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## Self-Responsibility, Tradition, and the Apparent Good

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**Abstract:** The crucial distinction for ethics is between the good and the apparent good, between being and seeming. Tradition is useful for developing our ability to make this distinction and to live ethically or in self-responsibility, but it is also threatening to this ability. The phenomenology of Husserl and of others in the Husserlian tradition, especially Robert Sokolowski, are helpful in spelling out how tradition works; how the difference between the apparent good and the good is bridged in the experience of moral truth but also a permanent, challenging feature of human life; what ethics requires regarding self-responsibility or authenticity; and what the proper voice of tradition is in the ethical or moral life.

**Keywords:** Ethics, Custom, Culture, Husserl, Sokolowski, Natural Law.

### *1. The Socratic Turn and the Crucial Distinction for Ethics (and Philosophy)*

Philosophical thinking is akin to ethical reflection: both require the crucial distinction between seeming and being. The Socratic question about truth is at the heart of both. Socrates' exhortations that people examine their and their society's assumptions, especially about justice and the good, rightly still inspire the continual re-beginning of philosophy, and he still models for us the continual re-beginning of mature ethical thinking that must happen for each person to awaken to a sense of responsibility for how he lives. In a sense, each person must start from scratch, both ethically and philosophically, or else he fails to make the crucial distinction.

But the sense in which each person must—or can, or should try to—start from scratch, philosophically or ethically, is not immediately clear. On the one hand, each human person encounters and must encounter as new for himself

the philosophical or ethical attitudes of genuinely recognizing the apparent as the apparent and seeking after the true. On the other hand, the person does not face the crucial distinction genuinely if he thinks the distinction first arises in himself. Adulthood requires that the person attempt to take up responsibility for making the true appear true to him, but it is adolescent, a foreshadowing of adulthood, to magnify the depth of one's first experiences and to dismiss the insight of those who are already adults. There is something perennial in all thinking that is genuinely philosophical or ethical. It must be old and new.

Note that Socrates was an inheritor and reformer of a philosophical tradition. Also, Socrates *still* inspires beginning philosophy and models the ethical turn. The vocation handed him by "the god" or his "spiritual voice" he handed on to others, and we bear a tradition of continually questioning what we take as given. Though a tradition, this is also a fulfillment of something inherently in us. We human beings inherit some permanent wealth in his critical turn toward tradition—as long as we are rational animals falling short of divine wisdom. We would be betraying the Socratic tradition, by failing to know ourselves, if we thought that one's self was solely responsible for this turning of oneself, if we denied that this is a tradition and worth handing on again. Yet this is an odd tradition, and we share in Socrates' irony by knowing ourselves as its bearers, because all tradition, as something we take in hand from others, as a pretender to the truth that is not the product of our own insight, threatens to smother the crucial distinction.

## 2. Tradition

By tradition, Husserl means most generally intersubjective habituality. According to Husserl, almost everything we know of the world, indeed the very objectivity of the world, involves the presence of others not just as objects or as other subjects but as co-constituting subjects. Therefore, even the physical aspects of the world—though known by us as being independent of our involvement with them—are in part traditional or cultural. The properties that the world accrues by being wrapped up into our valuing and acting are likewise in general intersubjective sediments, correlative to shared or sharable habitualities of intentionality.

We acquire tradition both through communicative (or "social") acts, in which others address us directly, and also through acts of influence, in which we witness others and take on, perhaps very passively, their beliefs, attitudes, values, and patterns of actions.<sup>1</sup> According to Husserl, in the cultural community or the community of tradition people interact and motivate each

<sup>1</sup> For the distinction between these two types of intersubjective motivation and how they produce the cultural community, see, e.g., "Gemeingeist I" and "Gemeingeist II" in E. Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjectivität, Texte aus dem Nachlass, Zweiter Teil: 1921–1928 (Husserliana 14)*, ed. I. Kern, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973.

other in both of these modes and thereby continuously regenerate and modify the community and its surrounding world. Our particular personal dealings with others are based on and occur in the context of these shared traditions and customs by which we participate in an overlapping spiritual life (a culture) and take for granted as valid certain beliefs, values, and ways of acting.

This very broad understanding of tradition is both truthful and useful philosophically. Tradition is something “handed over” from person to person. It runs as deep in our thoughts as does the presence of other people. Yet this is too broad to capture what tradition generally means: something that is handed down and not just passed around. Tradition in its central sense implies the passing down of something passed down. A spiritual formation becomes traditional in this sense when you give it to a *new* generation (or wave of initiates into the community) and it had already been there before you. The intersubjective constitution of it stretches back in historical time.<sup>2</sup>

We must also add that traditions are not just practices. Tradition encompasses spiritual formations of all types. In a doctrinal tradition, there is some propositional content that is passed down. In a philosophical tradition, there is at least a style of questioning, thinking through, and valuing that is passed down, and often some *endoxa* and terminology. In a cultural tradition, there is, along with the ways of acting that are learned, also certain beliefs and values and styles of believing and valuing that are handed down. These are traditional in the narrower sense when the subjects of tradition, those doing the handing over, were once datives receiving the tradition.

Two features of phenomenology in the Husserlian style bring out how interesting tradition is ethically. First, phenomenology’s focus on insight and rational grounding forbid uncritical acceptance or explicit appeal to tradition. Tradition often appears in phenomenological rhetoric as a force preventing us from self-responsibility or authenticity. Second, phenomenology wishes to recognize and consider the apparent as apparent while not dismissing all appearances as false or usurping the power of prephilosophical reason to find truth. Tradition is recognized by phenomenologists as powerfully shaping appearances and as a universal and necessary feature of the living together of human persons in generative communities. In this paper, I wish both to take seriously the phenomenologically emphasized good of personal self-responsible reason and to rehabilitate tradition’s voice in ethical conversation.

