

Two Christian-Aristotelian Ethics: The Ethics of Aquinas and Augustine vs. the Situation Ethics of Joseph Fletcher

*By William O'Meara**

First, we shall examine theoretical similarities and differences between two ethics: that of a Christian-Aristotelian Ethics as commented upon by Aquinas and Augustine and that of a Christian-Aristotelian Ethics as developed by Joseph Fletcher in his Situation Ethics. The deep similarity is that both ethics find that the highest virtue is that of love. The key difference is that for a Christian-Aristotelian Ethics developed by Aquinas and Augustine there are some actions and feelings that are evil in themselves and which have no Golden Mean whereas for a Christian-Aristotelian Ethics as developed by Fletcher there are no actions which are evil in themselves. This question of whether there are actions evil in themselves is the primary reason for writing this paper. Second, we shall examine (a) the positive practice of the virtues, arguing that there is little to no practical difference between a Christian-Aristotelian ethics as developed by Aquinas and Augustine and a Christian-Aristotelian situation ethics as developed by Fletcher in the positive practice of the virtues; and we shall examine (b) the practical differences between these two ethics in deciding whether there are some actions that are evil in themselves by reflecting upon the four conditions of the principle of the double effect. The paper will conclude by favoring a Christian-Aristotelian Ethics as developed by Aquinas and Augustine.

Keywords: *Christian-Aristotelian Ethics, Aquinas, Augustine, Joseph Fletcher*

(1) Theoretical Similarities and Differences between Two Different Ethics

We first sketch some brief theoretical similarities and differences between an Aristotelian Ethics brought about by Thomas Aquinas and Augustine and Fletcher's Situation Ethics.

It is clear that both kinds of ethics are virtue-based ethics that find the highest virtue is that of love.

Alan Donagan notes that in Luke's gospel Jesus approves the Jewish scholar who affirms the two greatest commandments, love of God and love of neighbor as oneself, and Thomas Aquinas affirms that love of neighbor as oneself is, first, the self-evident principle from which, second, all the precepts of the Mosaic decalogue relating to neighbor can be derived as deductive conclusions and common principles (Donagan 1977, pp. 59–60).

First, it is self-evident that if one wishes to love one's own self by not doing things that harm one's own life and well-being and by positively doing things that affirm and develop one's own life and well-being, then one should not in those efforts do things that harm others. For if one would allow own's own self to harm

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others, then those others could reasonably be willing to harm that original self, and thus harming others would have the consequence of thwarting the protection and overall development of one's self. So just as one should not harm oneself directly and should advance one's own development, so also one should not harm others and should assist in the proper development of others.

Second, the precepts of the Mosaic decalogue can be deduced as self-evident principles from the command to love others as one loves oneself. For example, if one could promote the advancement of oneself by killing innocent persons, then one should be willing to let any others kill that original self who would be an innocent self. So, just as one would not want others to harm the self who is innocent of killing others, neither should the self be willing to harm others by killing others who are innocent of killing other innocent people. For a second example, if one could reasonably harm others by stealing their property, so also one should reasonably allow others to harm oneself by stealing from the one would steal from them. Such a choice of stealing from others is a self-defeating choice. Hence, in summary, one should not harm others by destroying their innocent loves or by taking away their property, just as others should not harm the self by killing that innocent self or taking away that self's property. So, the precepts of the decalogue dealing with our relationships with neighbors are as self-evident as the principle of loving others as one loves oneself.

Similar to Aquinas's emphasis upon love of neighbor as of oneself, Augustine has this most insightful transformation of the four cardinal virtues found in an Aristotelian ethics by the central virtue of love, writing:

So that temperance is love, keeping the self-entire and uncorrupt for the beloved. Courage is love, bearing everything gladly for the sake of the beloved. Righteousness [justice] is love serving the beloved only, and therefore ruling well. And prudence is love, wisely discerning what helps it and what hinders it (Quoted from Augustine by Haring 1982, Vol. I, 41).

