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In this paper I give a theological foundation to a radical type of virtue ethics I call motivation-based. In motivation-based virtue theory all moral concepts are derivative from the concept of a good motive, the most basic component of a virtue, where what I mean by a motive is an emotion that initiates and directs action towards an end. Here I give a foundation to motivation-based virtue theory by making the motivations of one person in particular the ultimate foundation of all moral value, and that person is God. The theory is structurally parallel to Divine Command Theory, but has a number of advantages over DC theory without the well-known problems. In particular, DM theory does not face a dilemma parallel to the famous *Euthyphro* problem, nor does it have any difficulty answering the question whether God could make cruelty morally right. Unlike DC theory, it explains the importance of Christology in Christian ethics, and it has the advantage of providing a unitary account of all evaluative properties, divine and human. I call the theory Divine Motivation Theory.

> *"Nothing will be called good except in so far as it has a certain likeness of the divine goodness."* SCG I. 40. 326.

I. The foundations of virtue ethics

A moral theory is an abstract structure that aims to simplify, systematize, and justify our moral practices and beliefs. The shape of the structure itself is typically either foundationalist or coherentist, although well-known problems with both of these structures within epistemology may lead some ethicists to seek an alternative. A more radical approach is to give up the very *idea* of a moral theory, and virtue ethicists have been among the most prominent of the anti-theorists.[1] Contemporary virtue ethics, then, is often portrayed as not only an alternative to act-based theories, but as an alternative to theory itself.

Virtue ethicists are particularly skeptical about foundationalist moral theory. Aretaic theories deriving from Aristotle or Aquinas make the foundational moral concept *eudaimonia*, or human flourishing, where *eudaimonia* is derivative from or dependent upon the allegedly non-moral concept of human nature.[2] But many contemporary ethicists have despaired of ever giving a clear and plausible account of *eudaimonia*, much less one that has universal applicability, and the concept of nature

has been attacked throughout the modern era on the grounds that it depends upon an outdated biology. Nonetheless, the concept of human nature has survived, if somewhat bruised,[3] and even *eudaimonia* has survived, although typically without the pretense of being foundational in the sense I mean here.[4] So skepticism about the ability of virtue ethics to even get started has kept many a contemporary philosopher away from it. And virtue theorists themselves are prone to this skepticism. So when virtue ethics entered a renaissance in the last two decades, it did so without most of the theoretical trappings of modern theories.

I am convinced that if virtue ethics is ever to be the equal rival of deontological and consequentialist ethics, it should have a form that is purely theoretical, one that addresses such basic issues as whether moral properties are grounded in non-moral properties, whether moral judgments have a truth value, where morality gets its authority, how the moral properties of persons, acts, and states of affairs are related to each other, and many others.[5] I would not deny that it is desirable to have forms of virtue ethics that ignore these theoretical issues, and we probably cannot do both at the same time. But I believe that the human need to theorize is a powerful one. We want to understand the moral world as well as the natural world and, indeed, to understand the relation between the two. For Christians there is also the need to understand the relation between the moral world and the supernatural world. The reliance of the moral world on God puts constraints on the way we answer the deep questions just mentioned, although, as far as I can tell, belief in the Christian God puts no special constraint on whether the theory is deontological, consequentialist, aretaic, or some alternative, nor on whether the structure of the theory is foundationalist, coherentist, or some alternative. But Christian philosophers have traditionally agreed that in some sense God is the foundation of moral value, and that makes the search for a foundationalist structure a natural one even though I see no reason to think that a belief in moral foundationalism is a requirement of Christianity.

In this paper I want to exhibit one way to structure a virtue ethics with a theological foundation; in fact, the theological foundation is an extension of virtue theory to God himself. It is, then, a divine virtue theory. In other work I have outlined a strong form of virtue ethics I call motivation-based.[6] This theory makes all moral concepts derivative from the concept of a good motive, the most basic component of a virtue, where what I mean by a motive is an emotion that initiates and directs action towards an end. In outlining that theory I left unanswered the important question of what makes a motive a good one. In this paper I will give motivation-based virtue theory a theological foundation by making the motivations of one person in particular the ultimate foundation of all moral value, and that person is God. I call the theory Divine Motivation Theory.

Divine Motivation Theory has the following structure: The motivational states of God are ontologically and explanatorily the basis for all moral properties. God's motives are perfectly good and human motives are good in so far as they are similar to the divine motives as those

motives would be expressed in finite and embodied beings. Like motivation-based virtue theory, all moral properties, including the moral properties of persons, acts and states of affairs, are grounded in their relation to good motives, but they are more specifically grounded in their relation to the motives of a perfect being whose nature is the metaphysical foundation of all value. The theory is structurally parallel to Divine Command Theory, but it has many advantages over that theory while avoiding the disadvantages.