### *3. Self-Responsibility*

Robert Sokolowski points out that our very being as agents is rooted in a “moral ontological difference” between the good appearing and the good as

<sup>2</sup> Tradition will be used in the broader sense in this paper unless noted, but both senses should be kept in mind.

appearing.<sup>3</sup> While enjoying a good, he claims, we are also at least marginally aware of it as good. This difference gives us as agents a space in which to work. This slight doubling is not the same thing as moral doubt, and this first difference is not the full-fledged applied crucial distinction made by a person standing up for some ethical truth amidst counterfeits. Rather, only by being pried open further does this opening allow me to make the distinctions required of ethical actors between what is good and what merely seems good, between what is good for me in certain respects and not in others, between what is good for me and what is good for others. Sokolowski describes it as the “origin of responsibility” and of the “moral substance of a situation.”<sup>4</sup>

Though each person inherently possesses this moral ontological difference, our ability to pry open and live within this space results from cultivation. It requires first the care that others give us. Through upbringing, friendship, and even incidental influence, others draw us into language and syntax, customs and ways of acting, a shared moral mindedness expressed in stories and honoring or dishonoring models of human life. Thus others are co-creators of our self-responsibility (and its deformities). It requires also a care that we give ourselves. We must care about the world and care to get things right, and this is simultaneously an education that we give ourselves.<sup>5</sup> This self-formation is not at odds with the education we receive from others. It builds upon it and plays off of it.

Self-responsibility is therefore a tricky ideal for human beings. In some sense it is the essence of ethical life. As dependent upon others even in coming into its own as our innermost selves, our reason is not *causa sui*, and we are unable to be completely self-responsible.<sup>6</sup> At the same time in a sense it does

<sup>3</sup> R. Sokolowski, *Moral Action: A Phenomenological Study*, Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana UP, 1985, pp. 58, 156, 219.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

<sup>5</sup> In the third *Kaizo* article, “Erneuerung als individuelle ethisches Problem (1924),” in *Aufsätze und Vorträge (1922–1937)* (Hua 27), Husserl discusses the development of the ethical person as involving a “self-education.” In willing and striving toward true goods in reflective moments and in particular actions, the developing “ethical personality” simultaneously wills and strives to become and develops into a more perfect person. As James G. Hart puts it, for Husserl “morality has to do with determining myself as I myself and incessantly renewing myself as a person. I can only exist properly and fully, if I will the good and will myself to will the good” (“Edmund Husserl, *Einleitung in die Ethik*,” *Husserl Studies* 22.2 (2006), pp. 167–191; p. 189). That is, willing myself to be a good person and willing the good for its own sake require each other (p. 174). Likewise Sokolowski points out, because an action is “me actualized” and “I am becomes what I have been,” who I am is always at stake for me in my actions: “When I do act, it is not just the problem I assess that is an issue for me; I myself must be an issue for myself” (*Moral Action, op. cit.*, p. 161).

<sup>6</sup> Sokolowski discusses, using Robert Spaemann’s notion of an “awakening,” the senses in which our willing is or is not responsible for our own reason in *Phenomenology of the Human Person* (pp. 94–95; New York, N.Y.: Cambridge UP, 2008). Similarly, Husserl discusses the absolutely perfect reasonable being as *causa sui* of its rationality and contrasts this with the human person, who must perform self-education. This self-education seems to be a relative and

move itself, since all the preparative work done by others for us cannot make us reasonable if we shrink from the truth. We must care enough to put in the work. Our self-responsibility—ourselves as facing and responding appropriately to the truth—involves knowing ourselves as not fully responsible for ourselves. Perhaps for this reason the most self-responsible people are often the most able and interested to learn from others—docile, though not tractable, submissive, or pliant. Seeing oneself as one's own author, though partially true, is a deceived and deceiving act of pride; the truly self-responsible human being puts truth and his responsibility to it before his self.

#### 4. Bridging the Gap

The moral ontological difference gives us “the sense that there is an issue of truth in what we do.”<sup>7</sup> The difference allows truth, and the truth must show up in an identity synthesis in which the difference is not closed but bridged.

According to Husserl, experiencing truth requires that we can experience the same intentional object in various modes, from various perspectives, and in various degrees of absence or intuitive fullness. A perceptual object, for example, can be thought of at a distance and then in its perceptual presence can show itself to be harmonious or disharmonious with what we had thought. The object itself incorporates synthetically the object as thought emptily and also the object as brought to intuitive fullness (even if we were wrong in our initial expectations). Truth is experienced in the concordant synthesis of these experiences, just as falsity is experienced in the discordance that is reconciled in the synthesis. Perhaps a perceptual object becomes the focus for a question calling to be resolved by more experiences. To look for the truth of the matter, we seek these other perspectives that can show us the same object in more fullness. This ‘more fullness’ does not happen in an experience of an altogether different type in which the thing in itself, abstracted from my experiences of it, would be infallibly revealed. The further experiences are themselves still fallible; no experience can be a final victory where error surrenders unconditionally.

For Husserl, different types of objects show up in suitably different types of experiences, so the identity syntheses in which we experience truth about

gradual recreation of oneself. In the same essay, “Erneuerung als individualethisches Problem,” Husserl later speaks of the ethical person spontaneously generating, such that a new and true human being arises out of my radical self-reflection and a single once-in-my-life decision. This rhetoric suggests that the ethical person is *causa sui* and that there is an absolute break between the old and the new person. He indicates in the same passage, however, that even this primal institution of the “new” human being can become invalid and needs to be renewed by that same person, and that training and guidance from others is helpful for and presupposed by this self-renewal.

<sup>7</sup> R. Sokolowski, *Moral Action*, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

mathematical propositions are not the same as, e.g., those suitable to refrigerators, to a friendship betrayed, or to the proposition that betrayal is villainous. Reason is Husserl's "name for the inherent tendency to seek adequate fulfillment for what is posited," for a bringing to evidence of what is meant.<sup>8</sup> "For Husserl," Thomas Nenon notes about ethical reason, "knowledge about these matters is not inborn, but is acquired through experience of evidence in which the purported good shows itself as an authentic good and the mere seemingly good reveals itself as inauthentic or untrue."<sup>9</sup>

For moral truth to be an issue for us in what we do, there must be various appearances of the matter to us. This is what the "moral ontological difference" allows. But this difference must be exploited thoughtfully. Sokolowski therefore claims that we cannot get to the moral substance of a situation by appealing to what is immediately given:

We cannot settle the issue of whether something desirable is truly good by narrowing our attention to the thing that is immediately and momentarily desirable. We will not get any clues to the truth or falsity of the good by looking at the immediate experience. Whatever we do as desirable is going to be reidentified again in different contexts, and these reidentifications must be kept in mind when we perform.<sup>10</sup>

