

Sin, Self and Society:

A Theological Investigation into
Structural Evil, drawing especially on
the works of Thomas Aquinas,
Heinz Kohut and Anthony Giddens
Volume One

by

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Abstract

This investigation addresses four main issues: 1) the theological problem of speaking about sin in social terms; 2) the interrelation of self and society and how structure explains this; 3) the persisting effect of evil in society; and 4) whether and how one might oneself as a member of society be implicated in its evils. These issues originated from a study of official statements of the Catholic Church and contemporary theological writings.

These issues are addressed by calling principally upon 1) Thomas Aquinas' views on analogy, on evil as a lack of what ought to be present, of sin as fault (*culpa*) and affliction (*poena*), and its essential character as a denial of charity; 2) Kohut's depiction of the self as a bi-polar structure and the weaknesses that come from its splitting and fragmentation; and 3) Giddens' theory of structuration that shows how 'structure' is both the medium and outcome of human activity, and his depiction of the institutional clusterings of modernity. A loosely articulated complementarity is found between 'structure' in the self (Kohut) and in society (Giddens). 'Structure' in modern society also functions in a similar way to habits — whether skills, virtues or vices — in ancient and medieval society (Thomas).

Special attention is given to the organismic, mechanistic and artistic root metaphors that guide people's thought, and particularly their understanding of self and society. Structural evil, when interpreted in 'artistic' terms, emerges as an entrenched combination of distorted generative rules, inadequate resources and disabling images, that are both drawn upon and reproduced through people's interactions. They afflict both the self and society. No one can totally distance him- or herself from them as the self is both shaped by and helps shape society. Conversely, since structural evil describes how human potentialities have been shaped historically, which a person may still actualize in varied ways, this account is not determinist.

Sebastian Moore's distinction of sin as a defect *within* the human condition (in relation to others) and *of* it (in relation to God) is used to criticize the pride, reminiscent of original sin, that makes people personally connive in structural sin and collectively set up unrealistic and idolatrous human projects.

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Abbreviations

Ia	<i>Summa Theologiae</i> , Prima Pars, Thomas Aquinas.
IaIIae	<i>Summa Theologiae</i> , Prima Secundae Pars, Thomas Aquinas.
IIaIIae	<i>Summa Theologiae</i> , Secunda Secundae Pars, Thomas Aquinas.
IIIa	<i>Summa Theologiae</i> , Tertia Pars, Thomas Aquinas.
AA	<i>Apostolicam Auctoritatem</i> , Vatican II
ANSE	<i>Analysis of the Self</i> , Kohut, 1971.
BLR	<i>Beyond Left and Right</i> , Giddens, 1994.
CCHM	<i>A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism:</i> Vol. I - <i>Power, Property and the State.</i> , Giddens, 1981.
CDF	Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith
CELAM	Conferencia del Episcopado Latinoamericano
CMOD	<i>The Consequences of Modernity.</i> , Giddens, 1990.
CMST	<i>Capitalism and Modern Social Theory</i> , Giddens, 1971.
CPST	<i>Central Problems in Social Theory</i> . Giddens, 1979.
CS	<i>The Constitution of Society</i> , Giddens, 1984.
DH	<i>Dignitatis Humanae</i> , Vatican II
DR	<i>Divini Redemptoris</i> , Pius XI
DS	Denzinger-Schönmetzer, 1965.
EIA	<i>Ecclesia in Africa</i> , John Paul II
EN	<i>Evangelii Nuntiandi</i> , Paul VI
EV	<i>Evangelium Veritatis</i> , John Paul II
G&S	<i>Gaudium et Spes</i> , Vatican II
HDAC	<i>How does Analysis Cure?</i> Kohut, 1984.
IMBISA	Interterritorial Meeting of the Bishops of Southern Africa
JW	<i>Justice in the World</i> , 1971 Synod of Bishops
LC	<i>Libertatis Conscientia</i> , CDF
MDJ	Medellin Document on Justice, CELAM
MDP	Medellin Document on Peace, CELAM
MM	<i>Mater et Magistra</i> , John XXIII
MSI	<i>Modernity and Self-Identity</i> , Giddens, 1991.
NDCE	<i>A New Dictionary of Christian Ethics</i> .
NRSM	<i>New Rules of Sociological Method</i> , Giddens, 1976.
NSV	<i>The Nation-State and Violence.: A Contemporary Critique of Historical</i> <i>Materialism: Vol. II</i> , Giddens, 1985.
OA	<i>Octogesima Adveniens</i> , Paul VI
PCST	<i>Profiles and Critiques in Social Theory</i> , Giddens, 1982.
PP	<i>Populorum Progressio</i> , Paul VI
PT	<i>Pacem in Terris</i> , John XXIII
QA	<i>Quadragesimo Anno</i> , Pius XI
QD	<i>Questiones Disputatae</i> , Thomas Aquinas
R&P	<i>Reconciliatio et Paenitentia</i> , John Paul II
RESS	<i>The Restoration of the Self</i> , Kohut, 1977.
RH	<i>Redemptor Hominis</i> , John Paul II
RMC	"A reply to my critics," Giddens, 1989
RN	<i>Rerum Novarum</i> , Leo XIII
RP	<i>De Regimine Principum</i> , Thomas Aquinas
SACBC	Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference
SBCI	<i>Sociology: A Brief but Critical Introduction</i> , Giddens, 1987.
SC	<i>Sacrosanctum Concilium</i> , Vatican II

SCG	<i>Summa Contra Gentiles</i> , Thomas Aquinas.
SLCE	Super Librum de Causis Expositio, Thomas Aquinas.
SM	<i>Sacramentum Mundi</i>
SPHU	<i>Self Psychology and the Humanities</i> , Kohut, 1985.
SRS	<i>Sollicitudo Rei Socialis</i> , John Paul II
SS I-IV	<i>The Search for the Self: Selected Writings</i> , Kohut, 1978 & 1990, Vols I-IV.
SSLS	<i>Scriptum Super Libros Sententiarum</i> , Thomas Aquinas.
SSPT	<i>Studies in Social and Political Theory</i> , Giddens, 1977.
STMS	<i>Social Theory and Modern Sociology</i> , Giddens, 1987b.
STPPF	"Structuration Theory: Past, Present and Future," Giddens, 1991.
STT	<i>Social Theory Today</i> , Giddens, 1987.
USCC	United States Catholic Conference.

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Preface

My interest in addressing this topic grew out of my involvement in the search and struggle to bring about a more just society in South Africa. In various meetings of commissions for justice and peace, we found ourselves asking what led people to establish and defend apartheid, and how could one break through it together with its injustices and atrocities. As soon as I began to grasp that racism was more than a matter of personal prejudice, but was socially institutionalized I had to find a new approach to it. Various readings in sociology helped make some sense of this, but did not fully answer the objection that some posed: that you had to change hearts as well as, or even before, you changed structures.

Some light was thrown upon this during a visit to Washington DC in 1978. There I met with one of the organizers of Network, a Catholic lobbying agency for social justice founded by a number of religious women. One of them explained that it was inadequate to change structures alone as a change in values was also required. Their aim, she said, was to bring about 'systemic' change. This helped, but I was still left wondering what it would involve. This was a pressing question as the apartheid state with its security apparatus was referred to as "the system."

Another question that was important at the time — and remains so today — was what stirred people to violent aggression. My fairly primitive views on that topic were dispelled when Jennifer Alt lent me a copy of Kohut's collected papers. Also, through lending an editorial hand for her work on shame and guilt, I came to appreciate the depth of Kohut's views. In the meantime, theological debates between those thinking in personal terms and those taking a usually rather unspecified 'structural' approach were hot and even acrimonious.

Even those who took a 'both-and' rather than 'either-or' approach were unable to

explain how persons and social structures were linked. But it wasn't until I discovered Giddens' writings, around the time of the controversy engendered by the publication of the *Kairos Document* in 1985, that I glimpsed a territory beyond the current impasse. Earlier studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara had introduced me not only to "West Coast" sociology and ethnomethodology, but had provided an outline of how various sociological theories worked up to a point. Giddens I found showed a much more plausible linkage between personal action and social structure than other social theorists. He also offered a multi-faceted understanding of modern society than those claiming that an analysis solely in terms of class, or race, or technical development was the key to understanding all society's ills. In choosing him as a prime source for this thesis, I was encouraged by David Tracy mentioning the need for "a plausible critical theory of self and society that may clarify some of our suspicions" (Baum & Ellsberg, eds 1987: 73) about the understanding of our time and its interruptions. Among the authors, he suggests in a footnote, who might help in this direction is Anthony Giddens. Confirmation of his value for theology came from Gregory Baum, who wrote in a commentary on the papal encyclical, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, that "the teaching of John Paul II has a certain affinity with the emphasis on personal agency in the sociology of Max Weber and the contemporary thinker, Anthony Giddens" (1989: 115).

As a Dominican, trained in the 1960s, I was brought up on Thomas Aquinas, but did not immediately see his relevance for a discussion of structural evil. He wrote in an age where a person was not considered apart from membership of the city or kingdom. Only when re-reading his treatment of sin together with the footnotes and commentary of T. C. O'Brien (1965, 1974) did I realize that his views might provide a basis and guide for dealing with it. The great advantage of Thomas is that he eventually shows both details and the big picture; though, it is not always easy to keep sight of both. Although more recent authors have discussed human action and sin in detail, they have not always related it to the whole picture. Admittedly, had I been brought up in a different church tradition,

or even a member of another religious order, some other theologian than Thomas Aquinas might have become a source for me. Likewise, another sociologist than Giddens and another psychologist than Kohut could have been selected. But then — unlike the proverbial Irishman — you can only start from where you are!

In drawing upon the works of Thomas, Giddens and Kohut, I am not trying to explain *their* understanding of 'structural evil' and 'social sin.' That would be impossible as none of them ever mentioned these topics as such. What I have tried to do is to borrow their views and terminology, trimming and reshaping them somewhat in the process, to elucidate my own understanding of how sin and evil so effectively persist in society. While I have endeavoured to be faithful to their insights —there would be no point in drawing upon them if one wasn't — I have not been afraid to extend their lines of thinking further than they did or even could themselves. This applies especially to Thomas Aquinas, as he was writing in a different epoch. Consequently, he could have no premonition even about conditions in the modern world. Since my purpose was not to expound his theology, relating it to his contemporaries, but to bring it into dialogue with later views, my translations from the Latin are fairly free. At times I have consulted McDermott's concise translation (1989) and the volumes of the Gilby translation (1959 onwards), but not usually stuck to their wording.

Since this is a thesis in theology, it is ultimately an expression of Christian faith. This faith, however, is not simply a personal belief, but is drawn from a shared tradition that the author among others has received as a member of the Catholic Church. By standing as a theologian in this continuing historical and living tradition, one has the duty to hand on (παράδομι) creatively to others what one has received as an inheritance. This goes beyond merely repeating hallowed texts, even though it is important to pay attention to their actual wording (*ipsissima verba*). It is much more a task of communicating insight into and evoking appreciation of the mystery that encompasses human life.

