

THE THEOLOGICAL VALUES OF LIFE AND NONBEING

by Wallace W. Robbins

It has been some time since I have attended one of these conferences. I can only date it as biblical dates are fixed—by a great event: I was here last when the new flagpole was erected; long enough, I think, to allow me to repeat the only story I remember telling at that conference.

Enrico Fermi, the great physicist, was a resident at the University of Chicago when I lived and worked there, and he was among those who turned up to read the great religious books in a special group President Robert Hutchins suggested that I start. Enrico Fermi never read the books that were required reading for the members, but such was the cleverness of his mind that within a few minutes of following the questions and answers and discussion of others he had developed an understanding of what the book was all about. As soon as he discovered this, he took the position of the devil's advocate and with great good humor demolished everybody's favorable opinions during the rest of the evening.

I always had the feeling that this was Fermi's vacation from more precise work that he was doing elsewhere; he enjoyed it thoroughly. He was a delightful man, and we all loved him most of the time, but once my esteem for him faltered for a shameful instant.

We met in homes to have coffee and cake before the meeting began, and at one of the meetings a woman brought as her guest her first cousin, a woman who immediately was overcome to meet the great physicist Enrico Fermi, the Columbus who had discovered a New World, if you remember his designation in Conant's telegram. As he and I were standing together and drinking coffee, she approached with respect and addressed him as follows: "Professor Fermi, will you please tell me what effect the discovery of nuclear fission will have upon religion?" I thought, "Of all people to ask, she asks Fermi; why didn't she ask me? I could've told her; why did she ask him, the man who does not read through a theological book?" Fermi went into a brown study,

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wiped his forehead, thought about this question at great length. I was waiting for his answer, silently and with hostility. Finally, he said: "Madam, I don't think I know enough about nuclear fission to answer your question."

THE THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL

So having been taught such humility in matters of the relation of science and religion, I go forward with an immediate resolve to limit myself in method as well as in subject. May I remind you of the distinction which Aristotle made between practical and theoretical knowledge? He suggested that there were two branches of knowledge; the one was examination of the pure ideological form of the subject under investigation; the other was a development of that knowledge of virtue which was imbedded in the being of man himself and required practice. The one required uncontaminated thought; the other required unremitting practice. Now, such is the American scene that if you say something is "practical," it sounds as though it were really good, and if you say it is "theoretical," that sounds as though it didn't relate to reality. Even at this risk, I want to speak about the theoretical and not the practical, for it seems to me that there is advantage in doing this since we are discussing ethics, not morals. Morality is that which you learn from example and from personal practice. You do not learn morality by talking about it or merely thinking about it—you have to make it a part of your life—while ethics is something which allows you to investigate the principles by which we ought to act: it is a criticism of morality and, at best, an intelligent proposal for a better behavior.

I would also like to call to your attention that both science and religion, because these two kinds of knowledge—the theoretical and the practical—are mixed up in the public mind, find themselves in peculiar difficulty with disgruntled citizens, especially young people who are growing to be as disillusioned with science as they have in the past with religion, and pretty much for the same reason. What they say to religion, to use biblical language, is: "We do not like your solemn assemblies." In effect, "You go through all of this exalted talk about God and the good life but you show no signs of being concerned with the depressed who are living in the slums, with the poor people of the world; you don't do anything about it that we can see that is worthwhile." They began by saying of science: "Look what you've done! You've invented the bomb that might blow us up at any time," but now they have discovered something worse than the bomb. They have discovered that while everybody's attention was directed to the final

holocaust, the innocent-looking neighborhood factory chimney was belching out sickness. Industry had learned from science how to manufacture goods at the high expense of poison waste. While critics of religion do not like liturgy, the outward signs of religion, and critics of science do not like engineering, the outward signs of science, in the end, of course, and let me confess this now and clearly, all that is going to matter is how religion and science are applied and how they work. So the young people are quite right in looking at the end results, but I think they are making a great mistake in not going back to the theoretical to find out how one really goes about criticizing the practical! The young people have shut down the universities occasionally because they do not want to pursue the critical, the theoretical; everyone wants to be literally in the act. Religion as a cult and science as engineering are under severe attack, but religion as theology and science as the advancement of knowledge still have a significant place, even though ignored, and it is in terms of the theoretical that I would like to try to bring things together.

