

RETHINKING MORALITY'S RELATIONSHIP TO SALVATION: JOSEF FUCHS, S.J., ON MORAL GOODNESS

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[The author explains Fuchs's two distinct notions of moral goodness and their relationship to salvation. By linking moral goodness with the performance of right actions, the early Fuchs unwittingly made it more difficult for some people to become morally good, and thus to accept God's gift of salvation. The later Fuchs overcame many of these problems by appropriating Karl Rahner's theological anthropology, especially his understanding of the fundamental option, although Fuchs's conception of moral goodness is still not entirely satisfactory. Building on Fuchs's insights, the author then proposes an account of moral goodness which he judges to be more adequate.]

A STAPLE TENET of Catholic moral theology is that the acceptance of God's gift of salvation requires a moral response.¹ One cooperates with God's gift of grace and is drawn into intimate union with God by becoming a morally good person. Likewise, becoming a morally bad person constitutes a rejection of God's offer of salvation. While the link between salvation and morality is uncontested in Catholic moral theology, the specific manner in which moral goodness is conceived underwent a considerable shift in the 20th century. Especially after the Second Vatican Council, several influential German-speaking² and English-speaking³ Catholic

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¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (New York: Paulist, 1994) nos. 1987–2029.

² Bruno Schüller, *Die Begründung sittlicher Urteile* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1980); Bruno Schüller, "The Double Effect in Catholic Thought: a Reevaluation," in *Doing Evil to Achieve Good*, ed. Richard A. McCormick and Paul Ramsey (Chicago: Loyola University, 1978) 165–92; and Klaus Demmer, *Deuten und Handeln* (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1985).

³ Richard A. McCormick, *The Critical Calling: Reflections on Moral Dilemmas since Vatican II* (Washington: Georgetown University, 1989); James F. Keenan, "Can a Wrong Action be Good? The Development of Theological Opinion on

moral theologians began to dismantle the traditional understanding of moral goodness, in which moral goodness is attained by performing right actions, and have proposed that the moral quality of the person be distinguished from the rightness or wrongness of his or her actions (called the goodness/rightness distinction), with the former being the exclusive evaluative criterion for determining one's soteriological standing.⁴

Josef Fuchs, S.J., has been one of the most productive and influential advocates of the contemporary goodness/rightness distinction and his writings serve as a weather vane for the distinction as it emerged and evolved over the last forty years, since at different times in his academic career Fuchs found himself on opposite sides of the issue.⁵ Fuchs's writings on salvation and morality offer not only a unique glimpse into the internal development of concepts critical to the moral theological enterprise, but they also offer the considered position of one of the most talented and

Erroneous Conscience," *Église et Théologie* 24 (1993) 205–19; James F. Keenan, "Distinguishing Charity as Goodness and Prudence as Rightness: A Key to Thomas's *Secunda Pars*," *Thomist* 56 (1992) 407–26; James F. Keenan, "What is Good and What is Right," *Church* 5 (1989) 22–28; James F. Keenan, "The Problem With Thomas Aquinas's Concept of Sin," *Heythrop Journal* 35 (1994) 401–20; James F. Keenan, *Goodness and Rightness in Thomas Aquinas's Summa Theologiae* (Washington: Georgetown University, 1992); and Bernard Hoose, *Proportionalism: The American Debate and its European Roots* (Washington: Georgetown University, 1987).

⁴ In Catholic moral theology, an act of faith and assent to certain propositional truths are often considered necessary to accept God's gift of salvation. Here I prescind entirely from non-moral factors that are related to the issue of salvation.

⁵ Josef Fuchs, S.J., was born in Bergisch Gladbach, North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany, in 1912. He received a licentiate in philosophy and a doctorate in sacred theology from the Gregorian University. Interestingly, Fuchs began his academic career as an ecclesiologist, not a moral theologian. His doctoral dissertation in 1940 explored the Church's self-understanding as teacher, minister, and ruler. For some inexplicable reason, his Jesuit superiors decided to have Fuchs teach moral theology instead of ecclesiology, which he did at Sankt Georgen, Frankfurt, from 1947 to 1954. Fuchs then joined the faculty at the Gregorian University in 1954 where he remained until his retirement in 1982. Although Fuchs continued researching, writing, and lecturing after his retirement, recently failing health forced him to discontinue his academic activities. He now lives in Cologne at a residence for elderly Jesuits. My thanks to Fr. Clemens Maass, S.J., Assistant to the Provincial of the South German Province of the Society of Jesus, for providing this biographical information. For a comprehensive bibliography of Fuchs's publications from 1940 to 1996, see Josef Fuchs, S.J., *Für eine menschliche Moral: Grundfragen der theologische Ethik* (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1997) 219–64. For recent treatments of Fuchs's moral theology, see Mark E. Graham, *Josef Fuchs on Natural Law* (Washington: Georgetown University, 2002); Cristina L. H. Traina, *Feminist Ethics and Natural Law* (Washington: Georgetown University, 1999) chap. 5; and Ronald Amos Mercier, *What is Nature? The Development of Josef Fuchs' Thought on Moral Normativity* (Ph.D. diss., Regis College, 1993).

respected Catholic moralists who developed various aspects of the contemporary goodness/rightness distinction for approximately 30 years.

My article has three objectives. First, to present Fuchs's understanding before the mid-1960s of the relationship between salvation and morality and the various problems associated with his synthesis. Second, to develop Fuchs's later position⁶ and his distinction between goodness and rightness, and the ways in which his distinction overcame many of the problems he encountered earlier. Finally, because I think Fuchs's position on moral goodness needs to be refined further, I offer ideas that I trust constructively develop Fuchs's presentation and provide a fuller and more persuasive account of moral goodness and its relationship to salvation.

THE EARLY FUCHS ON MORALITY AND SALVATION

From the late 1800s to the eve of the Second Vatican Council, Catholic moral theology was dominated by the neo-Thomist manualists.⁷ In addition to receiving official ecclesiastical approval from the highest offices in the Catholic Church, which at this time was a virtual prerequisite for academic credibility, at least in Catholic circles, the neo-Thomist manuals of moral theology were also the principal textbooks used in seminaries worldwide, which solidified their continuing influence as bishops and priests trained according to their precepts assumed important academic and pastoral posts. In a very practical sense, "moral theology" during this period was synonymous with the neo-Thomist manuals of moral theology.

On the issue of morality's relationship to salvation, the neo-Thomist manualists unanimously agreed that accepting the gift of salvation and cooperating with God's grace required that a person become morally good. The pivotal question that would later become so controversial was: How does a person become morally good? The manualists proposed four criteria, all of which must be fulfilled in order to become a better person morally, and thus to improve one's soteriological standing.