Psychology and sociology operate within that ambit, focusing mainly on the issues that are easier to grasp, though both Giddens and Kohut, each in their own way, press issues to their limits. Not only are the human person (self) and human communities (society) mysterious, but so in a different way is evil. Although its effects are readily evident, it can only be grasped through what it destroys. This has made writing this thesis extra difficult, because structural evil cannot be explained, unless one already has a sufficiently well formulated conception of structure to draw upon.

To claim that this thesis is all my own work, as though it drew upon the writer's resources alone, would go totally against its message. No one told me what to write or provided me a text to copy. So, in this way as a confrere who had been through the process remarked: "It's a lonely business." Yet working on this study became a reminder of how much I was indebted to others, both for my understanding of theology and other sciences, and for the support and encouragement I have received.

Looking back to my former lecturers I must acknowledge a special debt from long ago to Cornelius Ernst in England, Timothy McDermott in South Africa, Walter Kapps and Herbert Fingarette in California. Many others have helped fill the domains they opened up for me.

Steady support has come from my supervisor, Neville Richardson, who with a light hand on the wheel saved me from wrong turnings and urged me — who drives a loaded stationwagon — not to overload the vehicle. Graham Lindegger, Jennifer Alt and Carol Mouat have helped check my initial understanding of Heinz Kohut, though they cannot be held accountable for how I've used his views. Benjamin Garfield translated for me the relevant parts of several articles in Spanish and Italian.

For their personal interest and encouragement, my thanks go to Paula Hinxlage,

Bridget Carney, Margaret Kelly and my cousin Anne Stone; including a gentle prodding at times from the latter two. A reading by Greta Schoebel showed me places where the text could be improved.

Not only have my Dominican brethren provided down to earth material support, but they have trustfully given me the social and community space to get on with writing, even though they were not always sure quite what I was investigating.

Although this study does not draw upon any ancient manuscripts, obtaining even recent bibliographies, books and periodicals can be difficult at times. Besides having access to the libraries of the Pietermaritzburg Cluster of Theological Institutions, I was also fortunate to be able to use for several weeks the libraries of Graduate Theological Union and University of California in Berkeley. A short stay in Washington DC enabled me to search bibliographies in the Dominican House of Studies and the Catholic University of America. A few days in the Dominican community in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire yielded some older and newer French articles. Finally, the library of the University of Cape Town enabled me to keep abreast of most relevant developments in periodicals.

I realize this list of acknowledgements could be extended indefinitely, but let me thank all the above mentioned as well as those other persons and institutions who have structurally supported the emergence of this study.

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‘Structural Evil’:

Why is it such a Problem?

At times the evils that overwhelm people are so huge that they defy description. Their enormity cannot be adequately conveyed by the words used for handling the affairs of everyday life. Even to express effectively, for instance, the lasting harm that a prejudiced person brings upon both others and his or herself, or the malicious indifference and ruinous suffering that mark a drug pusher’s trade is hard enough. But when faced with today’s vast international traffic in drugs or the trade in armaments throughout the world, or the enmity that is constantly stirred up between people by divisions of race, class or religion, or the lack of political will to tackle the endemic starvation that faces whole populations, words are even more inadequate.

To grapple with such overwhelming evils people have basically used two linguistic approaches, the metaphorical and the systematic. The classical example of the metaphorical approach occurs in apocalyptic literature, where various social horrors are depicted as due to threatening beasts and plagues, or brought about by ‘principalities and powers.’ Although apocalypses are not generally

written today, social evils are often still described in metaphors. For instance, racism has recently been likened to a hydra with many heads, while being caught by an undertow or ensnared in a net depicts how people are carried along by the evils of their society. Such graphic metaphors convey well the menace of evil, but do not indicate so well how it might be overcome.

Alternatively, a more systematic approach can be adopted. Here one tries to delineate the origin, working and effects of various evils through combining the insights of moral theology and ethics with those of the social sciences. To date, various attempts at this have been made, each generating its own vocabulary, its own mixture of clarity and confusion. But so far, no well rounded theory or systematic exposition has emerged. For instance, a recent theological dictionary asks: “[W]hat is the relation between sinful individuals, actions and social structures?” (Macquarrie & Childress, 1986: 585b), but does not really attempt to answer its own question. This question does, however, indicate a relatively unexplored area of interest, and so provides a challenge which this treatise endeavours to take up.

This area of focal interest lies — to use Lonergan’s terms (1972) — in the realm of systematics. Hence what is called for is not so much a restatement of beliefs about evil, such as the metaphorical approach might provide, but a deeper understanding of all that is involved. Lonergan sets the criteria for understanding in systematic theology: “In the contemporary world it has to be at home in modern science, modern scholarship, and modern philosophy” (1972: 350). Doubtless in elucidating such an understanding of structural evil, a sense of its menace may be lost, but one hopes to gain a firmer grasp of how it is perpetuated and so can be overcome.

The very diversity of the words used to grapple with deep seated social ills is itself further evidence of the need for understanding in this area. Roughly the same reality of evil is addressed by speaking of ‘social sin/evil,’ ‘collective guilt,’

'structural sin/evil,' a 'situation of sin,' 'institutional evil,' the 'system' as evil or sinful. In some cases these terms are used very loosely and more or less interchangeably, whereas in others a distinction is made between 'sin,' 'evil' and 'guilt.' Mynatty, after compiling a similar list of terms, remarks that many of these terms are borrowed from paranesis and exhortation. "There has never been any serious attempt to explain the theological content of these terminologies and assess their theological validity" (Mynatty, 1991: 7).

Closely related expressions, though somewhat more restricted in scope, are 'structural violence/injustice' and 'institutional injustice/violence.' Many of these terms and phrases have their own background, which links or contrasts them with various theories about society and conceptions of evil. For instance, 'social' stands in contrast to 'personal,' 'collective' to 'individual,' and 'guilt' to 'innocence.' Nevertheless, many gaps in understanding still remain to be filled before a systematic treatment is elucidated.

This treatise is divided into five parts. Part One surveys the *literature* relating to the topic in order to pick out the basic problems involved. Part Two is a study of *potentials* — those of the self and of modern society — and how in general evil may threaten or undermine human potential. Part Three concentrates attention on how potential is realized in *action*, or remains partially unrealized through defective action. Only in Part Four, however, are various *types of action* discussed. This looks more closely at how structural evil manifests itself in modern society, in the self and among social leaders. This treatise does not go on to analyze particular instances of structural evil. Finally Part Five looks more closely at *social sin*, in particular how it impinges on charity, faith and hope — ways in which human beings are invited to share in the divine life.

This whole treatise is theological — in the sense understood by Thomas Aquinas — because it deals with topics that bear a relation towards God as their origin and end (*Omnia autem pertractantur in sacra doctrina sub ratione Dei ... quia habent*

ordinem ad Deum, ut ad principium et finem, Ia 1, 7). It does, however, draw upon the human sciences, whose findings are discovered by human investigation, in order to lead us more easily by the hand to theological issues that exceed the powers of human research (*qui ex his quae per naturalem rationem ex qua procedunt aliae scientiae cognoscuntur, facilius manuducitur in ea quae sunt supra rationem, quae in hac scientia traduntur*, Ia 1, 5 ad 2). So, even though Parts Two, Three and Four draw upon many texts not written by theologians, they are in the course of the whole study used to make and amplify a theological statement. What is important is not so much the source of the texts, but the light in which they are understood (*objectum formale quo*).

The aim of the first part of this treatise is to present the current state of the question as far as structural evil — or whatever cognate term may be used — is concerned. This will involve going through various writings on the subject both in academic theology and those that express with rather more poignancy the social concerns of ‘the people.’ Here an attempt will be made to unravel the differing approaches to the topic, to untangle various confusions and draw together the points that have so far been clarified. This will entail examining briefly in what socio-historical background, and particularly with what understanding of society, problems about structural evil could as such arise (Chapter One). In order to fill this out, a survey will be undertaken of official statements made by the Catholic Church pertaining to this topic (Chapter Two). Next will an overview of the five approaches ways that have in various ways over the last thirty years raised the problem of structural evil, even though they tend to leave it as a residual problem (Chapter Three). However, several attempts have been made to explain it; so these are noted (Chapter Four). Like many other technical or ‘experience distant’ terms from the social sciences, ‘structure’ and ‘system’ have been reincorporated into theology. This holds not only for systematic theory, but also for people’s theology, where such terms are used in a more rhetorical than analytic fashion. A short account (Chapter Five) is given of this ‘experience near’ approach.

Background to the Problem of Grasping 'Structural Evil'

*"Wisdom will deliver you from those whose paths are crooked,
and who are devious in their ways" (Proverbs 2: 14).*

The chapter looks briefly at the different views of society that have been held over the centuries. The views of philosophers and theologians, political theorists as well as the ordinary person in the street are governed by the images they hold of society. Understanding their differing approaches is facilitated by grasping what 'root metaphors' or 'basic models' they adopted either for orientating themselves in everyday life, or for examining and evaluating society from a more theoretical standpoint. A brief exploration of the dynamics of the root metaphors prevailing in Western society shows that only in the last century or so could such a notion as structural evil or social sin be conceived. This is linked to society becoming less transparent and more impersonal. Although modern communications have extended the range of what can be known, the increased size and complexity of modern society in fact renders many areas of life only accessible to the specialist. Ordinary citizens and even government departments do not know their way around every realm of life. If they wish to venture beyond their own familiar activities, they must increasingly turn to consultancies and engage specialist agencies with the requisite information and

contacts. The multiplication of such agencies is an indicator of how modern society lacks transparency. A consideration of the changing root metaphors of various ages also throws light on the social role expected of the individual member of society. Whenever this change was overlooked moral theology proved inadequate to its task. To situate ourselves in the contemporary world, some instances of how society is changing and of the social evils that still need to be overcome will be sketched. Also, by referring to the root metaphors they adopted, or are wrestling with, it is possible to place the central figures — Thomas Aquinas, Heinz Kohut and Anthony Giddens — of this study.

1.1 Background, Problems and Root Metaphors

To understand and especially to evaluate any society, it is not enough to know facts about it. One has also to grasp how those facts were drawn together, to know what was considered important and what trivial, to sense what was valued highly and what passed by. Depending upon the basic model, or root metaphor, adopted so one's sense of what a society is all about, how it holds together, and where it is going emerges. Stuart D. McLean explains:

Analyzing the root concepts of a social theory uncovers the presence of a basic model and often auxiliary or sub-models. The basic model (or root metaphor) represents in a nutshell a view of reality. It also entails ethical and value variables. Choice of a theory with its model is comparable to choosing one trail up one valley rather than another trail up another valley. That choice limits what one sees and established the boundaries of the hike. In social science it implies not only the scope and limitation of what one sees, but also a set of values and ethical choices. (1978: 218)

The importance of root metaphors is not confined to the social sciences, as they also play a major role in shaping the view of society held by theologians and others interested in social morality. So when we later seek to grasp how Thomas Aquinas, different official church documents, various contemporary theologians and others understand society, it will be important to inquire into their root metaphors.

