectives: namely impulse, habit, and intellectual action. Human nature is changeable. Thus morals, which are totally determined by the interaction between human nature and circumstances, is also changeable. This change is accomplished by intellectual action. Dewey thinks that the impulse can be changed into any form depending on how it is used. This is especially the case in his earlier writings.²² Impulse and instinct, although they have relative permanency and confirmed character toward their proper objectives, are not eternally fixed, and can be changed into whatever forms by the interaction with circumstances. Impulse and instinct possess the impulsive power of life. In this sense, Dewey's theory is in line with the "elan vital" of Bergson. Dewey examines impulse in the guidance of intellectual action. Impulse should be liberated from the shackles of the habit, system, custom, etc. These things have a tendency to freeze the

²² Cf. John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct*, p.93.

state which it already possesses, and one needs to escape from the shackles of things when they are not proper in solving the new situations. Furthermore, the power of impulse should be fully used in reconstructing the habit and systems in order to advance to a better situation. Liberation of impulse should be done in order to allow adaptability and to give new life to habit, to allow it to be a proper instrument for solving a new situation. Impulse keeps changing in the interaction with the situation. The present impulse and instinct have been acquired through human life including the evolutionary process over a long period of time. The habit, system, or custom constructed by impulse is always changing and adapting into new situations. The change of human habit, system, and custom is carried out by the guidance of intellectual action. Human instinct changes in this way and so do morals. It is because Dewey's morals take place in the interaction with impulse, habit, system, and circumstances by the light of intellectual action. Morals thus should be changed in accordance with the change of impulse and system. Morals also should be reconstructed by the reorganization of custom and system. Therefore, fixed morals or some permanent and unchangeable commandments of morals are excluded in Dewey's ethics.²³

On the Standard of Good and Evil of Dewey and Thomism.

We saw how in Dewey's philosophy, the good is individual in essence, not universal. He therefore does not accept a supreme good which is real and a standard for individual good. The supreme good is purely an outcome of reason. Individual good grows lively with a man's life because the situation of the life of a human being grows. So, in Dewey's ethics, there is no internal and essential distinction between good and evil. This is because the good acquired through an experience in one situation could become an evil in other situation. That is, when the good can not solve other problematic situation, it can become an evil and the reverse is also possible. All the ethical elements in Dewey's ethics are changeable.

St. Thomas does not think that a constituent essence or standard of good and evil is an interaction between environment and actor. The reason is that the essence of good and evil, even

²³ Ibid., p.103.

"Consequently rigid moral codes that attempt to lay down definite injunctions and prohibitions for every occasion in life turn out in fact loose and slack. Stretch ten commandments or any other number as far as you will by ingenious exegesis, yet acts unprovided for by them will occur."

though the environment or the interaction is changed, always remains as it is. For instance, the adoration to God, a filial heart to parents, sense of respect to grown-ups, love for one's country, friendship, justice, etc. are always good, that is, what is good, and the opposite concepts are defined as bad, that is, an evil. Therefore, the interaction between the environment and the subject does not specify in itself the good and the evil of a moral act, but changes it accidentally [accidentaliter] or secondarily. The essential distinction between good and evil is intrinsic and permanent. This is proved through experience and history. The reason that human beings in the present globalized society are able to live together, notwithstanding their different environments and historical backgrounds, is that they have basically commonality and universality of morals. Dewey's ethics connotes some contradiction in itself in that it rejects metaphysics as a foundation of ethics and emphasizes only scientific experimental value as well as empirical value.

According to Dewey, the material foundation of good and evil is the sufficiency of a desire. This sufficiency becomes formally good or evil according to the solution of a problematic situation and the improvement of earthly life. Therefore Dewey examines the standard of good and evil phenomenologically and subjectively [phenomenice et subjective]. St Thomas, unlike Dewey, considers the standard of good and evil from the deeper root, that is, objectively and ontologically [objective et ontologic]. He examines good in the object - in being itself. All being is good inasmuch as they are being and something to be desired. Evil consists in deficiency of fullness to be existed [malum autem consistit in carentia vel defectu perfectionis debitae]. St Thomas refers to it as follows: "every action inasmuch as it has something real (aliquid de esse) about it has something good about it; and that inasmuch as it fails to have the full reality a human act should possess then it falls short of goodness, and so is referred to as bad."²⁴

Being includes some fullness of esse. This fullness is desirable, leading to a desire of the subject. This metaphysical point of view is something strange to Dewey. From this ontological reason of being, man's free will [velle liberum humanaum] is aroused. Man's choice of free will, in the ontological question of good and evil, is a decisive element of composing good and evil.

