Chapter 2
Overview of Ethical Thought

Abstract This overview of ethical thought has a merely introductory character. It does not enter into discussions of philosophical views.

Axiology or Theory of Value is the discipline addressing values in general; it comprises the study of what makes things desirable. Metaethics, Normative Ethics and Applied Ethics constitute the current main divisions in the field of ethical studies. In the history of Western Philosophy there are three main Normative Ethics theories: Virtue Ethics, Consequentialist Ethics, and Deontological Ethics.

Rationality is traditionally equated with experimental or mathematical scientificity, and Epistemology is currently often defined as the study of knowledge as justified true belief. Ethical or Moral Epistemology is concerned with moral beliefs. Reason being theoretical and practical, unique and multiple, valid belief is a broader epistemological category and seemingly more accurate than true belief, as it encompasses all kinds of beliefs and agreed reasons for justifying them.

2.1 Ethics

Axiology or Theory of Value is the discipline that studies values, in general, what makes things desirable[1]. According to Charles W. Morris (1901–1979): "Since the life process depends on the selection or rejection of certain objects or situations, preferential behavior (positive or negative) is a basic phenomenon of life. I have proposed that axiology (as the study of 'value') be considered as the study of preferential behavior" (1964, p. 17). He called a "value situation" any situation in which preferential behavior occurs.

> A 'value situation' […] is inherently relational, involving an action of (positive or negative) preferential behavior by some agent to something or other. […]

[1] The term 'Axiology' stems from Greek αξια (worth) and *logos* (science/discourse). The term was first used in a book title by Eduard von Hartmann in *Grundriss der Axiologie* (Outline of Axiology, 1909). It "originally meant the worth of something, chiefly in the economic sense of exchange value, as in the work of the 18th-century political economist Adam Smith. A broad extension of the meaning of value to wider areas of philosophical interest occurred during the nineteenth century under the influence of a variety of thinkers and schools" (Encyclopedia Britannica 2012).

A. Reis Monteiro, *Ethics of Human Rights,* DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-03566-6_2,

© Springer International Publishing Switzerland 2014

> So conceived, values are 'objectively relative'; that is, they are properties of objects (in a wide sense of this term) relative to preferential behavior. […]
> Such a view avoids the ancient dispute among value theorists as to whether values are 'subjective' or 'objective'—for they are envisaged as properties of objects (or properties of properties of objects) relative to a 'subject' (conceived of as responding by preferential behavior). Hence, they involve both subjects (agents) and objects. The relations of objects to agents (or 'subjects') are no less 'objective' than the relations of objects to other objects. (p. 18)

Values are manifold[2]. Some, such as wealth and power, are instrumental for reaching other ones. Other values have instrumental and intrinsic senses (as means and ends), such as health and knowledge. Moral values are goals for human life, such as compassion, happiness and justice. They are concerned with good and evil, right and wrong, regulating the behaviors and relations between human beings and giving sense to their individual and collective lives. In every society, there are moral values commanding obligations and interdictions, often supported by myths. Individuals have to make moral choices and take decisions in their everyday lives. Moral sensitivity means, in particular, the conscience of how our actions may affect other people, and being concerned with their suffering.

Morality is a universal phenomenon, but moral values are historically, culturally, socially and individually variable, and may vary radically. The world never was as Voltaire saw it when he quietly said: "There is a sole morals as there is a sole geometry" (cit. in Bindé 2004, p. 14). There are obsolete, lasting and emerging values. For example, thinkers as preeminent as Plato, Aristotle (384–322 BC) and St. Augustine (354–430) deemed slavery natural and necessary. Religious intolerance was a theological imperative giving rise to the establishment of the Catholic Inquisition, in the Middle Ages. In nineteenth century, several Popes severely condemned the 'evils' of 'modernism', liberalism and socialism. The most famous document of the Catholic resistance to moral, intellectual and political advancements was the *Syllabus*[3] attached to the Encyclical *Quanta cura* of Pope Pius IX (1864)[4], which anathematized the modern 'errors' in 80 statements. Before, Pope Gregory XVI had condemned, in Encyclical *Mirari vos* (1832)[5], "the unbridled lust for freedom", the "liberty of conscience", the "immoderate freedom of opinion, license of free speech, and desire for novelty", which were "a pestilence more deadly to the state than any other". The "freedom to publish" was said "harmful and never sufficiently denounced".