Rather than considering temperance only as the wise practical guidance in the fulfilling of human bodily appetites, Augustine understands temperance also as a way of loving both self and others in their fulfilling of bodily appetites so that love never lets any appetite ruin the self or the other but rather affirms the goodness of the fulfilment of appetites in both self and others. Rather than considering courage only as the wise practical guidance of facing great dangers to our highest values, Augustine understands courage as love which not only acts to defend both self and others in facing great dangers but also acts to challenge both self and others to achieve great values. Rather than considering justice only as the wise practical guidance of rendering unto others what is due to them, namely, the protections of their basic human rights, Augustine understands justice not only as love protecting the others in their basic human rights what is due to them such as right to a basic education but also as affirming that others can be served by the self-helping others attain even higher educational goals, for example. And finally, rather than considering practical wisdom as the appropriate guidance of reason in the fulfilling of what is due though the practice of all the virtues, especially of temperance, courage, and justice, Augustine understands practical wisdom as love not only as

guiding the self in avoiding harm to others and the self but also as affirming the true, practical affirmation and realization of the intrinsic dignity of others and the self.

Fletcher comments upon Augustine's emphasis upon love in all the virtues, writing that he:

was right to make love the source principle, the hinge principle upon which all other 'virtues' hang, whether 'cardinal' (natural) or 'theological' (revealed). Love is not one virtue among others, one principle among equals, not even a *primus inter pares* (Fletcher 1966, p. 78).

Fletcher also comments favorably on the famous quotation by Augustine:

Augustine was right again, as situationists see it, to reduce the whole Christian ethics to the single maxim, *Dilige et quod vis, fac* (Love with care and then what you will, do). It was not, by the way, *Ama et quod vis, fac* (Love with desire and do what you please) (Fletcher 1966, p. 79).

For Fletcher, the love commanded here is neither erotic love, *eros*, nor friendship love, *philia*, but rather *agape*, the giving love which is non-reciprocal, willing the good of all neighbors, even neighbors who are enemies. The command for agapeic love is not a command to have an emotional feeling of love for the neighbor, but the command to have the attitude of one's mind and will that guides one to so act not only not to harm one's neighbor but also to affirm and assist the positive development of wisdom and love in one's neighbor. Of course, this positive help for the neighbor is not to make the neighbor dependent as a child upon the helper, but to assist the neighbor in becoming their own mature self (Fletcher 1966, p. 79).

It is worthwhile to point out the deep similarity between Fletcher, Augustine, and Aquinas on the importance of will. Just as Fletcher has emphasized that the command to achieve agapeic love is a command to the person's will, so also does Augustine emphasize the centrality of will in ethics, writing: "But the character of the human will is of moment; because, if it is wrong, these motions of the soul will be wrong, but if it is right, they will be not merely blameless, but even praiseworthy (Augustine 2014, pp. 14, 2)." The key for Augustine is that one's will is rightly ordered towards that which is truly good. As Fletcher and Augustine emphasize the key role of the will, so also does Aquinas, writing:

The will is a rational appetite. Now every appetite is only of something good. The reason of this is that the appetite is nothing else than an inclination of a person desirous of a thing towards that thing. Now every inclination is to something like and suitable to the thing inclined. Since, therefore, everything, inasmuch as it is being and substance, is a good, it must needs be that every inclination is to something good. And hence it is that the Philosopher says (Ethic. i, 1) that "the good is that which all desire" (Aquinas 2006, I-II, Q. 8, Art. 2).

So, for Aquinas, the rightly ordered will towards that which is truly good, the proper ethical development of oneself as a person, namely, the willing of self and of others as worthwhile for their own sake is at the heart of all ethical behavior.

Having emphasized the centrality of the will in ethical judgment, Fletcher goes on to consider two common objections to situation ethics are, first, that it disregards the virtue of practical wisdom, and, second that it disregards the virtue of justice (Fletcher 1966, pp. 81–84). But Fletcher affirms that situation ethics calls for adults not only to develop significant knowledge of appropriate facts and the wisdom needed practically about how to exercise *agape* in the circumstances of one's decision, but also to realize that love and justice are the same. For he writes: "We say, however, very positively, that love is justice or that justice loves. They are one and the same. To be loving is to be just, to be just is to be loving" (Fletcher 1966, p. 93). When Fletcher reflects upon justice as giving unto others what is their due, what is in accord with their rights, he affirms that what is owed in justice to any person is only agapeic love:

You have a right to anything that is loving; you have no right to anything that is unloving. All rights and duties are as contingent and relative as all values. The right to religious freedom, free speech, public assembly, private property, sexual liberty, life itself, the vote—all are validated only by love (Fletcher 1966, p. 95).

