ethnicity: "The religious Jew is more likely to harbor prejudice and less likely to respect the political rights of Arabs [than the nonreligious Jews]." See Charles S. Liebman, "Religion and Democracy in Israel," in Ehud Sprinzak and Larry Diamond (eds.), *Israeli Democracy under Stress* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1993), pp. 273-92, quotations from pp. 277-8 and 291. In the same volume, see also the Introduction by the editors, pp. 1-20, and the article by Yaron Ezrahi, "Democratic Politics and Culture in Modern Israel: Recent Trends," pp. 255-72.

[70] Liebman, "religion and Democracy in Israel," pp. 284-5.

[71] See Suzanne Hoeber Rudolph, "The New Courage: An Essay on Gandhi's Psychology," *World Politics* (Oct. 1963), pp. 98-117, quotation from p. 114.

[72] For Gandhi's mobilization of satyagraha and other religious symbols for modern democratic purposes, see Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, *The Modernity of Tradition: Political Development in India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967). For Gandhi's overall philosophy of conflict, see Joan Bordurant, *The Conquest of Violence: Gandhi's Philosophy of Conflict* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958).

[73] For a critical analysis of the BJP and the RSS, see Tapan Bosu *et al.*, *Khaki Shorts and The Saffron Flags: A Critique of the Hindu Right* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1993). For a discussion of the new crisis of Indian secularism in the post-Nehruvian world and the rise of Hindu fundamentalism that contributed to the 1992 demolition of the Babri Mosque, see Stanley J. Tambiah, "The Crisis of Secularism in India," and Amartya Sen, "Secularism and its Discontents," both in Bhargava (ed.), *Secularism and Its Critics*, pp. 418-53, pp. 454-85.

[74] For the history of the establishment of churches in America and for debates over the First Amendment, see A. J. Reichley, *Religion in American Public Life* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1985), pp. 53-167.

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13. ON SELF-EVIDENT TRUTHS

Amitai Etzioni

At some point we may all agree that the criticism of relativism has been done to perfection, in the future we will dedicate to it not more than ten percent of our attention and devote much more energy to what will replace it. Both the old-fashioned form and the multicultural form of relativism are so full of flaws, that we all have a field day pointing them out, but the time *is* ripe to focus on what, for me at least, is the more difficult question: what is going to replace relativism? What are moral judgments that lay universal claims going to be based on? Are there some basic truths and how may we establish or find these?

Many raise their eyebrows at the very mention of such a project. Just to give some succor to those who have not given up, first some anecdotes. I am told that Lawrence Kohlberg asked his class: "If one can tell who in the room is a more moral person than another?" When all the students–relativist they were to a man–said surely not, Larry said, "I'm going to fail anybody who takes that position." The students reponded like one person: "Unfair! Unfair!" Suddenly they all found a shared and solid, to them uncontested, standard to judge by.

Still, by way of introduction, *in* my favorite New Yorker cartoon Moses comes down from Mount Sinai with the tablets and he's talking to the crowd. Someone from the crowd says something. Moses responds, saying well, you know, it really is etched in stone....

I turn next to review several suggestions that have been made as to where we shall find universal principles, or solid truth, on which to base our judgments. Fair warning: none of them quite cut it. But some, most likely in combination, may move us in the right direction. Some social scientists have suggested that certain values are adhered to by all societies and in all cultures. For instance, the Golden Rule

appears in one form or another in all cultures. And they suggest that if you want to break out of cultural relativism, you may rely on what we all agree on, we all share.

On closer examination we find that this base is a very thin one indeed. One of the few things all or at least most cultures agree on is that in revenge killing you should not kill more than eight people. One may think that killing in general is something we find morally unacceptable. Actually in many cultures people abhor killing members of their own community (unless they've committed certain crimes, a category that is expanded to include political and religious heresy), but have few reservations about killing non-members (although sometimes they maintain their taboo against killing human beings by defining non-members as subhuman, the way the Nazis did for those not Aryans).

Moreover, as I see it, consensus is a very thin reed to rely on. Actually, it's no reed at all. All you have to think about is, what if Rhode Island or Liechtenstein refuses to participate, that's the end of consensus. That is are we willing to grant any small state a veto power of what we consider moral, or will we go by what the majority considers moral. Majority provides a political out ground for decisions that must be made in face of diverse positions but no one claims or at least should claim what the majority rule is a moral truth. Another way I think that we should not want to go, although it's fashionable in some quarters these days, is to say its all in our genes. If we have altruistic genes or some other biological setup which we all share and therefore a secure basis for our morality. First of all, if there is an altruistic gene, I don't know of anyone who has ever seen it x-rayed or analyzed its DNA. Second, scholars who try to draw on biology for moral truths face the fact that our genes change very slowly while our moral culture does not. So, if you read Fukuyama's book, *The Great Disruption*, in the first half of the book he has very, very good data that shows that our moral order deteriorated after the 1960s. How it fell apart, sometimes over four years, an explosion of

drug abuse, teen pregnancies and violent crimes. In the second half of the book he explains how our ethics are driven by biology. What is missing in the middle between some of us is how our biology changed in the 1960s. And so there are two developments here. One runs very fast and one barely moves at all. I just cannot see how one can explain a rapidly changing factor with a barely mutable one, i.e. biology, for me, this doesn't get us very far, not far enough at all.