[2] A research into the meaning of the term 'value', conducted in 1971, identified 171 definitions. They had in common only the fact of considering values as factors of the judgments and behaviors concerning the Good, the Truth and the Beautiful (see Elchardus 1998, p. 103).

[3] www.ewtn.com/library/PAPALDOC/P9SYLL.HTM

[4] www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/p9quanta.htm
Encyclical or Encyclical Charter (a term first used perhaps by Pope Benedict XIV in the eighteenth century) is a doctrinal document issued by a Pope.

[5] www.papalencyclicals.net/Greg16/g16mirar.htm

Morals and Ethics are terms etymologically synonymous, with Latin (*mos*) and Greek (*ethos*, *êthos*) etymologies, respectively[6]. Both refer to 'right' or 'wrong' conduct, to custom or way of being. Ethics designated the part of Philosophy concerned with human behavior. Aristotle "may be deemed to be creator of the expression and of the concept of moral theory as a distinct discipline" (Ricoeur 2004, p. 136). The Stoic philosophers made it the core of wisdom. George W. F. Hegel (1770–1831) distinguished between Ethics (*Sittlichkeit*) and Morals (*Moralität*), applying the former to the concrete rules and behaviors, and the latter to the reflection on the moral values. These days, many authors view the relation between Ethics and Morals differently. For example, in the opinion of Paul Ricoeur (1913–2005), "ethics is more fundamental than morals" (1994, p. 16). We should "distinguish between ethics and morals, to reserve the term ethics for every questioning preceding the introduction of the moral law idea, and to call moral all that, in the field of good and evil, refers to laws, norms, imperatives" (1990, p. 62). Jacqueline Russ (1994) also considered justified and useful this distinction between Ethics and Morals: "The first one is more theoretical than the second one, intended to be more concerned with a reflection on the foundations of the latter". Ethics denotes, "not a morals, namely a set of rules particular to a culture, but rather a 'meta-morals', a doctrine situated beyond morals […], deconstructing and founding, stating principles or ultimate foundations" (p. 5, 6).

Therefore, the following distinction may be made:

- Morals denotes the *what* of values (which they are), that is, a set of values and norms concerning the right and wrong individual behaviors within a given human community. A moral judgment is one of approving or condemning decisions and behaviors in the light of common values.
- Ethics or Moral Philosophy is the theory of morality, that is, the reflection on the *why* of moral values, on the principles of good and evil, pointing to a worldwide horizon. It is a term with a rather intellectual and universal meaning, without the frequent religious and conservative connotation of the term Morals. One says, for instance, 'Ethics of Human Righs', and not 'Morals of Human Rights'.

While the moral phenomenon is as old as humankind itself, the origins of a systematic ethical thought go back to relatively recent times. The *Vedas* (meaning religious wisdom), which are the foundational texts of Hinduism, are considered the oldest known Moral Philosophy. In the Western world, it is born in Classical Greece, in the fifth–forth centuries BC, with Socrates (469–399 BC), Plato and Aristotle, whose thought is rooted in the wisdom of earlier thinkers known as the 'Seven Sages', one of whom was Pythagoras (sixth century BC). In the opinion of Ricoeur (2004), Aristotle "may be deemed to be creator of the expression and of the concept of moral theory as a distinct discipline" (p. 136).