(2) The Key Pragmatic Question Differentiating the Two Ethics

In Chapter II of his famous book, *Situation Ethics*, when he notes a key presupposition of his ethics, he affirms that the inspiration for his book came from his graduate studies in theology when he became "a professed advocate of the Peirce-James-Dewey analysis of human knowledge" (Fletcher 1966, p. 40). Furthermore, when he concludes his book in Chapter IX, he ends with a quotation of Dewey and Tuft's book, *Ethics*, affirming that human ethics must begin with and always come back to the concrete human problems which we encounter in our experiences with others and that if a person "gets away from them he is talking about something which his own brain has invented, not about moral realities" (Dewey and Tufts 1908, p. 212, Fletcher 1966, p. 159).

In accord with the key pragmatic question of what is the practical difference between the two views, we may examine any key practical difference between an ethics rooted in the Aristotelian tradition and Fletcher's situation ethics: (a) in positive practice of the virtues, and (b) in avoiding actions and feelings that Aristotle affirms are evil in themselves

(a) *The Positive Practice of the Virtues*

We shall argue that there is little to no practical difference between an Aristotelian ethics and a situation ethics in the positive practice of the virtues. As Stephen Pope points out about practical reasoning for Aquinas's Aristotelian ethics, which Fletcher would fully agree with, that:

practical reasoning, unlike speculative reasoning, deals with individual and contingent matters, and therefore its judgements are not characterized by absolute necessity (see Aquinas 1948, I-II, 3, 6 ad 2) . They are true 'for the most part', but do not always hold. Moral principles therefore need to be interpreted with sensitivity to the particular nuances of concrete cases, not applied rigidly and mechanistically (see Aquinas 1948, I-II, 96, I, 6, Miller 1956, pp. 151–152).

We shall consider, first, Aristotle on his consideration of virtue in practical reasoning: In his ethics, he famously affirms: “Virtue, then, is a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, i.e., the mean relative to us, this being determined by a rational principle, and by that principle by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it” (Aristotle, NE, 2, 6). Aristotle has recognized that children and adolescents in becoming morally responsible adults will at times choose either excessive or defective actions and/or feelings but learn to correct themselves towards finding the appropriate mean between excess and defect. For example, rather than being intemperate by eating and drinking either too much or too little, adults will learn to eat and drink moderately as appropriate to themselves as a person of practical wisdom would decide. Again, for example, rather than being foolhardy by making rash decisions too boldly in dangerous situations and rather than being cowardly by merely running away from dangerous situations, people learn to become courageous by making the decision appropriate to themselves as a person of practical wisdom would decide, avoiding excess and defect in facing danger.

Even more famously, Aristotle affirms that there are some actions and feelings such as murder or jealousy which have no mean (Aristotle, NE, 2, 6). He has no development of this key affirmation. Rather, the main thrust of Aristotle’s ethics is to identify the key role that the virtues have in developing deep, lasting happiness through positive actions. For example in Books 8 and 9, almost 20% of his *Nicomachean Ethics*, is devoted to identifying and developing a rich conceptualization of friendship of virtue, the friendship between two people of virtue who strive to develop the realization of their best self, their ethical self, both in themselves and in each other.

It is obvious that for friendship of virtue there are no absolute rules of ethics for the positive practice of virtue that either Aristotelian ethics or situation ethics which would be commanded. For example, when Aristotle considers the problem of whether or not one friend should forgive another for a deep harm done to the first friend, he writes no absolute command but only advises that forgiveness may be favored when one discerns that the friend who has committed the harm to the other might yet be able to grow beyond that action and its harm towards better actions and positive growth for the friendship

Furthermore, even in the situation ethics of Fletcher which postulates only one true good, that of *agape*, that most generous love of neighbor as of oneself cannot be used to deduce every moral action in accord with it. For Fletcher writes:

Even the radical principle of enemy-love has to be qualified in the calculations of the situation; it is right to deal lovingly with the enemy *unless to do so hurts too many friends*. The enemy neighbor has no stronger claims than a friend-neighbor, after all (Fletcher 1966, p. 115).

For Fletcher, we cannot deduce from the command that we should love our enemies that we must always forgive our enemies or even always forgive our friends when they have harmed our relationship deeply. For such forgiveness of enemies and even such forgiveness of one's former best friend might possibly result in terrible harms for the one who proposes to forgive the other, whether enemy or friend.