The action will for example be remembered, and I will have to remember myself as its agent; the action will have consequences that will become part of its identity, and it is identifiable by others. This action, which seems good to me now, may not seem so good in these other perspectives and contexts. "The distinction between what seems good and what is good" in order to "have room to assert itself" needs "differences in perspective and contexts, and it needs reidentification of the 'same' desired thing, to flesh out possible looks of 'being bad.' If the variation in perspective and context reaffirms the things as good, then it begins to seem to be truly, and not just apparently, good."<sup>11</sup>

Sokolowski also insists that we do not get to the moral truth of a situation by bringing in abstract principles or rules. The "primary display" and "measure of what ought to be done" is given by virtuous agents in action. "There is no cognitive substitute for this original display" of practical possibilities and of what human beings ought to be and do. "And in the face of this original, virtuous display of human being, philosophical reflection must stand back and recognize the privilege of virtue."<sup>12</sup> Sokolowski concludes, in what may

<sup>8</sup> T. Nenon, "Husserl's Conception of Reason as Authenticity," *Philosophy Today* 47 (Supplement, 2003), pp. 63–70; pp. 64–65.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>10</sup> R. Sokolowski, *Moral Action*, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.

seem like a rather unHusserlian moment, that the philosopher does not have “a kind of rigorous moral science.”<sup>13</sup>

If we honor the privilege of the phenomena over against the modern philosophical tradition, we should say that the actions of the virtuous person bring out what we should be and what we should do, but not because they conform to a rule that could predict them. Rather, virtuous agents hear more clearly what reality calls for ethically. This is because virtuous agents are tuned into the morally significant features of a situation. They perceive moral situations both better than others and where others often do not at all; they have a sense of the ends of the players involved; they possess also the imagination to see what can be done to bring out the best from and for the situation, the people at stake, and themselves. The identity synthesis wherein the good action is confirmed (or disconfirmed) as good, the experience of the truth of a moral situation, seeks after and is measured against this best display, where the thing itself (what should be done) is shown to us. But we witness many actions and agents in action, and such best displays are in some sense more of the same—just better. They are not philosophically certifiable as the best, though they must function in our moral imagination as the standard. They are corrigible, and our further experience may show us better ways of acting that would then become our standard.

Moreover, often we lack the ability to self-sufficiently put on this display. In Sokolowski’s judgment,

The only agent who should do what he simply wants to do is the one who knows the excellences and the needs of the things, persons, and relationships involved in the situation, and who has the moral excellence to do what he sees should be done. Other agents, the less virtuous, should do what the laws and customs and the advice of the better judges indicate.<sup>14</sup>

A study of the phenomena of tradition and virtue leads us to temper our enthusiasm for an egalitarian emancipated reason, but this produces a tension in our *logos*, in our dedication to reason and theory. It may help to ask here, what should a study of moral phenomena do?

### 5. *The Naturalistic Attitude in Ethics*

The prephilosophical natural attitude needs philosophy. This is not because intentionality in the natural attitude does not do its job of displaying to the person things in the world. Intentionality in the natural attitude does its job too well, though of course fallibly; it is invisible to itself. The naturalistic

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159.



attitude—which purports to abstract from all subject-relative properties of the world—arises in an attempt to overcome the fallibility of the achievements of intentionality. Though the naturalistic attitude achieves much, it doubles down on this weakness of the natural attitude in an attempt to overcome it. It is hyperaware of how the activities of consciousness may skew others' beliefs, but is more thoroughly unaware of its own fallibility because it pretends to have escaped subjectivity. This increases the need for philosophical clarification of subjectivity, partly because the naturalistic attitude may acquire an expansionist disdain for the natural attitude and a dismissal of its accomplishments, which, it turns out, the naturalistic attitude presumes and cannot replace. The popular admiration for the successes of the naturalistic attitude even fosters an unhealthy low self-esteem on the part of nonscientific human knowing, which may now deem itself merely "subjective."

We must beware of a similar error in ethical reflection. Rationalist foundationalism in ethics presumes that truly ethical behavior is justified, perhaps necessarily motivated, by explicit principles into which an unhistorical, unsituated, and depersonalized reason has insight. Such a philosophy of ethics sees its task as discovering the ultimate founding principles that determine any given action for any agent whatever as ethically condemnable, commendable, acceptable, or obligatory. This type of theorizing, I think, parallels the naturalistic attitude in an important way: it attempts to dismiss our lifeworldly appearances of the ethical good and bad and to rewrite them based on idealizing postulates about reason and will in abstraction from the conditions of ethical appearing. Neglecting to discuss personal character as shaping the appearing of the good and dismissing tradition as supposedly ethically obscuring, rather than possibly revelatory, are common symptoms of this attitude in ethics, which sees itself as having overcome these subjective distortions, as having discovered a telescope that sees around and no longer through the eyes of average people.

Lifeworldly ethics needs philosophy not because the ethical good and bad fail to appear, however fallibly, in prephilosophical life, but because it is naïve about the role of subjectivity in this appearing. It is in need of fundamental philosophical clarification, but not fundamental rewriting by philosophers. Rationalist foundationalism in ethics helps us discover ethical truth and helps us think through our ethical commitments rigorously, but its uncompromising expansionism, its penchant for formulas and single-bullet theories of the ethical domain, and its lack of humility toward the opinions of decent character and tradition (which are hesitant to allow a principle to override consciences and worn paths) are dangerous. Precisely because it tries to get around the fallibility of human opinion, rationalist foundationalism in ethics is even more unaware than everyday doxa of its fallibility, and philosophers engaged in it seem not less blind than other people to how their character and traditions may shape their commitments. Even as it helps correct some errors, it

presumes and cannot replace the appearances given by character and tradition to ethical actors.

A philosophical approach to ethics should provide a clarification of ethical actions and agents that protects the legitimacy of prephilosophical ethics and the ability of prephilosophical life to achieve authentic ethical goods. A genuinely philosophical approach should not reject the insights of a systematic critical theorizing on ethical principles, but it must resist the expansionist momentum of such theorizing and remind us of the permanence of our situation—that we act always under goods that appear; that our personal and social histories have something to do with these appearances; that appearances can deceive; and that we should do our best to find and act on the true good.