At present, the ethical field of studies is usually divided into three main areas: Metaethics, Normative Ethics, and Applied Ethics. The latter has dramatically grown in importance during the second half of the twentieth century. It is concerned with specific and controversial moral issues such as stem cell research, in vitro

[6] It was Cicero (106–43 BC) who translated the Greek term *ethos* with the Latin term *moralis*.

fertilization, human cloning, abortion, euthanasia, death penalty, homosexuality, environmental ethics, animals' rights, etc. Although some of these issues will be later mentioned as Case Law issues, they are too varied and vast to be introduced here. We are considering the principal stakes of Metaethics and Normative Ethics.

2.2 Metaethics

Metaethics is a term coined in the first half of the twentieth century. Its Greek etymology means 'after' or 'beyond' (*meta*) ethics. It addresses the most general moral questions, such as: Is there a specific human moral sense? Where do moral values come from? Have they an objective, absolute, universal and eternal existence, or result from social conventions, being particular, relative, and changeable? Do moral judgments and behaviors have a rational basis or are they merely expressions of emotions? Why should I be moral, if I am not compelled to act on given moral standards?

The major ethical questions are as old as philosophical inquiry and revive at times of cultural destabilization and ideological unrest. It is out of the scope of this study to give an account of the present variety of answers to them. Only the first one is next briefly approached (The epistemological question is addressed in sect. 2.4).

Aristotle (2000) wrote that "it is a characteristic of man that he alone has any sense of good and evil, of just and unjust". Being so, "when perfected, [he] is the best of animals, but, when separated from law and justice, he is the worst of all; since armed injustice is the more dangerous, and he is equipped at birth with the arms of intelligence and with moral qualities which he may use for the worst ends" (1253a, p. 12, pp. 15–16). That is why José-Luis Aranguren (1909–1996) concluded that the human being "may be defined as a moral animal, rather than as rational animal" (1990, p. 99). This is also why morality may be considered the highest cultural expression of the human species, and "the most important subject on earth" (Pojman 2000, p. 40). The *soul* of cultures are their moral values, crystallized in traditions and religious and other texts. They became "part of the mechanism of change and evolution", and "progress has been increasingly concerned with values—intellectual, aesthetic, emotional and moral" (Huxley 1946, p. 11, 14). Consequently, wrote René Descartes (1596–1650) in the Letter-Preface of his *Principes de la Philosophie* (Principles of Philosophy 1644), Ethics is "the highest and most perfect science", as it presupposes the knowledge of all others[7]. Also "Kant put morality much higher than [every other] science" (Fischl 1968, p. 315, 316).

[7] *Ainsi toute la philosophie est comme un arbre, dont les racines sont la métaphysique, le tronc est la physique, et les branches qui sortent de ce tronc sont toutes les autres sciences, qui se réduisent à trois principales, à savoir la médecine, la mécanique et la morale; j'entends la plus haute et la plus parfaite morale, qui présupposant une entière connaissance des autres sciences, est le dernier degré de la sagesse*. (www.ac-nice.fr/philo/textes/Descartes-LettrePreface.htm)

Morality has biological roots. In 1975, the entomologist Edward O. Wilson published *Sociobiology—The New Synthesis*. The term was not new, but the thing's definition was: "the systematic study of the biological basis of all social behavior". Sociobiology envisaged the unification of the biological study of social behaviors in the whole animal world, including human beings. The book gave rise to a heated controversy[8]. In 2001, John Alcock published *The Triumph of Sociobiology*. It became amply integrated into the larger field of the behavioral sciences. Its researches have diluted frontiers between the animal and the human worlds.

The term 'moral sense' was first used by the 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury (1671–1713). Following David Hume (1711–1776) and Charles Darwin (1809–1882), there is a moral sense common to human beings and other animals. Darwin believed that all in the human species had arisen from its biological evolution, including social, rational, moral and esthetical aptitudes. He wrote in Chapter III of *The descent of man, and selection in relation to sex* (1871)[9]: "The moral sense perhaps affords the best and highest distinction between man and the lower animals". Nevertheless: "Besides love and sympathy, animals exhibit other qualities which in us would be called moral; and I agree with Agassiz that dogs possess something very like a conscience". In Frans de Waal's opinion, the base of moral sense is compassion or empathy, that is, the capacity to put oneself in another's place and suffer by a kind of emotional contagion. It is common to human beings and other higher animal species, such as apes, dolphins and dogs. Even altruistic behaviors and the moral sentiment of equity may be observed in animals. "Philosophers have surrounded the sense of equity with all kinds of complex rational justifications, but it probably rests on simple sentiments. At the risk of shocking some people, I would say that these sentiments act both in some animals and in the human being" (in Journet 2012, p. 30).

