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Course/Class: Fundamental Moral Theology

**Informal short explanations**

Topics:
- (1) The Principle of Cooperation in Evil;
- (2) The Principle of Double Effect;
- (3) Human Freedom; and
- (4) We are meant to be Conduits of the Spirit of Christ.

(1) What is the Principle of Cooperation in Evil? Specifically, what is the difference between formal & material cooperation, and immediate & mediate/proximate cooperation?

Under the principle of cooperation in evil, the culpability of someone who participates or aids in some way in an evil act will depend (in part) on the status of the individual as the principle agent or cooperator, and then furthermore it will depend on the type of cooperator the person is. A principle agent is one who commits the evil act, and the principle agent is always culpable for the act (assuming the individual is acting knowingly, freely, and voluntarily). A cooperator is someone who is not the principle agent, but rather is someone who participates in some way in the act. Another way of thinking of a cooperator is as a person who aids or abets in some way in the perpetration of the evil act.

A cooperator can be either a formal cooperator or a material cooperator. A formal cooperator is one who wills the evil act to occur. A formal cooperator is culpable for the evil act (assuming the individual is acting knowingly, freely, and voluntarily). A material cooperator is one who aids the evil act in some way (e.g., provides material that aids the act in occurring), but who does not will the act to occur.

A material cooperator could be either an immediate cooperator or a mediate cooperator. An immediate cooperator is one who provides material that is necessary for the act to occur. Such a cooperator is culpable for the evil act (assuming the individual/cooperator acted knowingly, freely, and voluntarily). A mediate cooperator is one who provides material that aids the evil act in some way, but such material is not necessary for the act to occur.

A mediate cooperator could be either a proximate mediate cooperator or a remote material cooperator. The difference between a proximate mediate cooperator and a remote material cooperator depends on how close or how far removed their provision of the material is in relation to the act. In either case, whether the person is a proximate mediate cooperator or remote material cooperator, there must be a grave proportionate reason for the provision of the material. If there is no grave proportionate reason, then the mediate cooperator is culpable, at least to some degree (again, assuming the individual is acting knowingly, freely, and voluntarily).

A person’s culpability for committing an evil act can be reduced to a degree (or possibly even removed altogether, depending on the situation) if the person does not act knowingly, freely, and voluntarily.
What is the **Principle of Double Effect** and the conditions that are required for its legitimate use?

The *principle of double effect* entails that some acts which have evil consequences (or, acts that carry a risk of evil consequences) can be considered morally good acts, provided certain conditions are met. It is typically used in difficult cases, where there is a dilemma and the morality of an act (whether it is good or bad) is not initially clear. There is a five-part rubric that is used to determine whether an act is considered “good” under the principle of double effect.

1. **Is there another option or alternative?**
   - If there is another option or alternative, then the principle of double effect cannot be used to justify the act. The principle of double effect can only be used for true dilemmas.

2. **Is the object of the act good, or at least neutral?**
   - The object of the act must be good, or at least neutral. If the object of the act is bad, then the principle of double effect cannot be used to justify the act. If the object of the act is evil, then the act is evil no matter what.

3. **Is the potential or inevitable evil consequence intended?**
   - The potential or inevitable evil consequence must *not* be intended in order for the principle of double effect to be used to justify the act. In other words, if the evil consequence is intended, then the principle of double effect will not justify the act.

4. **Is the good consequence the effect of the evil consequence?**
   - The ends cannot justify the means. If the good consequence is the effect of the evil consequence, then the principle of double effect will not justify the act.

5. **Is the good consequence at least proportionate to the evil consequence?**
   - The good consequence must be just as “weighty” as the evil consequence. If the good consequence is not proportionate to the evil consequence, then the principle of double effect will not justify the act. An act that will have a significant evil consequence and only result in a minimal good consequence will not be justified by the principle of double effect.

**Compare and contrast St. Thomas Aquinas’ understanding of human freedom and that of William of Ockham**

St. Thomas Aquinas’ understanding of human freedom differed significantly from William of Ockham’s understanding of freedom. St. Thomas subscribed to the idea of “freedom for excellence,” which could perhaps also be described as freedom for perfection. Moreover, it could be described as the ability to be who we were meant to be (and, we were meant to be fully conformed to and in communion with God).

For St. Thomas, freedom is the capacity for goodness and truth. We are made in the image and likeness of God, and therefore we have a natural aspiration to the pursuit of happiness, the source of which is goodness and truth. God is the ultimate Good and the ultimate Truth, and our ultimate end and fulfillment. So, for St. Thomas, freedom as the capacity for goodness and truth also means our capability and inclination to choose goodness and truth. Freedom is when
our conscience is aligned with goodness and truth. Perfect freedom is the inability to choose evil, such as that enjoyed by the communion of saints, who perfectly choose God.

For St. Thomas, body and soul form an interpenetrating composite, and human freedom is rooted in the will and intellect (i.e., the image and likeness of God in us). The will and intellect are naturally inclined to goodness and truth. Therefore, freedom consists in our ability and capacity for goodness and truth. We are free in the measure that we are formed toward and aligned with goodness and truth.

For William of Ockham, freedom is the absence of external restraints. William broke from the Church fathers and St. Thomas and subscribed to a “freedom of indifference” rather than a “freedom for excellence.” For William, freedom was a faculty that preceded the intellect and the will. William held that freedom did not tend toward goodness and truth, but rather was indifferent and neutral. William taught that God’s laws were arbitrary, external restraints. This means that we are not naturally inclined to God’s laws. God’s eternal law is not written on our hearts (the natural law), and we are not naturally inclined to follow God’s laws.