The work of McLean (1978) and Gibson Winter (1981), Joe Holland (1983) delineates, admittedly in a very schematic fashion, the three root metaphors operative in different epochs:

- 1) the *organic* metaphor of the human body that under-pinned *pre-modern* or medieval society;
- 2) the *mechanistic* metaphor of the machine that has dominated *modern* society from at least the Enlightenment;
- 3) the root metaphor of society as a *work of art* that is emerging in our *post-modern* times.

Each root metaphor in its turn generates further images of its own regarding government, education, social organization, morality, religion and theology. Since the forms that art can take are much more varied than that of a body or a machine, this third root metaphor allows for much greater social variation than the previous ones.

In his study, *Social Justice*, David Miller (1976) also found it necessary to take account of root metaphors; he spoke of different “ways of looking at society” or “views of society.” These refer:

both to the well-articulated, coherent models of society which we find in the writing of the major political thinkers and to the much less coherent world-views upheld by ordinary men who are not theorists, but who require some way of making sense of their social existence. (1976: 7)

He shows that one’s understanding of ‘social justice,’ and other political concepts varies with the view of society one espouses. This helps account for people’s understanding of ‘justice,’ ‘liberty,’ ‘democracy,’ etc varying so greatly. Miller (1976: 253f) distinguishes between three types of society: primitive, hierarchical and market. These correspond to the traditional, organicist and mechanistic metaphors in Winter’s terminology. A similar classification of types of society is made by Anthony Giddens (1981: 159; 1984: 181f) into tribal, class-divided and class societies (see Chapter Seven). ‘Traditional’ (‘tribal’ or ‘primitive’) society falls outside the ambit of this study. Winter’s classification goes beyond that of



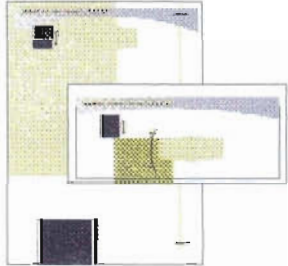
	Pre-Modern Organic	Modern Mechanistic	Post-Modern Artistic
Space	Integralist (order)	Pluralistic (competition)	Interdependent (community)
Time	Cyclical (tradition)	Linear (progress)	Wave-like (rhythm)
Governance	Hierarchical (authority)	Managerial (competence)	Participative (creativity)
Metaphor	 Organic (body)	Mechanistic  (machine)	Artistic (work of art) 
Theology	Catholic Illuminist (analogy)	Protestant Fiducial (opposition)	Ecumenical Synthesis (dialectic)
Spirituality	Monastic contemplation (mind)	Individual Privatization (will)	Prophetic Transformation (praxis)
Evangelization	Aristocracy (imperialism)	Middle Classes (personal experience)	Poor & Oppressed (community)

Fig 1. *Root Metaphors*
Adapted from Holland (1983: 171)

Miller and Giddens, as he employs the artistic root metaphor for the post-mechanistic society, which he sees as emerging.

Any society, it must be admitted, is much more intricate than these root metaphors suggest, and many of its features are inexplicable in terms of these models. Also, these models are not sharply delineated from one another, since in practice people may either combine one root metaphor with another, or hold on to one that others have relinquished long ago. But the purpose of employing them here is not to explain in detail the working of any society, past or present, but rather to sort out the various views that have been propounded on what society is like and how it should run. This chapter therefore is not trying to find or describe the particular social evils that have afflicted pre-modern, modern and post-modern society, but to show whether and how in each case social evil might be conceived.

1.2 The Changing Structure and Images of Society

Selecting a model of society or root metaphor is not a matter of arbitrary choice. After all, no model would be valid, or root metaphor be very revealing, unless the members of a particular society were able to recognize themselves in the model proposed for interpreting it. Over the root metaphor there must be at least an implicit consensus between the people living in any epoch and those using it to explain what is and what should be happening there. A strong indication that the root metaphors proposed by Winter and Holland for pre-modern, modern and post-modern societies are on the right track is that in each epoch these metaphors were or are actually employed.

Society is not entirely distinct from its members' image of it; their root metaphor shapes the way they relate both to society and to one another. Even if their images were very inadequately worked out, or in other words people were deluded by false consciousness, that too would show itself in the actual workings

(or breakdowns) of their society. Moreover, as the dominant root metaphor changes, whether due to religious or secular influence, so social relations are altered and the whole society changes. While, conversely, as society is modified by technological or political factors, its members in order to orient themselves begin to seek a new model of society. These various types of influence are especially apparent during a transition, as in South Africa today, from one epoch to another.

1.3 Pre-Modern Organic Societies

During medieval times, the basic analogy or root metaphor for understanding society was the human body. As in an organism, the members of society with their different positions yet related tasks should work together for the good of the whole. So in times of crisis or moral dilemma, appeals were continually made for each member to support one another as parts of an organic whole. For instance, John of Salisbury writing his *Policraticus* in 1159 compares a republic to "a sort of body ... [in which] the position of the head is occupied by a prince ... the place of the heart is occupied by the senate ... the duties of the ears, eyes and mouth are claimed by the judges and governors of provinces ... " (1992: 67). He warns against interpreting this allegory in too servile a fashion, but his message is that for the health of the whole the higher members must consider the lower ones and the lower members answer to the higher ones.

Furthermore, the feet coincide with the peasants perpetually bound to the soil, for whom it is all the more necessary that the head take precautions, in that they more often meet with accidents while they walk on the earth in bodily subservience; and those who erect, sustain and move forward the mass of the whole body are justly owed shelter and support. (1992: 67)

Thomas Aquinas writing a century later has dropped the elaborate allegory. He usually speaks of membership of society or the political community in terms of parts and the whole, nevertheless in a few places his underlying metaphor becomes apparent. For instance, he remarks that: "In this way a political

community is taken as a single person, in that various people holding various offices are organized like the various members of a single bodily organism" (QD de Malo, 4, 1).¹ Likewise, the rule of a king over his subjects is similar to that of "the human mind over the organs of the body and the other forces of the soul" (*De Regimine Principum*, 12). The influence of this metaphor is evident when Thomas employs it to justify punishing wrongdoers and even putting them to death.

As the surgeon carrying out an operation seeks [his patient's] health, which consists in the ordered harmony of the bodily humors, so the ruler of a city carrying out his duties seeks peace, which consists in ordered harmony among its citizens. So if in cutting off a diseased member the surgeon prevents the body from breaking down, what he does is good and useful. Rightly, therefore, and without incurring sin the ruler of a city executes noxious persons lest the peace of the city be ruined. (SCG, 146: 3197; cf IIaIIae, 64, 2)

In the medieval view, human beings were not cogs in a machine, nor drops in the ocean, nor individuals who entered into a social contract, nor the anonymous masses, but members of a living 'social organism' (see Tawney, 1954: 27ff), each with their own function, position and rights. Admittedly, the position of the commoners did not bring many rights with it. But they had the assurance of believing themselves part of a society whose fundamental order derived ultimately from God and was directed towards him.

Since, the personal agents who enforced the law (or failed to) and who ordered social arrangements were never too far away, social morality could be expounded in a personal fashion. Society was healthy when people in each social position, such as rulers and judges, bishops and clerics, married couples, virgins and widows, medical practitioners and scholars, merchants and artisans, carried out the obligations and their rights were respected. (These are some of the categories used by Antoninus of Florence, writing in mid-fifteenth century, in his *Summa*

¹ Translations from Thomas Aquinas are the author's own. Since Thomas is very terse, even over compact, in his expression, for the sake of readability the translation is fairly free and sometimes more expansive. Where technical terms or arguments, crucial for grasping the intricacies of his thought, are employed, the original Latin text is reproduced as well.

Theologica.) Society, or rather the city, suffered when people in any of these categories failed in their customary duties, abused their power or infringed the rights of others. Because society, or rather the city or county, was fairly compact, the sources of any social evils were evident enough.

1.4 The Modern Mechanistic World

It is far beyond the scope of this study to examine historically how the root metaphor of society changed from being a social organism to the world of the machine. Both society itself and people's way of conceptualizing was gradually transformed. This shift in social consciousness resulted in a dichotomy between the individual and society. It was now possible to conceive and treat them as two separate entities in a way that was impossible previously. The person ceased to be a representative of a social whole, and became a replaceable part within a giant mechanism or structure.

Many factors — social, political, economic and technological, as well as religious, scientific and cultural — went into this process; some took effect quickly, others only showed their full effect decades later.² Here a few points will drawn from the work of Tawney, as he has an eye for the moral implications of social and religious changes.

Speaking of the Reformation effected by Luther, Tawney observes:

The difference between loving men as a result of first loving God, and learning to love God through a growing love for men, may not, at first sight, appear profound. ... [But] its effects on social theory were staggering. ... The medieval conception of the social order, which regarded it as a highly articulated organism of members contributing in their different degrees to a spiritual purpose, was shattered, and differences which had been distinctions within a larger unity were now set in irreconcilable antagonism to each other. Grace no longer completed nature: it was the

² Different aspects of this transformation have been explored in a range of studies, for instance, Max Weber in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, C.B. Macpherson in *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke*, Bob Goudzwaard in *Capitalism and Progress: A Diagnosis of Western Society*, and R.H. Tawney in *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*.

antithesis of it. Man's actions as a member of society were no longer the extension of his life as a child of God: they were its negation. ... For, though all [believers] might be sanctified, it was their inner life alone which could partake of sanctification. (Tawney, 1954: 87f)

Luther did not change the content of medieval social teaching, but his attack on some of the prescriptions of canon law, and his changing people's attitudes towards the hierarchy, did in time alter the ordering of society. He apparently expected everything in society to arrange itself without these supports. Tawney then asks:

If it is true that the inner life is the sphere of religion, does it necessarily follow that the external order is simply irrelevant to it? To wave aside the world of institutions and law as alien to that of the spirit — is not this to abandon, instead of facing, the task of making Christian morality prevail, for which medieval writers, with their conception of a hierarchy of values related to a common end, had attempted, however inadequately, to discover a formula? (Tawney, 1954: 89)

Tawney presents a depressing picture of the churches, despite periodic renewals of their religious fervour, becoming increasingly out of touch with the new socio-economic world brought about by people's quest for freedom and the exercise of their economic rights. He tellingly remarks that "too often, contemning the external order as unspiritual, he [the Puritan] made it, and ultimately himself, less spiritual by reason of his contempt." (Tawney, 1954: 191) This stricture applied not just to Puritans, but with few exceptions to the churches as a whole. By turning distinctions into oppositions, faith became opposed to knowledge, religious practices to social concerns, the spiritual to the material, grace (or supernature) to nature, and even the personal to the social dimensions of life. "It did not occur to [the Puritans] that character is social, and society, since it is the expression of character, spiritual. Thus the eye is sometimes blinded by light itself" (Tawney, 1954: 230-1). As a result, the churches lacked an adequate theology to address the widespread evils of the slave trade and colonialism in foreign lands, as well as those inherent in industrialization and migration to the cities at home. As society had become much larger and more complex and opaque, the long range effects of people's activities were not immediately

apparent. But, since the churches still perceived life almost solely in interpersonal terms, such as the duties of master to servant and servant to master appropriate to a previous and more transparent age, it was unable to envisage what charity, justice and morality called for in emerging industrial society.

