Family and the value of human life, traditionally intertwined concepts, have in recent years become hotly debated political issues as “new ideas” concerning human relationships have entered the stage, seeking recognition and status as acceptable norms for society. The following contrasted statements are representative of much recent language from political debates, United Nations deliberations, opinion columns, news articles, legal briefs, and law reviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family is the natural and best social unit for the mutual benefit of husband and wife and the best environment for nurturing and rearing children.</th>
<th>Family as the basic unit of society grew out of economic convenience and has largely served as a vehicle of patriarchal suppression of women.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender is entirely biological and natural, with a special role for both men and women in the perpetuation of humankind.</td>
<td>Gender has no biological roots; rather it is socially constructed, meaning roles can and should be changed to conform to one’s desires.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage ought to be a lifelong commitment to love and serve one another, even at great personal sacrifice, with the intention of bearing and rearing children to assume similar responsibilities, thus benefiting both family members and society.</td>
<td>Marriage ought to be a contract designed to benefit each individual, having no larger social role in or obligation to society, and thus is subject to termination when it no longer meets the needs or desires of those involved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motherhood is a privileged responsibility, even a calling that, when accepted and fulfilled, brings great joy.</td>
<td>Motherhood is a stereotype, tantamount to slavery, that prevents many women from enjoying the fulfillment of equal participation in the marketplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual intimacy is the expression of an underlying commitment and love between a man and woman which should be engaged in only within the bonds of marriage (due to its unavoidable social ramifications), where partners fully accept its accompanying interpersonal, social, and intergenerational responsibilities.</td>
<td>Sexual intimacy is entirely instinctual and should be protected by an individual’s right to privacy, to be exercised between any consenting partners, uninhibited by outdated mores and without interference from or regulation by society.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pregnancy indicates a person has chosen to participate in activity that has begun a new human life, a choice with inevitable consequences that one should be willing to bear since life, once begun, morally should be respected and assisted. Thus, the child, even unborn, has a right to life.

Life is a gift, inexplicable, beyond our ability to understand or create, and should be reverenced in any form, particularly in the most vulnerable among us -- the unborn, the young, the old. Ours is to nurture and sustain life, not to play God.

Pregnancy may, at the sole prerogative of the woman, be terminated, since the child is not yet a separate life. Not being allowed an abortion constitutes “forced pregnancy,” a violation of a woman’s human rights.

Life should only be protected when it is worth living from a quality-of-life perspective. The terminally ill and suffering should be permitted the choice to “die with dignity.”

Beyond the divergence of viewpoint on any individual issue, it should be noted that each side’s position is presented with the full force of moral imperative and moral suasion, and that the views represented in each column distill into two fundamentally distinct perspectives about human morality, or the underlying moral system on which each side bases and justifies its position. Each moral system establishes a world view, a Weltanschauung, for its adherents.

It is noteworthy that what each side defines as a moral good (its “should”) is precisely what the other defines as immoral and wrong. This difference in thinking is foundational, seemingly irreconcilable. They are diametrically opposed with no middle ground. The implications of the moral systems on which we base our laws and policies are therefore matters for serious deliberation.

Background

Most readers will be well acquainted with the political battles spawned by the drastically divergent viewpoints described above. In today’s rational world, it is difficult to comprehend, first, that some have reduced such vitally important issues to simple legal proposals and formulas; second, that such proposals often disregard or disdain millennia of human tradition and experience; and third, that so many proponents of the most radical “modern” ideas seem incapable of understanding the wisdom behind long-standing traditions that value and seek to preserve the natural family. Must family and life advocates to engage in the same kind of political posturing and strategizing being carried out by those who seem to want to erase the natural family from the world stage? I hope not.

My purpose today is twofold: first, to discuss and analyze each of the two perspectives on human morality that underlie so many important current issues. I will refer to the first viewpoint as natural or relational morality and to the second as constructed morality based in moral relativism. Because I believe, as I hope to demonstrate, that a choice between these moral systems is both unavoidable and important, let me make clear that I support and advocate natural morality as the better choice.