There is a foundation that provides a very solid answer, but unfortunately-and I mean this seriously-it is not available to all of us, and that is religion. For people who are devout, God or their religion gives them a solid foundation on which to rest their moral truths; God demands this, the Bible says that, these beliefs provide strong anchoring points. It doesn't mean that there is no room for discussion or interpretation, but it gives them a starting point not readily available to the secular thinkers. For those of us for which religion does not provide the kind of answer I'm looking for, where is it to be found? What secular principles may guide us in our moral judgments?

I visited father Richard Neuhaus, and he pointed out how good is religion for your mental hygiene. I teased him a bit saying "Are you telling me I should be religious for utilitarian reasons? Because it is beneficial?" He responded with a line that has stayed with me for a very long time: "For those who don't have the revelation, you give reason. Think about that. It's a very powerful line. Those of us who have a religious revelation of the truth, can then add reason, but those who haven't are left bereft looking."

One may say if you cannot find a foundation in worldwide consensus or in religion, you can find the answer in the Constitution (indeed some say that it is God given). Thus when we face a clash between two rights or the common good and a right, we draw on the values that are ensconced in our constitution, and we can rely on it for guidance. (As with religious texts, it is subject to interpretation.) The constitution gets us part of the way. When we ask why we

should allow, for instance, freedom of speech to trump some concerns for privacy, we are in effect saying that we value speech higher, and we base this ranking on values we invested in the constitution. And so on and on.

At the same time, there is no question that we view the Constitution itself critically, and the various interpretations given to it by the Supreme Court. Whether we debate vouchers or the death penalty or affirmative action–we do not simply accept the values expressed in constitutional terms as ultimate, uncontested truth. That is, we have a sense of higher criteria, on which we draw when we assess that moral standing, the legitimacy, of various phrases of the constitution (for instance, dismiss out of hand it references to non-Europeans as people as a lower standing), and court rulings. We sense a higher truth.

Nor can we judge other cultures by our Constitution. In search for a ground for cross-cultural, indeed global, judgments many turn to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Indeed for some, and not only or even mainly in the US, it has acquired somewhat of the respect the Constitution has for Americans. And there are other sources and references for a growing notion that human rights are universal, all people have them. Still this declaration too is judged by some higher criteria. Thus, we wonder if people indeed have socio-economic rights, and whether they deserve the same standing as legal-political rights, drawing on divergent concepts of equality (and fairness). And a communitarian–like myself–faults the Declaration for its failure to recognize that people who command rights must also assume responsibilities–drawing on the communitarian concept of the essential balance between autonomy and social order.

A rather different attempt to find a solid basis for moral judgments might be called proceduralism. Habermas, at least in some of his writing, provides such an approach. Accordingly, if you conduct the right kind of discourse–follow what might be called the

Roberts Rules of moral conversations–the outcome is *Kosher*. Here one must distinguish between political and societal discourse. The first kind can be settled by procedure; Voting is often used, legitimately, to settle political differences. But first of all, here the question is not what is right in some moral sense but what course of action the members of a polity will be willing to accept in face of differences. Voting and other such procedural treatments thus have a great particular merit and they reflect the legitimacy of the procedure, but not the moral standing of the outcome.

Thus, welfare reforms introduced in the US and UK in the 1990s, which cut off all benefits–including food stamps and health care–after a given period, a politically legitimate policy (because it was duly enacted, after extensive hearings and votes by both chambers and so on), but morally unappealing. My moral basis is that every person is to be treated as if they have a basic human worth, and they need not do anything for us to respect it. After all we provide even convicted terrorists and serial killers with a roof over their head, clothing, three meals a day and basic health care. I see no reason why welfare clients should be treated more poorly [*sic.*]. That is, I bring a substantive value to bear on political positions that resulted from legitimate procedures. It is not enough for them to have been arrived at legitimately for us to accept them as moral. But how are the values we bring to bear to be assessed? The one at hand–basic human worth of all–happens to be mine, but you may subscribe to another, or do I have some foundation on which I can build in order to suggest that no one can refuse to hear its claim, deny its validity?

Proceduralists may suggest that their approach is not limited to political matters but the moral judgments in general. In the social realm, one must distinguish between two rather different discourse, those of rational deliberations and moral dialogues. I have written extensively on the difference and here can only very briefly outline it. Rational deliberations are cool, based on information and logic. Moral dialogues are passionate, and engage our values.