There was a basic failure in church teaching to recognize that society had radically changed; that understanding it and criticizing could only be effective if its new root metaphor was at least recognized. Even earlier, Descartes had considered animals and the human body to be nothing more than elaborate machines. This view made the transition from an organismic to a mechanistic image of society relatively easy. Thomas Hobbes took the Commonwealth or State to be “but an artificial man; though of greater strength and stature than the natural, for whose protection and defence it was intended.” (1962: 19) By the eighteenth century, the natural science of Newton and Halley provided the dominant image for understanding society. Both the universe and society were vast machines, guided by their own natural laws. This metaphor was put into political terms by John Locke. According to his political theory, sovereign individuals came together in a society to protect their rights and property. The image of society produced by the new Political Arithmetic was that of

a joint-stock company rather than an organism, and the liabilities of the shareholders are strictly limited. They enter it in order to insure the rights already vested in them by the immutable laws of nature. The State, a matter of convenience, not of supernatural sanctions, exists for the protection of those rights, and fulfills its object in so far as, by maintaining contractual freedom, it secures full scope for their unfettered exercise. (Tawney, 1954: 160)

With such a powerful new understanding of society and hence of one’s individual freedom, it was no longer any use merely to repeat the denunciations of greed from an earlier age. Greed, it was even argued by Bernard de Mandeville, was necessary for the advancement of society. In his eyes, private vices led to public benefits; a people’s drive for possessions and expenditure made their society great. It was also necessary, in his view, to keep people poor to ensure the

prosperity of society. Such views flew in the face of religious sentiment, and at times provoked moral indignation, but that was of little avail as it was not coupled with sufficient insight into the new kind of society that was emerging. Tawney observes:

The paroxysms of virtuous fury, with which the children of light denounced each new victory of economic enterprise as yet another stratagem of Mammon, disabled them from the staff-work of their campaign, which needs a cool head as well as a stout heart. Their obstinate refusal to revise old formulae in the light of new facts exposed them helpless to a counter-attack, in which the whole fabric of their philosophy, truth and fantasy alike, was overwhelmed together. They despised knowledge, and knowledge destroyed them. (Tawney, 1954: 231)

Another aspect of the mechanistic image of society was that economy especially was seen as bound by 'iron laws.' Just as tampering with the running of a machine only leads to a breakdown, so it is no use trying to alter the running of society. This was the presumption behind the iron law of wages; according to it, the wages of labourers could not rise above bare subsistence level because human fertility outstripped the productive capacity of the soil. Hence, raising the wages of labourers only provided temporary relief; in time there would always be more mouths to feed, so wages inevitably fall back to subsistence level. Such presumptions led to economics being dubbed 'the dismal science'; their general acceptance made the churches reluctant to tackle social issues at all.

1.4.1 Variations within the Mechanistic Model

In assessing what the mechanistic model has led to, two main trends can be discerned: the gradual dissolution of the medieval realm as an organic whole so that its members became individuals in their own right, and their subsequent linkage into a new society conceived in a more mechanical fashion. While the mechanistic vision affirmed human reason and liberated people from submission to hierarchy, it also "projected a deterministic order to which the human would have to conform." (Winter, 1981: 110) In this vein, Max Weber

traces the long term influence of carrying other worldly asceticism into everyday life.³ Instead of producing greater personal freedom and detachment from goods, it gradually bound people “with irresistible force ... to the technical and economic conditions of machine production which today determine the lives of all individuals who are born into this mechanism.” So instead of care for external goods, Weber comments, being like a light cloak that the saint could easily cast aside, “fate decreed that the cloak should become an iron cage.” (1930: 181)

Depending upon whether emphasis is placed upon the rational individual or the determinism inherent in the social whole, two lines of thought have emerged. These could broadly be classified as the liberal approach, exemplified in the ‘possessive individualism’ of John Locke, and the socialist approach, exemplified above all in Karl Marx advocating the collectivisation of property. What is important to notice, however, is that both the liberal and the socialist views of society ultimately derive, despite their antagonism, from the same mechanistic vision of society (see Holland, in Hug, 1983: 170ff). Their difference lies in opposing views of the kind of machine required. The former basically proposes a self-regulating model, where market forces direct the economy and a balance of powers maintains political equilibrium. The latter advocates a model that can be directly controlled by centralized planning and commands. Both views, despite their great insights and strengths that have between them fashioned the modern world, result in a crisis of human meaning. It is impossible to do full justice to human beings if basically they are conceived in the image of a machine. Human issues, whether personal or social, are conceived as technical problems; governing human beings is reduced to the administration of things. This is why so many people and groups are currently searching for a new root metaphor with which to understand themselves, relate to one another and fashion together a new society.

3 Mention of Weber’s classic study, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, does not mean every detail of the process as he describes it is accepted. Too many factors were involved for any nicely defined thesis to explain them all. This holds especially when dealing with the influence of ideas, images, articulations of faith, lifestyles, etc. which can have a very indirect influence. Their influence may (or may not) take place wherever or whenever they are communicated.

1.4.2 The Dichotomy between Person and Society

Before looking at the root metaphor for post-modern society, some attention must be given to how social evils could be conceived from within a society governed by a mechanistic image. Two views are possible, depending again upon whether the individual in isolation or society as a structural whole is emphasized.

If attention is concentrated entirely upon the liberty and activities of the individual, then society fades away to nothing. For instance, Margaret Thatcher is reported to have said — repeating Ayn Rand (1964: 15) — that only people and their families, not society, exist. In this view, reminiscent of the ‘possessive individualism’ elaborated by Hobbes and Locke, individuals are free to hold property, enter into the labour market or undertake other economic transactions, but they owe nothing to society as a whole (see Macpherson, 1962). Religion too is an individual affair; each person is guilty of their own sins, the abuse before God and their conscience of their own freedom, but no more. Being individuals in their own right, they are not implicated in others’ sin, unless they freely consent to be. Since society is only a rather vague abstraction, speaking about social evil is either an absurdity or an attempt to evade responsibility for personal faults.

At the other extreme, the mechanism of society may be thought so to overshadow the individual, that he or she is only a manifestation of social forces. This view when pressed far enough leaves no room for individual morality. All social evils and even every anti-social action, for example, crime, laziness, and sexual immorality must be due to society being wrongly structured. Hence structural change is required to overcome social evils, while the re-education of people to fit in the new society will correct their anti-social behaviour.

Admittedly, two extreme views have been presented above; ranged between them are various views which endeavour to combine, or at least juxtapose, the

reality of the individual with that of society. Likewise, depending upon how this combination, or juxtaposition, is effected, greater or lesser importance will be given to the evil embedded in social structures. But without some conception of society having a lasting structure, which nevertheless has been brought about historically and can in principle be altered, the idea of social evil would make no sense. In contemporary society, since the exercise of power is often dispersed, the sources of its various social structures generally remain anonymous. The abuse of power is also mediated through these same structures and leaves its imprint upon them; it is usually even more anonymous and impersonal than its rightful exercise.

1.4.3 New Forms of Individualism

Alongside those who have sought to understand modern society in structural terms are several recent writers who have taken individuals or even just the individual as their starting point. They offer a distinct alternative to collectivist views of society, particularly those that would justify the state or community in the name of either a present necessity or a brighter future suppressing the rights, interests and initiatives of individuals. If their views of the human condition were sufficient, there would be no need to think in terms of social structures binding people together. My contention is, however, that whatever the merits of the four authors discussed briefly below, their varied approaches do not take sufficient account of the ways human inadequacies may in fact become embedded in both people's sense of themselves and their patterns of interaction.

1.4.3.1 The Rational Selfishness of Ayn Rand

The most straightforward and outspoken individualist is Ayn Rand, whose philosophy of objectivism sets as its standard of value "that which is required for man's survival *qua* man ... [namely] thinking and productive work" (1964: 23). She explains:

Value is that which one acts to gain and/or keep — *virtue* is the act by which one gains and/or keeps it. The three cardinal values of the Objectivist ethics — the three values which, together, are the means to and the realization of one's ultimate value, one's own life — are: Reason, Purpose, Self-Esteem, with their three corresponding virtues: Rationality, Productiveness, Pride. (1964:25)

In this view, “every living human being is an end in himself ... and, therefore, man must live for his own sake, neither sacrificing himself to others nor sacrificing others to himself” (1964: 27). Ayn Rand rightly objects to a wishy-washy altruism that insists solely on doing good to others but lacks any standard for judging what would be good. But she fails to see that the virtue of selfishness or “concern with one's own interests” (1964: vii) is not the only alternative to “collectivism,” which holds “that the group may sacrifice him at its own whim to its own interests” (1964: 128). Between these extremes are various forms of inter-dependence between society and its members, in which the claims of both can be more or less accommodated. Her ideal is the self-made man, who does not realize how dependent he is upon others' support for the opportunity to develop his own life and interests. This support comes not only through trade — an activity Rand thoroughly approves of — but also through taken-for-granted social institutions and personal relationships. She mistakes not letting oneself be totally determined by others with having no obligation to care for them.

1.4.3.2 The Fearful Fairness of John Rawls

John Rawls' major study, *A Theory of Justice*, attempts to work out in abstract terms how individuals should be obligated to one another. In order to obviate partiality and special pleading he places people hypothetically behind a veil of ignorance and then asks them how they would conceive of justice.

Among the essential features of this situation is that no one knows his place in society, his class position or social status, nor does anyone know his fortunes in the distribution of natural assets and abilities, his intelligence, strength, and the like. I shall even assume that the parties do not know their conceptions of the good or their special psychological propensities. The principles of justice are chosen behind a veil of ignorance. This ensures that no one is advantaged or disadvantaged in the choice

of principles by the outcome of natural chance or the contingency of social circumstances. Since all are similarly situated and no one is able to design principles to favor his particular condition, the principles of justice are the result of a fair agreement or bargain. For given the circumstances of the original position, the symmetry of everyone's relations to each other, this initial situation is fair between individuals as moral persons, that is, as rational beings with their own ends and capable, I shall assume, of a sense of justice. (Rawls, 1972: 12)

In any case, however the outcome of this thought experiment might be assessed, it leaves out of account both any tradition of solidarity as well as longstanding social injustice. In any given society structural evil is present to the extent that key social arrangements are loaded against people as a whole or a sector of them. Working for justice is a matter of attending to the social imbalances, the disparities of political power, the abuse of official positions, the manipulation of information and other inequities. Account also has to be taken of how these inequities have over time affected different persons, both those who have gained and those who have been deprived of opportunities and even basic necessities. Taking a time slice through society, and ignoring the good and ill of history as Rawls' experiment does, leaves us not with a picture of a healthy society but of a bunch of fearful individuals trying to agree upon rules that would protect their own possessions and personalities against the rapaciousness of others. This study, as it were, aims to look behind Rawls' veil of ignorance and examine the recurrent features of modern society that render people's actual positions unjust and lives inhuman.