Consequently, both for Aristotle in the positive practice of friendship of virtue and for Fletcher in the positive practice of *agape*, we may affirm that no absolute rule should be deduced for Aristotle that would in friendship of virtue require one to forgive a friend and that no absolute rule for Fletcher be deduced which would require one to forgive every enemy or even every friend for the serious harms they have committed. Aristotle, Aquinas, and Fletcher would fully agree that the positive practice of the virtues cannot be guided by absolute universal rules since the contingencies of human nature and our relationships must be taken into account as in the wise application of the maxim for our practical, moral decisions.

(b) Are There Actions and Feelings Evil in Themselves

Fletcher affirms that there is no list of commandments, that is, prohibitions of things evil in themselves, that the moral agent acting with agapeic love must avoid, writing:

Only one "general" proposition is prescribed, namely, the commandment to love God through the neighbor. "God does not will to draw any love exclusively to Himself. He wills that we should love Him 'in our neighbor'" [Brunner, *The Divine Imperative*, 133]. . . . All other generalities (e.g., "One should tell the truth" and "one should respect life") are at most only *maxims*, never rules. For the situationist there are no rules—none at all (Fletcher 1966, p. 55).

In reflecting upon Fletcher's position, we shall argue that there are significant practical differences between an Aristotelian ethics and Fletcher's ethics by examining the four conditions of the principle of the double effect. Joseph Mangan, a Catholic moral theologian in the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition, writes:

A person may licitly [morally] perform an action that he foresees will produce a good effect and a bad effect provided that four conditions are verified at one and the same time:

- that the action in itself from its very object be good or at least indifferent; that the good effect and not the evil effect be intended [we should avoid bringing about the evil effect or at least reducing it if at

all possible];

- that the good effect and not the evil effect be intended,
- that the good effect be not produced by means of the evil effect;
- that there be a proportionately grave reason for permitting the evil effect (Mangan 1949, p. 43).

Let us consider a first case applying the principle of the double effect and then reflect how what situation ethics can learn from this new case. What may a person do in choosing a life partner between two possible lovers when a person knows that the one not chosen might commit suicide?

A person may licitly perform an action of choosing one's life partner that he foresees will produce a good effect and a bad effect provided that four conditions are verified at one and the same time:

- (1) that the action in itself from its very object be good or at least indifferent; yes, free choice of a life partner is a great good.
- (2) that the good effect and not the evil effect be intended; yes, the free choice of love is intended even if we know another possible partner may do something terrible, but we don't want that terrible thing to happen.
- (3) that the good effect be not produced by means of the evil effect; yes, the evil effect of something terrible happening to a third person is not the means for two lovers committed to each other to be fulfilled.
- (4) that there be a proportionately grave reason for permitting the evil effect"; yes, the free choice of love is a great good even if something terrible happens to a third person

How would Fletcher reflect upon this solution? I believe he would strongly agree, especially with the last three conditions: (2) because the human heart and conscience acting with agapeic love should never want an evil result in another person; (3) because the human heart and conscience acting with agapeic love should not use the evil result occurring for the unchosen partner as a means to the end of love with the chosen partner but should attempt to avoid or diminish the harm befalling the unchosen partner; and (4) because freely chosen erotic love is a great good that would outweigh any negative effect upon the unchosen partner.

We can now take up a second case study of the application of the principle of the double effect, namely, the case of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. May a person or a country morally bomb with atomic weapons (this is the action) Hiroshima and Nagasaki that he foresees will produce a good effect, the likely ending of the war with an avoidance of 1,000,000 American soldiers' lives saved, and a bad effect, the killing of 150,000 to 200,000 civilian lives lost, mostly senior citizens, women, and children? The bombs were set to explode, not at ground level which would have reduced casualties but at 1,000 feet or so in the air which would greatly increase casualties.

We can apply these four conditions to the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and

Nagasaki:

- The first condition requires that the proposed action, doing a bombing during a war of self-defense against the aggressor is broadly speaking a good action.
- The second condition requires that the evil effect not be desired. We may say that the killing of civilians is an indirect effect of the attack upon a military base. The killing of civilians is a foreseen effect, but it is not desired in itself.
- The third condition requires that the evil effect of the foreseen loss of over 100,000 civilian deaths not be a means to the good effect of ending the war and saving perhaps a million lives of American soldiers that would have occurred during an attack upon the main island of Japan. This third condition is violated since the evil effect is desired precisely as the necessary means to the purposes of ending the war and saving many American soldiers' lives.
- The fourth condition requires that there be a grave reason for permitting the evil effect of killing of over 100,000 civilians. This grave reason is that the good effect of saving one million lives of American soldiers far outweighs the bad effect of the loss of the lives of Japanese civilians.