Let me start by telling you a couple of stories. When I lived in Chicago, an old cottonwood tree out on the sidewalk grew so large that it filled the eaves of my house with leaves and covered completely a flowering hawthorn tree and two ginkgoes in my garden, so I had it cut down. When the workmen came to do the cutting, little gatherings of belligerent nature lovers gathered outside the garden gate. "Who's cutting down this great tree?" they asked, and I expected them at any time to recite: "Woodsmen, spare that tree; touch not a single bough" or to sing Joyce Kilmer's poem about trees and how only God could make one. I was the naughty man over the wall destroying this unique creation of the Divine. I survived the criticism and attack, and when the next spring came, around the stump of the tree an enormous colony of mushrooms grew. I know nothing about wild mushrooms so I did not dare touch them, but I soon discovered there were a couple of men visiting this place and picking them, vying with one another as to who would get the most.

These were a couple of graduate students in botany, and they told me that by cutting down the tree I had helped support their pursuit of knowledge at the University of Chicago because it helped feed their families. Also, the ginkgoes grew well, the hawthorn flowered and came up over the wall, and people passing by saw that a good thing had been done after all. I had killed a tree but I allowed three to live, and I had fed the families of the graduate students in botany. What I am trying to convey to you is my impatience with romantic notions

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about ecology, the foolishness of the view that the preservation of all things, without discrimination, is good, that we should keep everything alive without regard to that husbandry which practices selection: cutting, pruning, uprooting, making death serve life.

There is an extraordinary short movie made by Lord Snowdon about the emotional regard of some of the British for cats, dogs, and birds. In one of the scenes there was a dog, alleged to be seventeen years of age. Poor creature, he was bleary of eye and weak of limb, and in his misery had to listen to an official who had come dressed in appropriate funereal dress to discuss his impending death. The sepulchral tone, the vocabulary of this whole occasion, was one which I as a minister recognized full well. Then there was another scene of a dog haven in a beautiful old estate out on the moors where there must have been twenty or thirty dogs leaping greedily all around an old English spinster dressed in big shoes and heavy, thick socks while she distributed the food. She was very proud to have her picture taken amidst her dependents and she conveyed the impression that she knew full well that her salvatory work was good.

Then there was another scene of the inside of a grand house which was filled with birds flying from one coping to another and landing on the piano or the mantle. These were birds that had fallen onto bad times and had been rescued from a featherless walking of the streets by the mistress of the asylum, who seemed very sure that they were worth saving.

But the greatest scene, and one which was said to have disturbed the English viewers most of all, was that of an egg being hatched in what I suppose we should decently say was the cleavage of a woman who was lying in bed. As the eggshell broke and the little chicken peeked out, she was saying: "Isn't this marvelous; isn't it miraculous." The little chicken squirmed his way out and finally walked along the top of the blanket; the birth struggle was over. Later this woman was interviewed and asked about the filming. She said that it was authentic and that she had had to wear double heavy underwear whenever she went down to the pub at night to keep the egg warm.

I do not know what to say about these things; I suppose one should be very sympathetic and speak of the loneliness of the human heart, which here without human companionship seeks out this nonhuman kind of dependable friendship, literally dependent friendship. One remembers the comments of Mark Twain, who said that there is a difference between a man and a dog. For if you find a dog and a man, hungry and wandering around the streets, and you take them home and give them shelter and feed them, the dog will not bite you.

While one recognizes the pathological loneliness in the hearts of these people, it may also be that they have that healthy impulse in all men to save life, whether it is animal or man, for we were created to be the keeper of nature, the keeper of the garden, the farmer and the herdsman. It may be the urge to return to a time when animals were as kind as teddy bears and belonged to the environment of the first Eden, where all things of the earth, the sea, and sky, were blessed in life with peace. But this ancient garden, or even the closer rural life of a century ago, is gone and we are out of it in time, excluded because of our own refusal to accept life conditionally. The "fall of man" does not mean that flesh is evil and sex sinful. The meaning of the Eden myth is that man receives all of his life conditionally and he must be obedient to basic laws. He was kicked out of the garden, not because he was lustful, but because he refused to accept life as something that was deeded to him under the requirement that he be responsible. Even Augustine has a passage in the *City of God* which is generally left in Latin so the children of a past and less knowledgeable generation cannot get it off the bookshelf and read it. This particular paragraph, however, when translated, proves to be a joyful paean to the sexual act as it might have occurred in Eden before the fall. It was a union without mutual exploitation; it was of love and not of lust. Therefore, there is, even in this highly classical book of the Christian fall, this lyrical statement of the goodness of sex as God intended it to be. No part of life was exempt from blessing. And this goodness of the wholeness of life surely remains, but man is separated from its wholeness because he will not accept it conditionally to this day. He still exploits nature and refuses to be responsible for it; yet he knows his failing and he tries.

