THE PROBLEM OF GOOD AND EVIL EMPIRICALLY CONSIDERED, WITH REFERENCE TO PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT

by O. Hobart Mowrer

Is man inherently good? Is he inherently evil? Or is he neither, an amoral, ethically neutral creature? Despite many recent attempts to show that morality cannot be defined precisely or investigated scientifically and is therefore a meaningless problem, we go right ahead talking about virtue and evil, and judging conduct, both our own and that of others, as good or bad. So it would seem that, at the outset, we can eliminate the supposition that man is morally indifferent, ethically insensitive, amoral. Instead we must apparently posit that for him morality is a vital, relevant, and enduring concern. This then reduces the issue, as originally formulated, to a dichotomy: is man inherently good or inherently evil?

A lively debate usually ensues whenever one assumes and defends one of these alternatives as against the other. But we will, it seems, be on sounder ground if we take the position that there are inherent tendencies in human beings which dispose us all toward *both* good and evil. These tendencies, as I shall try to show, are deeply rooted in human nature, and there are strong forces propelling man toward virtue but also pulling him toward evil. Although we may not believe in the formal doctrines of Original Sin and the Substitutionary Atonement, the

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inescapable fact seems to be that man is an original and recurrent sinner and always will be; but he is also capable of creativity and originality in finding ways of extricating himself from sin and working out his own salvation. Thus, we may say man is perennially disposed toward goodness, wisdom, and virtue, as well as toward evil, stupidity, and folly.

If these reflections are valid, it follows that life must always be lived in the context of a certain amount of tension and strain; and although there are personal strategies and life styles which will lessen or increase this tension, it can never be altogether eliminated. So we may say that all men have the *capacity* for both good and evil; and, to paraphrase a common proverb, we may add that there is some good in the worst of us and some evil in the best of us. The problem, then, practically speaking, is how to capitalize on our propensities for goodness and self-control and minimize our susceptibility to temptation and evil.

I. THE "FALL OF MAN" AND THE PROBLEMS OF EVIL

That man's struggle with good and evil has been perennial and ancient is indicated by the fact that early in the first book of the Old Testament, known as Genesis, there is a great allegory revolving around the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This allegory is sometimes referred to simply as the "story of the fall of man." According to this story, Adam, the first man, could eat freely all the fruits that abounded in the Garden of Eden, except one: "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil," said the Lord of Creation, "you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."

We are, of course, familiar with how the Lord then decided that Adam should have a companion and created a woman for him, known as Eve. Then, as the story goes on to tell us, a serpent appeared and persuaded the woman to eat of the forbidden fruit, with the promise: "When you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." The woman ate of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and persuaded her husband to do so; and although both then knew the difference between good and evil, they were rendered not serene and godlike but guilty, ashamed, and miserable. Thus they lost their original ethical ignorance and innocence; and, lest Adam and Eve should now also eat of the Tree of Life and become immortal, they were cast out of the Garden of Eden into the world as we know it today—and as ordinary human beings have always known it: with a longing for goodness and peace but also a susceptibility to sin and misery.

This was the superbly figurative way in which the ancient Hebrews conceptualized the problem of good and evil. But because many of us no longer take this story literally but dismiss it as "mythical," does this mean that the problem of good and evil is no longer with us, that we can renounce all issues of morality and thus escape the experience of evil and guilt? By no means! So it will perhaps be useful if we can recast the problem in more contemporary, albeit less dramatic, terms.

II. A SIMPLE GEOMETRICAL APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM

Perhaps we can usefully reformulate the problem of good and evil by posing the following question: If goodness is really good—and good *for* us, why do we sometimes act badly, with undesirable, indeed often disastrous, consequences? In short, why should the problem of evil, that is, of bad, self-defeating behavior, exist?

There is a diagram which I find illuminating in this connection, which consists of a simple right triangle. Imagine the right angle of the triangle composed of a horizontal line running from right to left and there joining with a perpendicular vertical line of the same length extending downward. Let us call the vertical line AB and the horizontal line BC. The hypotenuse of the triangle will thus be AC.