My second purpose is to describe how a better understanding of the difference between these two moral systems can aid each of us in our efforts to preserve the natural family and human life. Specifically, I will address what we can do as parents, what we can do as concerned citizens of a community, what we can do as scholars, especially in the social
sciences, and what we can do as government officials to make a positive difference for the families of the world.

**Discussion and Analysis: Two Mutually Exclusive Moral Systems**

Let me bring this discussion more into focus by relating two stories, one a personal account and reflections from my own experience, and one describing a story I read in the newspaper several years ago.

Each of us has multiple roles in life. I am an American citizen; a husband; a father to eight wonderful children; a grandfather; a son; a son-in-law; a lawyer; a trained social scientist; a teacher; a friend; an employee; a co-worker; and as of today, a speaker and acquaintance to all of you. To some people, I will never be more than someone they passed on the highway, to others even less. To others, I will have frequent interactions for a period of time, only to have life take us in different directions, never again to cross paths, while a few will become lifelong friends. To my mother and sisters, my early family life established permanent ties, and I still sometimes long to talk with my father, who passed away more than 40 years ago. To one person, my wife, I have committed everything I am or ever hope to be. To our children, my wife and I have given life itself, as well as love, sustenance, security, comfort, and training in preparation for their own paths through life.

It was not difficult to become a son and brother. It happened with no effort on my part. But as I have matured I have noticed a direct, seemingly mathematical relationship between the closeness of a human relationship and the amount of effort involved in keeping it healthy; the closer the relationship, the more effort and sacrifice it seems to take. I can meet any obligation I may have to the person I pass on the highway by simply staying out of her way and obeying the traffic rules. To my co-workers, I can maintain a friendly, cooperative relationship by fulfilling my responsibilities and assignments in a pleasant manner. But maintaining happy family relationships has required a quantum leap in relational commitment and emotional work, i.e. in the level of personal responsibility felt.

Marriage first brought this concept into focus for me. It took a lot of effort, years really, to prepare myself for marriage, and then to persuade my wife to marry me. It continues to require daily effort and sacrifice (by both of us) for our marriage to remain joyful, vibrant, and alive. But of all the relationships in which I have ever engaged, it is parenthood that has been the most daunting.

The mystery, awe, and complete wonder of holding a newborn son or daughter soon gave way to a palpable feeling of responsibility to direct a new life and assist it toward maturity (physical, emotional, and spiritual), to guide each child from a position of complete dependence toward eventual responsible adulthood. Each child seemed a precious gift, and with each one the weight of responsibility grew. Each son or daughter had a life stretching out ahead, and no two were alike in personality, talents, interests, or temperament. How were my wife and I supposed to prepare them? What should we teach? How should we teach it?

**Natural/Relational Morality**

Interestingly, while my wife and I have tried many approaches to some parts of childrearing, such as how to discipline our children or what kind of schooling to arrange, my 32 years as a father have taught me that moral training is unavoidable. The simple acts of
daily life and my personal example of strengths and weaknesses, observed closely by every child, provide a natural pathway for their discoveries of how to discern and respond or ignore the true feelings and needs of others. Two different fathers, for example, may decide to teach their sons to help their mothers with chores. One father may do so by establishing strict rules about when chores are done and what punishments are inflicted when the son forgets or avoids his work. The other father may wash dishes with his son on a regular basis, making sure to mention how much work the boy’s mother does daily on behalf of the family and how every family member should feel a duty to share in the work of the home. Both sons would grow up being helpful to their mothers. But their motivations would likely differ considerably as would their ability to relate to their mothers’ (and others’) needs.

Like many parents, I have been both sons and both fathers in this little example. I have learned from repeated personal experience that ultimately joy flows from relationships and that most things are not as enjoyable alone as they are when shared with another. Fatherhood has taught me that successful parenting only happens when I assume responsibility for my own actions and their influence on my children. Actions that deepen one’s relationships with others are good and right, while actions which are destructive to relationships or that alienate a person from others are bad or wrong. Morality, in other words, fundamentally involves how I treat other people and whether I accept responsibility for the effects of my choices on others’ lives. I want you to keep this moral perspective in mind as I continue. I will refer to it as natural or relational morality.