As Monique Canto-Sperber and Ruwen Ogien (2004) write: "The evolutionist account is very broad and there is no reason for not being applied to the morality's institution, more precisely to the emergence, persistence and importance, in human life, of behaviors called 'moral' (concern with justice, altruism, etc.) and of moral sentiments (shame, culpability, indignation, etc.)" (p. 62, 63). In fact, neurobiological research—by means of images of the human brain's activity and comparative studies of damaged persons' brains and other experiments—proves the influence of emotions on moral judgments and decisions, which activate archaic parts of the human brain, allowing the conclusion that they originate in the instinctive social behavior of mammals. They may be a heritage of that evolution stage. There is so,

[8] "The violence of reactions against Wilson's proposals, going as far as physical aggression, […] is level to the *enjeux* some people believe to detect in the development of the human Sociobiology: at best an attempt to establish a diktat of the biological sciences over the human sciences, at worst a resurgence of the social darwinism's and eugenics' nauseous ideas. […] The debate quickly moves to the political stage. Lewontin and Gould see in the Sociobiology an intellectual manipulation aiming at bridling the social progress by protecting the interests of the higher social classes and the domination exerted by the white race" (Cézilly 2007, p. 40).

[9] www.gutenberg.org/files/34967/34967.txt

perhaps, an animal proto-moral. Anyway, between the fact of the biological roots of human morality and pretentions to reduce the latter to the former, there is a gulf that Behavioral Ethology is not prepared to nullify (so far, at least). Following Nicolas Baumard:

> There are many explanations for the emergence of morals.. […]
> The two main evolutionist theories, one continuist and other altruist, are not able to account for the morals' logic. They do not succeed in explaining why the moral sense rests on a specific logic of equity.
> […]
> My approach starts from observing that, in the human beings' life, cooperation holds a central place. […] This was the context where morals evolved, because it provided a comparative advantage to those able to it. […]
> According to this theory that I call mutualistic, morals' function is to regulate the individual interactions so that they are equitable […]. As one sees, this theory meets the intuition of the social contract philosophies […]. It may be said that morals exists because it is advantageous, in the final analysis. […]
> Human beings are by nature equipped not only with social sentiments but with a specific moral sense too. (in Journet 2012, p. 15, 17, 18, 19)

In Jean-Michel Besnier's (2004) opinion: "Only those beings able to distance themselves from situations they are confronted to are moral. […] If, in animals, there is something like a moral sense, it is not different from the vision, the tact or the smell senses, which all living beings possess" (ib. p. 82). Pascal Picq (2004) concluded: "There is, therefore, no natural morals, but rather natural foundations of morals, which are to be found in animals closer to us. We have a base to affirm that they have no morals, especially because they cannot speak about morality. This does not prevent them from having notions of right and wrong regarding others" (ib. p. 30). Patrick Tort (2004) explained:

> Tendentially, the extension of sympathy to the whole mankind and, in the final analysis, the humanity's sense towards animals, replace the old warlike conducts or dominating brutality. That is what I called, in 1983, *evolution reversed effect*, introducing into evolution, not a breach but rather a *breach effect*, deriving from applying its own law to natural selection (disappearance of the old forms). Natural selection selects then the *civilization*, which *opposes* to natural selection. (ib. p. 43)

For Yvon Quiniou (2004), Möbius strip (or ring)[10] is the metaphor of the "evolution reverse effect", explaining the progressive emergence of the human moral behavior through natural selection of social instincts (ib. p. 41). According to Waal (2004):