Let us now suppose that we are at A and our objective is to get from A to C. Obviously the shortest path from A to C is the hypotenuse of the triangle. But often "morality" says that we shall not go from A to C by this route but that we shall take the longer route ABC. Immediately a conflict arises. We can readily see that the shortest, quickest route from A to C is along the hypotenuse of the triangle, but the "rules," the principles of right and wrong, say that we must make this journey by the longer route ABC. So our dilemma is: shall we be good and take the longer path or shall we disobey the rules and "do what comes naturally," namely, take the quick and easy route?

Before we proceed further with our analysis of this type of situation, let me concretize it in two ways. The situation may be simply that of a lawn, where the perpendicular sides of the triangle represent a sidewalk and where there is beautiful grass which the hypotenuse or path AC would cross. There may be a sign in this situation which says: "Please do not walk on the grass." In other words, the bad consequences, or evil, that would result if we went from A to C along the hypotenuse of the triangle would be that we would soon destroy some of the grass by walking on it and would disfigure the lawn. And if we disregarded the sign and walked on the grass, we might be shouted

at by the proprietor of the lawn or we might even be arrested, whereas if we remained on the sidewalk, we could "go in peace."

Another simple illustration of this way of distinguishing between right and wrong would be the following. Let us suppose that C represents not a point in space but a goal of another kind, for example, that of money. Now the "rules" say that the proper way to get money is to *work* for it, and that involves, figuratively, taking the longer, harder route represented by the perpendicular lines AB, BC in the triangle. What would the alternative route AC involve in this case? It might involve burglary, forgery, swindling, or some more violent activity, such as armed robbery or perhaps even murder. This, we would say, was a bad, immoral, evil, or criminal solution to the problem; yet some people at least periodically or perhaps habitually take route AC when they want money, instead of getting it in the good, approved way, by taking route ABC, which involves *working* for it.

From these and innumerable other examples which could be given, it is clear that some human beings are good, or at least predominantly so, whereas other human beings are bad, at least a part—perhaps a very large part—of the time. So the *fact* of good and bad conduct is obvious and ubiquitous and needs no elaborate documentation or argument. This conclusion does not, however, answer our question: Is man *inherently* good or evil. It merely indicates that human beings sometimes act virtuously and sometimes otherwise, and that both good and bad behavior are human realities; and the geometrical illustration helps us specify and clarify what we mean, in principle, when we refer to conduct that is good and conduct that is evil.

III. Intelligence and the Problem of Good and Evil

At first blush it might appear that the problem of good and evil could easily be resolved in terms of intelligence and stupidity. Good behavior, as we have thus far analyzed it, seems eminently rational, intelligent; and bad behavior seems grossly stupid and self-defeating. A popular—or perhaps I should say, a *once* popular slogan—says: "Crime doesn't pay," with the implicit injunction, "so don't be a chump and engage in it." But crime and evil persist; so the rationality argument is by no means axiomatic to everyone and apparently to some persons is itself stupid and "irrational."

The difficulty with the rationality approach to good and evil solutions to problems is that each, in its own way, is both intelligent *and* stupid. A good person is intelligent in that he characteristically reaches his goals in such a way that other persons do not object to or interfere

with his behavior and he is not criticized or punished; but he is "stupid," if I may use that term, in a rather special sense, in that he chooses an arduous and slow way of gratifying his needs and wishes in preference to quick and easy ones. The evil person, on the other hand, chooses exactly the opposite strategy, which, again, involves both an intelligent and a stupid aspect. His behavior is intelligent in that he typically goes to his goals by the quickest and easiest methods; that is, he takes what we call shortcuts (which, in many situations are regarded as insights, creative innovations, inventions, etc.). But the shortcuts which the man of evil takes are of such a nature that, if known to others, they are likely to precipitate rebuke or, in more serious cases, personal retaliation or perhaps legal action; and if these shortcut solutions are carried out by stealth, their perpetrator is always in danger of being found out and is thus rendered more or less chronically insecure, furtive, apprehensive.