The Law of Sinai becomes acceptable to man after it becomes evident to him that in his own unrestrained living he will have nothing but murder and all kinds of maiming behavior to endure: his personal survival is not possible if he persists in trying to live unconditionally. The Ten Commandments impose upon him a sort of second chance to accept life as a design once again, but this time he must do it by acts of will and not as before, not as Augustine describes the men of Eden, who were able to do good instinctively, able to fulfill the law of their essential manhood without the tension and agony of thought, without trial or error painfully compiled and made into traditional wisdom.

In man's religion there emerges, to use Karl Barth's paradox, a "possible impossibility"; that is to say, man has the possibility of rising above himself. And how does one rise above himself? In our culture two answers have been proposed. One is the answer of one part of

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Christian life, namely that this possible impossibility is afforded man because God has enabled him, through grace, to do the will of God. Our Jewish brothers do not look at it quite this way. Insofar as man is to surpass himself, they believe he is to do it by reason of knowing the law and training himself to be obedient to it; for man cannot expect to sit by and receive grace without moral exertion. Which is true? Is it so that by doing good you will increase the grace of God that is within you and thus increase your capacity to do more good, or that grace comes first as the means by which righteousness can be done? Let me offer the suggestion that this situation is like looking at two teams of workmen starting at opposite shores to build a tunnel under a river. If you looked at this from above without understanding their motives, you could see them as furiously blasting away at each other in complete opposition, yet, at some appropriate moment of fulfillment, there will be a bursting through of the final wall of their separation, the completion of the tunnel. The men will shake hands because they will have accomplished what they set out to do: Not to build a highway to God, but to build a better understanding of who they are on the highway to God.

ECOLOGICAL ETHICS: THE WHOLENESS OF LIFE

There is a kind of equation between man and God, law and grace, which varies as to how much power you assign to God and how much power to man, how much to law, how much to grace; but it remains an equation, a wholeness which is always in balance, for you cannot shift from one side without giving to the other. In short, I contend that the ethics that we seek are in themselves ecological. It is within the fierce division and diversity of nature and of man himself that there is a wholeness which is present and waiting for us to discover. And it is this wholeness, this ecology, this holiness, that I wish to uphold as that which gives worth to all the parts. The meaning of life and death is knitted into the fabric of the world.

I call your attention to the positive value of even negative things. For example, the genetic cause of sickle-cell anemia also provides resistance to malaria. One does not interfere with this kind of inter-related system without first recognizing that what seems to be bad may be good, and what seems to be good possibly might be bad. I remember visiting a state hospital twenty-five years ago and observing, among other things, men who were being cured of paresis by malaria; that is, by elevating a man's temperature high enough, the malaria effectively killed the syphilis germ and prevented any further attacks upon the

patient's nervous system. So one does not know. Should one have anemia in order to do away with malaria, or should one have malaria in order to do away with paresis? There is a kind of interlocking of negations that goes on here which cannot easily be pulled out and thrown away without imperiling the life of man. I interpret this theologically to mean that when God created the world he did not overcome the darkness completely with the light but left the darkness to live in the same world with the light, and that form and content did not completely override all chaos and the void but left the chaos and the void also present in the world. The darkness and the chaos are not vanquished but remain in some fashion a part of the good. "The darkness and the light are both alike to thee."

Man can be preserved only by saving all of nature, good and bad. Noah was not instructed to leave behind any creatures, not even the mosquitoes. Apparently the renewed world needed all of the old, for the evil of the old world was not in nature's wholeness but in man's unholiness, in man's ego. It is that which man does with the world, not the world itself which is bad. Even Noah was hardly exemplary. Why could not have God chosen a more nearly perfect man than Noah? Do you remember the discussion in *Green Pastures*? This Noah was, as you know, the patriarch of all alcoholics, for he was given to strong drink. Roark Bradford develops the myth by having the Lord reply to Noah's request for strong drink: "Yes, you may take a jug of strong spirits with you." But Noah argues that there will be poisonous snakes aboard and it will be a wise provision to take two jugs. And the Lord said: "One jug." And Noah said: "But one jug will unbalance the Ark, we got to take two jugs, one for each side to trim the ship." And the Lord said: "One jug, in the middle." A curious thing about all of this is that while certainly Noah was a good Jew, he is hardly representative in his thirst, for it is one of the peculiarities of the Jew that he is nowhere near so prone to alcoholism, in spite of his bad inheritance from Noah, as the rest of us seem to be. My neighbor and friend, Rabbi Joseph Klein, has for a long time been in great demand to make speeches to explain why this is so. And he has told me that he really does not know why it is so, but it is true. The one suggestion he can make is that the Jew never looked upon alcohol as evil. "We have looked upon it as a means of celebration," he says. The wine is blessed upon the table for all to rejoice and give thanks. Wine which is received in gratitude is holy. So what seems a danger and a horror to some men, a downright evil to fundamentalists, is looked upon as a part of the wholeness of the world. Alcohol is one of the gifts of God and we ought to be

