

Philosophy of the Human Person

Lecture #28

Adler on the Practical Intellect

general remarks

according to Adler, the key to morality is possession of a “practical intellect”

this is fundamentally the view of Aristotle and Aquinas

it highlights a contrast with perception & emotions

& a connection with the speculative intellect

(they are just two uses of the same power)

this use of the practical intellect in man shows a difference in kind between man and animals

kinds of intellectual acts (of the practical intellect)

apprehension

the key concepts of practical apprehension — goodness & badness

this is controversial

it is the Aristotelian answer

rightness & wrongness are then taken as derivative

other authors claim that rightness and wrongness are equally

fundamental (cf. W. D. Ross, *The Right & the Good*)

prescriptive judgment

judgments of the theoretical intellect are descriptive

e.g., dogs are warm-blooded, or dogs are mammals

judgments of the practical intellect also can be true or false

depending on whether they correspond to right desire

right desires are for real goods

e.g., friendship is good

returning evil for evil is bad

deliberation

two differences from theoretical reasoning

these must have one prescriptive and one descriptive premise

practical reasoning works at three levels

L1	establishing particular principles major premise—the most general principle minor premise— conclusion—more particular principle	real goods should be pursued just peace is a real good so, just peace should be pursued
L2	establishing rules major premise—particular principle minor premise—general descriptive judgment conclusion—rule	just peace should be pursued prevention of ethnic cleansing is a way of establishing a just peace so, preventing ethnic cleansing should be pursued
L3	making decisions major premise—rule minor premise—descriptive judgment about a situation conclusion—decision about a particular case	prevention of ethnic cleansing should be pursued the bombing of Serbia is a case of prevention of ethnic cleansing so, the bombing of Serbia should be pursued

comments

the principles are universal

the rules are only general

positive injunctions holding for the most part, but not universally

some negative injunctions absolute

(this is controversial, see ethics class)

the decisions depend on the analysis of the situation, which has many aspects

morality is fundamentally a matter of moral *judgments* (not moral sentiments)

conscience is the result of a syllogism

not a feeling

not a “voice”

Adler on the Rational Appetite (Will)

definition

the power of choice

(for Aristotelians) intellectual appetite

“will” = Latin *voluntas*

so, voluntary is, as a matter of etymology, “of the will”

does the power of choice make man and animal different in kind?

Aquinas distinguishes

sense appetite

intellectual appetite (will)

whether will is distinctively human will then depend on whether intellect is

general argument

the will is an intellectual power

the intellect is present only in man

so, the will is present only in man

contrast of man and animal

animal actions

begin with viscerally or perceptually generated desire

move automatically from sense-desire to action

on the basis of the strongest desire

human actions

begin with intellectual judgment that something is good

this may be a sensible good (e.g., food)

or it may be an intelligible good (e.g., power)

intellectual judgment does not automatically result in action

[this is the claim that the will is free; see next lecture on this]

two acts of the will

intention—making something one’s end

choosing—taking something one’s means