> We may distinguish two levels in human morals. That of moral emotions or sentiments: sympathy, empathy, reciprocity, fears of punishment. We share this level with some other animals. That of moral judgment: it is the level of good and evil, of language, of reasoning, of logic, of social consensus. Here, it appears a greater discontinuity; this is, undoubtedly, a

[10] Möbius strip is a surface with two meeting faces, forming a sole one. It is got by jointing the two ends of a strip, after twisting one of them. This effect was discovered by two mathematicians simultaneously and independently from one another, in nineteenth century—August Ferdinand Möbius (1790–1868) and Johann Benedikt Listing (1808–1882)—but lasted associated to the name of the former.

> specifically human level of morality. Let us say, to conclude, that human morals is founded in social emotions and that we find these social emotions in other animals. (ib. p. 11)

Consequently: "I do not claim that chimpanzees are full moral beings, because it seems that they are not able to reason about good and evil" (p. 31).

> Even if animals other than ourselves act in ways tantamount to moral behavior, their behavior does not necessarily rest on deliberations of the kind we engage in. It is hard to believe that animals weigh their own interests against the rights of others, that they develop a vision of the greater good of society, or that they feel lifelong guilt about something they should not have done. Members of some species may reach tacit consensus about what kind of behavior to tolerate or inhibit in their midst, but without language the principles behind such decisions cannot be conceptualized, let alone debated. (as cit. in Rolston III 2008, p. 148)

Holmes Rolston III (2008), reviewing a number of research data on what makes human beings unique, concluded that "there is nowhere in animal behavior the capacity to be reflectively ethical. After a careful survey of behavior, Helmut Kummer concludes, 'It seems at present that morality has no specific functional equivalents among our animal relatives'" (p. 140, 148).

Following Karl-Otto Apel (1988), the moral conscience originated from the need of *homo faber*—an animal without instinctive mechanisms of self-control—to take control of his transformation and destruction powers. That is why the central problem of the human morality lies "in the question of the relation of *homo sapiens* to *homo faber*, in other words, in the question of knowing whether man can compensate, by means of his ethical reason, its constituent lack of instinct" (p. 25). In Éric Weil's (1989) opinion:

> Morals is considered as the result of two primitive and irreducible tendencies: the fear of need and the desire of taking maximum profit of the work's products, by eliminating violence among men belonging to the same community; morals is the way of life of beings needing each other for their satisfactions, but also remaining potentially violent. (p. 745)

In this connection, Richard Taylor, after remarking that to say that human beings are rational or cognitive is leaving "entirely out of account the most important fact about men, that they are desiderative or conative beings as well", that "men have needs, desires, and goals", proposes an account of the origin of the distinction between good and evil. If we imagine the world as inhabited by just one sentient being, "certain things in the world do acquire the aspect of good and evil. Those things are good that this one being finds satisfying to his needs and desires, and those bad to which he reacts in the opposite way". If another similar being comes on stage, with which the former begins to interact, a conflict may arouse between the two. In order so they can peacefully cohabit, there is a need of "*rules*, using the notion of rules in an extremely broad sense that encompasses any regular and predictable behavior". Notions of right and wrong then appear. "Right is simply the adherence to rule, and wrong is violation of it" (in Pojman 2000, p. 142…152).

The neuroscientist António Damásio (2010) pointed out that the central value for every organism is survival. Also for human beings, the "biological value is the root" of all meanings of 'value' we find in a standard dictionary (p. 48). The management of life, its regulation or *homeostasis*, is "the primary function of human

brains", even though it is not "their most distinctive feature" (p. 63). There is a basic biological homeostasis, entirely automated, which began in unicellular living creatures, and an added "sociocultural homeostasis" (p. 27), with a complexity peculiar to organisms possessing "brain, mind, and consciousness" (p. 44), making them able to deliberate. The sociocultural homeostasis consists of cultural devices for life regulation such as the normative, political, economic systems, science, technology, art, etc., by means of which "consciousness optimized life regulation. The self in each conscious mind is the first representative of individual life-regulation mechanisms, the guardian and curator of biological value" (p. 183).