Proceduralists favor rational deliberations because they fear that moral dialogues will turn into cultural wars and these into shooting wars. And that moral dialogues cannot be settled without some substantive moral principles, while rational deliberations can be resolved on the basis of facts and logic all can see. (Those who do not, are dismissed as ir-rational.) I suggest that moral dialogues can also be considered, and hence one can work to ensure that they will not lead to violent conflict, and that they can lead to new shared moral understandings. In this way we developed a new moral obligation to the environment we did not have in the 1950s, and agreed that we ought to change the relationship among the races, and between men and women, among many others. (Currently we are engaged in amoral dialogue about the death penalty and gay marriages and are moving toward closure). But the fact that there are substantive moral dialogues and that while they are passionate and disorderly, they often lead to a shared understanding of a good at the end of the day, does not mean that their outcome need not be judged. If fifty million Frenchmen can be wrong so can 280 million Americans. But on what is this judgment to be based–other than that we agreed upon?

Constitutions and universal declarations and moral dialogues may all take us part of the way, but something is still missing. Possibly it is to be revealed in a powerful term the founding fathers employed, that of self-evident truths. They didn't speak of self-evident truths for Americans, as some people like to read such a statement, but as self-evident for anybody who will open his mind and heart.

In this regard, I conducted an experiment with four hundred groups from different cultures and societies, and I hope you'll join me this morning for yet one more round. If you just play along for one minute and assume you are member a curriculum committee for the third grade. And the question before the house is: should we teach children that truth-telling is better that lying, or that lying is better

than truth-telling, under normal circumstances? (Forget about extreme, so-called limit situations: a Nazi knocks on your door. You're a Norwegian and your hiding ten Jews. And he asks you if you know about any of them? Are you going to lie?) Should we teach children lying is better than truth-telling or truth-telling is better than lying–day in and day out? So far, in my experience, I've always received the same reaction: I'm sorry, I don't see the question. Obviously, that is, its self-evident, that you're going to teach children that truth-telling is better than lying, under most circumstances. To realize this basic truth people do not go through the utilitarian exercise, that if I'm going to lie, then other people are going to lie, then we are going to live in a world in which everybody lies, and I don't want to live in such a world. They just see the self-evident truth right away. There are a limited number of such moral statements that speak to us in an unmistakable voice (the definition of deontology). True–after we have such a revelation–we are free to examine it, but reason follows revelation and revelation is not based on it but protected and specified by it.

People who live in closed societies, subject to extensive and prolonged religious or political indoctrination may not hear the same moral voices as speaking to them as self-evident truths. However, once these societies open up or people from isolated segments of our own societies are exposed to free dialogues they also hear the same limited moral claims.

When you go to societies where dialogue is suppressed, and people have been indoctrinated–whether via imposed religion or imposed cultural traditions they often do not hear [*sic.*] the truth of which I speak. But when their societies open up, after a period of dialogue, they gradually gravitate toward the same truth.

It might well be aruged that I did not deal with the Big Answers offered to the issue we face such as those given by philosophies that draw on the human *telos*, human flourishing, reason, or happiness as the ultimate criteria. My short response would be guilty as charged; it

would take a semester to deal with this. A somewhat more satisfactory responce might be that these principles are treated by their champions as self evident truths. For those to whom they speak in a compelling way, they indeed provide the required foundation.

Let me close by suggesting that after a measure of open moral dialogue one and all will recognize the merit of autonomy (make our own choices), of the need for some measure of social order (that is self-restraint or fostered by norms and laws), and a carefully crafted balance between the two. It took me 300 pages to make this point (in *The New Golden Rule*). All I can do here is lay the claim that there is a limited but crucial set of self-evident truths, that speak to us in an unmistakable voice, and that they provide a foundation for moral claims we should lay on one and all, and expect them to lay on us.

14. CENTER AND PERIPHERY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF IRANIAN ARCHITECTURE*

Mohammad-Reza Haeri

I would like to take this opportunity to briefly discuss those chief aspects of Iranian architecture that can be used both for internal dialogue within the periphery and external dialogue with the center. My use of the terms "center" and "periphery" is not merely confined to concrete and bounded entities but also encompasses conventional concepts, employed to organize thoughts and discussions.

Architecture, as it has been conventionally defined, is one amongst many manifestations of humanity's drive towards creativity and activity. Its basis has historically been a combination of the creative organization of space independent of materials, structures and ornamentations. Historians have divided Iranian architecture into two distinctive eras, ancient and Islamic. Broadly speaking, the ancient era began around 1000 B.C., producing such monumental examples as the cities of Persepolis and Susa. The Achemenids built these two cities between 500 and 300 B.C., at a time when the Persian Empire was considered to be the "center." Architects and builders, stone masons and painters, along with construction materials, were brought together from throughout the "peripheries," yet the final product was "Persian," and the resulting architectural complexes represented "Persia."

Islam, in turn, imbued Iranian architecture with a distinctive style and character, an influence that continued to dominate the landscape of Iranian cities for centuries, up until the dawn of the 20th century, the start of the modern era. As may be readily discerned in

* This text was presented at the conference with the aim of making a small contribution to the discussions. At I was asked to make this contribution on the last day, the text was not prepared as a research article and is reproduced here in the form it was presented.