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thankful for it. When we see it in its relation to the whole, it loses its capacity to do evil, and its powers to enhance high feeling is harnessed to the good. The answer to the "evil" in the world is not to go around denying it but to celebrate it in its "goodness."

I once said to one of my Jewish friends: "You must have to say many, many prayers during the day because I know you're required to thank God for everything that you taste that is as big as a pigeon's egg or larger." He replied: "You pray even before you pray! You wake up in the morning and thank God that you can see, and you thank God that you have feet to put on the floor." Only the thankful man comprehends with awe that existence is of God in all its parts, that all of the parts are conjoined.

It is not man that makes things holy but it is man who can see that all things are holy. The first requirement is that man shall see his own life not as something that he can make better but as something that is holy. For only if he sees himself as a part of the whole can he possibly improve himself in his relationship. Without the vision of the whole, the unity of God, he cannot make life better except in isolated pieces, deformed and disproportioned, which is idolatry.

It is this wholeness of life which includes the inevitable event which man abhors: his own death. Because death is so freighted with emotional feelings, I have disguised it in the title of this presentation by calling it "nonbeing"; and not only as a camouflage but for the added reason that life never comes into being without nonbeing giving it room, by death and by infertility. The chief ethical problem that confronts us is how we are to accept nonbeing by some method, in some proportion, by some judgment, as necessary for the whole to survive. Then let us remember that just as the chaos and the void and all those mischances and negations of life which I have suggested may have purpose, so also, although we are wired to live and programmed to resist death, the function of destruction may indeed be a means of life; for without infertility and death to balance the prodigality of life, life overwhelms itself.

However, such is the human urge to live that a word in praise of death and life limitation is thought by some to be pathological or sinful. Indeed the question has been raised about Jesus' willingness to go to the cross: Was he not suicidal in his tendencies? Serious investigations have been made, as much as they can be made at this distance and time, of the state of his mind and emotions. The foremost of these investigators was Albert Schweitzer in his M.D. thesis; he concluded that he was normal.

But still the martyr who goes off to his death willingly accepting it, joyfully doing so, leaves doubts. Does not the one who embraces death first embrace madness? Gilbert Keith Chesterton said a martyr is a man who cares so much for life outside himself he forgets his own personal life; he renounces the world in order to save the world; his heart is outside himself; he dies in order that something he loves shall live. Suicide, in Chesterton's view, is sin, for it is the refusal to accept the totality of life. The murderer kills a man, twenty men, thousands of men, even a race of men. Terrible. But the suicide hates all men including himself. The suicide wishes to destroy the wholeness of life.

In the wholeness of life, the ecology, the first virtue is courage—the strong desire to live, even to risk death to do it. And in this sense the saying, “He who will lose his life, the same shall save it,” is correct. If we cling to life as the only thing that matters, we shall lose our lives. The mountaineer confronts the crevice. Could he possibly jump that far? If he could, he could make it beyond the dangers of the coming night on the mountainside and live. But if he stays there, he will die. He has to make the choice: to jump is to risk death but in the risking perhaps to find life.

We live in this ambivalence and we do not like it. We want a simple set of rules. I find this especially true amongst young people today who say, “This world is bad; let's change it so it'll be good.” A happy thought, but how does one change it so “it'll all be good”? For when immediately one puts his hands into the organic wholeness of life and starts tinkering with it, it is disturbed and goes into new patterns of earthquakes, floods, and produces deformed bios. It is not easy to decide whether the death of any being, the transplanting of organs, any new construction of life is good; its goodness or badness resides in its very complicated relationship. One must learn to live with this ambivalence and so with accepted risk and true humility to act.