On the other hand, there *are* situations where taking a shortcut may involve insight, creativity, or adaptive "reality testing." Imagine that for a prehistoric tribe the route from A to C was taboo because a saber-toothed tiger lived in a cave along the way. But then further suppose that someday one or more persons were so rash (*or* "courageous") as nevertheless to take path AC and found that the tiger was dead and that the formerly dangerous path was now safe. This illustrates the adage that "circumstances alter cases" and shows that what may once have been bad, evil, stupid is now safe and desirable. This thought is capsulated in one line of a poem by James Russell Lowell (often sung as a hymn) which, if I recall correctly, reads: "Time makes ancient good uncouth." But the dependence of a moral truth upon circumstances does not lessen its relevance and urgency if the circumstances are of one sort rather than another.

This, I suppose, might be interpreted as a form of "situation ethics," as indeed it is. But I feel that Fletcher[1] has carried his argument to an absurdity—and interest in it seems, appropriately, to be gradually declining. In his book he seems to be saying that there should be no rules whatever, and that every situation should be treated, so to say, on its own merits—"decided in love," to use one of his favorite expressions. Suppose, to take a simple but highly pertinent example, that there were no "rules of the road" and that each time two cars approached from opposite directions, the drivers had to take time out to decide whether to pass one another on the right or on the left. The result would not be freedom but confusion and chaos of the worst sort. Rules are not made to "hold us down" but to help us get to our "destinations" in the

quickest and easiest way that is compatible with the common good. Rules may indeed become outmoded (as seems to be happening today with regard to certain traditional sexual mores), but this does not mean that rules are *never* desirable, useful, and worthy of our fullest observance and loyalty. A society without rules, general agreements, "contracts" would be a shambles, a nonsociety.[2]

IV. THE ROLE OF TIME AND THE CONCEPT OF NET GAIN

It thus becomes evident that we cannot resolve the problem of good and evil, in any very simple or obvious way, by saying that one is intelligent, smart and the other unintelligent, stupid. Both approaches to the solution of life's moral problems involve intelligent *and* stupid aspects—or, said a little differently, both involve advantages and disadvantages. How is this dilemma to be resolved? I am sure that, at this juncture, many of you will have already found yourselves introducing, in your own minds, the *time* dimension; and this enables us to take a substantial step toward the resolution of the dilemma. Already we have established that evil and virtue involve both advantages and disadvantages, but we must now notice also that there is a difference in the *ordering* or *timing* of the consequences thereof. By and large, we can say that in the case of evil solutions to problems, the advantages come quickly and the disadvantages tend to be delayed (or sometimes, in the overt sense of the wrongdoer's being caught and punished, averted altogether), whereas, in the case of good solutions to moral problems, the disadvantages come first and the advantages or "payoff" tends to be delayed (or, again, in an unstable or unjust situation, it may not materialize at all). In other words, virtue, like evil, always involves a risk or gamble, but a gamble of two different sorts: the evil person, by his impulsive action, insures impulse gratification, but at the risk of being, sooner or later, punished, whereas the good person "controls himself" and works and waits, but may or may not receive his just rewards.

If time were the only factor involved here, we would all surely be perpetual sinners, sociopaths, criminals—that is, persons habitually given to resorting to so-called bad rather than good solutions to moral problems. For who wants a delayed satisfaction of a need if an equally good one is available immediately? We have already said that good solutions take more time and effort than do evil ones, so the balance would be heavily in favor of bad rather than good solutions. That is to say, "good" solutions to problems would be *bad* and "bad" solutions to problems would be *good*. But manifestly, things do not work this

way; and in order to explain why they do not, we have to take not only time and effort into account but also a factor which can perhaps be best termed "net gain." In a bad solution to a problem, although the goal is typically reached quickly and easily, there are likely to be delayed negative consequences which are *more punishing* than the quick-and-easy goal attainment was rewarding or satisfying. On the other hand, in a *good* instance of goal attainment, although more time and effort are involved in "getting there" than in the case of a bad problem-solving strategy, there are not likely to be any delayed negative consequences, and the satisfaction ultimately achieved is more than worth what it has cost in terms of the sacrifices required to achieve it.[3]