This is in contrast to the view of God’s laws under the “freedom for excellence” philosophy, which holds that God’s laws are written on our hearts and knowable through our reason, and God’s laws are meant to guide us to happiness and our fulfillment. God’s laws and rules (discovered through the natural law which is written on our hearts and discoverable through our use of reason, as well as the laws and rules made known to us through divine Revelation) are meant to guide us into being who we are meant to be, to guide us into doing what is best for us.

God’s laws and rules delineate for our own good what is evil and what is good. God’s laws and rules are given to promote our flourishing. God’s rules and laws define what is evil because those things are truly evil, and define what is good because those things are truly good— in other words, God’s laws and rules do not define and what is good and what is evil in an arbitrary fashion. The voluntarist position incorrectly holds that God could say that the killing of an innocent human being (murder) is good, and then it would be good. Rather, the correct view is to recognize that God’s law declares that the killing of an innocent human being is evil because it is truly evil. God would never declare murder “good” for the same reason that a triangle cannot have four equal sides (because such a proposition is illogical nonsense, a triangle is not a square), or for the same reason that there are no square circles.

An evil act, regardless of whether it hurts others (and they often do), it (the evil act) always hurts the actor himself, and God identifies what is evil and what is good through His laws and rules in order to guide us into fulfilling our destiny, our end/purpose, that is, what we were made for: Conformity to Christ and communion with God. ‘God became man so that man could become God.’

1 We are meant to be taken up into Christ (without losing our own individual identity, and without becoming consubstantial with Christ), through the power of the Holy Spirit, thus becoming a member of the Body of Christ and therefore participating in the life of God, the life of the Blessed Trinity.

Under St. Thomas’ view, we are inclined to goodness and truth, and God’s laws point to goodness and truth, and therefore we do have some natural inclination to follow them. Furthermore, our obligations flow from and out of our natural inclinations and attractions. Under

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William of Ockham, we are not inclined to goodness and truth, and therefore we are not naturally inclined to follow God’s laws or the direction in which they point. Furthermore, our obligations are imposed externally upon us. In other words, in William of Ockham’s view, God’s laws are alien to us.

(4) What does it mean to be empowered to love both God and neighbor with the Love which God Loves by the Holy Spirit?

Through the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ we are new creations (symphytoi), and as such “we are empowered to love both God and neighbor with the Love with which God loves, namely, the Holy Spirit.” It is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that brings about our transformation into a new creation. Through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, our ability to love is elevated beyond the measure of what we would be capable of on our own. As symphytoi, we are able to receive and share the love of God with others. We are capable of a new mode of love, in which we participate in and share God’s love with others as if it is our own.

It has been said that the Blessed Virgin Mary always points towards Christ because she is in Christ. The grace of Christ flows from Christ to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and then through the Blessed Virgin Mary to others (e.g., those who ask for her intercession). This is partly shown through the following image:

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4 From Attraction to Obligation to Freedom for Excellence to Freedom for Love, para. 8.
Here in the above image, the Spirit of Christ is being poured into the Mother of God (as shown by the rays emanating from the dove down through her crown as Queen of Heaven and Earth), so that she can then channel the Spirit of Christ to others.

In the Gospel of John, it is written: “Jesus stood up and proclaimed, ‘If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.’” Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive” (John 7:37–39).

We are meant to be instruments/tools of God, conduits/channels of grace, through which the peace of Christ, the love of Christ, the Spirit of Christ flows to others. We dive into Christ (especially, as members of the Body of Christ), and open ourselves up to the Spirit of Christ (especially, through our “Yes” to God’s will and love, both by word/thought and our actions). The Spirit is poured down into us, and then should flow out from us to others. We cannot hang onto the Spirit, but rather we have to give it away. The more we give it away, the more we receive.

We are called to mirror the love of God, and the love of God is total self-donative love. We are called to love God first, and then love others because we love God—and love is not an emotion, but rather it is proactively willing the good of the other as other.

By way of analogy: I am a twisted up pipe (with an open end), with lots of nicks and dents (particularly on the inside) due to my sins, but nevertheless I can be an instrument and tool of Christ through which His grace and Spirit flow to others, and the more open I am and the more I consent to His will and love, the more His grace and Spirit and peace can flow out from me to others. As another analogy: I am a twisted up (garden) hose, and even with the kinks the water/the Spirit can flow through me to others (Mary, Undoer of Knots, pray for us!)—and I am meant to eventually be a firehose, with Christ pointing the hose and using me to further His will and share His peace and love.

I think this is at least partly what Fr. Pinckaers is getting at in his discussion of the beatitude, Blessed are the Peacemakers. Pinckaers stated that peace is “an authentic Christian virtue, that is, the power of God radiating through the believer and inclining him to spread the peace of Christ around him”, and “the peacemakers” “win the name of sons of God because

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6 (This idea is from Bishop Barron, but I apologize, I cannot find the specific video. However, here are two videos that are still helpful): cf. Word on Fire, video Bishop Barron on the Holy Spirit (May 30, 2012), accessed on December 27, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1INut0Gi09Q&vl=en; Word on Fire, video Bishop Barron on Nature and Grace (February 25, 2016), accessed on December 27, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j7a7MFs0cQc.

7 This idea is also from Bishop Barron, but again, I apologize, I cannot find the specific video.


they bring to the world the peace and reconciliation which can only come from Him”.\textsuperscript{11} In addition, Pinckaers also pointed out that “All of God’s peace passes through Christ to touch the world. Thus peacemakers, who receive, practice, and communicate this peace, merit to be called sons of God because they image the only Son”.\textsuperscript{12}

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\textsuperscript{11} Pinckaers, \textit{The Pursuit of Happiness}, 162. \\
\textsuperscript{12} Pinckaers, \textit{The Pursuit of Happiness}, 163.
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