Martin Luther, at the breakfast table where his students learned from him while his good wife Catherine brought in the food, was explaining to them how difficult it was to do good when almost anything a man did was partly motivated by pride, and he developed so many examples of it that one of the students said, “Doctor, it's hopeless, isn't it? How can we possibly do anything if everything we do is fouled by sin?” And he said, with his customary vigor, “Young man, sin on the more bravely.” Of course Luther did not mean that the young man should tear the world apart and rip its moral fiber to pieces, but rather to understand the ambivalence of humanity: that you cannot do the perfect thing, you can only approximate something that is helpful

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in the situation and not harmful. Life is indivisible: the soul and the body, the material and the spirit, you and I, and all men everywhere, and all men everywhere in the fullness of nature in which they dwell. There is a unity in the world and in this unity man exists in quivering ambivalence, unable to comprehend fully the whole and all its equities in the moment in which he is required to act.

It is not enough to be sincere. While sincerity is better than insincerity, we must observe that the most sincere people have sometimes been the worst enemies of us all. Fanatics are always self-justified by their sincerity. Remember the story of the tamed bear who saw his master sleeping in the shade? The bear loved his master so much that when he saw a fly crawling on his master's forehead he took a rock and smashed the fly—and his master's skull. There is also a fallacy in our time that ambivalence can be easily settled by final appeals to reason and to conscience, a holdover from the Enlightenment substitution of human faculties for papal authority. But by now you must know that reason is not always effective; it is sometimes diseased, it is sometimes touched with emotional willfulness that makes it a rationalizing rather than a logical process; and we should know that conscience may be more informed by the culture in which it lives. Oracles, whether external or internal, are too often mad or self-serving and venal.

In one of the South Sea Islands, an old father of the tribe was troubled in reason and conscience. After the missionaries came, the tribe began to change in its spiritual direction and social behavior, and he found himself growing more and more distraught and wasting away in his conscience, for he was trained to do certain ritualistic acts and these were now being denied him by the fact that the young men and the women were accepting the new ways as to their clothes, as to their worshipful behavior, their dances and chants, but worst of all, it seemed to him, his conscience was most distressed that cannibalism had ended on the island and he no longer could eat his enemies. From his perspective he was right, but from our perspective wrong. We have our own conflicts of conscience. As Lincoln remarked, both sides prayed to the same God.

THE PROBLEM OF AMBIVALENCE

There are three possible ways of resolving this problem of authority. Maybe there are more; I can think of only three. One is authoritarian, and I find this way here amongst us, even though we are all liberals of some kind, for I am forever being presented with precepts which are true enough but too simple to apply to this world of contradiction,

ambivalence, paradox. Yes, we ought to love one another. But how does one match this to the need for self-defense in the face of hostility? Also, it is a Strangelove that makes the defense so strong that all perish.

Take the Ten Commandments. Let us put aside for a moment any doubts and agree that they are absolute. For example, you should not bear false witness. That is clear enough, for where would society be if we all lied to one another? What would happen to justice for your neighbor if you were on the stand in court and lied? It is all very simple and straightforward. But suppose I am living in Nazi Germany and two of my neighbors who are Jews come to me for help and I hide them in my attic. Next a stormtrooper knocks on my door. "Tell me," he commands, "do you have two Jews in your attic?" Would I say, in order to tell the truth, in order to save my own soul, "Yes, I have two Jews in the attic"? No. Another rule has come into action: Thou shalt not kill. For me to tell the truth is for me to become an accessory before the fact of murder. So there is no authoritarian way of obeying authority. Even ultimate law requires interpretation; it seldom has easy application to the event.

So there is a second possibility, that is to accept the "laws" which culture has given us and which wisdom has validated, yet understanding that these have a means of interpretation. Thus we have in our country a juridical system by which the old Constitution is adjusted to the new needs by the combination of legislature and court.

The rabbinical tradition acted on this need for interpretation a long time before we had a Constitution, recognizing that the basic laws never change but new occasions provide new cases. Law and custom must be applied with wisdom. Which is authority, law, or wisdom in the application of the law? The law makes the court and the court makes the law.

The third possibility is the theonomous one which proposes that there is something that presides over both the law and human wisdom, that this something overarches our ambivalence. We cannot be absolutely sure at any time that when we make a decision it is the correct decision, but we can recognize that it is an in-between decision, or what some ethicists call a "middle principle." The absolute good is here and the absolute evil there, and you must move somewhere in the middle range: You have to accept Luther's idea that the best that you can do is to sin on the more bravely. Such enforced modesty at least prevents the rigidities of the authoritarian and the legalistic. One applies the rule and says his prayers.