²⁴ S. Thomas, S. Th., I a II ae, q.18, a.1.

"Omnis actio, in quantum habet aliquid de esse, in quantum habet de bonitate: in quantum vero deficit ei aliquid de plenitudine essendi quae debetur actioni humanae, in quantum deficit a bonitate, et sic dicitur mala."

Both theories agree to this, but the theories of free will are fundamentally differentiated from each other.

Here, we need to examine more deeply the fundamental elements of ethics in sufficiency of desire and happiness. Both theories, of course, have in common in that all the sufficiency of desire cannot be good. However, a question can be raised concerning how some sufficiency or happiness is something good, whereas some other sufficiency or happiness is something bad, that is, evil. In other words, we need a solid standard to define moral good and evil. According to Dewey, the standard of moral good and evil consists in the solution of a problematic situation through human conduct. St Thomas, however, examines good and evil in the objective of human conduct. The reason is that, as the natural things are specified by the form [forma] so is human conduct morally specified by the proper or rational objective. It is also related to the final end of human life. Thus, St Thomas states as follows: "the basic goodness of a moral act is provided by the befitting objective on which it is set"²⁵ Also, a human act is specified according to the end or purpose of human life. Man is a contingent being [ens contingens], which belongs to an other being. Therefore, as long as the being is belonged to, it has its end in an other being. Human act is morally specified by this end. St Thomas thus goes on to say: "human act, as well as other things the goodness of which depends on something else, hold a manner of good which is relative to the end on which they depend besides the strain of good which is considered in themselves".²⁶

St Thomas also considers that the end and objective specify human moral act formally [fomaliter] and materially [materiliter]. Thus he maintains that "the specific character of a human act is assessed as to its form by the end intended and as to its matter by the objective of the external deed."²⁷

²⁵ S. Thomas, *Ibid.*, a.2.

"Prima bonitas actus moralis attenditur ex obiecto convenienti."

²⁶ *Ibid.*, a.4.

"Actiones autem humanae, et alia quorum bonitas dependet ab alio, habent rationem bonitatis ex fine a quo dependent."

²⁷ *Ibid.*, a.6.

"Actus humani species formaliter consideratur secundum finem, materialiter autem secundum objectum exterioris actus."

The objective, however, is considered the closest end.²⁸ Those which are moral receive the classification from its end. The end classifies human act.²⁹ An act is done by the end [actio fit propter finem]. The end, as the standard of good and evil, is rationally examined by human nature. Ultimately, this end is considered in the ultimate end of human life. This ultimate end is related to the original being of all existence, that is, being itself or creator.

This metaphysical moral standard of good and evil is not only just theoretically but corresponds with the daily moral life, that is, empirical or experimental characteristics of good and evil. It is because the metaphysical foundation is unchangeable and universal for all the people. In fact, morals are concretely revealed in time and space, yet include the elements that are common to human beings beyond time and space. This shows well that morals are deeply rooted in human nature. Human beings thus live in diverse situations, but with the same humanity and morality. From this point of view we can explain properly the unchangeability and universality of morals as the first principle of morals.

In fact, Thomas holds the unchangeability of moral principles. Human nature is a composite of soul and body, the image of God, and of natural law which is the self-expression of human nature and is based on the eternal law. But such essentially unchangeable moral principles also are accidentally changeable in their realization in time and space.³⁰

The Unchangeability of Moral Principles in the World Religions

Now I would like to present here the unchangeability of the moral principles of Christianity, Confucianism and Buddhism as follows:

Christianity

1. I, the Lord, am your God. You shall not have other gods besides me.
4. Honor your father and your mother.
5. You shall not kill.
6. You shall not commit adultery.
7. You shall not steal.