(1) An action must belong to the moral sphere.⁸ Morally indifferent

⁶ Fuchs underwent something of an intellectual conversion in the mid-1960s which affected not only his understanding of moral goodness, but other substantive components of his fundamental moral theology as well. For an account of the factors precipitating his conversion and the ways in which his moral theology changed, see Graham, *Josef Fuchs on Natural Law*, chap. 3; Traina, *Feminist Ethics and Natural Law*, chap. 5; and Mercier, *What is Nature?*, esp. 120–61.

⁷ For an overview of the manualist genre, as well as a discussion of the neo-Thomist manuals of moral theology, see John A. Gallagher, *Time Past, Time Future: An Historical Study of Catholic Moral Theology* (New York: Paulist, 1990) 29–48.

⁸ Henry Davis, *Moral and Pastoral Theology*, 4 vols., 2nd ed. (New York: Sheed

actions, for example, had no effect on one's goodness or badness because they did not have any moral import. Furthermore, the neo-Thomist manualists presupposed that actions, and only actions, could affect one's moral standing. As Thomas Slater writes: "By performing good actions a man becomes a good man morally, and he is a bad man if he performs bad actions."⁹

(2) An action must be voluntarily willed and any subjective factor impeding or perhaps even completely extinguishing full consent of the will—ignorance, fear, coercion, inordinate passion—minimizes the degree to which an action affects a person's moral goodness or badness.¹⁰

(3) An action must conform to the objective moral order.¹¹ If any component of an action is wrong, the act as a whole is considered defective and morally wrong and thus it makes a person morally worse. This criterion, it should be noted, considers only the action as it is actually performed, not the action willed and intended to be performed by the moral agent. The reasons the neo-Thomist manualists required that an action be performed rightly for it to contribute to a person's moral goodness, independently of the action willed and intended by the agent, were theological: God could never approve an action violating the objective moral order, and it is inconceivable that a person could draw closer to God by performing a wrong action. Henry Davis illustrated this theological position well: "The act, free and human, must be morally good, because it would be absurd to think that any morally evil act could possibly lead to God, Who necessarily abhors evil."¹²

(4) God's grace, or charity, was necessary for an action to be meritorious

and Ward, 1936) 1.38–41; Thomas Slater, *A Manual of Moral Theology*, 2 vols., 3rd ed. (New York: Benziger Bros., 1908) 1.17; Arthur Vermeersch, *Theologiae moralis*, 3 vols., 3rd ed. (Rome: Gregorian University, 1933) 1.56; Francis J. Connell, *Outlines of Moral Theology* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1958) 13; Aloysius Sabetti and Timothy Barrett, *Compendium theologiae moralis*, 33rd ed. (New York: Frederick Pustet, 1931) 10; and H. Noldin and A. Schmitt, *Summa theologiae moralis*, 2 vols., 30th ed. (Innsbruck: F. Rauch, 1952) 1.43.

⁹ Slater, *A Manual of Moral Theology* 1.41.

¹⁰ Davis, *Moral and Pastoral Theology* 1.16–33; Slater, *A Manual of Moral Theology* 1.22–40; Sabetti and Barrett, *Compendium theologiae moralis* 1.11–27; Connell, *Outlines of Moral Theology* 13–17; Vermeersch, *Theologiae moralis* 1.58–94; Noldin and Schmitt, *Summa theologiae moralis* 1.44–64; and Antony Koch and Arthur Preuss, *Handbook of Moral Theology*, 5 vols., 3rd ed. (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1925) 1.98–101, 113–18.

¹¹ Davis, *Moral and Pastoral Theology* 1.53–54; Slater, *A Manual of Moral Theology* 1.45–55; Connell, *Outlines of Moral Theology* 20–22; Vermeersch, *Theologiae moralis* 1.110–20; Sabetti and Barrett, *Compendium theologiae moralis* 29–34; Noldin and Schmitt, *Summa theologiae moralis* 1.69–77; and Koch and Preuss, *Handbook of Moral Theology* 1.264–74.

¹² Davis, *Moral and Pastoral Theology* 1.46.

and thus to contribute positively to one's soteriological standing.¹³ Even if the preceding three criteria were fulfilled, an action would remain purely on the "natural" level unless animated by charity. Only if an action was referred to God as the person's ultimate end and motivated on some level of consciousness by love for God could it transcend its natural meaning and possess supernatural import.

Although Fuchs differed theologically from the neo-Thomist manualists in several crucial respects,¹⁴ on the specific issue of the relationship between moral goodness and salvation, he concurred with the neo-Thomist manualists on the four preceding criteria. This synthesis, however, suffers from a host of intractable problems, all directly linked with the requirement that a right action be performed in order to become better morally.¹⁵ The first problem concerns innocent mistakes. Consider, for example, a doctor who draws fluid from a mislabeled vial and injects a patient with a toxic substance, resulting in the patient's death. Had the doctor known the serum was lethal, he or she would not have administered it to the patient, since the doctor's sole intention was to restore the patient's health. The conceptual difficulties raised by this scenario are insurmountable, given Fuchs's position on moral goodness. Remember that for an act to contribute to a person's moral goodness it must not only be freely willed and intended, but it must also be performed rightly, i.e., it must conform to objective morality. The act freely willed and intended by the doctor in this case was to administer a beneficial drug that would help restore the patient's health. The actual performance of the act, however, clearly violates the objective moral order, since it resulted in the killing of an innocent human being. Thus according to Fuchs's criteria, it is impossible for the doctor's act to contribute to his or her goodness or salvation, since the right performance of an action is a necessary prerequisite for an action to increase a person's moral goodness. As Fuchs writes: "*A man who lives in grace and charity, in choosing and performing a good act as good implicitly realizes and actuates himself, that is to say as tending by charity toward God.*"¹⁶

Interestingly, precisely because of the problem of an innocent mistake causing an objectively wrong action, despite the good intention of the moral agent, Fuchs distinguished between two types of goodness and

¹³ Ibid. 1.46–50; Slater, *A Manual of Moral Theology* 1.52–55; Connell, *Outlines of Moral Theology* 24–26; Vermeersch, *Theologiae moralis* 1.128–42; and Noldin and Schmitt, *Summa theologiae moralis* 1.99–103.

¹⁴ For theological differences between Fuchs and the neo-Thomist manualists, see Gallagher, *Time Past, Time Future*, 176–81.

¹⁵ Some of these criticisms can also be found in my *Josef Fuchs on Natural Law* 71–74.