### 6. Husserl's Ethics

According to Husserl's earlier analyses of ethics, ethics requires that human valuation and action be reasonable both formally and materially. Formally, we should seek consistency and genuine insight in our valuing and acting. The categorical imperative of ethics, according to Husserl, is to always do the best possible in our situation. Materially, we should value and act upon true human goods, which are identifiable and rankable, in sketch, by philosophy in a "material *a priori*" of the human person, whose being integrates bodily, psychological, and spiritual activities and whose living well incorporates the goods of these activities.<sup>15</sup>

Husserl hoped that the categorical imperative, in conjunction with the formal axiological and practical rules and the material *a priori* of the person as rational animal, would yield a philosophical articulation of ethical principles capable of aiding particular human agents in their ethical situations. These earlier analyses seem mostly to accomplish clarification of phenomena already present prephilosophically, but they are surely not merely "the reflections of common life, methodized and corrected."<sup>16</sup> Husserl grounds the plethora of goods sought by prephilosophical living in the essence of human personhood, seen by philosophical insight, and offers rules by which our values and prospective deeds are comparable, objectively universally rankable, and cumulative (summed, with the goodness of the forgone less good "absorbed" by the best, and the goodness of the unreasonably chosen less good canceled by any failure to do the manifest best). This systematic ethics

<sup>15</sup> This account of Husserl's ethics is based largely on the work done by Ullrich Melle, Donn Welton, John Drummond, and James Hart (all cited below), in addition to Husserl's third *Kaizo* article, "Erneuerung als individualethisches Problem (1924)," in *Aufsätze und Vorträge (1922–1937)* (Hua 27).

<sup>16</sup> D. Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, New York, N.Y.: Oxford UP, 1999, p. 208.

perhaps takes on the flavor of a "rigorous moral science" in exalting a rationally purified paradigm of ethical deliberation, which seems here to become a calculation that applies to the situations of life a philosophically authenticated chart of goods and rules.<sup>17</sup> Still, the system attempts not a replacement of lifeworldly ethics by a theoretical substitute, but a philosophical grounding and rigorous enhancement of it.

According to Husserl's later reflections of ethics, doing the best possible (as construed earlier) is insufficient for ethical living.<sup>18</sup> His later reflections emphasize certain features of human ethical life that are not accounted for in the earlier approach. Ethical experience includes being obliged to certain goods, actions, and activities in and for themselves, that is, not because they contribute to the best set of cumulative goods. Such goods beckon us with an "absolute ought." Of these, some are vocational goods, to which I myself am called and in which I find my true and deepest self, but which are not "objective" in the sense of universal and based on solely the *a priori* of personhood that I share with all other persons. Recognizing goods and obligations of this absolute type undermines construing ethical deliberation as merely calculative and construing all true human goods as philosophically certifiable as correct. Moreover, whereas the earlier ethics was in Husserl's words, "an ethics for no one and for everyone in general," his later reflections recognize the more personal aspects of the ethical life.<sup>19</sup>

In the later ethics, ethical living requires not just insight into true goods, but also a change in attitude toward the appearance of goods. This change of attitude involves an ethical epoché, in which I step back from and survey the particular values under which I have been acting or could act. As James G. Hart has discussed, this ethical reduction for Husserl amounts to something like Socrates' exhortation to live an examined life.<sup>20</sup> It is a kind of awakening to reason as informing my life, as calling my life into question, and as portending that, because I am free and reasonable, my life is at stake in my living. Husserl describes the motivation leading into the ethical attitude as an increasing concern for the gap between the apparent and the true good. In Husserl's words,

<sup>17</sup> For this reason, Christopher Arroyo claims that Husserl advocates, in these earlier ethical reflections, an "'idealized' consequentialism" (*Kant and Husserl on Moral Obligation and Emotions*, Dissertation, Fordham University, 2007).

<sup>18</sup> Husserl's marginalia show the following mark: "I shall have to give up the categorical imperative—or else recast it completely." Quoted by U. Melle, pp. 128–129, "Edmund Husserl: From Reason to Love," in J. Drummond and L. Embree (eds.), *Phenomenological Approaches to Moral Philosophy: A Handbook*, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2002, pp. 229–248.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in J. Hart, "Edmund Husserl, *Einleitung in die Ethik*," *op. cit.*, p. 183.

<sup>20</sup> J. Hart, *The Person and The Common Life: Studies in a Husserlian Social Ethics*, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1992, pp. 26–44.

There arises in the progress of individual development not only the multiplicity and the complexity of practical projects and the activities executing them but also, in increasing measure, the inner lack of certainty of the person, the pressing care for authentic and abiding goods, for satisfaction that can be secured from all critique and exposure to devaluation.<sup>21</sup>

Rather than deliberating about only particular goods and actions or a set of them, I must reflect on my life as a whole, recognize my responsibility for my actions and the shape of my life, and commit myself to living as best I can under the ideal of a perfect human life, a life for which I can, in the long view, take responsibility.

Husserl does exalt a single, rather intellectual principle as the key to ethical living—self-responsibility (or authenticity), which is fulfilled in the ideal of the perfectly (though humanly) reasonable person. Acting authentically and being this person form the goal of ethical striving.

Husserl seems therefore to be a hyperrationalist, except for two things. First, he knows that human beings have essential limits: we are not omnipotent, are in constant development, and are always infinitely away from this idealized end. Second, in contrast to the modern style, he appreciates the broadness and diversity of reason's operations, its fundamental orientation not to mere ratiocination but to truth with evidence, and the various ways evidence is appropriately given for different types of thing. Self-responsibility and reason mean, for Husserl, the human achievement of and striving for truth with evidence. Authenticity means not sincerity independent of truth or choice independent of norms; on the contrary, radical sincerity or truthfulness to oneself requires seeking the truth and a willingness to submit to it.<sup>22</sup> Reason, authenticity, self-responsibility according to Husserl can be "correlatively expressed" as a "striving to exhibit by means of appropriate grounding of the things themselves what is described as 'the true'—true being, true contents of judgment, true or 'authentic' values and goods—in light of which mere opinions have a normative standard for their rightness or wrongness."<sup>23</sup>

Though the goal is to achieve true goods that cannot be debunked and to be a person who knows and achieves incontrovertibly true goods, human ethical being consists not in reaching this goal but in continual critique and renewal. We do this work in the light of this infinite goal, but in the shadow cast by ourselves. "Be a true human, live a life that you can justify in an insightful

<sup>21</sup> Hua 27, p. 31. Trans. by and quoted in D. Welton, *The Other Husserl: The Horizons of Transcendental Phenomenology*, Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana UP, 2000, p. 315.