Damásio observes "the sameness that hallmarks the repertoire of human behavior", due to the "genomic unconscious" formed of "the colossal number of instructions that are contained in our genome and that guide the construction of the organism with the distinctive features of our phenotype, in both body proper and brain, and that further assist with the operation of the organism" (p. 278, 279). Emotions are complex programs of action, "unlearned, automated, and predictably stable", originated "in natural selection and in the resulting genomic instructions", which participate in life regulation. There are "so-called universal emotions (fear, anger, sadness, happiness, disgust, and surprise […]. Such emotions are present even in cultures that lack distinctive names for the emotions. We owe to Charles Darwin the early recognition of this universality, not only in humans but in animals" (p. 123). Social emotions are another major group of emotions.

> Examples of the main social emotions easily justify the label: *compassion, embarrassment, shame, guilt, contempt, jealousy, envy, pride, admiration*. […] The physiological operation of the social emotions is in no way different from that of other emotions. […] But there are some noteworthy differences. Most social emotions are of recent evolutionary vintage, and some may be exclusively human. This seems to be the case with admiration and with the variety of compassion that focuses on the mental and social pain of others rather than on physical pain. Many species, primates and the great apes in particular, exhibit forerunners of some social emotions. Compassion for physical predicaments, embarrassment, envy, and pride are good examples. Capuchin monkeys certainly appear to react to perceived injustices. Social emotions incorporate a number of moral principles and form a natural grounding for ethical systems. (p. 125, 126)

The need and dilemmas of human morality have frequently been literary themes. For example, *Brave New World* (1931), by Aldous Huxley (1894–1963), "highlights the paradox of freedom and welfare better than any political philosophy book" (Pojman 2000, p. xiii). *Lord of the Flies* (1954), by William Golding (1911–1993), Nobel Literature Prize in 1983, "is like a picture worth a thousand arguments about why we need morality". It is a counterpoint of *The Choral Island*, a classical work of literature for children, published by Michael Ballantyne (1825–1894) in 1858, in which human nature is described as essentially good. In *Sophie's Choice* (1978), William Styron (1925–2006) evokes the drama of having to choose between two evils, during the Holocaust.

2.3 Normative Ethics

Normative Ethics is concerned with moral principles/standards/norms on right and wrong, which are considered necessary to guide human conduct. A central question is whether there is a fundamental universal moral principle.

Following the above mentioned document of the International Theological Commission (2008)[11], every human being "discovers that he is fundamentally a moral being, capable of perceiving and of expressing the call that, as we saw, is found within all cultures: 'to do good and avoid evil'. […] This first precept is known naturally, immediately, with the practical reason, just as the principle of non-contradiction" (para. 39). There is a more precise and probably more universal principle of morality, however: it is the Golden Rule that is a principle of reciprocity and compassion, with both positive and negative formulations, namely: 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you', and 'Do not do unto others what you would not have them do unto you'. The second one is sometimes named Silver Rule. Another formulation commands: 'Treat others in the way that they wish to be treated'. In R. M. MacIver's view:

> This is the only rule that stands by itself in the light of its own reason, the only rule that can stand by itself in the naked, warring universe, in the face of the contending values of men and groups.
> What makes it so? […] It prescribes a mode of behaving, not a goal of action. On the level of goals, of *final* values, there is irreconcilable conflict. (in Pojman 2000, p. 333)

Although 'Golden Rule' is a term that appeared relatively recently—it goes back to the seventeenth century, when it was, for the first time, the subject of an entire book (*The Golden Rule* 1688) by John Goodman (1625–1690)—its command is millenary, having "appeared in the fifth century BC in all cultural and religious areas of the world" (Roy 2012, p. 12)[12]. There are Confucian, Buddhist, Hinduist, Jewish, Christian and Islamic versions of it[13]. For example, it is to be found in biblical texts (Tobit 4:15; Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 7:12; Luke 6:31, and 10:27). Tobit 4:15 reads: "Do not do to anyone what you do not want done to you".