¹⁶ Fuchs, *General Moral Theology* 188 (Fuchs's italics).

hinted at the possibility of formulating two distinct moral evaluations, one for the external act and its conformity to objective morality, the other for the act intended and willed:

Objective-material moral goodness . . . consists in that quality of the act itself on account of which this act is according to right reason ordainable to the last end. But *personal-formal moral goodness* consists in the *intention of the good* which man sees in the act he performs (whether rightly or wrongly). *Per se* these goodness[es] coincide in personal action; *per accidens* . . . they do not coincide.¹⁷

Since Fuchs holds that responsibility for an action attaches only to the rightness or wrongness of the internal act of the will¹⁸—not the external act as performed—it is reasonable to suspect that a person’s moral goodness could be assessed independently of the actions he or she performs, and that it would be possible to become better morally even if a person performed a wrong action by mistake. Yet this is precisely the conclusion Fuchs refuses to draw, since he remains committed to the proposition that for an action to increase one’s moral goodness, the external action must be objectively right. Thus, while Fuchs’s personal formal moral goodness category provides clarity on the issue of personal responsibility for mistaken actions, the new category’s implications are left suspended in midair, as it were, since they apparently should, but do not, challenge the requirement the objectively right actions be performed for the moral agent to become better morally.

As illustrated by the preceding example, another problem with Fuchs’s position is that circumstances beyond a person’s control can vitiate the possibility of an action contributing to one’s moral goodness. The only deficiency of the doctor’s action—injecting the patient with a toxin—stems from someone else’s error, an error possibly completely beyond the doctor’s capacity to detect and rectify. Even if the doctor had gone to great lengths to ensure the vial was properly labeled, the doctor’s action still contravened the objective moral order and could not make him or her better morally. Of course, the claim that a wrong action resulting from circumstances beyond a person’s control should be viewed with some circumspection, especially since it is reasonable to expect that a person take

¹⁷ Ibid. 107–8 (Fuchs’s italics). For other explanations of the difference between the good performed (objective material moral goodness), and the good performance of the act (personal formal moral goodness), see Josef Fuchs, “Morale théologique et morale de situation,” *Nouvelle revue théologique* 76 (1954) 1085; Josef Fuchs, *Situation und Entscheidung: Grundfragen christlicher Situationsethik* (Frankfurt: Josef Knecht, 1952) 118–28; and Josef Fuchs, “‘Operatio’ et ‘Operatum’ in Dictamine Conscientiae,” in *Thomistica morum principia II: Communicationes et acta V congressus thomistici internationalis, Roma, 1960* (Rome: Catholic Book Agency, 1961) 71–79.

¹⁸ Fuchs writes: “What makes a person, above all, either moral or immoral, is not the act in itself, but the inner personal decision” (*Situation und Entscheidung* 116).

sufficient precautions to safeguard against foreseeable and preventable errors. But if a person has striven to take measures designed to eliminate mistakes, measures that are widely considered adequate in the respective situation, there is no persuasive reason to deny that the action, even though objectively wrong, makes the person better morally.

Another problem with Fuchs's synthesis is that it unfairly discriminates against those possessing comparatively less moral knowledge by making it more difficult for them, other things being equal, to become morally good. Because acting rightly requires reliable moral knowledge (unless one is simply lucky and acts rightly by mistake), the ability to become morally good gets directly linked to the breadth and quality of one's moral knowledge. This bodes ill for those lacking the time, resources, stamina, or mental wherewithal to investigate and master the Catholic Church's teaching on moral issues. At this time, the paradigm for moral decision making in Catholic moral theology was that the magisterium proposed moral norms and individual Catholics learned the received teaching, formed their consciences accordingly, and "applied" the appropriate norm in their respective situations, which means that they followed the norm's specific directive. Given this notion of moral decision making, in a concrete situation a moral agent might encounter a series of questions, any one of which might cause him or her to act wrongly if answered incorrectly: What is the intended meaning of the moral norm? Is the norm a rule of thumb or an exceptionless norm? Does the norm conflict with other norms pertinent in the situation? If so, what is the respective location of each norm in the hierarchy of norms? Has the norm been formulated with these circumstances in mind? Is the norm historically, culturally, or socially conditioned and thus possibly inapplicable in the situation?

These questions show clearly that the persons possessing the most thorough and detailed moral knowledge, in other words, the ones most familiar with the Church's moral teaching, are in the best position to be able to act rightly (once again, other things being equal), and thus to become morally good. Although such a conclusion might violate our modern sensibilities, this is precisely the conclusion Fuchs draws. In his opinion, the "experts," or moral theologians and bishops who have received advanced training in moral theology, are most capable of attaining accurate moral knowledge consistently. Although Fuchs does not consider the average layperson a moral infant, there is a wide chasm separating the intelligent and well informed layperson from those possessing "scientific" moral knowledge. As Fuchs writes: "One who thinks little in moral categories must not assume that he will be able to find the proper solution to difficult moral questions with any real facility."¹⁹

A comparable difficulty arises with the issue of factual knowledge. Every

¹⁹ Josef Fuchs, *Natural Law: A Theological Investigation*, trans. Helmut Recker

moral decision involves a series of judgments concerning salient factual data upon which a moral agent relies to determine what ought to be done. Some of these factual data can and should be verified by the person himself or herself. Practical constraints, however, necessitate that we rely on others to supply truthful factual information. For instance, the doctor in the preceding example would need to make judgments about the patient's identity, the reliability of the diagnosis, the accuracy of the medication chart, the measurements on the syringe, and the vial's contents, among others. These, in turn, require that the doctor either undertake the virtually impossible task of verifying all this information personally, or place his or her trust in the nurses, other physicians, and the pharmaceutical company that produced the serum, which in turn requires a consistent, proven track record of providing reliable information in order to garner the doctor's confidence.

Within Fuchs's synthesis, moral goodness directly or indirectly becomes dependent on the veracity of information obtained from others, as well as the correctness of one's own insights that establish the factual data informing the processes of moral deliberation and judgment, insofar as an action rendered morally wrong simply because of false information cannot make a person better morally. From a moral perspective, however, there should be no link between correct knowledge and moral goodness; the appropriate link is between moral goodness and whether a person's attempt to gather correct information is reasonable. The standard of "reasonableness," of course, will differ in dissimilar contexts, but this in no way undercuts the assertion that moral goodness should depend on whether a person goes to sufficient lengths to uncover accurate factual information, not on whether the information actually turns out to be correct.

By creating links between correct factual and moral knowledge and the capacity to become morally good, Fuchs has unwittingly engendered a "disturbing intellectual moral elitism"²⁰ that discriminates against the unintelligent. Consider two persons equal in every respect but intelligence. Both are similarly well ordered and well intentioned, and both are equally loving and concerned about the flourishing of others, themselves, and their respective communities. Which one is more likely to perform right actions? The one most proficient at gathering salient factual data, being able to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant moral norms and their scope and meaning, knowing where potentially conflicting moral norms reside

and John Dowling (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1965) 155. The German original was published as *Lex Naturae: Zur Theologie des Naturrechts* in 1955.