Thus we arrive at a rather interesting conclusion: namely, that good behavior is good because the *total satisfaction* experienced over time tends to outweigh the requisite energy expenditure and gratification postponement, and bad behavior is bad because the *total experienced satisfaction* tends to be *less* than what it ultimately costs. Thus good behavior turns out to be intelligent and in one's long-term self-interest, and bad behavior turns out to be stupid and self-defeating, in the slightly complicated way which has been explained. Was it not Socrates who long ago argued that in the final analysis virtue and wisdom are the same? And there are contemporary empirical studies which show that the results of intelligence tests and objective measures of morality are positively correlated.[4]

V. The Role of "Authority," Temporal and Supernatural, in the Control of Behavior

Although good behavior is, by definition and in reality, in the long run preferable to bad behavior from a purely hedonistic, self-fulfilling standpoint, the fact is that human beings, when very young, are typically impulsive rather than controlled and prudent in their pursuit of pleasure and only gradually learn to be "good," and that no one is ever wholly immune to the lure of temptation, that is, the tendency, on occasion, to revert from virtuous and wise action to evil and foolish action.[5] And it has long been recognized that human beings *need help* in their pursuit of goodness. In the case of infants and children this help comes from the concern, discipline, and "authority" which their parents (or parental surrogates) in all societies exercise over them; and when human beings become adult, if they are to live together in any sort of harmony and productiveness, they must be subject to some sort of external force or power, the exercise of which is the prerogative of the chief in tribal situations, of kings in autocratic societies, and of

duly constituted "public officials" in democratic societies. In all of these instances, it is the *duty* of persons "in authority" to keep the peace by seeing to it that individuals, when they lack the inner capacity to behave themselves, do so out of fear of external coercion, loss of privileges, or punishment.

But, being human themselves, such authorities cannot, or do not, always execute their duties perfectly in this connection; and mankind has a long history of resorting to supernatural powers in its struggle toward virtue and against evil. In Sumner and Keller's now somewhat dated but nevertheless still monumental work entitled *The Science of Society*, the problem is set forth, graphically and colorfully, in the following words:

> Not without justice has it been written that fear is the beginning of knowledge. It is certainly the beginning of that discipline through which alone wisdom arrives. Discipline was precisely what men needed in the childhood of the race and have continued to require ever since. Men must learn to control themselves. Though the regulative organization exercised considerable discipline, its agents were merely human; the chief had to sleep occasionally, could not be everywhere at once, and might be deceived and evaded. Not so the ghosts and spirits. The all-seeing daimonic eye was sleepless; no time or place was immune from its surveillance. Detection was sure. Further, the penalty inflicted was awesome. Granted that the chief might beat or maim or fine or kill, there were yet limits to what he could do. The spirits, on the other hand, could inflict strange agonies and frightful malformations and transformations. Their powers extended even beyond the grave and their resources for harm outran the liveliest imaginings. In short, they inspired, not a daylight-fear but a grisly, gruesome terror—ghost-fear. Consider the threat of the taboo, and its effectiveness. It is beneath this unearthly whip of scorpions that humanity has cringed for long ages and there is no doubt that its disciplinary value has superseded all other compulsions to which mankind has ever been subject.[6]

Today I can recall, clearly and with some discernment, the span of more than half a century of life in our society; and I remember that when I was eleven or twelve years old, there was a book in our family library (housed in the small, glass-enclosed "bookcase" in our "parlor") which fascinated me far more than any of the other rarely consulted volumes there. As I remember it, this book had very little text and was made up largely of pictures (actually engravings) of the devil carrying out his varied and far-reaching responsibilities on earth and in hell. Although he was a terrible-looking fellow, he did not seem, to my youthful eyes at least, altogether unlikeable or unhappy. And this much was certain: he took his work very seriously and gave every indication of enjoying it. Stated most generally, the devil's primary duty on earth was to *tempt* living mortals and to superintend the punishment in hell

of those who yielded to his blandishments and failed to repent soon enough. On Sundays, the ministers of the Protestant church which my family and I regularly attended pictured hell to us even more vividly than did the book (in color and with sound effects) and assured us that the fires burned brightly and that the place was doing a thriving business. But our ministers, for some reason, did not seem to want to appear to know too much about the general overseer of this institution—perhaps this is why I found our old book, appropriately bound in red, so uniquely instructive and interesting. Our ministers also, of course, discoursed on heaven—and were much freer to talk about God, whose supreme objective was to help human beings *be good* in this life so they could share eternity with him.