Next I would like to summarize a newspaper account I read some years ago to describe another aspect of natural/relational morality. A young Hispanic family had gone for a stroll together one evening on a walking path along a golf course adjacent to a swamp in Florida. During their peaceful stroll, an alligator suddenly lunged from the tall grass at the side of the walkway, grabbed their 5-year-old son in its jaws, and began dragging him into the water. Instantly, reflexively, the boy’s mother leaped onto the alligator, fought the animal’s mouth open, and released her son. The alligator, probably in shock, fled into the swamp while the mother and son struggled back to dry ground. The boy was injured, but safe.

Let’s examine this mother’s stunningly courageous act. The American alligator is a cousin to the South American caiman and the African crocodile, perhaps somewhat smaller than the largest Australian crocodiles. It is a dangerous creature; its jaws can end a person’s life in a matter of seconds. Why did this mother do what she did? It was certainly not in her self-interest to throw herself at the alligator.

To my knowledge, no law has ever required anyone to risk life or limb to assist a person in peril when to do so would place oneself in danger. That is, no law established by parliaments or legislatures. This mother did not risk her life out of a feeling of duty or even of personal responsibility. She acted because she cared about her son, and not in an abstract way. The attack on the boy was nothing less than an attack on her. I strongly suspect that in her mind she experienced no clear moment of decision; rather her action was instinctive, irresistible, because of the emotional bond of care and love that existed between her and her son. Her action rises above the adjective “moral”; it demonstrates the ultimate end toward which natural morality points us – caring about others, loving another as part of ourselves.

Dorothy Lee, an anthropologist who studied numerous indigenous American and Polynesian cultures, observed a social conception she called the “open self” that contrasted with rather than the closed, separate “self” usually thought of in Western societies. Lee offers the following personal example to illustrate this difference.
When I was in my teens, I was tortured by a question which I think would never have disturbed the Wintu or the Arapesh or the Oglala. If I dashed out to save a child from death or maiming at the risk of my own life, would I be doing it for the child’s sake or for my sake? Would my act be altruistic or selfish? . . . Would I be saving his life so that he could enjoy it, or only because I could not bear to live with myself if I did not try to save him? This question, of course, presupposed a conception of the self as closed, in limited, purposive interaction.

In a society where relatedness stems from the premise of the open self, such a question would be nonsense. In such societies, though the self and the other are differentiated, they are not mutually exclusive. The self contains some of the other, participates in the other, and is in part contained within the other. By this I do not mean what usually goes under the name of empathy. I mean rather that where such a concept of the self is operative, self-interest and other-interest are not clearly distinguished; so that what I do for my own good is necessarily also good for my unit, the surround, whether this is my family, my village, my tribe . . . . (Lee, pp. 11-12).

What Lee describes as the “open self” is a person who does not perceive himself in any way as a truly separate person. Rather, he perceives his own actions in the context of his societal relationships and perceives another’s needs, pains, and joys as his own. In cultures where this conception of personhood is lived, there is no conception of “private behavior” because all of one’s actions are perceived as affecting other people, even in relatively minor matters. Acting from a sense of responsibility toward others is inseparable from and fully consonant with acting in one’s own best self-interest because one is inherently part of those others. Similarly, developing one’s own skills and talents is emphasized, not to distinguish oneself from others, but to improve one’s contributions to the group. Lee points out that entire societies and cultures can be premised on this foundational conception of social relatedness.

Natural or relational morality begins with a premise of responsibility for one’s decisions and choices in their effects on other people, even to the point of living in a perceived oneness with others, doing no intentional harm to anyone, and beyond this and ideally, seeking to be of assistance and benefit to others. Such behavior equates to becoming one’s best (moral) self. This view assumes that there are objective ideals to strive for in life and that we can be held accountable for our choices. It perceives these principles as being established by nature itself, with natural consequences for their violation. This idea was succinctly expressed by Cecil B. DeMille, for example, who referred to moral law in these words: “It is impossible for us to break the law. We can only break ourselves against the law.”