What could Fletcher reject and what would he accept from the above application of the four conditions of the principle of the double effect? It is clear that he would accept the second condition since no person of *agape*' love should ever delight in the occurrence of an evil effect. Such delight would be a manifestation of a heart dedicated to evil.

It is also clear that he would reject the third condition that an evil effect should never be used as a means to another end which is good. If the good effect can be achieved by another means which is good, then Fletcher would condemn using an evil effect as a means to a good effect and would accept the third condition. So only if the way to achieve the good effect is to use an evil means and only if the good effect outweighs the bad effect, then, and only then, may a person do what is usually an evil action in this case of deliberately killing some innocent person in order to achieve a good end. We are, of course, not considering the direct killing of a person guilty of a capital crime and also not considering the direct killing of an unjust attacker in self-defense.

While Fletcher himself does finally judge that at that time the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was morally justifiable, he himself notes that soon after the war with Japan ended "the U.S. Bombing Survey declared that the Japanese 'would have surrendered prior to November first in any case'" (Fletcher 1966, pp. 168 and 99). This reconsideration of whether or not the atomic bombings against Japan were truly necessary makes us realize that the justification of using an evil effect as a means to a good end must always be that using what is typically an evil action must be the only means available. This caution against using evil for the sake of good only when truly necessary must weigh heavily upon the conscience of the situation ethicist.

Let us consider a number of cases in which Fletcher justifies treating a general principle of morality as only a maxim because the situation justifies an exception to the general moral principle. Would it be proper in each of these cases to affirm that a person is being forced to make a choice between two evils so that the result is that the person morally out of agapeic love chooses the lesser of the two evils?

- (1) Fletcher considers the case of whether a small neighborhood business person may tell a lie in order to avoid extortion of another person by some crooks? Fletcher's answer is that it is good, that is, loving, to choose the lesser of two evils, lying and harming another innocent person. Agapeic love is required to choose the lesser of the two evils (Fletcher 1966, pp. 64–65).
- (2) Fletcher considers and approves of the moral decision of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Christian moral theologian, who participated in an attempt on Hitler's life (Fletcher 1966, p. 33). Again, we can find here that agapeic love should make the forced choice of lesser evil, the assassination of Hitler contrasted with the greater evil, the continuation of Hitler's crimes against humanity.
- (3) Fletcher considers and approves the moral decision in the *Apocrypha* of Judith of lying to Holofernes and using her sex to enable her to distract him and then murder him (Fletcher 1966, p. 66). Again, we can find here that agapeic love should make the forced choice of the lesser evil, lying and seduction, in order to avoid the greater evil of the enemy of Israel continuing to live.
- (4) Fletcher considers and approves of the moral decision not to be an absolute pacifist against all wars since choosing to go to war against an unjust attacker is a forced choice of the lesser evil, a defensive war, over against a greater evil, submission to another country who would commit crimes against humanity (Fletcher 1966, p. 53).
- (5) Fletcher considers and approves of the moral decision of T. E. Lawrence to kill a murderer in the following situation: "Hamed the Moor killed Salem in a personal quarrel while they were camped in the Wadi Kitan He [Lawrence] knew that Salem's people would exact "justice" by revenge, starting an endless feud and bloodletting" (Fletcher 1966, p. 98). Again, we can see a forced choice between a lesser evil, the execution of a murderer by an unauthorized person, namely, Lawrence, over against the development of a blood feud between the Arab people whose rebellion against the enemy in World War I would have collapsed.
- (6) Fletcher considers and approves of the decision of British authorities sending women agents into Germany during World War II, a lesser evil, over against the greater evil of letting Germany realize that the German code had been decrypted (Fletcher 1966, p. 98).
- (7) Fletcher considers and approves of the moral decisions of the French Resistance during World War II such as "killing occupation officers and collaborators, sometimes even killing one of their own members in danger of arrest and exposing their whole conspiracy" (Fletcher 1966, p. 124).