<sup>22</sup> R. Sokolowski, *Phenomenology of the Human Person*, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

<sup>23</sup> Hua 27, p. 26. Trans. by and quoted in Nenon, "Husserl's Conception of Reason as Authenticity," *op. cit.*, p. 67.

way, a life lived from out of practical reason," Husserl exhorts us.<sup>24</sup> This ideal of perfect human personhood carries us into an infinite task not only because perfection is beyond human reach, but also because it is a moving target: our concrete understanding of perfection develops as we develop in seeking it. We live concretely under our own developing sense of what it means to be a good person. The ethical life, living according to one's best ethical conscience, now takes the form of repeated attempts at critique and renewal, and because this process generates new norms the ethical life requires openness to new norms.

Next to the continuously developing ethical goal given to the continually critiquing ethical attitude, the material *a priori* with its enumeration of general, genuine human goods seems static and too simple. It is helpful and valid, but insufficient. Due to the goal's infinity and due to our continual personal development, there can be no final and complete articulation of how the ethical norm of perfect personhood must be applied concretely. To think that the norm as one currently understands it is not open to further development would be to cut off the essentially critical ethical attitude and turn to an ideology in an attempt to make the infinite something finite and possessed. Husserl comments that the commitment to renewal must itself be renewed and that failure to do so leads to a withered conscience.

It is part of human personhood, Husserl thinks, to be ineradicably infected with passivity, and to always sink back into unreflective living, which at one point Husserl calls "the original sin" belonging "to the essential form of man."<sup>25</sup> Partly for this reason—and if the goal of the ethical life were knowable in a static scientific revelation, it would be for this reason only—the ethical life involves continual attempts at self-critique and self-renewal. But our passivity is not really the root of all evil. It may be a "lazy nest" for particular failures to achieve genuine truth with insight, but it is also the basis for development.<sup>26</sup> It is through secondary passivity, sedimentation and habituality, that consciousness accrues a history, winning and maintaining a world and personal identity for itself. In Husserl's understanding of consciousness, only with this passivity to the past and its accrual of sense can the person play out his teleology toward insightful truth and self-responsibility:

<sup>24</sup> Hua 27, p. 36. Trans. by and quoted in U. Melle, p. 11, "Husserl's Personalist Ethics," *Husserl Studies* 23.1 (2007), pp. 1–15.

<sup>25</sup> Hua 27, p. 44. Trans. by and quoted in M. Brainard, pp. 233–234, "As Fate Would Have It: Husserl on the Vocation of Philosophy," *The New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy* 1 (2001), pp. 111–160.

<sup>26</sup> "True humanity requires a perpetual struggle against sinking into the lazy nest of conventionality or, what is essentially the same, living in lazy reason instead of living a life of authentic originalness [of evidence]." Hua 4, p. 231; trans. by and quoted in J. Hart, *The Person and the Common Life*, *op. cit.*, p. 409.

Consciousness [...] is not a mere succession of lived-experience, a flux, as one fancies an objective river. Consciousness is an incessant process of becoming as an incessant process of constituting objectivities in an incessant *progressus* of graduated levels. It is a never ending history. And history is a graduated process of constituting higher and higher formations of sense through which prevails an immanent teleology. And belonging to all sense is a truth and a norm of truth.<sup>27</sup>

The ethical person in self-responsibility need not discard what he inherits from his past, or from others, or from his community's past. In some sense he cannot even do so since these will remain part of him as rejected even in being rejected. If he could eradicate them, it would be foolish since they provide platforms for self-elevation. The ethical person establishes a habituality to question his actions and his life and to live it responsibly and reasonably. Humanity requires critique and renewal not to finally become ethical, but to be ethical, which is a becoming.

To compare the mood of these later reflections to the mood of the earlier systematic grounding, the ethical good and its obligations are more rigorous even as the view of ethical reasoning is less scientific. Critique and renewal are required permanently. The crucial distinction must be made again and again. Philosophy does not give us a magical key, a rationally proven formula, to escape the problem of the apparent good. Philosophy uncovers the need for each and all of us personally to live with and face up to the permanence of the problem and to do our best without a scientific dissolution of it.

### 7. Character and Appearances

In attempting to make the crucial distinction, we often enough misfire. We do this when we put aside a merely apparent good for a good that is itself also merely apparent. We think we have found the real thing only to discover later that it too was a fake. Discovering this does happen. Sometimes the mistake is a superficial error of fact or consequence—the action or project turned out to lack the features one thought it had, making it appear good according to the standard measuring it. Here, the error could be discovered by the person at the same level of ethical personality. Sometimes uncovering the error requires a different character, or, better, a higher level or type of ethical personality consists in being able to discover the error and perhaps emerges in the discovering: we have developed in the meantime, we have a new standard, we understand now what we not only did not but could not have understood then. An apparent good shows up as merely apparent only when we recognize an appearing good in whose shadow the apparent good now lies. The merely

<sup>27</sup> Hua 9, pp. 218–219. E. Husserl, *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis: Lectures on Transcendental Logic*, trans. A. Steinbock, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2001, p. 270.

apparent good refers to the true good as a standard to which it does not measure up. Having a new standard is accompanied by having become a different person ethically. One's ethical character determines and is determined by the things that appear good.

Sometimes the attempt to distinguish between the good and the apparent good misfires in a different, more philosophical way. We may fail to distinguish between the apparent good and the merely apparent good. In fact we cannot act on goods that do not appear. All such appearances are fallible, but we may think we have escaped or must escape the power of appearances altogether. We may imagine that the ethically good person stands opposed to apparent goods, rejecting them either because he has or because he demands goods that are not apparent. To think that the good as it currently appears to me as I currently am cannot possibly be a merely apparent good, to think that I am beyond appearances, or to think that ethics requires that I find an infallible way around possibly false appearances is to fail to make the crucial distinction genuinely and deeply: I do not make the distinction as permanently threatening to downgrade my current character and projects. This is not the naïveté of failing to make the crucial distinction at all. It is a more dangerous naïveté in some ways due to its half-philosophical sophistication. In thinking I am an angel, I may give myself leave to act devilishly. In expecting that ethical truth must be known without the troubles coincident with appearing, I may wind up downgrading ethics as sub-knowable. The problem of the apparent good applies permanently to human beings, but this does not mean that all goods are merely apparent.