It is instructive to reflect that every major world religion, those on which successful, long-term cultures have been based, urge people toward the higher levels of natural morality, i.e. toward accepting greater and greater responsibility for the consequences of one’s actions toward others. Christianity teaches, “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them” (Matthew 7:12), and also that each should “love thy neighbor as thyself” (Matthew 19:19), a teaching drawn from Judaism (Leviticus 19:18). Confucianism teaches, “What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others” (Analects of Confucius 15:23). Islam teaches, “Not one of you is a believer until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself” (Forty Hadith of an-Nawawi 13). Jainism teaches, “Aman should

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wander about treating all creatures as he himself would be treated” (Sutrakritanga 1.11.33). Hinduism teaches, “This is the sum of duty: do naught unto others which would cause you pain if done to you” (Mahabharata 5:1517). Judaism teaches, “What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow man” (Talmud, Shabbat 31a). Buddhism teaches, “Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful” (Udanavarga 5:18). Zoroastrianism teaches, “That nature only is good when it shall not do unto another whatever is not good for its own self” (Dadistan-i Dinik 94:5). Bahai teaches, “Blessed is he who preferreth his brother before himself” (Tablets of Baha’u’llah 71:26). And Sikism teaches, “Don’t create enmity with anyone as God is within everyone” (Guru Arjan Dev 259, Guru Granth Sahib).

A beautifully concise summary of this attitude toward life and family (which reflects natural morality) is contained in this credo of the Odawa Tribe of Native Americans in the State of Michigan, United States. “The Odawa will reach out to the next seven generations by holding to cultural values of Wisdom, Love, Respect, Bravery, Honesty, Humility and Truth. We will utilize our tribal assets to provide the necessary tools to become successful, hard-working community members who proudly represent our culture. With these virtues we will move the tribe forward” (emphasis added). The Odawa recognize that societal longevity depends on their society’s moral qualities and accept their obligation to live now on behalf of the next seven generations by committing themselves to seven virtues, all presuming personal ability to make right choices—the virtues that together define the essence of good in a system based on natural morality. (Little Traverse Bay – Odawa).

This view of morality—that potentially all of our individual actions can be good or bad, and that by striving to eliminate those words, actions, and even thoughts that might even tend to harm another we will diminish harsh feelings and enmity between ourselves and others—has an amazingly long and successful history. While religion has certainly encouraged and promoted the teachings of natural morality, I would argue that natural morality is not simply an outgrowth of religion, but rather a fundamental human truth these religions have recognized. Many people who do not espouse organized religion believe that nature is governed by laws and that because human beings are biologically related and have the capacity to reason, they must live by a “sixth sense,” conscience, that recognizes which actions work with or against natural harmony in nature.

**Constructed Morality**

I would assume that most of us here today recognize some form of natural/relational morality at work in our own lives and that we generally try to abide by its principles. However, we have also lived long enough to recognize that promoting this view of good and bad, right and wrong, does not guarantee peace in the world or even solve abuses and inequities within families. Not everyone lives it; not everyone listens to or obeys the natural call of conscience, so human problems persist.

Sometimes we (governments, parents, etc.) need to step in. We can’t wait for natural consequences to teach all the lessons. Rules, laws, and their enforcement become necessary.

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2 I am indebted for most of this collection of religious citations to remarks made by Elder Russell M. Nelson to the International Scientific and Practical Conference on “Religious Freedom: Transition and Globalization” in Kiev, Ukraine, 27 May 2004. http://www.lds.org/newsroom/voice/display/1,18255,5004-1-121,00.html (last accessed October 6, 2004.) A similar collection is found in the appendix to C. S. Lewis’ *The Abolition of Man*, where Lewis refers to this uniform theme in human history as being consistent with the *Tao* of nature.
for the general good. Such circumstances have sometimes given rise to a second view of morality, one both prevalent and popular today, which I have designated relative or constructed morality. This conception of right and wrong depends on reason and goodwill and holds that any civilized group of people can meet, discuss, and decide on a course of action to solve society’s problems. In fact, they can determine – by making laws – what actions will be lawful (right) and which will be unlawful (wrong).