²⁸ Ibid., a.2., comment. 3; a.7.

²⁹ Ibid., a.6.

³⁰ Cf. S. Thomas, S. Th. I . 75, 4, c: I – II , 34, 4–5

8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor etc.

Confucianism

Confucianism considers that 5 human relations(五倫) are an unchangeable principle of morals. Mencius says 'between father and son there should be affection; between sovereign and minister, righteousness; between husband and wife, attention to their separate function; between old and young, a proper order, and between friends, fidelity'.(孟子, Mencius, ‘滕文公上’)
(Prof. Jung, In Jae 鄭仁在 explains the relation between husband and wife in his own way: he says 'between husband and wife there should be (moral) discrimination from other man and woman = Husband should discriminate his wife from other woman and wife should discriminate her husband from other man.')

荀子 says '体常而盡變 that is 'substance is constant(unchangeable) but everything is changeable'(荀子, Hsunzi, 天論). It is exactly the same meaning as that of Thomas Aquinas.

Buddhism

The 5 and 10 commandments of Buddhism which are unchangeable: against murder (殺生), thief (偷盜), adultery (邪淫), falsehood (妄語), drinking (飲酒), a wrong view (邪見), calumny (毀謗), fraud (欺誑), self-praise and pulling down of others or humiliation of others (自讚□他), stinginess (慳吝) etc.

Thus the moral principles and the human nature of Christianity, Confucianism and Buddhism are unchangeable. It is quite an interesting point of view that Christianity and oriental religions have unchangeable moral principles and human nature ontologically with the changeability of them phenomenologically. These 3 religions' moral viewpoints are fundamentally contrary to Dewey's.

Challenging Dewey through Thomism

Dewey, who attempts to reconstruct ethics positively, does not correctly discuss the negative elements, namely evil. In fact, a great deal of evils are found in human life and numerous difficulties, agonies, and disasters. According to Dewey's theory, there is no essential way to distinguish between good and evil, and so a fixed distinction does not exist. The difference is just gradual and is only stems from both the interaction of situation and the difference between

solutions. Evil is nothing more than the rejected good in a certain confirmed situation. Therefore, evil can be transformed into good. In other words, when it can change the situation and work out effectively for solving the problematic situation, the evil becomes good and vice versa, namely good is turned into evil.

This theory is easily refuted by the internal experience of our consciousness. The reason is that we experience and recognize that the moral evil, in itself, never becomes good. For example, the murder of an innocent person, impiety to one's parents, betrayal of one's fatherland and friend and so on must be evil at all times wherever they occur and whether the situation is changed. The consistent moral experience like this is not explained properly in Dewey's ethics. The reason is that his ethics is not based on sound metaphysics, namely human nature. St Thomas explains the matter of evil in the internal reason - metaphysics. That is, he approaches it from the reason of human nature and rationality. He also, from this point of view, accounts for the internal difference of good and evil. This theory of gap is consistent with both our internal experience and daily life. For this Thomas considers it as follows: In human acts, good and evil are examined from the relation to the reasonable, namely grasping the reasonable. It is because man's good is to live according to reason and his evil to live outside of reason. The good, thus, is keeping with its form, and evil is out of keeping with its form. Thus the difference between good and evil in the objective is compared in itself in the relation to reason. That is, good and evil are judged to be reasonable or unreasonable according to the objectives of man in keeping with the reason.³¹

³¹ . Thomas, S. Th. I – II, q.18, a.5.

"In actibus autem humanis bonum et malum dicitur per comparationem ad rationem: quia...bonum hominis est secundum rationem esse malum autem quod est praeter rationem. Unicuique enim rei est bonum quod convenit ei secundum suam formam; et malum quod est ei praeter ordinem suae formae. Patet ergo quod differentia boni et mali circa objectum considerata, comparatur per se ad rationem: scilicet secundum quod objectum est ei conveniens vel non conveniens."