Alexander Miller, who interviewed the *maquis*, commented that “if killing and lying are to be used it must be under the most urgent pressure of social necessity, and with a profound sense of guilt that no better way can be found” (Miller 1956, pp. 99–100). Fletcher reinterprets Miller by affirming that these tragic situations are not to be a source of guilt or remorse, but a source of regret because the choice required was the necessary means of avoiding a greater evil (Fletcher 1966, p. 124).

So far we have sketched an understanding of seven cases wherein Fletcher uses situation ethics as being justified through the principle of forced choosing of the lesser of two evils. Alan Donagan reflects upon this general principle and its limits, which he calls:

The principle of the least evil, and which was already proverbial in Cicero’s time: namely, *minima de malis eligenda*—when you must choose between evils, choose the least. However, as we shall see, the limits of its application have not been well understood (Donagan 1977, p. 152).

Donagan does not distinguish between negative commands such as avoid direct harm to another, for example, by not committing murder or theft, and positive commands such as do good unto others, for example, by educating them, but rather reframes these commands as having the same logical form:

In terms of permissibility, both [commands] are negative; and there are prohibitory precepts expressible in sentences of the same form as those expressing precepts about promoting goods as those expressing precepts about promoting good ends: for example, “It is impermissible for one man not to go to the help of another in serious distress, when it is in his power,” and “It is impermissible not to promote the well-being of others, according to his means.” (Donagan 1977, p. 153).

Donagan does not find the distinction between these two kinds of things which are impermissible, the first kind being those in which certain actions such as murder and theft are prohibited and the second kind such as being those which affirm the pursuit of certain good ends such as education and health, as clear as people would think. What is impermissible in the first kind are prohibited actions, and what is impermissible in the second kind are failures of pursuing good ends generally. The key difference is that the prohibition of certain actions such as murder, that is, the deliberate killing of an innocent person, is absolute but the prohibition of failure to promote such ends as education and health does not exclude various ways of promoting education and/or health as evil in themselves. There can be a variety of ways, for example, of promoting education, one way being that of a completely public education, a second way being that of a completely private education, and a third way that of being various mixes of public and private education. Any one of these ways might indirectly harm some students, but the decision to allow these harms to occur should not intend that these harms be directly intended and that efforts should be made to reduce these harms (Donagan 1977, p. 153).

So, Donagan concludes: “A fundamental principle which categorically forbids violating the respect owed to human beings as rational must condemn any plan for promoting human well-being by which that respect would be violated (Donagan 1977, p. 154).” Donagan has adopted the general moral principle that it is absolutely prohibited both in negative duties such as avoiding killing that it is impermissible morally to kill an innocent person directly and in positive duties such as pursuing the well-being of education for others that it is impermissible to kill an innocent person directly. As for a negative duty, even if another person might threaten me that I would be shot and killed if I did not obey that person’s command to shoot and kill a third person, nevertheless the moral command is that I should not shoot and kill that third person. As for a positive duty of educating others, even if the shooting and killing of an innocent person might be a way of vividly educating children that their safety and well-being are not guaranteed in life, nevertheless the moral command not to shoot and kill an innocent person overrides the use of the vivid example of arbitrary murder since there are many ways of teaching the precariousness of our lives without resorting to the use of moral outrages. An educator could simply use examples from the animal kingdom which would show the precariousness, for example, of a mother seal who strives with great effort to protect her cub seals from starvation.

Both Donagan and Fletcher do not believe that the first principle of morality can be proven. Once Donagan accepts something like Kant’s second formulation of the Categorical Imperative which he rephrases as: “*Act always so that you respect every human, yourself or another, as being a rational creature* (Donagan 1977, p. 65).” he affirms that this principle must be never violated, whether in avoiding harm to humanity or in seeking beneficial development of proper ends for humanity. Once Fletcher adopts his Christian faith in the God of agapeic love, he thereby affirms only one moral principle, the similar agapeic love of neighbor as of oneself, as Brunner has affirmed:

Only one “general” proposition is prescribed, namely, the commandment to love God through the neighbor. “God does not will to draw any love exclusively to Himself. He wills that we should love Him ‘in our neighbor’” (Quoted by Fletcher 1966, p. 55).