In contrast to the human relational foundation for natural/relational morality, this second moral perspective is premised on the express separateness and individuality of people. Those who espouse this alternative version of moral thinking tend to deny the existence of generally applicable objective ideals apart from those on which they construct their moral positions, such as “justice” or “equality.” They reject the idea of a universal “natural” or true morality. They argue instead that, aside from gross crimes and denials of the rights of others, all people should be able to choose their own course according to their own preferences without any moral taint or disapproval. They appeal to ideals of justice or fairness or tolerance to say that not only are all people created equal, but that all chosen lifestyles are of equal value and should be respected equally before the law. Where natural morality asserts that moral right and wrong exist independent of enacted law, this constructed morality says right and wrong exist only as they are established in law, and that as long as an activity is legal, there is an absolute right to it.

In recent years some have advanced this latter view of morality as more enlightened, more just and fair, and as holding a better promise for world peace. The basic premise of this second view of morality is that right and wrong are arbitrary and that there are no absolute adverse consequences to such decisions. The important thing, we are told, is that we all just agree and then follow the enacted law.

This basic difference in moral origin and structure accounts for the opposite outcomes of the two moralities on such fundamental issues as life, sex, marriage, abortion, and a plethora of related issues. Where natural morality says there are higher standards of moral behavior than merely the minimum established in law, constructed morality denies this. In fact it is this very premise of natural morality that causes it to run afoul of the principles of this constructed morality, and it is the proposition that all legal behaviors are of equal worth and value that causes constructed morality to fail the test of natural morality.

In its application, a constructed morality will have certain earmarks or characteristics by which it can be recognized: 1- It will appropriate and redefine common words, distorting them to its purposes but retaining their force of moral suasion; 2- It will openly oppose and challenge traditional norms and values; and 3- It will seek to impose its moral perspective through substantive changes in law, deconstructing or disabling many aspects of natural morality in the process. A few examples of each of these characteristics will help to clarify my points.

**Redefining Terms**

One of the most familiar signs of constructed morality is the alteration of familiar terminology to uses that support the new perspective. “Tolerance,” for example, is a well-known and respected principle. The traditional definition of tolerance is “a fair, objective, and permissive attitude toward opinions and practices that differ from one's own” (Unabridgeddictionary.com) or “to permit as something not wholly approved of; to suffer; to
endure” (Black’s Law Dictionary, rev. 4th edition). It is taken from the Latin “toleratus,” “to endure, to put up with” (Webster’s Third New International Dictionary, unabridged, 1993). It did not require approval of the behavior in question, only “tolerance,” “putting up” with it. The common (and novel) recent use of the word “tolerance” by advocates of constructed morality, however, redefines tolerance as requiring acceptance of the view that all values and lifestyles are inherently equal. Anyone who disagrees is labeled “intolerant” and deemed therefore immoral by that standard.

Other words that receive similar redefining treatment (and to similar effect) include “justice,” “equality,” “monogamy,” “phobia,” “discrimination,” and even the lofty concept of “human rights.” Where law based in natural morality has traditionally defined justice and equality as “equal before the law,” advocates of constructed morality often advocate for “equal outcomes for all.” Where monogamy has traditionally meant absolute fidelity (sexual exclusivity) with one’s spouse, advocates of constructed morality have now begun using the term to describe homosexual relationships that are more or less permanent even though non-exclusive. The consistent theme with the modifications to all of these terms is the underlying constructed moral principle that all preferences and behaviors are equally valid and that it is wrong to deny this basic principle.