II. The theory without the foundation: Motivation-based virtue theory

In any foundationalist moral theory there is something that is good in the most basic way. If the goodness of something is really foundational, it cannot be justified or explained by the goodness of something else, and it is usually claimed that it *needs* no justification or explanation. Theorists almost always hedge this claim, however, and try to think of some way of justifying what the theory says cannot be justified, as Mill does in attempting to justify the goodness of pleasure in chap. 4 of *Utilitarianism*. Even Aristotle (who may not be intending to present a foundationalist structure anyway), appeals to common belief in justifying his claim that *eudaimonia* is the ultimate good in Book I of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Kant uses a transcendental argument to defend the primacy of the Categorical Imperative. And Sidgwick reaches his allegedly self-evident moral principles from reflection upon moral intuition in *Methods of Ethics*.

What I mean by a pure virtue theory is one in which the concept of a good human trait (a virtue) is logically prior to the concept of a right act, and in the strongest form, the concept of a virtue is also prior to the concept of a good state of affairs. The theory I will outline here is an instance of the strongest form of pure virtue theory, making all evaluative concepts logically dependent upon the concept of a virtue— more specifically, on the most basic component of a virtue, a motivation. In this section I will outline the structure of a motivation-based virtue theory only briefly since my principal interest in this paper is to show how a theological foundation can be given for this theory that should be attractive to the Christian philosopher. That task will be left for sections III-V.

I propose that moral properties presuppose the existence of persons. They are either properties of persons or their acts, or they are derivative from the properties of persons, e.g., the properties of personal creations— social institutions, practices, laws, etc.[7] It is common in ethics to think of the will as the center of the moral self, and for this reason, moral properties are often thought to be most fundamentally properties of the will. The primacy of the will as the bearer of moral value emerged gradually throughout the medieval period, reaching its clearest expression during that period in the work of Duns Scotus, and, of course, reaching its zenith in the modern period in Kant's famous claim that there is nothing good without qualification but a good will. My proposal is to retain the focus of moral evaluation on the person, but to shift it away from the will, both when we are talking about God and when we are

talking about human beings, and to focus instead on emotion.

I suggest that moral properties in the primary sense attach to emotions. Emotions are good or bad in themselves; they do not derive their goodness or badness from their relation to anything else that is good or bad. In particular, they are not good or bad in virtue of their relationship to the states of affairs which are their intentional objects or the states of affairs which produce them. For example, it is bad to take delight in the misfortune of others or to enjoy the sight of animals in pain, even when these emotions never motivate the agent to act on them. And the badness of these emotions is not derivative from the badness of the pain of animals or the misfortune of others. I will not give an account of the state of emotion here, but it suffices for the purposes of this paper to say that an emotion has a cognitive component as well as a feeling component. The cognitive component may or may not be as fully formed as a belief or a judgment, although it always involves taking or supposing or imagining some portion of the world to be a certain way[8]— e.g., threatening, exciting, boring, pitiful, contemptible, etc. The feeling component accompanies seeing something as threatening, exciting, contemptible. The agent feels threatened by something seen as threatening, feels excited by something seen as exciting, feels contemptuous of something seen as contemptible, and so on.

The cognitive aspect of emotion suggests that emotions have intentional objects, which is to say, a person is afraid *of* something, is angry *at* someone, is excited *about* something, loves *someone*, and so on, and some writers have taken the intentionality of emotion to be a characteristic distinguishing emotions from similar psychic states such as moods or pure feelings. I am inclined to accept this position, although it is not critical for the thesis of this paper.

A motive is an emotion that initiates, sustains, and directs action towards an end. Not all motives are emotions since some motives are almost purely physiological, such as the motives of hunger, thirst, or fatigue, and for this reason these states are sometimes called "drives". But the motives that have foundational ethical significance are emotions. It is also possible that not all emotions are motivating since some emotions may be purely passive, which is why emotions were formerly called "passions". Examples of passive emotions might include joy, sadness, tranquillity, and the enjoyment of beauty. But even these emotions probably can motivate in certain circumstances. It is usual to *call* an emotion a motive only when it actually operates to motivate on a particular occasion. But when an emotion that sometimes motivates does not operate to motivate at a particular time, it retains its motivational potential. So not all motives are emotions, but the morally significant ones are emotions, and most, if not all, emotions are or can be motives. That is, they have potential motivational force.[9]

Motives tend to be persistent and become dispositions, at which point they become components of enduring traits of character— virtues or vices. Each virtue has a motivational component which is the disposition to have an action-guiding emotion characteristic of the particular virtue. The virtuous person is disposed to perform acts motivated by such an

emotion. So a person with the virtue of benevolence is disposed to act in ways motivated by the emotion of benevolence; a person with the virtue of courage is disposed to act in ways motivated by the distinctive emotion underlying the behavior of those who face danger when they judge it to be necessary to obtain a greater good; a person with the virtue of justice is disposed to act in ways expressing an attitude of equal respect for the humanity of others, and so on.[10]

A virtue also has a success component which is a component of reliability in reaching the end of the motivational component of the virtue. Some virtuous motives aim at *producing* a state of affairs of a certain kind. The state of affairs may either be internal to the agent or external to the agent. Other virtuous motives aim to *express* the emotion of the agent. Temperance is an example of a virtue whose motivational component aims at producing a state within the agent, whereas fairness is a virtue whose motivational component aims at producing a state of affairs external to the agent. Empathy and gratitude are examples of virtues whose motivational components aim at expressing the agent's emotional state. Successfully achieving the end of a virtuous motive, then, sometimes amounts to bringing about a state of affairs completely distinct from the motivating emotion, and sometimes success is achieved by merely expressing the emotion itself.