The consequence of Fletcher’s situation ethics is that just as one would deliberately kill over:

- 100,000 Japanese civilians including children to save the lives of 1,000,000 American soldiers,
- so also one would also deliberately kill 10,000 innocent children to save the lives of 100,000 soldiers,
- and 10,000 innocent children to save the lives of 100,000 soldiers,
- and 1,000 innocent children to save the lives of 10,000 soldiers,
- and 100 innocent children to save the lives of 1,000 soldiers,
- and 10 innocent children to save the lives of 100 soldiers,
- and, finally, even finally one innocent child to save the lives of 10 soldiers.

The vicious nature of this calculus by situation ethics is so repulsive that this author can only stand against the absolute horror of deliberately choosing to do evil in order that good may come from it. What person of agapeic love, what person whose central moral principle is respect for the intrinsic value of every human being, can deliberately choose such horrifying evil? Alan Donagan does not, and neither should Joseph Fletcher.

Indeed, Donagan considers the problem put by the atheist brother, Ivan, to the saintly brother, Alyosha, from *The Brothers Karamazov*:

“ . . . imagine that it is you yourself who is erecting the edifice of human destiny with the aim of making men happy in the end, of giving them peace and contentment at last, but that to do that it is absolutely necessary, and indeed quite inevitable, to torture to death only one tiny creature, the little girl who beat her breast with her little fist, and to found the edifice on her unavenged tears—would you consent to be the architect on those conditions? Tell me and do not lie!”

“No, I wouldn't” Alyosha said softly (Donagan 1977, p. 36).

Having raised this famous objection from Ivan, Donagan dismisses Ivan's thought experiment since “it is necessary to demand, in what system of nature could a deed of that kind be a necessary element in causing that outcome (Donagan 1977, p. 36)?”

However, this paper holds that Donagan's challenge is quite easily answered. For the inevitable development and choice of capitalism as an economic system has greatly enriched humanity since its beginning in England over 200 years ago. Nevertheless, capitalism has caused profound misery at the same time. For example, the capitalist control of the practice of medicine even now in the U.S.A. has brought with it many advances in human health but at the same time caused great inequities in the different states for pregnant women and their offspring. Indeed, infant mortality and maternal health statistics vary greatly amongst the states. The suffering of innocent children is not an implausible and not an unforeseen effect of capitalism that Donagan has questioned as an implausible system of nature and human nature. The deleterious effects on women's health and infant mortality have been known for a long time, and millions of people, claiming that they are following the best laws of economics for the advancement of medicine in general, have failed to do anything much at all to mitigate this foreseen and horrible effect. Hence, Ivan's thought experiment succeeds in undermining Joseph Fletcher's situation ethics that would claim to act out of agapeic love for the majority of people but at the same time would allow a person to deliberately develop a system of economics and politics that causes or allows an evil to happen to an innocent child without even a serious effort to negate and/or minimize such an evil effect.

In conclusion, first, we have examined theoretical similarities and differences between two ethics: that of a Christian-Aristotelian Ethics as commented upon by Aquinas and Augustine and that of a Christian-Aristotelian Ethics as developed by Joseph Fletcher in his Situation Ethics. We have found a deep similarity in that both ethics find that the highest virtue is that of love. The key difference is that for

an Aristotelian Ethics developed by Aquinas and Augustine there are some actions and feelings that are evil in themselves and which have no Golden Mean whereas for an Aristotelian Ethics as developed by Fletcher there are no actions which are evil in themselves.

Second, we have examined (a) the positive practice of the virtues, arguing that there is little to no practical difference between an Aristotelian ethics as developed by Aquinas and Augustine and a situation ethics as developed by Fletcher in the positive practice of the virtues. For example, both of these ethics do not morally command that every wrong against a person must be forgiven because it is practically unwise to offer forgiveness when the offender will only disregard that forgiveness and harm the forgiver seriously again. We have also examined (b) the practical differences between these two ethics in deciding whether there are some actions that are evil in themselves by reflecting upon the four conditions of the principle of the double effect. We have agreed with Donagan's defense of the general moral principle that it is absolutely prohibited both in negative duties such as avoiding killing that it is impermissible morally to kill an innocent person directly and in positive duties such as pursuing the well-being of education for others that it is impermissible to kill an innocent person directly.

We have concluded the paper by favoring a Christian-Aristotelian Ethics as developed by Aquinas and Augustine.

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