Opposition to Natural Morality

As noted earlier, advocates of constructed morality often stand in direct opposition to the principles of natural morality. Attempts to enact laws against “hate speech” and to enforce them against people who speak out against the practices of homosexuality or pedophilia, for example, seek legal recognition of this artificial, constructed morality, and simultaneously seek to use the law to silence those who recognize and seek to promote natural morality. Use of the misnomer “homophobia” as an epithetic label provides another such example.

The end result of laws compelling “tolerance,” is that law is then perceived as condoning some of the worst examples of hedonism, such as sexual licentiousness, particularly where tolerance is redefined as above. According to this view, all legal choices are equally good and equally worth protecting—except for the choice of calling some behaviors immoral even though they are entirely legal. This view of morality therefore sets itself in direct opposition to the idea of natural law, for the major evil it seems to focus on and seeks to eliminate is the view of natural morality that people should discriminate among choices of behavior and exercise their human agency to choose the higher moral path.

Enforcement through Law

Where law is premised on notions of natural morality, the law typically only prohibits the worst forms of hedonistic conduct, such as murder, rape, theft and pedophilia, and it tolerates (through non-prohibition) a wide range of behaviors that are still harmful to other people. Currently in Utah, New York, and in other places, smoking indoors is generally prohibited, for example, and reckless driving is prohibited even though no actual harm might be done in a given instance. My religious faith considers the consumption of any alcoholic beverage to be wrong and immoral. Some other faiths consider only excessive, irresponsible drinking to be sinful, but the law has a far lower standard. Alcohol is regulated as to age of legal consumer, but only the most highly dangerous alcoholic beverages, such as absinthe, are actually illegal to buy, sell, or produce in the United States, France, and several other countries. Under such a system, it is recognized that there is a range of immoral behaviors against which
the law is not employed to prohibit until some unacceptable threshold of harm or potential harm is crossed.

Relative or constructed morality, on the other hand, relies on secular law not only to enforce norms of conduct, but to create and define what is right and what is wrong. Its premise is that governments can define and create legal rights as they wish (with no “natural” moral guide), and then grant those rights to the people. Among other of its implications, it presupposes, therefore, that people are subservient to their government, rather than vice versa. ³

More significantly, when we consider the antipathy that this constructed morality holds for natural morality and the potential for combining this constructed morality with the force of secular law and government, the combination does not bode well for such principles as freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and even freedom of assembly. Law, rather than only imposing a moral floor on acceptable individual morality, might very well be expected to prohibit or at least restrict the free expression and advocacy of natural morality, while also actually protecting behaviors that are ultimately destructive to society. Government, after all, is just a group of people, fallible people, with a potentially dangerous measure of power.

The danger to these historic freedoms is reflected in the fact that over time, the traditional family and religion, respectively the sanctuary and purveyor of natural law morality, have often been the express targets of artificially constructed moralities. As we note the modern efforts to deconstruct the traditional family, it is difficult to conclude that history is not repeating itself in this regard. As proponents of same-gender marriage, for example, paradoxically promote normlessness as the norm, this constructed morality comes to eliminate and replace procreative marriage, which is a societal norm in a natural morality society. It will not affect my own established marriage, but it very well may dilute, even vitiate, the idea of marriage and life-long commitment to family in my children’s and grandchildren’s generations, with sad and likely tragic consequences.

**The Choice Between Opposing Moral Directions**

It would be easy to assume, as much political discussion does, that natural law is “religious” at base and the other is not; in other words, that I am simply contrasting a religious point of view with a secular one. I contest this point. As discussed earlier, the world’s great religions, all of them, do indeed reflect and urge compliance with natural morality. What is noteworthy here is not that there are so many differences among these faith traditions, but that there is such an amazing amount of consistency in their descriptions of the moral life. Yet while most of the world’s religions espouse the ideas and ideals of natural morality, so do many people who claim no religious faith or affiliation—people who sense that human beings share a kinship by virtue of their biological relatedness and their ability to reason. There is an inherent rationality to altruism as the voluntary way to the “world peace” so many espouse, rather than having peace “enforced” upon them. For example, John Humphrey, the first