It now appears, in retrospect, that by roughly 1920, the devil was failing to command full credence, rather generally—which was, from one point of view, a grave misfortune; for if he was allowed to disappear from the minds of men, it was predictable that the fires of hell would cool and the place itself would eventually disappear. I have, of course, no way of knowing just how rapidly this indeed happened—I have often thought how instructive it would be if we had available today the results of a Gallup poll taken, let us say, at five-year intervals, during the half-century between 1920 and 1970, on the decline of "belief" in this general area. But it seems fairly certain that the devil went first, and then hell likewise gradually faded into oblivion.

Hell's obsolescence was officially recognized in theological circles when E. Stanley Jones announced that "hell is portable," that is, that it is a human condition and not a place. And if our assumption be correct that man himself is *both* good and evil, we could have predicted that if this personal and spatial way of representing evil and its fruits disappeared, Heaven and God would also be endangered. Sometime in the 1950s, I recall hearing a sermon entitled "What's Happened to Heaven?" Suddenly I said to myself: "As a matter of fact, you don't hear much about heaven anymore, do you?" The dissolution of hell had, it seems, created an unnatural imbalance. With this "institution" gone, everyone now presumably went to heaven; and if this were the case, the whole "other world" arrangement seemed rather pointless. Furthermore, about the same time, the existentialists descended upon us with the revelation that, as a matter of fact, no one was "going" anywhere! Tillich's terms "human finitude" and "our creatureliness" became household expressions, all of which left God without a permanent address and, as someone observed, "largely unemployed." Small wonder that it was only a few years until the "rumor" that God was

dead had developed into a vigorous, if somewhat paradoxical, "theo-
logical movement," which was launched by Vahanian's book[7] and has
been "reviewed" by Adolfs.[8] And today it is generally conceded that
our society is basically secular[9] and that the "three-storied universe"
of traditional Christianity is "mythical."[10]

The sequential process whereby this scheme of supernatural entities
and sanctions disappeared from the modern scene thus seems to have
been: first to go was the devil, then hell, then heaven, and finally—at
least in any naïvely anthropomorphic sense—God. Many of us recall that
if, as children, we asked *why* this or that act was bad, we were likely
to be told either that God did not *want* us to perform it or that the
devil would *get* us if we did. It is, therefore, perhaps not surprising
that the disappearance of the "all-seeing, sleepless daimonic eye" and
its accoutrements has also badly shaken our faith in and respect for
many human institutions which have claimed support and authenti-
cation from divine sources. For more than a decade now, we have been
in an acute moral crisis, uncertain and confused as to where we can look
for moral clarity and reliable guidance to the good life. In the earlier
sections of this paper, some suggestions have been put forward as to
how we can reapproach the problem of good and evil, in an entirely
objective, naturalistic, humanistic frame of reference. In the next and
concluding section we shall take a look at certain enterprises which are
specifically interested in putting such a conceptual approach into prac-
tice.

VI. The Probable Shape of Things to Come in Character Development and Nurturance

It is not without significance, surely, that the institution or movement
which is today most effective in producing personal *change* in adult
human beings is one which (*a*) has no truck with any form of super-
naturalism and (*b*) does not even use the traditional terminology of
secular ethical theory. I refer to Synanon Foundation, whose "houses"
are located mainly in major cities on the West Coast and whose spe-
cialty is the rehabilitation of hard-core drug addicts. Here there is,
officially, no prayer or worship in the conventional sense, and even the
terms "good" and "bad" are generally eschewed. Instead, behavior is
likely to be characterized as *smart* or *stupid,* in the self-actualizing,
self-defeating, selfishly hedonic sense previously discussed. That the
power and effectiveness of this approach lies not in the personal cha-
risma of Synanon's founder, Charles Dederich, but in clearly articulated
principles and processes[11] is indicated by the fact that a very similar

organization, known as Daytop Village, Inc., has come into existence in New York City and is now spreading up and down the Atlantic seaboard.[12] And both organizations owe much of their inspiration and know-how to Alcoholics Anonymous, which specializes in another admittedly "impossible" task, namely, the rehabilitation of alcoholics.