In China, Confucius (around 551–479 BC)[14] and Mencius (372–289 BC) were the most prominent representatives of a tradition of thought going back to more than 2500 years. Confucianism is a reinterpretation of very old traditions. The teachings of Confucius consisted mainly in sayings and aphorisms, usually in reply to ques-

[11] www.pathsoflove.com/universal-ethics-natural-law.html

[12] The author informs that in the nineteenth century some people wanted to erect a monument to the Golden Rule at Central Park, New York (p. 15).

[13] www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Golden_Rule

[14] Confucius or Kong Qiu was a teacher known as Kongzi, Master Kong, and to later followers as Kong Fuzi, "our Master Kong". He was contemporary of other great moral philosopher of ancient China, Laozi, best known for his thought about the Dao ('Way' or the Supreme Principle), based on the traditional Chinese virtues of simplicity and sincerity.

tions of disciples aiming at becoming better persons, superior men. They were recorded by his students in *The Analects*"[15]. For example (15.24, and also 5.12, 12.2):

> Zigong asked, "Is there a single saying that one may put into practice all one's life?"
> The Master said, "That would be 'reciprocity': That which you do not desire, do not do to others".

According to Joseph Chan (2005):

> The Confucian ethical tradition is a system of human relationships based on virtue of *ren*. The moral ideal for each individual is the attainment of *ren*—the highest and most perfect virtue. *Ren* is a human quality, an expression of humanity, which can be manifested in a wide range of dispositions from personal reflection and critical examination of one's life to respect, concern and care for others. In dealing with oneself, *ren* requires us to 'overcome the self through observing the rites' (*The Analects*, Book XII: 1). In dealing with others, *ren* asks us to practise the art of *shu*—'do not impose on others what we ourselves do not desire' (*The Analects*, Book XII: 2), an ethics of sympathy and reciprocity similar to the Golden Rule in other traditional religions and Kantian tradition. (p. 56)

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) wrote (1751) in Preface to *Discours sur l'origine et fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men):

> … contemplating the first and most simple operations of the human soul, I think I can perceive in it two principles prior to reason, one of them deeply interesting us in our own welfare and preservation, and the other exciting a natural repugnance at seeing any other sensible being, and particularly any of our own species, suffer pain or death. (p. 46, 47)

The two principles are love of self and compassion. Love of self is not to be confused with *amour-propre*.

> Love of self is a natural feeling which leads every animal to look to its own preservation, and which, guided in man by reason and modified by compassion, creates humanity and virtue. *Amour-propre* is a purely relative and factitious feeling, which arises in the state of society, leads each individual to make more of himself than of any other, causes all the mutual damage men inflict one on another, and is the real source of the 'sense of honor'.

Compassion "is a disposition suitable to creatures so weak and subject to so many evils as we certainly are. […] Such is the pure emotion of nature, prior to all kinds of reflection! Such is the force of natural compassion, which the greatest depravity of morale has as yet hardly been able to destroy!" (p. 73, 74).

Love of self and compassion or piety are two fundamental concepts of Rousseau's thought (see Trousson and Eigeldinger 1996, p. 33, 725), but compassion is "the first relative sentiment which touches the human heart according to the order of nature", as we read in *Émile* Book IV (1762, p. 220). According to Lévi-Strauss (1963), Rousseau was the "father of Anthropology" notably for having considered compassion (*pitié*) the essential faculty of the human being that "is at the same time natural and cultural, affective and rational, animal and human".

[15] www.indiana.edu/~p374/Analects_of_Confucius_(Eno-2012).pdf



http://www.springer.com/978-3-319-03565-9

Ethics of Human Rights

Reis Monteiro, A.

2014, XVIII, 540 p., Hardcover
ISBN: 978-3-319-03565-9