We must not allow a commitment to any currently appearing good to obscure the possible appearance of a good that downgrades it. At the same time, we must not allow the distinction between the good and the apparent good to obscure the goodness of goods that appear.

If apparent goods are always correlative to the character of the person to whom they are apparent, then the ethically good person is the one to whom the good appears truly. Yet not only this, because he must still be a human person to whom the good appears; even when his apprehension of the good is actively insightful, the appearance is still a given, a gift to the person who must be open to receiving. Because of the role of character, the person cannot eradicate his passivity when facing the appearing good. Thus, the ethically good person must make the crucial distinction not only in particular cases but also in principle such that he is attuned to the possibility that the good as it appears to him currently is merely apparent, that it may not be fully or adequately the true good, that he must continue to work to make the true appear so to him.

And all this means that the ethically good person is open to the improvement of his character. Character requires care. It requires the care first of those

responsible for our upbringing. It requires our own care as we become capable of choice and deliberate action. Part of the way in which we care is to listen, not to all voices, but to those—like tradition, the law, and the more virtuous—who likely have something solid to say.

### 8. *Self-Responsibility and Truth*

John J. Drummond argues for a eudaimonistic appropriation of Husserl's emphasis on self-responsibility: "It is the self-responsible [or authentic] life that is the flourishing life for rational agents."<sup>28</sup> Self-responsibility requires us to make a habituality of the critical attitude, in which we not only make judgments and thereby accept states of affairs as true, but also turn toward our judgments as proposed states of affairs and seek to ground them in evidence. The acquired disposition to adopt "the critical attitude and the teleological concern with the truthfulness of our judgments," according to Drummond, "is the manner in which self-responsibility is realized in everyday experience."<sup>29</sup> Tradition is not simply positive or negative in this account of authenticity. Self-responsibility does not require that we reject everything offered or previously accepted, but it does require us when we accept to accept actively, to ground in evidence what is handed over. Self-responsibility happens "in the transition from passively accepting beliefs that are handed down in tradition or communicated by others to the active taking over of a judgmental content as my own conviction, one for which I have intuitive evidence."<sup>30</sup>

Drummond emphasizes that, while "the existential account connects authenticity to human freedom," to choice unnormed by some teleological view of things, "the phenomenological account, on the other hand, connects authenticity to truthfulness, to having the proper sense of things."<sup>31</sup> The existentialist account must view tradition as demanding inauthenticity; the phenomenological account does not.

Drummond's account allows us to see that self-responsibility is the fulfillment of reason as teleologically directed toward personally beholding truth, having evidence and insight, and that it does not necessarily divorce us from tradition. Others are a necessary aid in developing and exercising this self-responsibility, and so custom and tradition as required for our living together form part of the necessary context of self-responsibility. In Drummond's

<sup>28</sup> J. Drummond, "Self-Responsibility and *Eudaimonia*," in C. Ierna, H. Jacobs, F. Mattens (eds.), *Edmund Husserl 150 Years: Philosophy, Phenomenology, Sciences*, Dordrecht: Springer, 2010, pp. 441–460, here p. 452.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 445.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 453.



account, the self-responsible person is “a truthful and responsible agent,”<sup>32</sup> becomes such only with the help of others, and can be active as such only with others as continual partners. He concludes, “In order to be self-responsible and to realize the goods of agency, one must think *for* oneself,” still “one cannot think rightly *by* oneself.”<sup>33</sup>

Here tradition appears as the background for the real work of self-responsibility, and tradition appears as consistent with self-responsibility only because it is “worked out, criticized, reappropriated, and modified.”<sup>34</sup> Drummond’s account is illuminating and, I think, correct. Still, it seems to miss an important way tradition serves human self-responsibility, which is an on-its-way toward self-responsibility.

One, not the only, insight humans have is that human insight is limited. This does not require an anti-rationalism, since we do have insights. Rather, this suggests that it is reasonable to recognize our own reason as imperfect and sometimes self-responsible to trust that others might see what we do not. Often enough self-responsibility involves not evidence and insight about the issue in front of me, but evidence and insight into my own lack of evidence and insight about it. In such a case it is not irresponsible to accept tradition, custom, or others’ advice even without appropriating it “as my own conviction, one for which I have intuitive evidence.” Drummond comments, for example, that for the virtuous agent, “following the example of the *phronimos* is insufficient. The virtuous agent lives self-responsibly, judging, valuing, and deciding for herself in the light of evidence rather than passively accepting received attitudes and opinions.”<sup>35</sup> True, but if we know ourselves enough to know that we are not in some given situation fully virtuous, then the relatively self-responsible agent might *as such* sometimes follow the *phronimos*, or *nomos* when a *phronimos* cannot be found.

### 9. Robert Sokolowski on Knowing the Natural Law

Sokolowski’s reflections on how we know natural law can help us highlight how tradition or convention may be both a positive and negative force for moral development.