Being neither an addict nor an alcoholic, I have had only tangential (but very cordial) contact with Synanon, Daytop, and AA; but I have been persuaded for a full quarter of a century now that functional personality disorders or so-called neuroses are intrinsically associated with basically moral problems and their persistent mismanagement. This conviction eventuated first in what was called "integrity therapy"[13]; but the name, and the process for which it stood, was attractive only to persons who were actively "hurting," and when they became reasonably comfortable, they, sensibly enough, disappeared. Who needs "therapy" if he is no longer "sick"? But we are now seeing the problem increasingly in educational rather than medical terms and have therefore dropped the term "therapy" and speak only of *integrity groups.*" As a result of this and related changes, people are now coming into our groups and *staying,* not because they are "still hurting," but because their pain has turned to a form of joy, which they feel they can continue to experience in no other way. In our groups, *personal change* and a form of *special training* go hand in hand. As a person becomes increasingly comfortable as a result of such change, he also begins to take deep satisfaction in new competences and skills which can then be exercised *in behalf of others.*

This is not the place to speak at length about integrity groups.[14] But this much is pertinent: we believe that these groups, as a facet of what is coming to be known, generally, as the small-groups movement, represent the emergence of a new *primary social institution.* In an era when the traditional primary social groups—home, church, school, and community—are badly shaken and confused, it is increasingly difficult for many persons to find identity, intimacy, emotional support, and cosmic meaning. It seems that the small-groups movement, of which integrity groups are one facet, represents an increasingly successful effort, on the part of more and more people, to avoid anonymity, alienation, and despair. And the part of this movement with which I am most closely associated has frankly moral or ethical objectives: to help oneself and others to become more *honest, responsible,* and *emotionally involved.* And *help* in the attainment or at least approximation of these objectives is found in the hope of heaven and the fear of hell, not as places but as human conditions in this life.

Within the past six months, there has been an unprecedented up-
surge of interest in small groups, which has been reflected, among other
ways, by the fact that several large-circulation magazines have run very
thoughtful and competently written articles on this phenomenon. A
long list of such articles could be cited, but one of the most recent and
best will suffice: namely, a piece by Sam Blum entitled, "Group Ther-
apy: A Special Report."[15] Personally, I think there is a good possibility
that these groups represent the emerging form of the church of the
twenty-first century. They will very likely differ from conventional
Catholic and Protestant churches in that they will not be specifically
christocentric, nor will they be explicitly theistic (compare Confucian-
ism and Buddhism). But they will, I think, be *profoundly religious.*
This may seem like a contradiction in terms to some, who will ask:
"But how can anyone be religious without also believing in God?" The
answer is very simple. The term "religion," in its literal derivation,
has no necessary relation to "theology." The former term comes from
the Latin root *ligare,* which means connection; and *re-ligare,* from
which our term "religion" comes, means reconnection. And this, more
than perhaps anything else, is what the small-groups movement is con-
cerned with: the reconnection, reintegration, reconciliation of lost,
lonely, isolated, alienated, estranged persons back into a loving, con-
cerned, and orderly fellowship or group of some sort.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was apparently envisioning something of this
sort when toward the end of his life,[16] he spoke about "man coming
of age" and of a "religionless Christianity." But his choice of terms was,
I think, unfortunate. We would prefer to speak of a nontheistic reli-
gion," of the sort which one already sees explicitly embodied in many
forms of contemporary small groups. Yet in one sense there is a striking
continuity and kinship here between the contemporary small-groups
movement and Christianity. The early or apostolic church was basically
a small-groups movement and was based, not in churches as we know
them today, but typically in individual homes, where a "congregation"
would consist of perhaps only ten or a dozen persons; and when the
group got larger than this, it would divide and provide the nucleus
of two new groups. Thus the early church was also known as a house
church; and when, as in Rome, it was not safe to meet in private homes,
these little bands found refuge and a degree of safety in the catacombs.
Here honesty (confession, exomologesis), responsibility (restitution,
penance), and involvement (loving kindness) were all practiced, with
the same salubrious effects we see them capable of producing today.
But there is, of course, the very significant difference that the small

groups ("congregations," "house churches") with which we are here particularly concerned are naturalistic and humanistic, rather than metaphysical and deistic, in their basic orientation.