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³ Of course, a contrasting view of the relationship between the people and the government can be found in the Declaration of Independence of the United States, which asserts that people are “endowed” with certain rights “by their Creator.” The people grant rights to the government, a government of “limited powers” vis-à-vis its people – as Abraham Lincoln said, “government of the people, by the people, and for the people.” This system of government is premised on the idea that there is good and evil in humankind, that evil is to be checked, and that because government is such an overwhelmingly powerful force in society, a force controlled by fallible human beings who sometimes are inclined to enforce their ideas of right and wrong on others, the power of government must be designed to be the servant of the people.
Director of the United Nations Division of Human Rights, noted: “There is something, which we have learned to call the Christian ethic . . . without which life is mean and egotistical . . . What we need is something like the Christian morality without the tommyrot.” (FitzGibbon, 2007, at 117, n. 21). James Q. Wilson, to take but one more example, is not alone in recognizing that conscience, a sense of obligation and concern for others, is a natural part of our human heritage, a “sixth sense” quite literally, which at worst moderates our baser inclinations and at best ennobles us.

Any government that assumes to itself the authority to define right and wrong and to then enforce that definition through law runs a potential danger of defining natural right as wrong and natural wrong as right. If the world religions are correct in saying that the eventual consequences of true wrong are severe and unavoidable, the citizens of such a country would eventually suffer the consequences of breaking natural law, even though (or perhaps in part because) their law had declared natural wrong to be legally right. If those who recognize a basic human truth in natural morality are correct that the consequences of increasing levels of hedonism in society are potentially and eventually disastrous to cultures and civilization, then any country would do well to closely examine not only its own legislation but also its position on many “human rights” issues now being urged upon them by various interest groups and even agencies of the United Nations. My recommendation is that countries and international organizations expressly adopt a policy which recognizes natural morality as both the moral foundation for its laws and the basis for interpretation of those laws. Otherwise, in one generation or two, a country choosing otherwise may well wish it had done so.

**What We Can Do as Parents**

For parents, this means that more is at stake than choosing a method of childrearing—disciplining, etc. If we as parents do not purposely choose a moral philosophy to teach our children, we may be allowing the schools and/or the political climate to do so for us. The family is the first and the most natural training ground for natural/relational morality, but this conception of morality is largely neglected or ignored in the dominant academic and popular theories of child rearing, at least in the United States.

**What We Can Do as Concerned Citizens**

Moral education is often equated with rules of behavior, religious teachings about right and wrong, or generally-accepted ethical thinking about justice and fairness. I point out that such rules, teachings, and ethical thinking can be based on one of two conceptions of morality: a morality that is constructed by humans reasoning together for the good of the whole (constructed/relative morality), or a morality found in the nature of being human, where each person feels the “call” of another person’s needs and then chooses whether to respond (natural/relational morality), the choice being fundamentally a moral decision.

**What We Can Do as Social Scientists**

For social scientists and other scholars, this means that, in order to understand the truth of a family issue, personal moral philosophy should be considered as a variable, not ignored or simply assumed as a given. Only then will we be able to compare the results of employing
radically different approaches to social norms. Moral training for children and adolescents lacks needed support from academia because social scientists find it difficult to define a moral education, much less measure or assess its results. I fear that there is great truth in the following description of the methodology and results of much of our social science: “Casting their loosely-woven conceptual nets at random into a sea of plankton-sized data, it is not surprising that the nets returned to the boat with little more than the occasional red herring” (Tapper, 1990, p. 105). Morality may well be the metaphorical plankton that fuels our societies’ lives.

Social scientists may find the subject of morality more accessible if they first recognize the difference between constructed/relative morality and natural/relational morality, then treat these opposing approaches to morality as variables in their research and compare them, rather than as simple assumptions behind it.