²⁰ Keenan criticizes Thomas Aquinas on this point. See his article, "The Problem With Thomas Aquinas's Concept of Sin" 402–3.

within the hierarchy of principles, and correctly assessing the moral import of circumstances; in short, the one with superior intellectual acumen.

Although superior intelligence is certainly no guarantee of moral goodness, in situations in which it is beneficial by placing the intelligent person in a better position to discover the morally right action, those possessing it enjoy a comparative advantage over the unintelligent. Thus, within Fuchs's synthesis intelligence indirectly has an effect on moral goodness by making it easier, other things being equal, for the intelligent to become morally good.

The palpable difficulty with this position is that intelligence, to the extent that it is simply accidental and beyond a person's control, should have no bearing on a person's ability to become morally good. If superior intelligence is partially or wholly innate or hereditary, then one has simply been fortunate in the natural lottery. In this case, intelligence is based on the vicissitudes of genetic inheritance, and the ability to become morally good must rest on a more plausible foundation than sheer luck. Likewise, if superior intelligence is partially or wholly cultivated by environmental factors, it is similarly contingent on a wide array of factors that are largely, if not entirely, beyond a person's control: access to educational opportunities, the quality of education in one's society, the presence of moral exemplars who can convey moral insights, and a stable political climate conducive to education, among a host of others. As long as intelligence bestows an advantage on certain persons by making it easier for them to act rightly, moral goodness should be measured not by a uniform standard—performing right actions—but by a graduated scale that acknowledges both unequal starting points and unequal environmental factors that influence one's ability to act rightly.

The last problem associated with Fuchs's early synthesis is that actions sometimes fail to manifest accurately a person's moral character. Stated differently, in some instances actions are sometimes imperfect or deceptive expressions of a person's moral constitution. Take, for example, Jean-Paul Sartre's portrait of the anti-Semite who surreptitiously hides his loathing of Jews and leads, according to all external assessments, a laudable life: "A man may be a good father and a good husband, a conscientious citizen, highly cultivated, philosophic *and* in addition an anti-Semite. He may like fishing and the pleasures of love, may be tolerant in matters of religion, full of generous notions on the condition of the natives of Central Africa *and* in addition detest the Jews."²¹ The anti-Semite poses a rather bedeviling problem for Fuchs: Can the anti-Semite be morally good if his actions are

²¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, trans. G. J. Becker (New York: Schocken, 1948), quoted in Owen Flanagan, *Varieties of Moral Personality* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1991) 288.

consistently morally right, even though he has a profound hatred for Jews that he is somehow able to keep hidden from others? It seems that something as pernicious as anti-Semitism, even if never expressed through actions, is incompatible with moral goodness. Yet within Fuchs's synthesis, because there is only one source for moral evaluation—the action—and there is no antecedent moral evaluation of the person independent of his or her actions, anti-Semites would be regarded as morally good if they did not act on their anti-Semitism. This specific problem with Fuchs's position, of course, could be generalized to include any number of other negative character traits that constitute a person's moral makeup, so that if a person never allows them to be expressed through actions, then they simply elude moral evaluation and do not affect a person's moral goodness or badness whatsoever.

In summary, Fuchs's synthesis of performing right actions to increase moral goodness is objectionable in the following ways: (1) it disallows the possibility of innocent mistakes making one a better person morally; (2) other things being equal, it places the intelligent at a comparative advantage of becoming morally good over the unintelligent; (3) other things being equal, it makes it easier for those formally trained in ethics to become morally good; (4) it allows moral goodness to be affected by random accidents, undeserved gifts of fortune, and circumstances beyond a person's control, insofar as they increase or decrease the probability of a person performing right actions; and (5) it fails to include in its assessment of moral goodness or badness formative character traits that are never expressed through actions. Phrased explicitly in soteriological terms, the early Fuchs has essentially made the ability to accept God's gift of salvation highly unequal, with some more privileged and able than others. Furthermore, as long as Fuchs continues to uphold the neo-Thomist tenet that actions must be performed rightly to become a better person morally, these problems cannot be rectified.

THE LATER FUCHS: KARL RAHNER'S TRANSCENDENTAL THOMISM AND THE EMERGING GOODNESS/RIGHTNESS DISTINCTION

In an article written in the late 1960s, Fuchs poses an unusual question: “[W]hat is the morality of my personal ego, over and above the morality of my various actions?”²² Several years earlier, Fuchs would not even have

²² Josef Fuchs, *Human Values and Christian Morality*, trans. M. H. Heelan, Maeve McRedmond, Erika Young, and Gerard Watson (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1970) 95. The article was originally delivered to the Second National Congress of the Association of Italian Moral Theologians, Assisi, Italy, in 1968. For a more

raised this question since he regarded a person's moral standing to be determined by the rightness or wrongness of his or her actions. Influenced by Karl Rahner's strand of transcendental Thomism, however, Fuchs now began to distinguish persons from their actions, and to assess the moral quality of each separately.

Essential for understanding Fuchs's emerging goodness/rightness distinction is Rahner's notion of fundamental option. Rahner is perhaps most famous for his "turn to the subject," or for identifying and exploring the necessary, a priori conditions of human subjectivity, two of which—the subject as a whole, and basic freedom—are germane to my study. An adequate theological anthropology, according to Rahner, must take account of the entire human person, not simply the discrete components that are frequently the subject matters of academic investigation: psychology, sociology, medicine, biology, anatomy, etc. These regional anthropologies,²³ as Rahner calls them, succeed in capturing only isolated, partial aspects of the human person, without capturing or explaining the human person as a whole. According to Rahner, even if it were possible to study the human person from every conceivable angle, this supposed comprehensive perspective would still fail to capture the totality of the human person as a unified, self-conscious subject aware of himself or herself as a whole being; for simply by considering this comprehensive perspective, the person becomes aware of his or her mental operations and thoughts, which necessarily affirms that as a subject he or she is more than, and never reducible to, the sum total of his or her various parts.²⁴

Human persons as a whole experiences themselves as open, undetermined, and free to be realized in a manner of their own choosing.²⁵ Rahner and Fuchs call this experience of radical indeterminacy and openness to different forms of realization "basic freedom," which should not be conflated with the more popular "freedom of choice."²⁶ Freedom of choice concerns the pursuit of human goods through discrete, individual actions, and the many factors either impeding or promoting free choice. Basic freedom, on the other hand, concerns not some identifiable action, but persons themselves as a whole. As Rahner writes: "freedom is first of all the subject's being responsible for himself, so that freedom in its funda-

extended treatment of Fuchs's post-conversion theological anthropology, see my *Josef Fuchs on Natural Law*, chap. 4.

²³ Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, trans. William V. Dych (New York: Crossroad, 1989) 27–28.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 29–31.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 37–38.