We cannot go on believing that human individual life and a particu-

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lar bird life and dog life and fish life and every special form of life should be extended indefinitely. Without man's interference life-forms have limitations placed upon them. Man did not invent death. It seems more gentle, kinder, to be the kind of conservationist that claims that everything ought to be protected, that all life should go on, that death should be conquered. It appeals to the heart that has mercy to allow all things to live. But in the ambivalence of life it is required of us that sometimes we administer nonbeing, more plainly, that we administer death to ourselves and others. We cannot even be certain that man-made extinctions of species are worse than nature's. It is a dreadful thought but it is one which I want to propose to you lest we become merely concerned with the problems of overkill and ignore the need to be concerned with the problems of overlife.

In man's present crowded condition in our teeming cities overlife has already happened, and it appears that nature itself may be taking a hand to administer nonbeing as a remedy. In the overcrowded situations of rat colonies John Calhoun, of the National Institute of Mental Health, observed perversions, neglected baby rats, and generally bizarre behavior that, whether purposely or not, diminished the population. These social disorders seem to be transferable in principle to the life of overcrowded man. I remember one time that the defense of homosexuality was being offered along the usual terms, that it was much more creative than other forms of amorous entertainment, etc., but *Time* magazine has pointed out that one negative thing can be said about homosexuality with certainty: It has no future. And maybe it is because it has no future that this sort of behavior apparently increases within the overcrowded society of today. There may be mechanisms of decrease, of destruction, of nonbeing, of death, which are triggered when they are needed to redress the distortions of overlife. If you believe that nature is God, you may believe that we must fatalistically or, if you will, providentially depend upon this built-in system of action-reaction, overpopulation and violence. But man should not accept nature as fate; he is required to act within nature and upon nature as biblically enjoined to knit up the skein of the webbed bios of earth. Man is under obligation to control life amongst his own kind as well as the "other" life in the effulgent sea and forest so as to preserve it. In nonbeing he can find the preservation of life. He must act in judgment to fill the grave in order to give room for the cradle.

Adolphus Greeley, back at the turn of the century, led an expedition toward the North Pole chiefly for weather observations. They were

trapped and isolated for two winters and went unrescued until many of the men had died of starvation. The heroism of those men is remarkable. Greeley kept a journal and reported that they finally came down to one tablespoonful of pea soup per man per day. The men would put their ration into their cups and lick it up with their fingers. One day a member of the crew, in his weakness, fell, dropped his spoonful of soup; whereupon each man dipped his finger into his own spoonful and scraped it into the barren cup to keep his comrade alive. This is keeping life by risking one's own. This is what happens whenever we share food with one another because of scarcity.

The Muslims have a theory of sanctuary based on sharing. We think of sanctuary as being a special place; but sanctuary is also a condition. The following case is developed by their philosophers. Suppose you are in pursuit of your enemy in the desert and you come to an oasis at night. For reasons of safety you do not build a fire. In the darkness you hear a voice begging piteously in hunger and thirst, and you share from your scanty supply of water and bread. In the morning you discover that this is the man that you have been seeking, your mortal enemy. Now, says the Muslim law, you may not kill him for he has become your brother by the sharing of food. It would be fratricide to kill him now. The human family is thus extended beyond the limitations of blood relation. We are related to one another insofar as we share with one another; we are related to one another insofar as we sacrifice for one another.

Mother Nature will kill us and do it in her necessary and often cruel way; we will become a statistical death if we do not find some way to become sacrificially responsible for one another.

Finally, I call to your attention one of the events on these Isles of Shoals, the scene of which you have visited or will visit: the cave where Betty Moody hid her children on the day of the Indian attack. As the Indians came closer and the smallest child began to whimper and to cry, she put her hand over his mouth to prevent discovery, until he stifled, suffocated, and died. I wonder if anyone ever condemned her for infanticide. Or, did they not understand that in order to save life she had taken life? It was a terrible decision which she made instantly. She had acted out of the necessity of the moment; she put aside her own ego, extended in that child, and in all her love as a mother for all her children she did the act.

Was Betty Moody outside the human condition of us all? I think she lived wholly in its ambivalence, and God help her, must have so lived in that knowledge the rest of her life.

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But it is our problem and we tend to deal with it indirectly—not with our own child, as it were, but with distant people in far places, with animals that we have never seen. For them our hearts are broken and our eyes weep. But what for ourselves, what for our immediate obligation to recognize that life is one, man is one, nature and man are one, God is one, and that in the ambivalence within the oneness we live and in the fierce diversity we are united in? Our decisions within this are painful and hard, but they are decisions which we must make.