1.4.3.3 Consumer Choice in Robert Nozick's utopia

Variations on Rawls' theme are provided by Robert Nozick in his *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (1974). This work, as the author admits, is an extended piece of philosophical reasoning; it explores often with great skill the implications of certain key concepts. Although concerned with determining the rightful scope and limits of state power, Nozick hardly ever draws upon any historical examples or tests his views against actual political situations. Basing himself

upon an understanding of individual human rights he argues cogently for a minimal state. Attractive as this idea is, it presupposes that a majority of individuals have sufficient personal abilities, technical and managerial skills, access to material and economic resources to make society work without state guidance or interference (depending upon one's point of view — communitarian or libertarian). Nozick also presumes that there are no great divisions amongst people along racial, ethnic, gender, class or religious lines. He does not bring into his account the ways people may identify themselves, not just as individuals here and now, but as members of a group whose dynamism today is fuelled by a mixture of pride in their historical achievements and resentment over past wounds. The examples of Rwanda, the former Yugoslavia, and Chechnya come to mind.

One might wish people would voluntarily live and let others live by forming or joining their own chosen community and leaving it for another if and when it no longer suits them. For Nozick

Utopia will consist of utopias, of many different and divergent communities in which people lead different kinds of lives under different institutions. ... Utopia is a framework for utopias, a place where people are at liberty to join together voluntarily to pursue and attempt to realize their own vision of the good life in the ideal community but where no one can *impose* his own utopian vision upon others. (1974: 312)

Apart from looking like a paradise for estate agents (presupposing the various communities can agree about property rights and transfers), this utopian vision offers no clue for sorting out various conflicting claims to land, entrance to cultural and religious sites, access to natural and developed resources, the use and control of infrastructure.

All in all, while Nozick's rather abstract argument for a minimal state offers some subtle points, his work barely touches upon the personal and communal inadequacies — to put it mildly — that afflict many a society, and which are the

focus of this study. In any event, this study does not deal directly with how states should be organized; apart from rejecting totalitarianism it offers no proposals about how extensive or curtailed the powers of the state should be.

1.4.3.4 David Norton's Complementarity of Excellences

Although not so well known, David Norton (1976) pays closer attention than any of the three previous authors to how people's lives actually develop, their relations with others and the influence of social circumstances. His work, *Personal Destinies: A philosophy of ethical individualism*, combines an appreciation of the uniqueness of each person with a nuanced understanding of society. He distinguishes ethical individualism from simply numerical individualism, which does not take account of "the innate, qualitatively unique potential worth of every person." Rawls, he criticizes for "presupposing that all individual features of personhood are morally irrelevant." Consequently Rawls' social ethic only offers "replication in place of complementarity" (1976: 280f) between persons.

Norton avoids exalting the individual at the expense of society by making

a categorial distinction between two broad kinds of sociality, to be termed antecedent sociality and consequent sociality. Every human being is social in the beginning and social in the end, but the two socialities are radically different in kind in virtue of the intervening attainment to individuality. The first is a received sociality to which the person (as child and adolescent) is responsible; the second is a constituted sociality for which he shares responsibility. The sociality that follows from the choice of oneself in no way compromises this choice but extends and fulfills it. It asks for no sacrifice of individuality to the collective interest but exemplified the principle of the complementarity of true individuals. (1976: 253)

Rand, for instance, having never averted to this distinction, rejects all responsibility for consequent sociality, because she only conceives of having to conform to antecedent sociality. Total collectivists, on the other hand, overlook how each person is called to contribute in his or her unique fashion towards consequent sociality.

Norton combines the eudaemonistic views of the Greeks with psychological insights from Abraham Maslow and Erik Erikson. In his view, true individuals are self-actualized persons guided by their personal *daimon*. Someone's *daimon* "is neither the actual person nor a product of the actual person, yet it is fully real, affording to the actual person his supreme aim and establishing the principle by which the actual person can grow in identity, worth, and being" (1976: 14). Even at the best of times, it must be asked whether the complementarity of excellences among true individuals could work out in society as easily as Norton makes out. This study, however, looks at more the worst of times; it examines some of the ways a deficient antecedent sociality can, as it were, internally debilitate or distort a person's *daimon* or externally thwart his or her best efforts. It also takes account of how actions flawed by stupidity, untamed passion or malice in turn lead to a radically defective consequent sociality. It will have to examine too the interplay between consequent and antecedent sociality, and especially how social defects produced by some become the conditions out of which others (or even they themselves) must act.

There is no real clash between a study of society in structural terms and Norton's understanding of personal choice and destiny; the two approaches are rather complementary. The approaches of Rand, Rawls and Nozick — whatever assessment might finally be made of them — simply do not deal with social continuity. The latter two especially take as their starting point the fully formed individual who without social position inherits from history only (unacknowledged) benefits and no burdens. Rand's individuals seem to need society in order to exalt themselves by defying it.

1.5 The Emergence of Post-Modern Artistic Community

When one asks how current social evils could be overcome, the question can be taken up in two different ways. One may either be raising a question from within the mechanistic model or looking for a model beyond that. In the first instance,

one is probably looking for a more effective way of controlling society by restructuring it, designing and imposing a new system, or tightening up its mechanism. But if the mechanistic root metaphor of society is itself questioned, one is now free to ask: how much is social evil inherent in society, because it is now conceived and treated according to an inadequate or even grossly misleading mechanistic paradigm? Matthew Lamb puts his finger on this when he remarks that a redeemed humankind is not *produced* "the way a factory produces consumer objects. That would be a contradiction in terms, for the victims of history are what they are precisely by such an effort to dominate and control" (Lamb, 1982: 2).

This view is evinced in many different quarters. For instance, Johann Baptist Metz speaks of "the principle of exchange" as regulating and underpinning all social relationships (1980: 35). Speaking of the modern predicament, Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, shows the effect of viewing the world, society and ourselves from a scientific or mechanistic point of view. "We master scientific objectivity and detachment, and as a result we suddenly feel not merely detached but cut off, not merely objective but objectlike in a world of objects" (1972: 320). She continues:

The consequences of this kind of experience, the costs of coming to see men too often or too exclusively as inhuman objects, are multiple. ...conceiving of men as objects, we increasingly treat them that way. This need not mean doing them harm, any more than we customarily damage the objects around us. But it does *allow* us to do harm with a minimum of guilt. It does not mean treating men immorally so much as treating them amorally. (1972: 321)

Once people are viewed as so many objects (or even as 'the masses'), one considers social and political issues as a matter of channelling people by propaganda, advertising or administrative measures. But this approach also recoils upon ourselves, as Pitkin indicates, we can no longer "treat even ourselves morally, to identify even with ourselves, to perceive even ourselves as persons. We become unable to experience integrally, with our whole selves, to be totally

absorbed in experience" (1972: 321f). To overcome these alienations, Pitkin suggests that we must learn to combine personal subjectivity with scientific objectivity. Unfortunately, she does not provide a key for effecting the combination.

The aim of Lamb (1982), Winter (1981), Holland (1983) and others searching for a new root metaphor for society is to provide that key. They are trying to find an image that will allow people both as persons and community participants to find and express their full humanity. For this to be accomplished, a genuine *transformation* — the word most commonly used — of people's self-understanding and experience, and hence too of their aims, actions and interactions, and so also of society is required. Holland suggests this might begin in small communities "tapping the cultural roots of the past for the sake of a transformed future, employing new creativity in decentralized social and material technology" (1983: 186). This approach of people transforming themselves as they transform their surroundings and society stems above all from the work of Paulo Freire.

Winter proposes that "the unfolding of human powers in our time makes artistic process a more fitting image of the ways of human dwelling." Without rejecting all previous models in their entirety, he wishes to counter "the destructive potential of organicist and mechanistic imagery," while incorporating their basic strengths. Winter continues:

Thus, the creativity and self-transcending power of human species life can be liberated from the oppressive forces of mechanism and the nostalgic yearning for traditional, organic bonds of blood and soil. ... This sets a context of responsibility for human species life both within the cosmic realm of creation and in the historical realm of justice and peace. (1981: 27)

Being creative calls both for receptivity to what is given with all its possibilities and initiative to develop those possibilities for the benefit of all concerned. The organismic metaphor stressed receptivity and submission to the whole, while individual initiative or agency takes pride of place in the mechanical. Worth-

while art combines both. A more wholesome society would do likewise, at the same time avoiding the kind of receptivity that leads to fatalism or any unrestrained agency that imposes its own aims upon everything else. The creative process Winter has in mind is that of sensitive and disciplined artists able to enter into each others' work, build upon it and bring out the best in their various contributions. To work out in this fashion, for example, a country's constitution, to transform its policy for education or build up its economy for the benefit of all, will not be easy. Since to impose upon everyone even the best designed system would vitiate the process from the start, small local experiments and initiatives are required as a beginning.

Winter's suggestions are basically along the same lines as those of Metz (1980). The former stresses creativity, but recognizes too that "history also involves continuity, memory and tradition" (1981: 27). The latter speaks of a "creative model of a culture of peace", whose central categories are memory, narrative and solidarity (Metz, 1980). This respect for memory and tradition contrasts sharply with a mechanistic view in which anything old is outdated and obsolete.

1.5.1 Some Contemporary Initiatives

There is little need to point out that no currently existing society, no country and certainly not the world as a whole, is actually living out this metaphor. There is a long road of painstaking effort between proposing a new symbol and bringing it to practical embodiment. But still, it seems fair to say, many people throughout the world are in varying ways edging towards something new. The world is growing itself a new skin. What interplay of patterns that skin will display, cannot be predicted, except that many of the taken for granted certainties of a previous mechanistic epoch will be left behind.

Speaking very generally and briefly, it seems worthwhile mentioning here a few of the many efforts being undertaken in different quarters to understand and

fashion society anew. The most striking instance is the remaking of Russian society through *glasnost* and *perestroika*. It is too early to say where it will lead; even to separate out the genuinely new concerns from older style rhetoric used to keep the *nomenklatura* content is difficult. Significant too is the widespread discussion in USA initiated by Robert Bellah and his associates' study, *Habits of the Heart*. It reveals that many Americans have little sense of who they are, personally or communally; tied together by the economy, each holds on tenuously to his or her own private security blanket. Yet amid this lonely unease there is also a readiness "to engage in the caring that nurtures interconnectedness" (1985: 194).