²⁶ Fuchs, *Human Values and Christian Morality* 98–104; and Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith* 36–37.

mental nature has to do with the subject as such and as a whole. In [basic] freedom the subject always intends himself, understands and posits himself. Ultimately he does not do *something*, but does *himself*.²⁷

An exercise of basic freedom, through which persons realize themselves as a whole, is called a fundamental option. A positive fundamental option occurs when persons accept God lovingly as the source and term of their existence; a negative fundamental option entails a refusal to love God.²⁸ According to Fuchs, the fundamental option has decisive import in the soteriological sphere: the ability to accept the gift of salvation and to cooperate with God's salvific grace now resides in the quality of one's fundamental option, so that one is morally good and saved by committing oneself as a whole in love for God, or, on the other hand, one is morally bad and outside the realm of salvation if God is rejected.²⁹

By appropriating these ideas from Rahner's theological anthropology, Fuchs has reconceived his understanding of moral goodness, which is now dependent exclusively on the quality of one's fundamental option. Furthermore, Fuchs has also severed the link between moral goodness and the performance of right actions by establishing the possibility of an antecedent moral evaluation of persons as distinct from their actions. As Fuchs argues, this antecedent moral evaluation is legitimate and necessary because the abiding disposition arising from an exercise of basic freedom determines the whole person's moral standing, and thus is a more original and accurate indicator of a person's moral goodness or badness than the acts he or she performs.³⁰

Fuchs has essentially interjected a considerable degree of ambiguity concerning the moral and soteriological import of actions. Actions might be consistent with one's fundamental option insofar as they represent accurately expressions of one's love for God or rejection of God. Actions might also be deceptive indicators of a person's fundamental option if they contradict or are only partially consistent with one's abiding disposition. For Fuchs, there is simply no direct, immediate transference of the quality of one's actions to the moral agent, nor is it licit in Fuchs's view automatically to infer either a positive or negative fundamental option from the moral quality of one's actions. As Fuchs writes: "[H]e who realizes all that is

²⁷ Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith* 94

²⁸ Josef Fuchs, *Personal Responsibility and Christian Morality*, trans. William Cleves et al. (Washington: Georgetown University, 1983) 94; and Fuchs, *Human Values and Christian Morality* 96.

²⁹ Josef Fuchs, *Christian Morality: The Word Becomes Flesh*, trans. Brian McNeil (Washington: Georgetown University, 1987) 96; and Josef Fuchs, *Christian Ethics in a Secular Arena*, trans. Bernard Hoose and Brian McNeil (Washington: Georgetown University, 1984) 51.

³⁰ Fuchs, *Personal Responsibility and Christian Morality* 36.

'right' in this world and avoids what is 'wrong' is not yet, therefore, necessarily 'good' and within the realm of 'salvation.'"³¹ In consequence, actions are at best partial, incomplete, yet relatively accurate expressions of one's moral standing, and at worst they are misleading and sometimes false indicators of a person's goodness or badness. Phrased somewhat differently, Fuchs believes it is possible for a good person, i.e., someone who has made a positive fundamental option, to act wrongly on occasion, without thereby becoming a worse person morally. Similarly, someone could act rightly without becoming a better person morally.

Given Fuchs's firm distinction between persons and acts, a pertinent question for Fuchs is: What, if any, soteriological import do actions possess? If persons and acts are partitioned so strictly that there arises a wholesale disjunction between them, with actions having no effect whatsoever on a person's moral goodness or badness, Fuchs's goodness/rightness distinction could easily degenerate into an unpalatable antinomianism that is unconcerned with the rightness or wrongness of actions and cares only whether they are animated by love for God. This would imply that personal salvation has nothing to do with acting rightly or wrongly, and that actions, whether praiseworthy or condemnable, have no effect on one's soteriological standing.

According to Fuchs, antinomianism and moral goodness are incompatible since a positive fundamental option for God in love requires that a person not be indifferent to the morality of his or her acts, but actively strive to do everything possible to act rightly as frequently as possible. One of the side effects of a positive fundamental option is the emergence of a persistent desire to conform one's actions to objective morality. Thus the morally good person, Fuchs writes, will exhibit a consistent drive toward what is right:

In the area of categorial life, the moral goodness of the person as a whole expresses itself as an inclination of mind, intention, goodwill, etc. The lack of such an intention would be a sign that the person is not 'good' and does not live within the realm of 'salvation.' Personal moral goodness . . . is therefore also the will for the 'right' realization of the world of man, that is, a realization which is good precisely for man: of the individual, of interpersonal relationships, of society, and of the material world. More exactly, it is the intention to try to find this rightness and, inasmuch as it is found, to realize it.³²

As Fuchs mentions, this intentional, concerted striving occurs on several levels, all of which directly or indirectly affect the moral agent's ability to act rightly: the desire to discover the morally right action and active seeking to discover appropriate behavior;³³ to cultivate good attitudes and charac-

³¹ Fuchs, *Christian Ethics in a Secular Arena* 53.

³² *Ibid.* 51.

³³ Fuchs, *Christian Morality* 140.

ter traits that make one well-ordered and well-disposed to act rightly;³⁴ to strengthen one's resolve or willpower, so that when the morally right act is discovered, one is able to perform it;³⁵ and the readiness to heed the dictates of one's conscience, which judges what is morally right in the situation.³⁶ For Fuchs, then, moral goodness no longer is dependent upon performing right actions; it is a byproduct of one's positive fundamental option, and its signs or indicators³⁷ are the consistent efforts to place oneself in the best position possible to act rightly.

By eliminating the necessity of performing right actions to become morally good, Fuchs has successfully overcome many of the conceptual problems that plagued his earlier position, although his account of moral goodness, as I will attempt to show later, is still not entirely satisfactory. As previously noted, by making the performance of a right action the indispensable prerequisite for increasing one's moral goodness, it would be impossible for a person to become better morally if he or she commits an innocent mistake, even though all other aspects of the act are morally laudable. This is true even if the person had gone to great lengths to eliminate the possibility of making a mistake. For the later Fuchs, mistakes resulting in actions that contravene the objective moral order no longer prevent the moral agent from becoming morally good because moral goodness depends exclusively on the quality of one's fundamental option, not on the rightness or wrongness of actions.

Another problem with Fuchs's early position involves its biases against the unintelligent and those not formally trained in ethics, insofar as they are at a comparative disadvantage in acting rightly since, all other things being equal, it is more probable that they will be less likely to act rightly, and thus it will be more difficult for them to become morally good. Fuchs's later position eliminates these biases completely and interjects a robust

³⁴ Fuchs, *Christian Ethics in a Secular Arena* 31.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 51.

³⁶ Josef Fuchs, *Moral Demands and Personal Obligations*, trans. Brian McNeil (Washington: Georgetown University, 1993) 97.