Some human motivations are good and others are bad. Good human motivations are components of virtues; bad human motivations are components of vices. If a human motive is a good one, reliable success in achieving its end is also a good thing. The goodness of the virtuous end is derivative from the goodness of the motive, not the other way around. The combination of a good human motivation with reliable success in reaching its end is a good human trait— a virtue. A vice is the combination of a bad human motivation with reliable success in reaching the end of the bad motivation.

The evaluative properties of acts are derivative from the evaluative properties of persons. Roughly, a right (permissible) act is an act a virtuous person might do. That is, it is not the case that she would not do it.[11] A wrong act is an act a virtuous person characteristically would not do. Vicious persons characteristically perform wrong acts, but so do persons who are neither vicious nor virtuous, and virtuous persons also may perform wrong acts, but uncharacteristically. A moral duty is an act a virtuous person characteristically *would* do. A virtuous act is one that expresses the motivational component of the virtue. For example, a compassionate act is one that expresses the motivation of compassion. It is an act in which the agent is motivated by compassion and acts with the intention of reaching the motivational end of compassion, the alleviation of the suffering of someone else. In the case of certain virtues, most especially justice, acts expressing the virtue are all moral duties. In the case of other virtues (e.g., compassion, kindness, mercy) many acts express the virtue but are not moral duties.[12]

The moral properties of states of affairs can also be defined in terms of good and bad motivations. Roughly, a good state of affairs is one that is the end of a good motive. A bad state of affairs is one that is the end of a bad

motive.[13] Goodness and badness of motives are more fundamental than goodness and badness of states of affairs. This is a generalization of the point that all moral value derives from a personal God. (Of course, non-moral value does also, but the subject of this paper is moral value). My conjecture is that the nature of moral value is such that it must derive from persons and more particularly, from the motivational states of persons. This view on the relation between the value of a motive and the value of the state of affairs at which it aims reverses the more usual view that the motive to bring about a bad state of affairs such as pain in others is bad because pain is a bad thing. Instead, my suggestion is that pain is a bad thing in the morally relevant sense because of the badness of the motive to bring it about. That motive is an emotional state that is bad in a sense that does not derive from the badness of anything other than other motives (the motives of God).

In motivation-based virtue theory there is a logical connection between the two senses of good— the admirable and the desirable, with the latter deriving from the former. Similarly, there is a logical connection between two senses of bad— the despicable and the undesirable.[14] Intuitively the distinction between the two senses of good and bad can be important since we think there is a fundamental difference between the sense in which injustice is bad and the sense in which pain is bad, or the sense in which compassion is good and the sense in which tranquillity is good. And this difference is not simply the difference between moral and non-moral good and bad because those things that are good or bad in the sense of desirable/undesirable can have moral significance. If so, it would be very peculiar if the two senses of good and bad just distinguished were unconnected, and I am proposing that they are not. The good in the most fundamental sense of good is the admirable, and the bad in the most fundamental sense of bad is the despicable. The good in the sense of desirable is defined in terms of what is desired by admirable people, while the bad in the sense of undesirable is what admirable people desire to prevent or to eliminate.[15]

In motivation-based virtue theory motives are good or bad in the most fundamental sense of good or bad. But what makes a motive good? One way we might answer this question is to borrow a suggestion from Plato in the *Republic*, where Socrates states that a good (just) person is one whose soul is in harmony. The idea would be that motives (emotions) are good when they integrate into a harmonious whole. This suggestion is worth pursuing, but the answer I want to give here is a theological one. Moral value is constituted by a harmony with the divine, not just a harmony within the soul. Human motives are good in so far as they are like God's motives. Since motives are emotions, this means that God must have emotions, a controversial position in Christian theology, although I will argue that the theory can stand without the claim that the states in God which are the counterparts of human emotions are also emotions. In any case, human virtues are modeled on the virtues of God. In humans virtues are finite representations of the traits of a perfect God. Since the gap between God and ourselves is infinite, it may seem to be hopelessly impractical, even if theologically and metaphysically desirable, to model our moral traits on God in this way. But we have

Christ incarnate as our archetype. What I will propose in what follows is a way to give the traditional Christian idea of ethics as the imitation of Christ a theoretical structure.

III. The virtues of God

There are many accounts of virtue in the history of ethics, but all accounts agree that virtues are excellences; they are good personal traits. If we assume that the goodness of God is the metaphysical ground of all value, it is natural to ask whether God has virtues. It may seem that the answer is no, and in good Thomistic fashion I will start with the objections to the thesis before proceeding to argue that God does have virtues, and that the divine virtues include both a motivational component and a success component as described in section II. More importantly, the divine virtues are not simply pale imitations of the more robust and richly nuanced traits of embodied and encultured beings. The relationship between divine and human virtues is, in fact, the reverse: Human virtues are pale imitations of the divine virtues. Admittedly we cannot really grasp perfection and we tend to find imperfection more interesting, perhaps because it admits of more variety than perfection and we find that thinking about perfection is too demanding a task since our experience is limited to the imperfect. Nonetheless, I believe that God is the only being who is virtuous in a pure and unqualified sense. As Aquinas says, all moral properties are attributed primarily to God and only analogously to humans. I believe that this includes the virtues and the primary component of virtue, a motivation.