The prehistory of our human, moral situation consists in learning to conform our desires to the way things are done by others. As Sokolowski puts it,

We normally encounter the good and the bad, the noble and the ugly, the obligatory and the prohibited, in our society’s laws, customs, manners, and

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 454.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 453.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 452.

morals. The challenge we initially encounter in life is to make our inclinations, purposes, and choices conform to the injunctions of our community. In most cases it is right and good to conform to social norms, because they are usually reasonable expressions of the natural good. Social conventions and moral traditions, based on long and localized experience, are normally an embodiment of what is good or bad in itself.<sup>36</sup>

Conventions are generally decent channels toward the human good. They allow each of us to first put to work the distinction between the good and the apparent good. Still, conventions are fallible and often enough suboptimal, inadequate, or even false indications of what one should do—as we sometimes experience. “When this sort of ‘crisis’ occurs, we appeal at least implicitly to the ends of the things in question; this appeal is made even by people who may deny that things have ends.”<sup>37</sup> According to Sokolowski, ethically we must seek to judge ourselves and our conventions by true human ends. “Conventions can be questioned and changed, and they are questioned when one thinks that they do not properly express the reality they deal with.”<sup>38</sup>

An end—as Sokolowski’s use of the term ‘reality’ indicates—is not the same thing as a purpose or goal. Purposes belong to persons as aiming for something, and are thus “in the mind.”<sup>39</sup> Ends are discovered as belonging to things as what they are when fully developed or completed. Just as our vision of a physical thing in dim light is illuminated for us by an apperception of what it would look like under optimal perceptual circumstances, our understanding of a thing as what it happens to be includes a notion of what a good specimen of that thing is. The thing present is played off against and understood in the light of its “idea” or “telos.” It is these ends that “bring out the full intelligibility of things.” According to Sokolowski’s phenomenological appropriation of classical philosophy, “The best of an entity is always present in any experience I have of the thing, provided that we are rational in our experiencing,” such that things as intelligible (as having been brought into the “game of language” and “enlisted into syntax”) are “profiled against their best, their telos or perfection.”<sup>40</sup>

Sokolowski presents a genetic phenomenology rather than a static analysis of the natural law—that is, of the intrinsic human ends that should measure both our desires and our laws and customs. He makes three claims important

<sup>36</sup> R. Sokolowski, “What is Natural Law? Human Purposes and Natural Ends,” in *Christian Faith and Human Understanding*, Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2006, pp. 214–235, here pp. 223–224.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 224.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 225.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 216.

<sup>40</sup> R. Sokolowski, “Discovery and Obligation in Natural Law,” in H. Zaborowski (ed.), *Natural Moral Law in Contemporary Society*, Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010, pp. 24–43.

to us here. First, we come to understand natural law in a triple distinction between these ends, our desires, and our laws or customs. Given what this deeper law essentially claims to be, given what we must claim it to be when we claim to act as witnesses to its truth, this way that things ought to be “by nature” is not the same as our desires or the way we do things. The acting required of us if we are to treat things and persons as what they are must be distinguished from acting merely according to my desires or according to custom or tradition. To take (or even to try to take) “natural law” as a measure requires this identification-by-triangulation.

Second, knowledge of the natural law is contrastive. We do not know natural law in a raw intuition of true human ends. It shows up not all on its own but only in this triple distinction. Even when we affirm our desires or our ways of doing things as in conformity with this deeper ought, the ought appears only as a new dimension that provides justification and measure grounded in the natures of things and persons.

Third, a person’s ability to draw the triple distinction well, to have insight into ends as served by or not served by, as consistent or at odds with our purposes or laws, is dependent on personal character. Sokolowski spells out four types of character that cannot make the distinction. A childish or impulsive person lacks the practical syntax that distinguishes means and purposes. Living in present desires, he does not have purposes in the full sense and so cannot distinguish them from ends. A morally obtuse person, who does not see that other people with purposes and ends of their own are also implicated in his actions and their consequences, cannot achieve the “objectivity” about his own actions and purposes that is given only in the light of other people’s perspectives. A morally immature person cannot distinguish between purposes and ends because he does not “see that things themselves have their own excellences that need to be respected if the things are not to be destroyed.” A vicious person “deliberately and maliciously” lets his desires or purposes “override” other persons and the ends of things.<sup>41</sup>

Sokolowski defends his creative recapitulation of natural law and how we come to know it partly by arguing that it allows us to overcome a certain prejudice against natural law theories: “We might be tempted to think of natural law as a kind of codex, a set of imperatives that could be formulated in a purely theoretic, systematic exercise, identifiable and arguable apart from any moral tradition.”<sup>42</sup> This prejudice is reinforced by the style of certain natural law theorizing and by the use of the term “law.” Sokolowski suggests, rather, that “natural decency” is the issue, since natural law is experienced by persons specifically as “agents of truth” who as such are obliged—in the sense

<sup>41</sup> R. Sokolowski, “What is Natural Law?”, *op. cit.*, pp. 220–223.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219.

of *noblesse oblige* following from the person's ennobling core, veracity or reason—to respond decently to the intrinsic natures and ends of things.<sup>43</sup>

Sokolowski's account of natural law emphasizes that things and persons have and point toward, independent of our subjective stances, their own excellences as part of their what-it-is-to-be. But to say that ends in contrast to purposes belong to the world and not merely to our minds might suggest, falsely, that ends can be easily read off of things. Our understanding of ends must be developed. Husserl shows how new perceptual optima emerge from better, richer and more differentiated, perceptual experiences of things in the world. Likewise, our grasp of human ends, of what human life looks like when lived well, matures. From experiences and thought about what a good human life is, we grow into richer and more differentiated understandings of the human person, which help us recognize and appraise ourselves and others, our and others' actions, our prospective actions and prospective selves. Sokolowski's account allows us to better appreciate how our understandings of these natural excellences develop. Tradition or custom is a key part of this development.

Tradition has both a positive and negative role in Sokolowski's genetic account of natural law. The ways of doing things we take over from others are what first allow us to escape moral childishness and obtuseness. With acculturation, we are no longer just overwhelmed by present desires but rather learn to articulate means and purposes and to think and act under the measure-supplying perspective of others. At the same time, we cannot appreciate the natural ends of things if we fail to contrast them with these customs. Custom helps till the soil of our soul such that we can later distinguish desires from purposes, and desires and purposes from oughts beyond us. It alone cannot give us insight into ends. Handed down wisdom, others' advice, and examples may seed our thoughts, but we must do the harvesting ourselves.

#### *10. The Traditionalist and the Anti-Traditionalist*

Sokolowski's enumeration of characters who cannot see the difference between ends and purposes seems to leave out a few that are important, given his description of custom in knowing natural law. The distinction requires distinguishers who are neither traditionalists nor anti-traditionalists.

There are those whose moral reflection stops with tradition or the way we do things, who can let tradition check their purposes but cannot reflect morally on tradition. Because tradition does a decent job of drawing people out of childishness and obtuseness, and because our immersion in it makes its correctness seem obvious, often we cannot see the need to turn toward it

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 228.

critically. We may lack the sensitive conscience to reject pieces of it, to see that it is not necessary, or to want to go beyond it. Being critical of it may even be dangerous, since we often lack the imagination to see practical possibilities that would be better. The traditionalist—whether passive or ideological—is unable to draw the needed distinction between ends and custom.