Also noteworthy is the work of the New Economic Network, centred in Britain. (see Ekins, 1986) Dissatisfied with the aims and methods of conventional economics, which in their mathematical abstractness have lost touch with human needs, it is formulating an alternative approach. It is working out concepts and indicators that are more attuned to satisfying genuine human needs, building up society and sustaining the environment. In taking a much longer view, this alternative economics incorporates a sense of human life as narrative into its approach. People engage in economic activities, not solely to satisfy their individual preferences, but as part of the working out of their life story, their relations with others and the environment. So, instead of considering the agents or units of the economy as "free-standing individuals, rendering decisions on their own" (Etzioni, 1988: xi), the alternative economics takes account of how individuals are members of communities with their own history. Yet, Etzioni insists: "The individual and community make each other and require each other" (1988: 9).

Throughout Southern Africa, a wide variety of local 'democratic' initiatives are helping people take more charge of their lives, find themselves as worthwhile people, develop their surroundings and battle against whatever thwarts their lives. The characteristics that Holland mentions, namely, small communities

forming an interdependent network, being ecumenical and participative, and arising among the poor and oppressed, generally hold. Important in bringing such communities about is the "group oriented" approach; exponents of this in Southern Africa are the Lumko Missiological Institute, as well as Anne Hope and Sally Timmel in their *Training for Transformation: Community Workers' Handbook* (1984).

This approach is also partly incorporated into the process of pastoral planning initiated by the Catholic church in Southern Africa. This does not aim at providing a detailed plan or blueprint which every person, parish and church organization must implement. Instead, it recognizes that each grouping within the church must take up the key theme, "Community Serving Humanity," in its own way. The planning document (SACBC, 1989) provides an overall policy, and various pastoral directives fill that out. But each group or small community, depending both upon its own composition and those beyond it whom it should serve, is invited to discern what is needed and make its own response.

It is far too early to say where these and many other initiatives, in both church and society in many countries, will eventually lead. But, there are two intertwined threads running through them. Firstly, the outlook they embody is certainly more akin to an artistic than a mechanical approach. There is a strong desire to break the stifling hold of big systems, even though the alternatives are not always very clear. Secondly, there is a definite return to ethics and human values, which previously had little place in a mechanistic view of life and society. It should not be thought, however, that social sin or structural evil is confined to societies or communities undergirded by mechanistic imagery. People can also be misled by artistic imagery; whitened sepulchres can occur anywhere.

The artistic root metaphor can best be linked theologically with the wisdom tradition, as there attention is drawn to how human wisdom and artistry derive

from God's creative wisdom. One is seeking for a society that will both express and advance the purpose of God. This applies both to the details of everyday life and the overall conception of society. But the wisdom guiding people in such a society is not settled once for all time. Through both receptivity and initiative it must constantly be sought for, discovered for ourselves and revealed to others anew. In this way the artistic metaphor may provide an entry point for people for both respecting and discovering the wisdom that undergirds nature and history. Needless to say, living up to this is not easy. Our own personal shortcomings and faults, as well as the sinful distortions of our society, persistently induce us towards folly instead of wisdom.

1.5.2 Contemporary Society beyond any Single Image

The objection has been made that post-modern society lacks any definite root metaphor, that it cannot be tied down to any one definite image. Furthermore, having recognized the role played by dominant images and grand narratives, they can now be deconstructed. Two points can be made in brief response. First, considering society in terms of a work of art is a very open metaphor; works of art can take many forms. This image leaves it much more open than either the organismic or mechanistic images exactly how society might knit together. Second, the shift from a mechanistic to an artistic image emphasizes the process of bringing society about rather than any set form it might take. Just as an artist composes a picture by making an appropriate response to the already partially shaped material before him, so the members of society endeavour to respond appropriately to events around them. Both the artist and members of society have to judge whether their appropriate response should be one keeping in harmony with what has gone before or striking a contrast. Just as the artist works on his material to form it, so it in its way works on him; likewise members of society through their interactions work on society and it on them. Although the parallelism is not complete, the artistic root metaphor does bring out how open-textured is the relationship between society and its members.

1.6 Instances of Structural Evil

If social transformation was progressing well throughout the world, and individuals and communities everywhere were taking a more creative role in shaping their own life, there would be no great call for a study of social evil. But, while there are high hopes for bringing about a more just and peaceful world, enormous obstacles remain. It would be false optimism to think that these obstacles can be easily skirted around or quickly demolished by a few adjustments in society, for example, a change of government, enacting a law against them, or putting more funds into education; however imperative these measures might be. Many obstacles are entrenched as social evils because people have had no experience of any alternative way of living. Even if they could imagine more desirable arrangements for all concerned, they often are unable to rise above the daily battle for survival. Their lives are so threatened and their society so precarious that they have little or no scope for transforming them. For various reasons, many are entrapped whether they like it or not, often too whether they realize it or not, within sinful social structures. A few instances, not given in any order of priority, should make this evident.

1.6.1 Militarism

This is found when military and security forces, instead of protecting a country so its citizens can conduct political affairs peaceably for the common good, themselves effectively prevent the common good being attained. In short, the military bring about the very insecurity they are meant to be a protection against. This may take place, for instance, through their absorbing such a large slice of public funds that many are impoverished through lack of food, education and work opportunities. Such impoverishment provokes discontent and — from the military point of view — stirs up unrest, which in turn seems to make their presence and activities more necessary. But many join the military in order to secure work, food and education for themselves and their families, so it is not completely lacking in popular support.

1.6.2 Lack of Adequate Health Care

A system of health care, including the training of doctors and nurses, the funding of hospitals and their equipment, the manufacture and sale of drugs, as well as the aura surrounding the medical profession, may contribute to the ill health it is meant to cure. For instance, by making medicine so much the preserve of the specialist, people become less capable of caring for their own health. And by spending on prestige projects, insufficient funds are available for primary health care and preventative medicine.

1.6.3 Sexism

Since our perception of and sensitivity towards sexuality is strongly influenced by culture, as children grow up they must adopt the roles and attitudes their culture provides. More specifically, they identify — not always without a struggle — with the role models exemplified in their family. This makes it extremely difficult to overcome any cultural bias that promotes one sex at the other's expense. Even those of the sex that is demeaned identify with their role fully as that is the only avenue for them to be socially acceptable as the man or woman they are. As long as no alternative models or options are available in their particular society, each person is obliged to take on roles and attitudes that in fact demean both their own and others' sexuality. The displaced rage this produces can be a further threat, and lead to men and women entrenching their own position against one another.

1.6.4 Mass Poverty

Many vicious circles hold people in mass poverty; for instance, unhealthy living conditions enfeeble people and make them prone to disease; hence their ability to work is lessened, and medicines use up any available saving; consequently they are unable to improve their housing. This process is exacerbated when

community organization is broken down, as then cooperation and sharing resources becomes impossible. Apart from sudden natural disasters, the general causes of mass poverty are more social than material. Usually what holds people in poverty is not a absolute shortage of food, building materials, land or other resources. It is due more to the patterns of trade and land holding, superstitions, the lack of suitable education, the impact of industrialization or war depriving a considerable section of the population from access to resources they can use.

1.6.5 Racism

Differences in skin pigmentation, language and culture are used as an aggressive justification of a social order that benefits one group at another's expense. The former group justifies its position of economic or political advantage by assigning human values to biological or cultural differences.

1.6.6 The Debt Burden

Many nations went into debt to foreign banks ostensibly to finance their own development. But with the inability to repay their debts, or even great difficulty to service them, these nations now find themselves in a financial stranglehold. Many reasons such as higher oil prices, lower commodity prices, changes in interest rates, over ambitious plans, corruption and ignorance, have brought this situation about. The overall result is, however, that loans which were meant to assist economic development now actually prevent it; when the cost in human terms, for instance, overcrowded shanty towns, malnutrition and ill health, poor education and high rates of unemployment is reckoned, there is no doubt that the debt burden is another social evil.

1.6.7 Consumerism

This is the social sin provoked by what McCormick, P.T. (1989) calls the "adver-

tising magisterium,” which endeavours not so much to sell products *as a dream*. The kind of advertising that promotes consumerism goes much further than simply giving information helpful to the potential buyer about what products are available, their performance and prices. It usually projects an image of happiness in others’ company or being a social success coming through using the advertised commodity. Such advertising doubly catches people; firstly through our tendency to desire for ourselves what we see others possessing and enjoying, and secondly through our aspiring to the marvellous life that these goods appear to provide. So according to the logic of consumerism, one is prone to argue.

- a. I am worthless without this product.
- b. No one could love me without this product.
- c. No living person would consistently meet my needs as well as this product would.
- d. This product is my greatest need. I must have it.

(McCormick, P.T: 1989: 164)

There have been greedy and envious individuals in every age, but consumerism is characteristic of modern society. As many people as possible have to be persuaded they want whatever might be sold; otherwise, if they fail to buy the economy will collapse with serious social repercussions.

Each of these social evils is usually entwined with others; once the social structure is seriously damaged in one area, its effects show up elsewhere. In every instance of such entrenched evils, detailed historical investigation and social analysis is called for. An oppressive political system may be a structural evil, but the actual historical form it takes, the measures used to uphold it, the way it presents itself as legitimate, and how it draws in collaborators, will vary enormously from one country to another, for instance from Chile to China. Likewise, ill health — ranging from kwashiorkor to heart disease — may be present in both affluent and poverty stricken areas of South Africa, but for considerably different reasons. Simply naming a social condition as a structural evil does not itself give details of the structure or how it came about historically.

That has to be investigated in each case, before effective steps can be taken to transform the situation.

1.7 History Overtaking Nature

In considering different views of society, some attention must also be given to how people relate to their natural and fabricated environment. Through organized work and its increasing application of technology to both agriculture and industry, human activity has been making an increasingly heavy impact on the natural environment. There have been many beneficial results from this in greater food production, better health and a higher standard of living. But, to put it mildly, these benefits are not shared by all equally. Is the reason for this that nature is kinder to some societies than others, or are there social factors involved too?

While it is certainly true that some parts of the globe are relatively kind, both in providing more food and other resources and in afflicting less calamities, that is not the whole story. Although a calamity or natural disaster, such as a drought, hurricane, flood, epidemic or earthquake, is not usually caused by human activity, the extent of its harmful effects upon people often depends largely upon their position in society. For instance, those fortunate enough to live in well built houses are not likely to suffer the same damage in a storm as those relegated to squatter camps. The tremor of an earthquake is the same for everyone, but well applied building codes and organized civil defence teams will limit the death and injuries. While no one can be totally immune from disease, its incidence and spread depends greatly on socio-economic conditions and the administration of public health. An Earthscan booklet (Anders Wijkman and Lloyd Timberlake, 1984) is aptly titled, *Natural Disasters: Acts of God or act of Man?* The authors recount that 'natural' disasters can be made more frequent and dangerous in two ways.

First, people can alter their environment to make it more *prone* to certain disaster triggers, mainly to drought and flood. Second, people (and it appears from fatality statistics to be mainly poor people) can live in dangerous structures on dangerous ground, making themselves more exposed and *vulnerable* to disaster trigger mechanisms. (1984: 29)

It must be added that those who render the environment more prone to disaster are not always the ones who bear the consequences. Also the latter live in dangerous areas, not usually as a matter of choice, but because they are forced by oppressive social structures.