³⁷ Since according to Fuchs the status of one's fundamental option, and thus one's soteriological status, can never be known precisely, these "signs" of moral goodness, as Fuchs calls them, are only indicators or approximations. Strictly speaking, Fuchs holds that one's fundamental option is made unthematatically, on a level of consciousness not directly accessible to conceptual, reflective thought. This means that one can never be absolutely sure whether one is morally good, and thus within the realm of salvation. Thus while these signs tends to be fairly reliable indicators of moral goodness, in the end they cannot guarantee one's moral or soteriological status. For fuller explanations of these issues, see Josef Fuchs, "Good Acts and Good Persons," in *Considering Veritatis Splendor*, ed. John Wilkins (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1994) 21–26; and Fuchs, *Human Values and Christian Morality* 92–111.

egalitarianism into the ability to become morally good. By locating moral goodness in the fundamental option, every person is equally capable of becoming morally good, regardless of whether they are blessed or cursed by nature, family, society, or culture. Since every person is capable of accepting God in love as the source and term of his or her existence, every person is equally capable of making a positive fundamental option and becoming morally good.

Similarly, the equal ability of every person to make a positive fundamental option effectively negates the capacity of random accidents, or things beyond a person's control—genetic inheritance, quality of family upbringing, guidance of moral exemplars, access to quality education—to affect moral goodness indirectly by making it easier or more difficult to perform right actions. For the later Fuchs, although these factors might make a considerable difference in one's capacity to perform right actions, they have no effect on moral goodness, which is concerned exclusively with one's fundamental option. Thus even the exceedingly unlucky person, whose ability to act rightly is stifled and undercut in almost every way imaginable by circumstances beyond his or her control, is as capable as anyone else of becoming morally good.

The early Fuchs, lastly, was criticized for his exclusive focus on the performance of right actions, which caused him to overlook formative character traits that constituted the person. This criticism is inapplicable to the later Fuchs, who analyzes at length the most formative character trait a person can have—the fundamental option—and the many other qualities—striving, effort, love, fidelity to conscience, etc.—that emerge or flow from a positive exercise of basic freedom.

AN ASSESSMENT AND A PROPOSAL

The most valuable component of the later Fuchs's notion of moral goodness is its egalitarianism. Ever since the rise of the neo-Thomist manualists and their robust act analysis (vestiges of which still greatly influence Catholic moral theology), the dominant notion of moral goodness arbitrarily and unfairly discriminated against individuals and classes of people due to its conceptual link between performing right actions and moral goodness, with the former being the necessary prerequisite for the latter. Whether it be the unintelligent, the poorly ordered, or the nonexpert in moral theology, these and other people less likely to be able to perform right actions were also less likely to become morally good, other things being equal, which made it comparatively difficult for them to cooperate with God's grace and accept the gift of salvation.

Whether intentional or not, Fuchs's shift from performing right actions to the quality of one's fundamental option as the locus of moral goodness

radically leveled the soteriological playing field, so to speak. Now nobody, regardless of his or her intelligence or lack thereof, wealth or poverty, fortune or misfortune, or freedom or oppression, is either advantaged or disadvantaged in the capacity to become morally good by making a positive fundamental option. Because the vicissitudes and randomness of human existence that deal each person a different lot in life and make it easier or more difficult for each person to act rightly are now irrelevant to becoming a morally good person, the ability to accept the gift of salvation is equally available to all.

Another positive contribution that should inform all subsequent attempts to construct an adequate theology of moral goodness is Fuchs's contention that actions are sometimes ambiguous indicators of a person's moral standing. For Fuchs, of course, the ambiguity emerges from the distinctiveness of two fundamentally different realities: the fundamental option and the person's individual actions, the former being more adequately indicative of the person's moral standing. Yet even if one rejects the reality of the fundamental option, it is still necessary, I suggest, to be cautious about the ability of actions to represent adequately the person's moral character.

One considerable source of ambiguity about individual actions is that they frequently insufficiently contextualize the human person, which effectively discounts the effort expended to act rightly. Take, for example, a recovering alcoholic who is an unwitting ethical egoist. Not that the alcoholic has considered ethical egoism in its various forms and reflectively decided that it is the correct moral theory. No, the egoism is somehow a consequence of his or her alcoholism, and it functions spontaneously and almost unconsciously, so that the basic thrust of the alcoholic's life is to satisfy only his or her wants, desires, interests, and needs. In a very significant and pervasive way, the alcoholic's ethical egoism dominates his or her attention and concern: the first reaction to any event is to determine how it will affect him or her, and all of the alcoholic's actions are based on their ability to contribute positively to him or her. If someone else draws attention to the alcoholic's self-interested actions, he or she is receptive to the criticism and willing to act in someone else's interest on these occasions. But other than these isolated instances in which someone else draws the alcoholic out of his or her egoism, the egoism functions as a complete, integral, and automatic way of being in the world.

What if, in a moment of insight and grace, the alcoholic begins to understand the pervasiveness of his or her egoism and makes a conscious attempt to transcend it? Little by little, he or she begins to think about others, their needs and flourishing, and how his or her actions affect others. The process of overcoming what was once a way of life, however, is slow and gradual, and the conversion occurs in fits and starts. Nonetheless, the

determination to strive to become less egotistical and the consistent effort to refashion himself or herself into something different—and morally better—are steady and consistent.

Actions, in this instance, are deceptive indicators of the alcoholic's moral standing. Despite his or her conscious resolve to shed the egoism and a persistent striving to subdue it, many of the alcoholic's actions are narcissistic because the personal transition is incomplete and he or she frequently—maybe even consistently—lapses into the same self-centered patterns of thought, consideration, deliberation, and action. The disjunction between person and act is apparent here: despite the dubious nature of the alcoholic's acts, he or she is still striving and doing the best to become better morally. The effort and determination are forthcoming, but his or her actions are rarely indicative of this concerted striving.

In addition to the disparity between the alcoholic's striving and the morality of his or her actions, the focus on and evaluation of discrete actions also fails to assess movement, personal growth, changed attitudes, increased willpower, new patterns of thinking; in other words, moral progress. If the alcoholic is gradually transformed from an exclusive egoist to an almost exclusive egoist, so that nearly all of his or her acts are self-interested, a catalogue and assessment of these acts will reveal one dubious act after another, occasioned by the highly infrequent morally right act. What this rather miserable moral track record fails to detect—and make morally relevant—however, is that the alcoholic has improved morally. Because of the alcoholic's effort, he or she has become something different than before, and this change is morally laudable.