In giving the following objections I will work with the high metaphysical view of God's nature that was developed in the medieval period and has its most subtle and penetrating expression in the thought of Aquinas. I will, however, propose a modification of that view since I submit that God has emotions.

Objection 1: God cannot have a virtue if a virtue includes a motivational component and a motive is an emotional state since God has no emotions. God cannot have emotions since (i) emotions involve the sense appetite and require a body, but God has no body or sensory appetite, and (ii) emotions are passions, ways of being acted upon, and that implies imperfection, but God is perfect and, hence, impassible.

Objection 2: Virtues are habits that involve overcoming contrary temptations and take time to develop, so they only make sense when attributed to imperfect beings who undergo change. But God does not *develop* his traits and has no contrary temptations; he is perfect and unchangeable.

Objection 3: Virtues are traditionally explained teleologically by reference to the natural end of a thing of a certain kind, an end that is not already actualized. This means that virtue presupposes potency. The virtues are goods *for* a thing as a member of a natural kind. But God is not lacking anything and has no potency, nor does God belong to a natural kind. Furthermore, it's hard to see how anything could be good for God.

Objection 4: Virtues in their richer and more interesting forms are socially and culturally conditioned. Honesty in parts of Asia is very different from honesty in the U.S. even when we consider only the later twentieth century. Cultural differences are even greater when we look at other historical periods. The practical usefulness of the concept of virtue depends upon our learning these richer, culture-dependent concepts. But it is hard to see how the virtues of God could serve such a practical purpose, even assuming that God does have virtues. We learn virtues by learning social practices, not by learning theology.

Virtues are the good traits of moral agents. The more perfect the moral agent, the more perfect the virtues. God is both a moral agent and a perfect being. Therefore, God has perfectly good moral traits— perfect virtues. Like all moral agents, God has motives, where motives are both explanations of and justifications for an agent's acts. In humans motives become dispositions, but if God has no dispositions, then God's motives are always *in act*, and God is always acting upon them. Since God is the perfect agent, God's motives are the perfect motives. God's love is the perfect motive of love; God's compassion is the perfect motive of compassion; God's mercy is the perfect motive of mercy, and so on. Since compassion, love, mercy, etc. are emotions, God's compassion, love, mercy, etc. are perfect emotions. I am not suggesting that it necessarily follows from the fact that God acts from compassion, and that the state of compassion in humans is an emotion, that God has emotions. I do think that having emotions is part of what makes a being a moral agent. But the minimum I want to insist upon in this paper is that God's virtues, like our virtues, include a component of motivation— a state that is act-directing, as well as reliable success in bringing about the aim of the motive. God's motives are perfect, and his success is perfect as well. God is, therefore, not just reliable, he is perfectly reliable. A divine virtue, then, is the combination of a perfect motive with perfect success in bringing about the end of the motive.[16]

Reply to objection 1: An emotion is a state of consciousness of a certain kind. I have suggested that that state includes a cognitive aspect whereby the emotion's intentional object is understood or construed to be a certain way. But an emotion is also an affective state; it has a certain "feel". Now the fact that God has no body precludes God from having emotions only if the possession of a body is a necessary condition for the states of consciousness in question, and that, of course, is denied by the Cartesian view on the relation between mind and body. Furthermore, even if Aquinas is right that sensory experience necessarily requires a body, it is not obvious that emotions necessarily have a sensory component if we mean by "sensory" a state that is of the same kind as states of consciousness that arise from the five senses or that are localized, such as the sensation of pain. But suppose we grant the objection. Suppose we agree with Aquinas that God has no passions (*passiones*) since these belong to the sensory appetite and the sensory appetite requires a body. Aquinas agrees that God does have *affectiones* since the latter admits of two kinds, sensory and intellective. God has intellective appetites which belong to the will. In this category are included states that we call emo-

tions, states such as love and joy. We see, then, that there are two words that refer to affective states in Aquinas, "*passiones*" and "*affectiones*." "*Passiones*" may be translated "passion" or "emotion," whereas Norman Kretzmann suggests "attitudes" as the translation for "*affectiones*."[17] As Kretzmann translates Aquinas, then, God has certain "attitudes" of love and joy, but these states are not emotions since Kretzmann maintains that Aquinas maintains that God has no emotions. But a case could be made for translating "*affectiones*" as "emotions" if it is true that even in us, states of emotion are not necessarily sensory. If some of our emotions are, or could be, intellective *affectiones* this would mean that the sensory aspect of an emotion is not essential to a state's being one of emotion. If so, a state could not be denied the categorization of an emotion on the grounds that it is not a sensory state. Thus, even if God has no sensory states it would not follow that he has no emotions.