Even in ancient or medieval times, the human impact on the environment was probably greater than people realized. But, since society was largely guided by the organismic metaphor, there was considerable respect for nature. It both sustained and took human life, and not very much could be altered.

The mechanistic root metaphor made a radical change in people's relation to nature. It was now a domain to be questioned, conquered and developed by human agency. By taking nature into the history man himself (very much in a male fashion) was fashioning in freedom, a world free of disease, famine, and natural disasters was promised. But things did not turn out so kindly, as Lamb remarks.

History as a realm of freedom over against nature seemed to hold the promise of overcoming natural and human evils through the progress of science and education. ... [Yet] indeed, the very means which previously were cultivated to promote human emancipation — science and technology — are increasingly seen as perverted by a necrophilic bias. ... Diseases in developing countries are intensified by the displacement of capital for industrial and military expansion. ... Even such tragic famines as in the Sahel or in Bangladesh show how we cannot blame nature so much as the human modernization of hunger. (Lamb, 1982: 3f)

Only in the last decade or two have the full implications of the combination of unrestrained technology with the commercialization of all aspects of human life been grasped. This combination has been given credence by viewing creation as a

field for infinite human progress in a unilinear direction. To overcome this Winter suggests that a fuller appreciation of creation be retrieved. Within the artistic metaphor place can be given for a wide variety of aims, for example, the upbuilding of community and its members, the use of technology as a service to nature and humanity, the recovery of older and diverse cultural traditions, and allowing all the elements, both natural and historical, to sustain each other. Investigating the how evil can distort the relation between human society and the environment goes beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, it remains a background concern, as the full ramifications of social evil will not be apparent unless attention is also given to the natural environment.

1.8 An Initial Placing of the Major Figures of this Study

The social thought of Thomas Aquinas has already been mentioned as basically fitting in with the medieval conception of society based upon organismic imagery. This is not to say that all facets of his thought conform to this imagery. Like any great thinker, his views at times overflow the boundaries of any single metaphor. In certain instances, his thought prepares the way for breaking out of the organismic metaphor.

Both Heinz Kohut and Anthony Giddens are two figures breaking out of the mechanistic tradition of thought. In particular, each is endeavouring to overcome the dichotomy between person and society, individual and structure, that has resulted from human life being dominated by a mechanistic image. Kohut is a psychoanalyst sensitive to the influence of society upon the self and vice versa. Giddens is a sociologist able to take account of the findings of psychology in his theory of human action, and so can present a more nuanced account of the interplay between persons and society. Drawn together, it is hoped, they can contribute to a fuller understanding of the heights and depths of the human story.

Kohut is a psychoanalyst in the Freudian tradition. Freud's theory with its emphasis on drives, discharges of energy, psychic structures, and the channelling of forces (cathexis), is basically mechanistic. This does not mean that Freud should always be read in a reductionist fashion, as though human psychology was no more than complicated mechanics. In many cases his insights ran ahead of his language and imagery; this left considerable ambiguity in his explanations, but also opportunities for development. Kohut has seized such opportunities. While never declaring himself no longer a Freudian, Kohut in pioneering self psychology, as well as in his studies of empathy and creativity, has proposed ideas that go beyond, if not openly break the mechanistic approach. His recurring interest in music, the fine arts and creativity, both as an avenue for understanding the self and as a means towards psychological health, strikes a chord that resonates with Winter's concerns.

Giddens stands in roughly the same relation to Karl Marx, as Kohut does to Freud. Marx, like Freud, shows the importance of structures and the consequences of processes that people are frequently unaware of in their actions. This leads Marx in his later writings to propose a theory of economic determinism for society. Giddens does not accept such a mechanistic view, nor even the neo-organicism of Talcott Parsons' 'structural functionalism.' He maintains that people make their society and history through what they do, but not as a project they intended. The results of one's actions can surprise one. There is no doubt that Giddens examines society from a post-mechanistic viewpoint, but how far his approach fits in with the artistic root metaphor is an open question.

This study aims to draw Thomas Aquinas, Heinz Kohut and Anthony Giddens together in critical correlation (Tracy), so as to achieve a deeper understanding of the interconnections between sin, self and society in our contemporary world. But since the manifestation of sin and evil is shaped by society and history, as well as our understanding of it, account must be taken of the differing socio-historical backgrounds and concerns of the main figures in this study.

The Treatment of Structural Evil in Official Church Documents

“Do they not err that devise evil? Those who devise good
meet loyalty and faithfulness” (Proverbs 14:22).

Only in 1971 did an official document addressed to the Catholic Church as a whole speak of sin and evil in clear structural terms. The Second General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, meeting in Rome, broke new ground in its statement, *Justice in the World*, when it perceived spreading over the world “a network of domination, oppression and abuses” (JW, 3). This chapter traces briefly how structural evil came gradually to be recognized in official church documents. Then it looks at the controversial reception of this idea, and finally at the use made of it by some local churches. This chapter on official documents and the next dealing with theological views need to be read in conjunction. Each

provides the background for the other, and helps explain the other's preoccupations.

Official church statements often draw upon but differ considerably from the writings of individual theologians. At their best, individual theologians draw upon their own learning and experience to respond to issues confronting themselves or their contemporaries; as far as they can theologians witness personally to the faith upon which they rely and the hope that draws them forward. Official church documents, again at their best, are an attempt by representatives of the Christian community to discern the work of the Holy Spirit in particular situations, in proposals for action, or ways of understanding. They usually result from weighing the views and blending the suggestions of various theologians; consequently they are rarely clear-cut in their formulation. While theologians explore and suggest, official statements weigh and confirm. Individual theologians express and usually systematize personal insights, while official documents lay out more broadly what the community should know. For understanding Catholic theology account has to be taken of both, and the interplay between them.

The church needs a healthy tension between its official statements and the explorations of theologians. Both in their different ways are meant to serve the Christian community and people beyond. Unhealthy tension arises when one tries to do the work of the other. Usually theologians go ahead and throw up new ideas, which after a while may receive some confirmation in official documents. Though until recently in the case of the church's social teaching, many papal encyclicals have been in advance of most theologians.

Examining how the social aspects of sin have been treated in official statements is important, because they give in the best instances an assurance that certain ideas and terminology are consonant with Christian tradition. They indicate what lines of approach to social issues it is not only safe but even imperative to

adopt. I say "in the best instances" because official documents do make mistakes, misunderstanding either the situation or views that have been put forward, But, then, there is usually some outcry and later ones usually try to remedy earlier misconceptions. Hence it is important to see official church documents as forming a tradition with a certain in-built correcting mechanism. If a single document is taken in isolation points of significance can easily be missed. Also, in interpreting a document account has to be taken of its degree of authority; for instance, Vatican Council statements carry much more weight than pronouncements by a Roman congregation.

2.1 Leo XIII to Pius XII (1878 - 1958)

During these eighty years the popes showed no ignorance of the social ills of their times, but they were not in a position to grasp how they became embedded in the structures of society.

2.1.1 Leo XIII

The English title of *Inscrutabili*⁴, "On the Evils of Society," Leo XIII's first encyclical written in 1878, bears out his sadness at seeing "the evils which on all sides overwhelm the human race." He continues:

We see about us the general subversion of the supreme truths on which human society is based as on its foundation; the stubbornness of mind which cannot endure any legitimate authority; the perpetual desire of dissension, from which arise intestine quarrels and cruel and sanguinary wars. We see the rejection of the rules which govern morals and ensure the carrying out of justice; the insatiable lust for transitory pleasures together with a forgetfulness for things eternal, reaching to such a degree of insensate fury that wretched beings dare to lay violent hands even on themselves. (*Inscrutabili*, 2)

⁴ Papal encyclicals, apostolic exhortations and other similar documents issued by the pope are known by their opening word or phrase. Since their titles vary considerably in translation, the official Latin titles will be used here, and references be made to the paragraph numbering of the original or translation quoted.

His strictures extend beyond the general public to governments.

We see, further, the inconsiderate government of states, the lavish expenditure and malversion of the public funds, the impudence of those who from the moment that they commit the worst treason endeavour to pass for champions of liberty and of all the privileges of humanity; and finally, the deadly plague that penetrates into the very marrow of human society and leaves it no repose, threatening it ever with fresh revolutions and the most calamitous results. (*Inscrutabili*, 2)

Leo XIII was writing a few years after the papacy had lost control of the papal states in central Italy, and hence used the recent events in Italian history to explain how such social evils originated.

Now We are convinced that the principal source of these evils is the contempt and rejection of the holy and august authority of the Church, which presides in the name of God over the human race, and which is the support and maintenance of all legitimate authority. (*Inscrutabili*, 3)

A similar portrayal of social ills occurs in Leo XIII's attack on the Socialists in his encyclical, *Quod Apostolici Muneris*, written in the same year. Since society was viewed as an organic whole, with each organ necessary for supporting the whole (Gudorf, 1980: 176), it was unthinkable that its basic configuration could be wrongly put together. Society in the final analysis was part of the well ordered cosmic hierarchy created by God. The overall wellbeing of society or the common good thus reflects the design intended by God (see Schuck, 1991: 86). Though, due to abuse by bad rulers, revolutionaries, anarchists, nihilists, freemasons, etc the body of society could be diseased, but not harbouring evil in its very constitution. As God had laid down the natural form of the human body, it was presumed that God had likewise laid down at least the basic form of any social body too. Society was thus held together and governed by natural law in somewhat the same way as the human organism. This conception could lead to a very static view of society, and the full identification of those in positions of power with God-given appointments.

Furthermore, in being so close to these conflicts which threatened the position of

the Catholic Church, and especially the papacy, it was next to impossible for Leo XIII or his advisers to view society apart from their conflictual involvement in it. When, however, in 1888 Leo XIII turned to a more distant issue, namely the abolition of African slavery in Brazil, he could view it as a "system ... which is wholly opposed to that which was originally ordained by God and by nature."⁵ (*In Plurimis*, 3) He adds: "History is full of examples showing what a seedbed of crime, what a pest and calamity, this system has been for states" (*In Plurimis*, 4) No analysis is made of it as system, however; instead he simply condemns it with a colourful description of the ills it brings.

Likewise, Leo XIII's most famous social encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, published in 1891 on the Condition of Working People had no illusions about the evils, especially the widespread poverty, prevalent in modern industrialized society. His depiction of the times combines the language of personal morality with that of social description. This is evident in the following passage.

Public institutions and the laws have repudiated the ancient religion. Hence by degrees it has come to pass that workingmen have been given over, isolated and defenceless, to the callousness of employers and the greed of unrestrained competition. The evil has been increased by rapacious usury, which, although more than once condemned by the Church, is nevertheless, under a different form but with the same guilt, still practised by avaricious and grasping men. And to this must be added the custom of working by contract, and the concentration of so many branches of trade in the hands of a few individuals, so that a small number of very rich men have been able to lay upon the masses of the poor a yoke little better than slavery itself. (RN, 2)

While such writing brings his moral indignation over powerfully, its mixing two realms of discourse, the individual and the collective, obscures the causes of these social evils. One passage, nevertheless, comes close to analyzing the structure of society.