While these considerations indicate that acts should be viewed skeptically when assessing the morality of persons, I think there is a more formidable, maybe even intractable, ambiguity about acts and their ability to indicate adequately a person's moral standing. Not only is every person born with unequal native endowments, but every person also is affected unequally throughout life by conditions and events that might influence his or her ability to act rightly. Furthermore, many, if not most, of these random circumstances are simply beyond a person's control. Catholic moral theology has long recognized certain factors conditioning a person's capacity to act rightly, especially violence, coercion, deception, fear, and inordinate appetites and desires, which limit and sometimes preclude the moral quality of the action from being transferred to the moral agent. Catholic moral theology has not sufficiently recognized, however, other circumstances affecting a person's ability to act rightly which, strictly speaking, do not always necessarily cause a particular action, but nonetheless exercise an indirect, yet often considerable, influence on the person.

On the negative side, psychoses, obsessions, compulsions, lack of moral exemplars, physical or sexual abuse, unloving or absent parents, an un-sup-

portive community, poverty, lack of education, a decadent culture, oppressive social and political institutions, intolerant or authoritarian churches, and a host of many other circumstances shape us as persons, many times even when the formative effect is wholly unwanted. A victim of child abuse, for example, might spend years psychologically tormenting himself or herself, reliving the abuse, blaming and hating himself or herself, and the victim's self-loathing might culminate in a pattern of self-destructive behavior intended on some level as punishment. A child largely ignored by his or her parents might grow up with feelings of insecurity, inadequacy, loneliness, and unworthiness and might spend most of his or her adult life trying to curry the favor and attention of others, even if this requires compromising his or her moral integrity. Likewise, from the desperation borne by oppressive, inescapable poverty, someone might develop into a callous, manipulative, resentful, and angry person prone to all sorts of destructive activities. In all these cases, circumstances beyond a person's control conspire to disorder the person in various ways, leaving him or her less able to act rightly.

On the other hand, fortuitous circumstances might have the opposite effect. A child naturally gifted with self-control, courage, kindness, and compassion, born to loving, nurturing parents, enjoying the blessing of morally upstanding friends, having exceptional educational, social, and cultural opportunities, and being exposed to moral exemplars that fire the moral imagination and personally demonstrate the magnetism and grandeur of love, service, and dedication to lofty moral ideals should have a much easier time conforming his or her actions to acceptable moral standards.

There is no guarantee, of course, that any positive or negative circumstance beyond a person's control is going to have any direct, palpable effect on his or her behavior, so that it would be possible to pinpoint one of these circumstances as a "cause" of specific discrete actions. Everyone is well-versed with the story of the rare moral virtuoso, who is able to surmount obstacles and deplorable conditions to lead an exemplary life. Simply because it is not always possible to demonstrate strict causality, however, we should not be reticent about admitting degrees of influence on actions and generalizing about conditions that affect people and their ability to act rightly. In fact, in the social and political spheres, this is done all the time. While it is almost impossible to predict how poverty, violence, and abuse will affect specific individuals, statistical analyses can establish with a great deal of precision how certain conditions affect people and their behavioral patterns. In this way, social scientists can forge a link between poverty and clinical depression, violent behavior, and drug addiction, for instance, and can relatively accurately predict certain consequences stemming from political policies increasing the poverty level. What this indicates is that cer-

tain conditions bear down upon and affect people, and in this way influence their ability to act rightly.

The ambiguity of actions, then, in many instances precludes them from being an adequate indicator of moral goodness or badness since they often reflect the formative—and accidental—circumstances that condition moral agents and make it easier or harder to act rightly. If actions are the sole standard to determine moral goodness, the vicissitudes of life beyond a person's control, positive or negative, are uncritically allowed to taint an assessment of the moral agent's goodness or badness. The only way to neutralize random circumstances and to prevent them from surreptitiously skewing the determination of goodness or badness is to eliminate them from consideration and to base goodness and badness on something else, something within a person's control that remains unaffected by the random, formative influences affecting everyone differently.

This could be done, as Fuchs does, by locating moral goodness or badness in the person's fundamental option, which makes all the accidental circumstances essentially irrelevant to the person's moral standing. I think, however, that given a certain technical, yet important, objection to Fuchs's notion of fundamental option,³⁸ the more fruitful approach lies in assessing a person's goodness or badness according to the presence or absence of a consistent pattern of striving or effort to act rightly. The conceptual difficulty raised by the fundamental option is that it is unclear whether the characteristics Fuchs mentions as indicative of a positive fundamental option—striving and effort to discover the morally right action and to act rightly, love, fidelity to one's conscience—actually make the person morally better. The trajectory of causation, it is clear for Fuchs, certainly flows from the fundamental option to the positive characteristics, with the latter being the byproduct of a positive fundamental option. In this scenario, the positive fundamental option is first in the order of causation, with the characteristics emerging subsequently to and being directly caused by the fundamental option. The reverse order of causation, namely, the characteristics making the person morally better by affecting the fundamental option, is much more tenuous. Fuchs admits some reciprocal influence

³⁸ For various criticisms of fundamental option theory, see John Finnis, *Fundamentals of Ethics* (Washington: Georgetown University, 1983) 142–44; Joseph Boyle, "Freedom, the Human Person, and Human Action," in *Principles of Catholic Moral Life*, ed. William E. May (Chicago: Franciscan Herald, 1980) 237–66; Theodore Hall, "The Mysterious Fundamental Option," *Homiletic and Pastoral Review* 78 (1978) 12–20; Germain Grisez, *Christian Moral Principles*, vol. 1 of *The Way of the Lord Jesus* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald, 1983) 382–90; and Jean Porter, "Moral Language and the Language of Grace: The Fundamental Option and the Virtue of Charity," *Philosophy and Theology* 10 (1997) 169–98.

between them,³⁹ but he is exceedingly reluctant to establish any solid causal link that moves from personal characteristics to the fundamental option since each operates on a different plane of reality and concerns different aspects of the human person.

If pushed to an extreme, this could place Fuchs in the untenable position that a consistent pattern of striving and concerted efforts to act rightly might not necessarily make a person better morally. Although Fuchs would certainly consider these to be signs indicating a positive fundamental option, and thus moral goodness, the most he could offer when addressing the issue of whether the striving and effort produce a better person morally is a conditional answer: yes, if they actually affected the person's fundamental option; no, if they did not.

This is one particular area where, in my judgment, Fuchs's notion of moral goodness goes astray and needs to be amended. Without some stronger causal link between striving and effort and the fundamental option, moral goodness becomes wholly independent of freely and consciously willed decisions and resolutions, and it furthermore becomes inscrutable to human awareness, since it occurs unthematically and can never be grasped through reflective thought. Moral goodness, if conceived in this manner, fades into the remote, mysterious recesses of human choice and awareness, not strictly unconscious but not conscious either, where ultimate destinies are determined through the acceptance or rejection of the gift of salvation. While it is not a decisive objection against the fundamental option that it is rather mysterious and occurs unthematically, unknown to the person consciously, it is objectionable that moral goodness, within Fuchs's framework, seems to be severed from our conscious activity as moral agents trying to conform ourselves to the requirements of objective morality.