Objection 1 gives a second reason for thinking that God cannot have emotions and that is that emotions are passions, ways of being acted upon, and thereby imply lack of perfection. I will not here address the issue of whether emotions are necessarily passive, but I do want to raise the question of whether emotion is an intrinsically defective state, a state that only makes sense when attributed to defective beings. I do not see that there is anything about emotion *per se* that implies imperfection, although there is no doubt that there are particular emotions that do have such an implication— e.g., fear, hope, jealousy, envy, hatred, bitterness. I hesitate to say that sadness implies a defect since sadness need not require any lack in the agent who has the emotion since it is a response to defects outside of the agent. The issue of whether the agent who has a certain emotion is defective does not correspond to the distinction that is sometimes made between positive and negative emotions. Some negative emotions such as sadness may imply no defect, whereas some positive emotions such as hope probably do imply a defect. This means that while God does have emotions, he does not have the range of emotions that human beings have.

I have already said that it is not necessary to accept that God has emotions for the argument of this paper in spite of what I have said in this reply. Even if God does not have emotions, God nonetheless has states that are the counterparts of the states which in us are emotions. God has emotions in at least the same sense that God has beliefs. God's emotions may not be just like ours, but God's cognitive states are not just like ours either. What is of particular importance for Divine Motivation Theory is not so much that God's emotions are similar to ours in the way they feel, but that the divine states which are the counterparts of human emotions are motivations. That much should not be controversial. Since God is a moral agent, God acts from motives, and among those motives are compassion, forgiveness, and love.

Reply to objection 2: As Norman Kretzmann has pointed out to me, while Aquinas says that virtue is a habit, "*habitus*" to Aquinas means fundamentally the same thing as "having." The dispositional aspect of a *habitus* is important in his account of human virtues and vices because of our temporality and imperfection, but the idea of a disposition or habit

is not essential to a *habitus* as Aquinas means it and does not prevent God from having qualities that in us would be habits or dispositions. For example, knowledge is a *habitus* and most human knowledge is dispositional. But the fact that God has no dispositions does not prevent God from having knowledge, nor does it prevent God's knowledge from being a *habitus* since God's knowledge is the eternal *having* of all truths. Similarly, even though a virtue such as compassion is a *habitus* which in us requires development over time culminating in a disposition distinctive of the virtue of compassion, that does not prevent God from having compassion, nor does it prevent compassion in God from being a *habitus*. God eternally has the emotion of compassion, not just as a disposition, but as an eternal motive-in-act.

Reply to objection 3: If a natural kind is a species, then God is not a natural kind, although God does have a nature and God *is* a certain kind of thing, namely, Absolutely Perfect Being, or Necessarily Existent Being. Each of the traditional arguments for the existence of God identifies a kind of thing that must be God, a kind of thing which, it must be argued, can have only one member. The divine virtues express the perfections of the kind God. There is no potency in God, but we can see that there is nothing inconsistent in the claim that a being with no potency has virtues since if, *per impossibile*, a human being reached full actualization of her potential with respect to some virtue, say, compassion, we certainly would not on that account deny that she is compassionate. The way in which a virtue is acquired is not essential to the virtue itself, although it may be essential to beings with a human nature to acquire virtue in a certain way. This means that there is nothing good *for* God if that means an extrinsic good that God needs for actualization, but there is still a sense in which God's virtues are good for him since even in the human case we do not cease claiming that what is good for us is good for us once it is attained. It is good for a human to have knowledge even when the knowledge is possessed; it is good for a knife to be sharp even when it *is* sharp. And it is good for God to be perfectly just, merciful, etc.[18]

Reply to objection 4: This is not an objection to the claim that God has virtues, nor even to the theoretical usefulness of understanding human moral properties in terms of God's virtues, but to the practical relevance of the claim for moral education and training. An answer to this objection would require a demonstration of the way the idea of a virtuous God can be integrated into the biblical doctrine of *imitatio Dei*. That issue will be addressed in the next section.

IV. Divine Motivation Theory

Motivation-based virtue theory is a very general form of pure virtue ethics in which motivational states are the most basic bearers of moral value and the moral properties of persons, acts, and states of affairs are defined in terms of the goodness and badness of motives. I outlined the way to give these definitions in section II. Divine Motivation Theory makes the motives of one being in particular the primary bearer of moral value, and that is God. The complete theory can still make the

goodness of human motives the primary bearer of moral value in a universe of human persons, human acts, and the states of affairs encountered by human beings. But the goodness of human motives needs to be explained since we humans are quite clearly imperfect in our nature and the goodness of our motives is never pure.