There are also those whose moral reflection starts with the rejection of tradition. Among normal human beings, this type of character is less common than the traditionalist, but among philosophers it is more common.

Sometimes we imagine moral reflection, which is after all supposed to discover what is morally true independent of our ways of doing things, as the activity of an unhistorical and uncultured reason. What this theorizing imagination fails to see is the necessity of tradition in developing our understanding of the ends of things and in situating our actions in a meaningful context determined partly by our and others' pasts. Our understanding of the ends of things, how they would be at their best, develops only with the help of tradition, but this type of theorizing must expect a pure intuition. This project can end either in immature theories (naïve because not self-knowing, done by theorists unaware of how their own histories shape their moral intuitions) or, when rational intuitions are not forthcoming, in skepticism. Both results are ungrateful toward and threaten to diminish the good that custom does.

The anti-traditionalist cannot insightfully make the crucial distinction because he is denied the traction, given by the triangulation, that allows us to have a mature grasp of ends. He sees that we must not allow ourselves to be determined by tradition. Tradition has limits we must be able to overcome if we are to live morally. Yet, because he has disdain for the limits of the way things are now, he often fails to see that much of the way things are now results from limits built into the "to be" of things. He does not have keen sight for ends, for how things must be if they are to be *still themselves* but at their best.

He cannot make the crucial distinction in any given particular situation because he is inattentive to any ends secured by or purposes sought in the custom. An anti-traditionalist—whether ideologically disdainful of the past's momentum in the present or playing out the customary personality-type of the rebel—does not appreciate the good protected by the way we currently do things, and may even identify moral action with the attempt to bring about what is not, to change the way things are, rather than to sometimes protect what is. We often imagine how human life might be quite different and better, and some of these imaginations are ethically inspirational. Alone this type of imagination lacks the concrete sensitivity to current situations needed for good practical action and refuses to accept the limitations that the past puts on the future and that our pasts put on our ability to insightfully move us toward a better future.

Robert Spaemann highlights “equanimity” as the proper “attitude to what we cannot change” and as required for insightful moral action.<sup>44</sup> “Human beings are not capable of acting in a void or *ex nihilo*, so the whole concept of action always includes the idea of accepting certain conditions.”<sup>45</sup> We need equanimity in order to “be reconciled with ourselves” as having limits, and thus to act well without losing heart within our limited possibilities.<sup>46</sup> What I am calling the anti-traditionalist is similar to Spaemann’s “revolutionary” who “thinks that it is only through his actions that any sense can come into the world at all.”<sup>47</sup> In Sokolowski’s terms, this is a failure to see that reality has ends prior to and independent of our coming on the scene. The anti-traditionalist cannot see that, in the world as it is, there already is sense in people and the way they do things. “Every moral point of view, by contrast,” Spaemann adds, “starts from the position that there is already sense in the world and that this sense results from the existence of each individual person.”<sup>48</sup>

### 11. Conclusion

Moral tradition in the narrower sense, what has been repeatedly passed down, seems to have a particularly serious ethical voice. Respect for it is not just superstition born of an irrational drive to honor the old. It is not easy to see how one’s action will play out in the long run, or to see how types of behavior, when made common, will play out for one’s culture and community. It is not easy to see from any given point on the arc of a person’s lifespan the total shape of life and how a human life turned out well or badly might look. The displays of these aspects of our actions are stretched-out historically. Longer-standing traditions are more likely than fads to reflect insight incorporating these long- and wide-view perspectives and contexts. Of course, there are often significant changes in technology and knowledge about the world that make the unadjusted application of many traditions impossible. Despite such changes, much in the ethical dimension of human nature has remained relatively unchanged, and must since we remain rational social-political animals. There should be a more stable validity in the opinions of previous generations about ethics than about many other domains of knowledge.

But even tradition in the broadest sense has real ethical significance. The grip of immediately present goods is loosened not primarily because we learn how to suppress the pressing desire with a calculation about how to fulfill such

<sup>44</sup> R. Spaemann, *Basic Moral Concepts*, trans. by T. J. Armstrong, New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 1989, pp. 80–89.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 83–84.

desires more fully in the long run. This type of calculation, which is first of all done for us by others, is an insertion of reasonable structure into our actions that we grow into only with help, and it gives us a perspective on the immediately satisfiable desire as possibly for a true or false good. Yet, it does not give us a standard outside of our desires by which we can measure them. Tradition or convention is such an outside measure, and more commonly possessed than virtue. By being acculturated to the way things are done, we are initiated not just into strategies to better satisfy our desires, but informed by communal spiritual accomplishments that put our desires into some broader context. Conventions are embodiments of a communal reason; they are shared sedimentations of past accomplishments that draw our attention away from immediate desires and toward long term goods, others' goods, and common goods. They put our desires in the context provided by desires and goods of others, who have their own lives, and by insights into the various ways human life looks when lived badly or well. Customs allow the development of virtue (i.e., moral self-responsibility), but happily they do much good work without it. These ways of acting are paths worn by our community that allow us to live together decently even when there is a scarcity of virtue.

Customs and traditions allow us to first draw the distinction between the good and the apparent good. When we grow into maturely making the distinction and wish to be not passive recipients of culture but responsible for the way we act, they shift into a new perspective and show themselves to be apparent goods. But this does not make them false or merely apparent goods. In their own realm, the realm of moral action, they are appearances that call to be taken seriously, voices that carry a certain authority. Given the way that moral truth is known and the way in which it is not known, we should respect this voice for what it is. Tradition is one of the serious opinions we should listen to, though not always obey, if we are dedicated to always doing what seems best to us upon consideration.

We must be open to acting under an appearing good that may turn out to be merely apparent, to be conscientious without scrupulously frozen. And this means that we must come to terms with ourselves as human beings, shaped by others and our pasts. To know ourselves, to be grateful to our benefactors, and to responsibly attempt to make the crucial distinction ever again, we must show equanimity in accepting the challenge and limits of our ability to live in self-responsibility.

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