I suggest, therefore, that moral goodness or badness be assessed according to a person's concerted striving and effort to act rightly. This understanding of moral goodness enjoys the advantage of locating formative moral decisions on the plane of conscious reflection where the moral agent is aware of his or her deliberations. Furthermore, this notion of moral goodness escapes the ambiguity sometimes surrounding individual actions and the various ways in which they are often conditioned by circumstances beyond a person's control. Even though someone has been disadvantaged in the natural lottery and suffered considerable setbacks throughout life, it is still possible for that person to expend considerable effort to surmount his or her conditioning to become a better person morally. While actions often reflect the haphazard, random ways a person has been affected and formed—for better or worse—intentional, consistent striving to act rightly

³⁹ Fuchs, "Good Acts and Good Persons" 23.

is always within the moral agent's capacity, regardless of his or her lot in life and the forces, either disintegrating or ordering, influencing him or her.

The concept of moral goodness I am proposing, which is functionally equivalent to the later Fuchs's notion of moral goodness absent the fundamental option, also succeeds at overcoming the problems discussed above with Fuchs's earlier synthesis: (1) it does not allow innocent mistakes to vitiate the possibility of becoming a better person morally even though an action is objectively wrong, because striving—not actual performance—determines the moral agent's goodness; (2) it does not unfairly place anyone in an advantaged or disadvantaged position to become morally good, because the capacity to strive to act rightly is equally available to everyone; and (3) it offers an assessment of persons and their character traits independently of their actions.

In a practical sense, this understanding of moral goodness provides uniform benchmarks to determine a person's moral goodness or badness, all of which are directly or indirectly related to the ability to act rightly. One obvious criterion that Fuchs mentions repeatedly is consistent striving to discover the morally right action in the particular situation.⁴⁰ Since accurate moral knowledge is a necessary prerequisite for acting rightly (unless one is lucky and acts rightly by mistake), the morally good person will exhibit the habit of striving to do whatever necessary to uncover the morally appropriate course of action.

The importance of correct moral knowledge, however, is negligible if the person is so disordered and plagued by subjective impediments that acting rightly is virtually impossible even with indubitable knowledge of right behavior. Thus, the morally good person will labor consistently to unify prerational inclinations, desires, emotions, and passions with his or her reflective grasp of the human good, so that he or she is spontaneously, and without internal resistance, able to realize the good when it is known. This would also require concerted effort to identify, confront, understand, and eventually overcome other disorders such as obsessions, compulsions, irrational fear, hostility, anger, narcissism, self-hatred, or any other qualities inhibiting his or her pursuit of the good.

Yet another characteristic of the morally good person directly related to the ability to act rightly is effort directed at self-criticism and self-knowledge. Every person, to some degree, is guilty of self-deception, rationalization, half-truths, deceit, unjustified self-preference, apathy, lack of concern for the suffering of others, biases, and narcissism, among others. These negative characteristics often become so imbedded in a person's

⁴⁰ Fuchs, *Personal Responsibility and Christian Morality* 122; Fuchs, *Christian Morality* 29, 107–9, 140; Fuchs, *Christian Ethics in a Secular Arena* 51, 55, 144; and Fuchs, *Moral Demands and Personal Obligations* 2, 97, 142.

psychological makeup, mental life, and ordinary patterns of behavior that they function practically as the implicit, unrecognized context for a multitude of daily behaviors. Yet they also exercise a crippling effect on a person's ability to act rightly either by providing convenient justifications for dubious actions, or by palliating the twinge of conscience indicating a more critical scrutiny of oneself is in order. Thus, the morally good person will strive to detect the potentially numerous subtle ways in which he or she falls short of becoming better morally.

In addition to the aforementioned criteria providing uniform benchmarks to assess moral goodness, a correct, sufficiently comprehensive understanding of goodness will incorporate standards unique to one's social location. For example, in order to be a morally good person, a father should strive in very specific ways to nurture his children, which in turn requires that he try to habituate himself to be attentive to the children's needs and sufficiently adaptable to be able to meet those needs well. As every father knows, this means being highly attentive to potential dangers (small objects swallowed easily, steps that pose a falling hazard, etc.) when the children are infants or toddlers, and being able to resist distractions and fatigue so that dangerous situations can be anticipated and effectively averted. As the children grow older and their needs, desires, interests, and strengths and weaknesses become clearer, a good father will attempt to cultivate qualities in himself that foster the children's development (patience or sternness with overly energetic or rambunctious children, respectively) and identify and pursue courses of activity unique to each child intended both to eradicate undesirable traits and to reinforce beneficial ones.

Moral goodness, then, while being constituted by the formal requirements to strive and exert effort to order oneself properly and to act rightly, is expressed in an almost irreducibly individual manner corresponding to the various occupations, roles, locations, and unique circumstances in which people find themselves and which require different types of habituation or actions to realize the human good. This incipient and obviously incomplete account of moral goodness offered here cannot, of course, exhaust the manifold, specific ways in which moral goodness should become incarnate. Such an undertaking would require volumes. The only objective has been to indicate that an adequate account of moral goodness should consist in universal requirements applicable to all persons as human beings, as well as sufficient flexibility and openness to account adequately for the particularity characterizing human life and affecting, in different degrees, integral human flourishing. The process of identifying both the universal and particular requirements of moral goodness, however, should not inadvertently lapse into the mistaken tendency chided throughout this article, namely, to make the performance of right actions a necessary prerequisite for moral goodness.

While I have amended Fuchs's account of moral goodness, the significant conceptual breakthroughs that effectively overturned the dominant notion of moral goodness in twentieth-century Catholic moral theology supplied by the neo-Thomist manualists are unquestionably Fuchs's. It was Fuchs who identified many of the various problems and inconsistencies with the traditional synthesis of performing right actions and moral goodness, and it was Fuchs who began dismantling this synthesis, exposing its weaknesses, and proposing a more intellectually persuasive account of how persons become morally good or bad and thereby cooperate with or refuse God's salvific grace. At the very least, theologians should be grateful for Fuchs's successful efforts at overcoming a persistent, ingrained error that plagued Catholic moral doctrine for well-nigh a century. Yet by providing the structural lineaments of a more adequate notion of moral goodness, Fuchs has offered much more: a substantive platform that can be fruitfully developed by subsequent commentators to outline a more comprehensive and adequate portrait of moral goodness and its contribution to personal salvation.⁴¹

⁴¹ My thanks to William Werpehowski and Sara Leader for reading and critiquing this article.