God has such virtues as justice, benevolence, mercy, forgiveness, kindness, love, compassion, loyalty, generosity, trustworthiness, integrity, and wisdom. God does not have courage, temperance, chastity, piety, nor perhaps humility, nor does he have faith or hope. Each of the virtues in the latter group involve handling emotions that are distinctive of limited and embodied creatures like ourselves. Sexual feelings make no sense when applied to a disembodied being, and since God does not have to deal with fear, the awareness of inferiority to a superior being, the sense of powerlessness, nor the need for faith in God, which is to say, himself, it does not make sense to say that God has the virtues in this category. This means that God's virtues correspond to only some of the traits we consider human virtues. Of course, it does not follow that God's virtues are limited to these traits. It would be presumptuous of us to think that all divine virtues are perfections of human traits. If there are angels, God's virtues no doubt include perfections of angelic virtues, and if there are any other moral creatures in existence, God's virtues would include the perfections of the virtues of those beings as well. This position is expressed by Aquinas as follows:

> For just as God's being is universally perfect, in some way or other containing within itself the perfection of all beings, so also must his goodness in some way or other contain within itself the goodness of all things. Now a virtue is a goodness belonging to a virtuous person, for "it is in accordance with it that one is called good, and what one does is called good" [NE 1106a22-4]. Therefore, *in its own way* the divine goodness must contain all virtues. (SCG I. 92.768).[19]

But how are we to understand what it means for God to "contain" all the virtues, even those I have already agreed God does not have—virtues like chastity, humility, and courage? And how can the virtues God *does* have give us any practical guidance in the moral life? The answer, I suggest, is that we humans ought to think of Divine Motivation Theory in conjunction with the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation. The arguments in natural theology about the nature of God do not pertain to Christ, the Incarnate Son of God. Christ did have the virtues of chastity, humility, and courage, as well as all the other virtues humans ought to develop, so the virtues of Christ are "contained" in the nature of God in the way that Christ is contained in God according to the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation. This means that these important Christian doctrines have a special place in the metaphysics of Christian morals. The Incarnation also helps us to resolve the practical problem of how we learn to be moral since we are called to develop the virtues by the imitation of Christ.

The idea that humans should become as much like God as is humanly

possible is the basis of the primary ethical doctrine of the Hebrew Bible, that of *imitatio Dei*.[20] "Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy" (Lev. 19:2) To become like God is to follow God's commands: "The Lord will establish you for a holy people unto Himself, as He has sworn unto you; if you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God, and walk in His ways." (Deut 28: 9). The focus of Christian ethics, in contrast, is less on following divine commands than on imitating the virtues of Christ, and the focus of the New Testament is primarily on the motivational component of these virtues. We see Jesus in a variety of human circumstances that produce recognizable human emotions, including temptation, weariness, anxiety, sadness, and anger. Jesus makes very few commands, but when he does, his injunctions generally call us to have motivations (emotion-dispositions) which I claim are the basic components of virtues, as in the Beatitudes and the two great commandments of love. The New Testament does not typically call us to will, but to be motivated in a virtuous way, so St. Paul says, "Owe no one anything but to love one another" (Romans 13:8). The Golden Rule appeals to a motive, not to a volition. We imagine how we would want to be treated and imaginatively project our own wants onto others. This leads us to have an emotional response to other persons that motivates our treatment of them. Our motive for loving and forgiving is not that we are to follow God's commands, but that God himself loves and forgives. And we see that there is no limit on the forgiveness of injuries because it corresponds to God's forgiveness of us, not because it will win over the offender or because God wills it (Matt18:21ff). The same point applies to the call "Be perfect even as your heavenly father is perfect." (Matt 5:48).

Many Christian ethicists have worked on basing ethics on the imitation of Christ. Much of this work uses the narrative approach to ethics, and my purpose is not to duplicate it, but to show how this approach can be combined with the theoretical structure I have outlined here to produce a theory that is both theoretically powerful and practically useful. In addition to narrative ethics, many Christian ethicists have produced careful and subtle elucidations of the individual virtues based on Scripture and the Christian tradition of veneration of the saints. Here also I neither intend nor am able to duplicate this work which has, in any case, been done very well by others, but to show how the philosopher's theoretical urge can be formulated in a way that combines naturally with these other approaches to Christian ethics.

V. Advantages of DM theory over DC theory

Divine Motivation Theory is structurally parallel to Divine Command Theory in that DM theory makes moral properties derivative from God's motives, whereas DC theory makes moral properties derivative from God's will. In this section I will briefly compare the two theories to show how DM theory avoids the well-known problems of DC theory and has some decided advantages.

Divine Command theory makes the divine will the source of moral value. Roughly, good states of affairs are what God wills to exist; bad states of affairs are what God wills not to exist. The focus of the theory,

however, is generally on the rightness and wrongness of human acts. An act is morally required (a duty) just in case God commands us to do it; an act is morally wrong just in case God forbids us to do it. Since a divine command is the expression of God's will with respect to human and other creaturely acts, the divine will is the fundamental source of the moral properties of acts as well as of states of affairs.

The nature of the relation between God's commands and moral requirements is an important issue for DC theorists. To say that "x is morally required" just *means* "x is commanded by God" is too strong since that has the consequence that to say "x is right because God commands it" is a mere tautology; it is just to say "x is commanded by God because x is commanded by God." On the other hand, to say that God's commands and moral requirements are extensionally equivalent is too weak. That is compatible with the lack of any metaphysical connection whatever between the existence of moral properties and God's will. The DC theory, then, aims at something in between identity of meaning and mere extensional equivalence. It should turn out that God's will *makes* what's good to be good and what's right to be right. States of affairs are good/bad and acts are right/wrong *because* of the will of God. God's will is the metaphysical ground of all moral properties. This is also the sense in which God's motives ground moral value in DM theory.

