

# philippine studies

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## **A Medical Approach to Morality: The Normal Pattern of Man's Ethical Behavior**

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centrates on the breakdown of society, on the problems that the society has not yet been able to come to terms with, e.g., graft and corruption in the government, family-centered corporations, excessive regionalism, etc., as hindering economic development. This is not to say that disorganization does not exist; the point is that analysis of it must be put in the context of how the society functions. This balance is essential if the society is to maintain the confidence of the people and to continue to strive to take its place in, and make its contribution to, the world community of nations.

Aside from this re-direction of research there is another lack to which this book points: a theoretical framework in which to view life in the Philippines. A dearth of research findings can no longer be a valid reason for not at least beginning to work on a theoretical frame of reference. As the pace of industrialization and planned social change increases, the need for theory will become more evident. Precisely because of the change involved, predictions into the future, if based merely on extrapolations of previously observed trends, will become more unreliable. Empirical findings will have to be expressed in terms of higher abstractions so that they can be embodied in more general statements of relationships. Such generalizations will enable social scientists to predict more accurately the implications of change and to offer concrete solutions to the problems occasioned by change.

JOHN T. KEANE

## A MEDICAL APPROACH TO MORALITY

THE NORMAL PATTERN OF MAN'S ETHICAL BEHAVIOR. By Victorino de la Fuente, M.D. New York: Pageant Press, Inc., 1967. xi, 345 pp.

Dr. de la Fuente is Professor of Hematology and Medical Ethics in the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery of the University of Santo Tomas. What makes his book unusual and provocative is his serious attempt to study the problem of morality from a unique standpoint and methodology, namely, that of medical science. This book is not on medical ethics. Nor can it be classified as a book on theology, philosophy, physiology, or psychology, because it is in some sense all these at once.

Dr. de la Fuente takes as his problematic starting point the great diversity today in the moral views of mankind and asks: How can unity in thought be made to prevail among men in moral matters?

Is there a way out to bridge the gap between the natural sciences and ethics, between what man "is" factually and what he "ought" to be ethically? The remarkable agreement among men of science today in scientific matters offers a clue and Dr. de la Fuente finds the answer in the adoption of the scientific viewpoint and the application of the empirical method of observation to the problem of morals and man's ethical behaviour. Convinced that the key to the future unanimity in moral thinking lies in the direction of the prevailing unanimity in scientific thinking (in this case medical science), this book tries to show the interrelationship between the *normal* pattern of man's behaviour and his *ethical* conduct, the correspondence between physiological and ethical values, the correlation between physicobiological laws and the moral law.

The author points out that both man's normal pattern of behaviour as disclosed by physiology and medicine, and man's ethical conduct as analyzed by a faculty-psychology of intellect and will, have man for their identical center of reference and the individual's supreme good for their ultimate goal. The central idea of his book is that the two pivotal concepts in medicine—the *normal* and *abnormal*—through the mediation of man's free will, become the norm for distinguishing between the *moral* and *immoral* in human behaviour. In his view, once the normal and abnormal activities of the will are discovered, then the fundamental laws of morality can be deduced. A human action is right or wrong depending on the movement of the will to or away from the individual's supreme good, both in its physical and spiritual components. It is in considering the spiritual component of man's supreme good that the author shows the relevance of God and human society to man's moral life. In specifying and clarifying what has traditionally been called *natural* as *normal*, Dr. de la Fuente has made a distinct contribution.

The philosophical framework on the basis of which Dr. de la Fuente conducts his research and inquiry into man's ethical behaviour is classical scholastic philosophy in the Aristotelico-Thomistic tradition. Credit must be given to Dr. de la Fuente for the painstaking task of translating scholastic philosophy into the vernacular of physiology and medicine. However, the author's philosophical system of reference is no longer adequate today in the light of contemporary developments in man's philosophical and theological thinking. His brand of Thomism has long been superseded by a more phenomenological and more existential philosophy of subjectivity. The failure of scholastic philosophy to provide an adequate philosophical framework for the 'new theology' was quite patent in the Second Vatican Council. The theory of knowledge, the ontological categories, the formulation of the moral law, the 'proof' for God's existence presented by the author are not without serious difficulties and their relevance today is being seriously questioned in view of our new understanding of

man and reality. Dr. de la Fuente lays great emphasis on the method of science, but his position tends to a reductionism of the scientific and philosophical methods. To be truly scientific today, one must think in a philosophical framework which takes into account evolution (especially Teilhard de Chardin's thought), process philosophy and man's historicity.

The inadequacy of scholastic philosophy to deal with the contemporary problems of morality and of God is reflected in this book's treatment of the moral law in reference to human reproduction (the birth control problem today) and his 'proof' of God's existence based on contingency. The author's main thesis that what is normal is moral will not receive wide acceptance today because it is based on a static natural law theory. The argument against birth control as a frustration of nature leads to a kind of "biologism". The morality of sexual intercourse does not lie on the level of the physical act alone but in its human meaning in the total context of a human relationship. A dynamic natural law theory understands "human nature" not as fixed but always in the process of becoming, and hence what is moral is not simply what is natural but what presents itself as reasonable in a given situation. With regard to the problem of God, it must be pointed out that there is a shift from the traditional cosmological to the contemporary anthropological approach. The 'proof' of God from contingency discussed by Dr. de la Fuente does not only suffer from a scholastic background and terminology, but fails to take account of the personalistic stress of the modern philosophical approaches to God.

It would not be fair to Dr. de la Fuente to criticize his book for what it does not say. The point here is that the philosophical basis and framework of his thesis is not the only possible philosophical orientation of Thomism and its adequacy and relevance today is being seriously questioned.

VITALIANO R. GOROSPE, S.J.

## THE PHILIPPINE REVOLUTION

**THE POLITICAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL IDEAS OF THE PHILIPPINE REVOLUTION.** By Cesar Adib Majul. Revised edition. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1967. xiii, 215 pp.

The first edition of this book appeared in 1957, in a double number of the *Philippine Social Sciences and Humanities Review*. Though the title page of the present edition speaks of a revision, there is no