What We Can Do as Government Representatives

Once we perceive that law can be based either on natural morality (law consistent with what C. S. Lewis called “the Tao of nature”) or on an artificially constructed morality (such as the current “moral relativism”), then we can also perceive that a choice between these two moralities is unavoidable because there is no neutral ground, no “amorality” in the sense described, on which to stand. The two systems are fundamentally incompatible. A nation’s choice between these two systems will eventually have dramatically different effects on the long-term prosperity, stability, security, and even the freedom of its citizens. It is therefore better for a country to make a conscious and informed choice of the moral system on which its laws are constructed, rather than to adopt the wrong one by default or from international “peer pressure.”

Human rights are inseparable from the moral considerations (duties) associated with their exercise. While respect should be accorded every person, for example, dignity must be earned through honorable, moral life choices. Individuals, moreover, can and must be held accountable for their actions.

For government officials and representatives, this means that in making decisions concerning the well-being of their people, especially their families, they must realize that siding with one or the other of these voices on social issues is a choice between distinct moral systems which will yield very different results. Government leaders should take the time to become informed about the nature of this choice and what it means. Until sound social science demonstrates otherwise, which I seriously doubt it will, the safe course for our societies is natural morality. History has demonstrated too many disasters based in radical constructed moralities. Moral training for children and youth also lacks needed support from policymakers who find themselves immersed in political disagreements over the nature and content of a moral education. Again, recognition of the difference between constructed/relative morality and natural/relational morality may help clarify for policymakers that no neutral ground exists, and a wise and informed choice between them is therefore imperative. In making this choice, I can recommend no better summary of the import of the correct choice than that offered by C. S. Lewis:

This thing which I have called for convenience the Tao, and which others may call Natural Law or Traditional Morality or the First principles of Practical Reason or the First Platitudes [or “natural
morality”), is not one among a series of possible systems of value. It is the sole source of all value judgements. . . . There has never been, and never will be, a radically new judgement of value in the history of the world. What purport to be new systems or (as they now call them) ‘ideologies’, all consist of fragments from the Tao itself, arbitrarily wrenched from their context in the whole and then swollen to madness in their isolation, yet still owing to the Tao and to it alone such validity as they possess [e.g. modern ‘tolerance’ – auth.]. . . . The rebellion of new ideologies against the Tao is a rebellion of the branches against the tree. (Lewis, pp. 43-44)

Conclusion

We often hear in modern political discourse that no single value system should be imposed through law on people who do not believe in that value system. This statement, however, is itself a value statement, one based in a rationally constructed conception of morality. Words like “should not” indicate that a moral judgment, an assumption of rightness or wrongness, is being expressed from within some system of moral philosophy. Thus, the adoption of laws that supposedly equate virtually all value systems or justify virtually all human behaviors, is just as much an imposition of values on those who may have valid reasons to disagree as is a system that specifies criteria for right and wrong and accordingly prizes some conduct, tolerates others, and prohibits still others.

When we stop to realize that the very purpose of law is to enforce some system of beliefs concerning basic moral questions such as honesty, justice, fairness, theft, murder, mayhem, and the appropriate context for human sexuality, it soon becomes apparent that a country’s choice of a moral system on which to base its laws is of crucial importance and should be made consciously, explicitly, and above all, correctly. If, for example, a homosexual relationship or a non-marital cohabiting relationship must, under law, be given equal status with a committed married relationship of man and wife, without regard, for example, for the effects on children and future society, or if a natural stage of everyone’s individual life (the fetal stage after fertilization but before birth) is considered to be of no value if his or her mother does not want the child, then that law overlooks fundamental truths of nature, disregards natural morality and respect for human life, and is premised on an artificial, constructed morality.

Recognizing constructed moralities, those that justify some form of inherently harmful behavior or ignore basic facts of nature, should be half of the formula for combating them. As they say in Germany, “Die richtige Frage ist halbe Antwort” (The right question is half of the answer.) The other half is committed action to implement laws and policies that rest and rely on the truths of nature. I hope by this paper to have assisted you on the first half; I implore you, on behalf of the people of your countries, to take action on the second half.
Bibliography