An important objection to Divine Command theory goes back to Plato's *Euthyphro* where Socrates asks, "Is what is holy holy because the gods approve it, or do they approve it because it is holy?" (10a). As applied to DC theory this question produces a famous dilemma: If God wills the good because it is good, then goodness is independent of God's will and the latter does not explain the former. On the other hand, if something is good because God wills it, then it looks as if the divine will is arbitrary. God is not constrained by any moral reason from willing anything whatever, and it is hard to see how any non-moral reason could be the right sort of reason to determine God's choice of what to make good or bad. The apparent consequence is that good/bad and right/wrong are determined by an arbitrary divine will; God could have commanded cruelty or hatred, and if he had done so, cruel and hateful acts would have been right, even duties. This is not only an unacceptable consequence for our sense of the essentiality of the moral properties of acts of certain kinds, but it also makes it hard to see how it can be true that God himself is good in any important, substantive sense of good.

Robert Adams has attempted to address this problem by modifying DC theory to say that the property of rightness is the property of being commanded by a *loving* God. This permits Adams to allow that God could command cruelty for its own sake, but if God did so he would not love us, says Adams, and if that were the case, he argues, morality would break down. Morality *is* dependent upon divine commands, but they are dependent upon the commands of a deity with a certain nature. If God's nature were not loving, morality would fall apart.[21]

But even if Adams's proposal succeeds at answering the objection it is designed to address, it seems to me that it is unsatisfactory because it is *ad hoc*. There is no intrinsic connection between a command and the property of being loving, so to tie morality to the commands of a loving God is to tie it to

two distinct properties of God. In DM theory, however, there is no need to solve the problem of whether God could make it right that we brutalize the innocent by making any such modification to the theory since being loving is one of God's essential motives. The right thing for humans to do is to act on motives that imitate the divine motives. Brutalizing the innocent is not an act that expresses a motive that imitates the divine motives. Hence, it is impossible for brutalizing the innocent to be right as long as (i) it is impossible for such an act to be an expression of a motive that is like the motives of God, and (ii) it is impossible for God to have different motives. (ii) follows from the highly plausible assumption that God's motives are part of his nature.

DC theory also can argue that God's will is part of his nature, and Stump and Kretzmann have used the Thomistic doctrine of divine simplicity, which has the consequence that God's will is identical with his nature, to solve both the arbitrariness problem and the problem that God could command something like cruelty.[22] This solution is not *ad hoc*, but it requires argument to make the needed connection between the divine will and the divine nature. That is because a will is logically separable from its possessor in a way that motives are not. In fact, the feature of a will that led to the theory of the existence of a will in the first place, namely, its freedom, is the very feature that seems to have that consequence. In contrast, God's love, mercy, justice, compassion, etc., make God what he is. There is no need to overcome by argument a prior expectation that God's motives are dissociated from his nature as in the case of God's commands.

The arbitariness problem may or may not be answerable in a DC theory, but the problem does not even arise in DM theory. That is because a will needs a reason, but a motive *is* a reason. The will, according to Aquinas, always chooses "under the aspect of good," which means that reasons are not inherent in the will itself. In contrast, motives provide not only the impetus to action, but the reason *for* the action. If we know that God acts from a motive of love there is no need to look for a further reason for the act. On the other hand, a divine command requires a reason, and if the reason is or includes fundamental divine motivational states such as love, it follows that even DC theory needs to refer to God's motives to avoid the consequence that moral properties are arbitrary and God himself is not good. This move makes divine motives more basic than the divine will even in DC theory.

Aside from DC's difficulty with these objections, Divine Motivation theory has an important theoretical advantage. DM theory gives us a unitary theory of all evaluative properties, divine as well as human, whereas DC theory does not. DC theory is most naturally interpreted as an ethics of law, a divine deontological theory, wherein the content of the law is promulgated by divine commands. God's own goodness and the rightness of God's own acts, however, are not connected to divine commands. In contrast, DM theory makes the features of the divine nature in virtue of which God is morally good the foundation for the moral goodness of those same features in creatures. Both divine and human goodness are explained in terms of good motives, and the goodness of human motives is derived from the goodness of the divine motives. DM theory, then, is a virtue theory that applies to both divine and human moral properties.

We have already seen another feature of DM theory that gives it an

advantage over DC theory, and that is that DM theory shows the importance of Christology for ethics, whereas DC theory does not. DC theory ignores the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation, focusing on the will of the Creator-God as the source of moral value. It is, in effect, an Old Testament theory. The features of Christian ethics that derive from the life of Christ do not appear in the theory, at least not in any straightforward way. The fact that DM theory integrates these features into the theory makes it theologically preferable as well as easier to apply.