And why do human beings continue to need "religious" groups, regardless of their cosmology or world view? Because, as previously noted in this paper, we all need help in pursuing the good and avoiding evil. Socially isolated, estranged man is weak and highly prone to evil, self-defeating behavior. Bonhoeffer, in his book *Life Together*, puts it this way: "In confession the break-through to community takes place. Sin demands to have a man by himself. It withdraws him from the community. The more isolated a person is, the more destructive will be the power of sin over him, and the more deeply he becomes involved in it, the more disastrous is his isolation. Sin wants to remain unknown. It shuns the light. In the darkness of the unexpressed it poisons the whole being of a person."[17]

The most reliable means yet discovered for obtaining help in overcoming estrangement and building resistance to temptation ("ego strength") comes from commitment to and earnest participation in a properly conceived and contractually structured group of fellow human beings, that is, of one's *peers*. The best safeguard of legal rights and justice ever evolved is probably the principle, in English law, of the "right to trial before a jury of one's peers"; and it is no accident that the kind of small groups discussed in this paper are now being commonly referred to as "peer self-help groups."[18]

Today there is manifestly widespread uncertainty, conflict, and pain in the area of morality and "values." This is perhaps the price we have to pay as we move through a religious "reformation" which, in historical retrospect, may prove to be far more important, sounder, and unifying than that of the sixteenth century.

NOTES

1. J. F. Fletcher, *Situation Ethics: The New Morality* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966).

2. O. H. Mowrer, "Conflict, Contract, Conscience, and Confession," *Transactions* 1 (1969):17–19; see also J. F. Fletcher, *Moral Responsibility: Situation Ethics at Work* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967).

3. See O. H. Mowrer and A. D. Ullman, "Time as a Determinant in Integrative Learning," *Psychological Review* 52 (1945):61–90.

4. See, for example, Clara F. Chassell, *The Relation between Morality and Intellect: A Compendium of Evidence Contributed by Psychology, Criminology, and Sociology* (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1935).

5. See the distinction made by Freud, in 1911, between the Pleasure Principle and the Reality Principle, in "Formulations regarding Two Principles of Mental Function," *Collected Papers* (London: Hogarth Press, 1934), 4:13–21.

6. W. B. Sumner and A. G. Keller, *Self-Maintenance Religion,* The Science of Society, vol. 2 (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1927), pp. 1478–79.

7. G. Vahanian, *The Death of God* (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1961)

8. R. Adolfs, *The Grave of God: Has the Church a Future?* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966).

9. See Harvey Cox, *The Secular Society* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1965).

10. See the writings of Rudolf Bultmann, *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate,* ed. H. Bartsch, trans. R. H. Fuller (London: SPCK Press, 1953), 1:1–44; see also W. Hordern, *New Directions in Theology Today* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), chap. 2.

11. See, for example, L. Yablonsky, *The Tunnel Back: Synanon* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1965).

12. See J. A. Shelly and A. Bassin, "Daytop Lodge: A New Treatment Approach for Drug Addicts," *Corrective Psychiatry* 11 (1965):186–95; see also A. Bassin, "Daytop Village," *Psychology Today* (December 1968), pp. 48 ff.

13. See, for example, J. W. Drakeford, *Integrity Therapy: A Christian Evaluation to a New Approch to Mental Health* (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman Press, 1967).

14. See, for example, O. H. Mowrer, "Integrity Groups Today," mimeographed (Urbana: Department of Psychology, University of Illinois, 1969).

15. *Redbook* (March 1970), p. 134.

16. *Prisoner for God: Letters and Papers from Prison* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1953).

17. New York: Harper & Bros., 1954, p. 112.

18. See N. Hurvitz, "The Characteristics of Peer Self-Help Psychotherapy Groups and Their Implications for the Theory and Practice of Psychotherapy," *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, and Practice* 7 (1970): 41–49.