Elsewhere I have argued that DM theory, like DC theory, has the resources to solve some important puzzles in natural theology: the paradoxes of perfect goodness and the logical problem of evil.[23] I will not review these arguments here, but if they work, they point to an advantage that both DM and DC theory have over other theories. If DM theory also has the advantages over DC theory I have mentioned here, that suggests that a strong case could be made for DM theory. I will undertake a full defense of the theory in a longer project.[24]

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NOTES

1.   Bernard Williams argues in *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass:Harvard University Press, 1985) that we ought to jettison moral theorizing because it takes away the knowledge needed in ordinary moral practice. Ethical theorizing has been rejected for a number of other reasons as well. See S. G. Clarke and E. Simpson, eds, *Anti-Theory in Ethics and Moral Conservatism* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1989)

2.   But Julia Annas argues that in ancient ethics there is no such thing as a substantial notion of the natural which is not dependent upon holding certain moral theses to be true. See *The Morality of Happiness* (Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 441.

3.   See, for example, the recent book, *Is There a Human Nature?*, edited by Leroy S. Rouner (University of Notre Dame Press, 1997).

4.   See Julia Annas (*op. cit.*). A good collection of essays on happiness in ethics is *Aristotle, Kant, and the Stoics*, ed. by Stephen Engstrom and Jennifer Whiting (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

5.   Some of these questions are usually considered meta-ethical. I reject the independence of meta-ethics from normative ethics and believe that a complete ethical theory, whether or not it is a virtue theory, should include answers to these questions.

6.   *Virtues of the Mind: An Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), Part II. A more detailed presentation of the theory appears in the first of my Jellema Lectures, "Making Motivation Ethically Primary," delivered at Calvin College March 1995.

7.   Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand's claim that "Moral values necessarily presuppose a person" in *Christian Ethics* (N.Y.: David McKay Company, 1953), p. 169.

8.   Compare Robert Roberts' definition of an emotion as a "concern-based construal" in "What an Emotion Is: A Sketch," *Philosophical Review* 97, 2 (April 1988), 183- 209. I agree with Roberts that some aspect of the world is construed to be such-and-such in an emotional state. I add the suggestion that the such-and-

such is a concept of the type listed above. These concepts are or include what Bernard Williams calls thick ethical concepts, but I will not discuss this part of my theory of emotion here. I pursue that question in "Emotion and Moral Judgment," in progress.

9.   Kant's so-called pure motive of duty might be an exception to my thesis that all morally significant motives are emotions. I doubt that it is an exception, but will not discuss it here.

10.   One of the problems in discussing motives is that our vocabulary about emotions and virtues is rather limited. Often we have no word for an emotion that is a component of a particular virtue or vice when we have a word for the virtue or vice itself. This is probably the case with courage and cowardice, fairness and unfairness. On the other hand, sometimes the word for the virtue or vice is borrowed from the word for the component emotion. This is probably the case with benevolence, compassion, cruelty, kindness, and many others.

11.   I am using a modification of the Lewis definition of "might" in terms of "would" that appears in *Counterfactuals* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973). Lewis's definition applies to "would" and "might" as they appear in counterfactual conditionals; mine does not.

12.   This distinction roughly corresponds to the distinction between perfect and imperfect duties.

13.   A bad state of affairs can also be defined as one that a good motive would attempt to prevent or to eliminate, and a good state of affairs can be defined as one that a bad motive would attempt to prevent or to eliminate.

14.   "Undesirable" is probably too weak a word to apply to what we think is truly repulsive, but I know of no more appropriate word.

15.   A natural question to raise at this point is whether we could define the undesirable in terms of what despicable persons desire, and if so, whether the definition would parallel the definition of "desirable". I have not thought about this sufficiently to have an answer.

16.   This raises questions about what counts as perfect success. Is it the highest possible number of successes? That, of course, leads to paradoxes. I will leave the analysis of perfect success for another project, but I think we can at least say that it is impossible for God to try and fail. God's perfect compassion means at least that whenever he attempts to act compassionately, he succeeds in his aim.

17.   See Norman Kretzmann, *The Metaphysics of Theism: Aquinas's Natural Theology in* Summa contra gentiles I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997) for the most detailed commentary on Aquinas's natural theology in recent decades. The translation to which I refer appears in Chapter Eight.

18.   I thank Norman Kretzmann for suggesting this line of reply to the objection that nothing is good for God.

19.   Translation by Norman Kretzmann, quoted in Kretzmann, p. 251.

20.   See Menachem Kellner, "Jewish Ethics," *A Companion to Ethics*, ed. by Peter Singer (Blackwell, 1991), p. 84.

21.   Adams, "Divine Command Metaethics Modified Again," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 7 (1979), 66-79.

22.   Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann, "Absolute Simplicity," *Faith and Philosophy* 2 (1985), 353-382. Stump and Kretzmann present the same view in "Being and Goodness," *Divine and Human Action*, ed. Thomas V. Morris (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988).

23.   "An Agent-Based Approach to the Problem of Evil," *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion*, 39 (June 1996) 127-139; "Perfect Goodness and Divine Motivation Theory," *Midwest Studies*, vol. 20 (Philosophy of Religion), 1997.

24.   *Divine Motivation Theory*, manuscript in preparation.