⁵ Recognition of a particular ill in society and recognition of the whole societal system as evil are of two different logical types. "It is the difference between talking in a language which a physicist might use to describe how one variable acts upon another and talking in a language about the circuit as a whole which reduces or increases difference." (Bateson, 1980: 120) When Leo XIII was a participant in the societal system, or Risorgimento Italy, he could point out the evil in other participants' actions, because of their harmful effect upon others including himself (among other criteria). But when viewing slavery as a system, he is using language of another logical type.

For the effect of civil change and revolution has been to divide society into two widely different castes. On the one side there is the party which holds the power because it holds the wealth; which has in its grasp all labour and all trade, and so manipulates for its own benefit and its own purposes all the sources of supply, and which is powerfully represented in the councils of the State itself. On the other side there is the needy and powerless multitude, sore and suffering, always ready for disturbance. (RN, 35)

But the full implications of this assessment are not followed up, as Leo XIII does not suggest, for instance, how power should be redistributed. He abhorred anything that smacked of revolutionary action by workers or the poor. Instead, society should be improved by those in positions of authority overcoming their moral deficiencies; those in government enacting laws to protect the needy and those with economic power treating their workers and customers better. In Dorr's assessment:

Pope Leo XIII seems to have presumed that socio-economic reform could come about without significant political changes and even without major challenge to existing political structures. The presumption helps to explain how he could combine the real concern for the poor expressed in *Rerum Novarum* with a total rejection of anything that might be considered subversive. (1983: 50; 1992: 57)

2.1.2 Pius XI

For the understanding of social structures, no significant papal statement occurs until Pius XI issued *Quadragesimo Anno* in 1931. Its title in some English translations, "Reconstructing the Social Order," indicates an advance in papal thinking from *Rerum Novarum*. Pius XI's main structural proposal is "to abolish disputes between opposing classes, and [instead] to create and foster harmony between vocational groups [each composed of those practising the same trade or profession]" (QA, 81). "All such groups should unite to promote, each in its own sphere, [the common good] with friendly harmony" (QA, 84).

Another proposal calling for structural as well as moral change (see Dorr, 1983: 63; 1992: 82) is that: "the proper ordering of economic life cannot be left to free

competition" (QA, 88). The Great Depression of the 1930s made that evident. Although Pius XI was the first pope to mention 'social justice' as such, he never really made it clear how economic affairs should be ordered by public authorities so that "social justice and social charity" might prevail. In this he lays himself open to Gudorf's charge (1980: 10), disputed by Dorr (1983: 286f, ftn 28; 1992: 384, ftn 6) that he was only calling for moral, and not structural, restraints upon 'economic dictatorship.'

A crucial insight into Pius XI's assumptions about society is given in his depiction of the past:

At one period there existed a social order which, though by no means perfect in every respect, corresponded nevertheless in a certain measure to right reason according to the needs and conditions of the times. That this order has long since perished is not due to the fact that it was incapable of development and adaptation to changing needs and circumstances, but it is due to the fact that men were hardened in excessive self-love, and refused to extend that order, as was their duty, to the increasing numbers of the population ... (QA, 97)

Once it is assumed that society is (or was at one time) basically good and fine, then all ills must derive from its members' sins and weaknesses, their personal faults and rejection of proper authority. Hence "the first and most necessary remedy ... lies in a reform of conduct" (QA, 98).

Pius XI follows this approach in his examination of the root causes of social disorder. Later in the encyclical he describes and denounces a number of social sins, for instance, making "rapid profits with the least labour," "serious injustices and frauds perpetrated beneath the shelter of the company's name," and the stimulation of "human desires... for profit" without providing "anything really useful." The fundamental cause of such ills "lies in the disorderly affections of the soul, a sad consequence of original sin." He does not inquire into how society mediates original sin. Nevertheless, the encyclical admits that "the condition of economic life today, lays more snares than ever for human weakness" (QA, 132).

Six years later in his encyclical against Atheistic Communism, *Divini Redemptoris*, Pius XI admits in his appeal to “Christian employers and industrialists” that their “task is often a difficult one.” They are burdened with “a legacy of error from an unjust economic system which has ruinously affected many generations” (DR, 70). This system, which for example forces them to keep wages low in order to stay in business, is a structure imposed upon them and not of their own making.

2.1.3 Pius XII

One area where a kind of social critique occurs is in the area of law; the laws of the country should uphold the law of God and the natural law. Pius XII used this approach in his first encyclical, *Summi Pontificatus*, written in 1939 just as the Second World War was breaking out.

One leading mistake We may single out, as the fountain-head, deeply hidden, from which the evils of the modern state derive their origin. Both in private life and in the state itself, and moreover in the mutual relations of race with race, of country with country, the one universal standard of morality is set aside; by which We mean the natural law, now buried away under a mass of destructive criticism and of neglect.

... The voice of nature, which instructs the uninstructed and even those to whom civilization has never penetrated, over the difference between right and wrong, becomes fainter and fainter till it dies away. (Ch II)

Faced with the massive evils of Naziism, Fascism and Communism, and then with the threat of nuclear annihilation during the Cold War, Pius XII tried to bring the world back to God, the one immutable source of law and morality, justice and social order. His understanding of evil was inevitably — because of the times and his own temperament — metaphysical, rather than structural.

2.2 John XXIII, Paul VI & the Second Vatican Council

Making an assessment of the impact and significance of the Second Vatican

Council and the two popes who presided over it is still difficult, both because their words and actions are open to different interpretations and the issues they dealt with are not yet resolved.

2.2.1 John XXIII (1958-1962)

A whole new chapter of the Church's social teaching opened with John XXIII's encyclical, *Mater et Magistra*. His own personality, together with the wish to affirm people's goodness, and the fairly successful reconstruction of the Western world after World War II, precluded him from speaking at any length about social evils. This is most apparent in his *Pacem in Terris*, which has been criticized for overlooking "disorder, sin, selfishness, aggressivity, envy and hatred" (Curran, 1972: 122-23; 1974: 9).

In looking at social change from the positive side, without denying its negative aspects, John XXIII differed from his predecessors who saw present society mainly as a deterioration of the good society that existed in the past. As Joseph Ratzinger explains:

His [John XXIII's] optimism essentially consisted in rejecting the romantic nostalgia for the Middle Ages which makes people forget that every age belongs to God and can and must stand open, each in its own time, to God's eternal present. (in Vorgrimler, 1969: 123)

Even Gudorf, whose evaluation of the Church's social teaching differs considerably from that of Ratzinger, observes: "He [John XXIII] thought he saw his eternal truth being made manifest amid all the change." (1980: 17)

This is especially evident when John XXIII notes that a "characteristic of our time is undoubtedly an increase in the number of social relationships" (MM, 59). Society was no longer viewed simply as a given, as nature was supposed to be, but was shaped historically for good or ill by human activity. In accepting this more flexible outlook on society a step was taken along the way towards the

church officially recognizing both the variability and moral ambiguity of social structures.

2.2.2 The Second Vatican Council (1961-64)

As the Second Vatican Council (hereafter 'the Council') progressed its prevailing mood became one of optimism in which both the Church and society could be updated in accordance with John XXIII's call for *aggiornamento*. Hence it was not the occasion to expect a thorough study of sin and evil, especially in their social dimensions.

Furthermore, on many occasions the Council tried to say more than it had the words, theory and skill to express. As Rosemary Haughton observed: "There is a gap between what 'wants to be said' and the means to say it" (1967: 480). In reply to Eagleton's criticism of dualism in *Gaudium et Spes*, Haughton writes:

The language of the Constitution [of the Church in the Modern World] is, indeed, a dualist language which cannot possibly say what needs to be said, but it is evident that new things are 'trying to be said', and it is the failure to do so that makes the attempt tragic. (1967: 482)

The Council itself rather acknowledged this when it stated:

The human race has passed from a rather static concept of reality to a more dynamic, evolutionary one. In consequence, there has arisen a new series of problems, a series as important as can be, calling for new efforts of analysis and synthesis. (G&S, 5; see also 91)

In other words, the Council raised more issues than it resolved. This holds for its approach to social sin/structural evil, even though it never used these terms.

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*), the first document the Council produced (1962), said the personal aspect of sin as "an

offence against God" should be stressed more than its "social consequences" (SC, 109). But by 1964 in the Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*) much more concern was given to the social situation. In its reading the signs of the times it states in general terms the hope and anguish that people experience today. It begins by pointing out that: "Today, the human race is passing through a new stage of its history." Even though many changes are "triggered by the intelligence and creative energies of man, these changes recoil upon him, upon his decisions and desires, both individual and collective, and upon his manner of thinking and acting with respect to things and to people." The Council does not view the problems of the modern world, certainly to begin with, in terms of good and evil, but as a "crisis of growth." For instance, "while man extends his power in every direction, he does not always succeed in subjecting it to his own welfare." Though after mentioning hunger and poverty it adds: "Never before today has man been so keenly aware of freedom, yet at the same time, new forms of social and psychological slavery make their appearance" (G&S, 4).

When it might have spoken in moral terms of sin, *Gaudium et Spes* speaks instead of 'contradictions and imbalances' in the modern world.

Significant differences crop up too between races and between various kinds of social orders; between wealthy nations and those which are less influential or are needy; finally, between international institutions born of the popular desire for peace, and the ambition to propagate one's own ideology, as well as collective greed existing in nations or other groups.

What results is mutual distrust, enmities, conflicts, and hardships. Of such man is at once the cause and the victim. (G&S, 8)

To balance its positive approach, one characterized by redemptive hope, the Council at the insistence of several of its members, added an article on sin. Early drafts had only referred to sin indirectly. So in the final draft we read:

Often refusing to acknowledge God as his beginning, man has disrupted also his proper relationship to his own ultimate goal. At the same time he became out of

harmony with himself, with others, and with all created things. Therefore man is split within himself. As a result, all of human life, whether individual or collective, shows itself to be a dramatic struggle between good and evil, between light and darkness. Indeed, man finds that by himself he is incapable of battling the assaults of evil successfully, so that everyone feels as though he is bound by chains. (G&S, 13)

But this is no more than a general lament over human immorality, which Karl Rahner had at the time pointed out was fruitless. Instead of recognizing that sin cannot be fully overcome before Christ's second coming, and showing the consequences of that for human action, the document only expresses what everybody experiences. So on balance, instead of showing how to act in a sinful world, *Gaudium et Spes* still contains, what Rahner called, "the ideology of a better or even of an excellent world" (see Auer in Vorgrimler, 1969: 195). In this vein Gregory Baum comments on this section:

We find here not a single word about social sin! There is no reference to the structures of oppression in which people find themselves, which must be analyzed, named, fought and eventually overcome. Vatican II affirmed the best of liberal society. (Baum in Fagin, 1984: 87)

Against this rather harsh and somewhat anachronistic judgment, must be set some other statements of the Council that pave the way towards an understanding of social sin. For instance, in dealing with the interdependence of person and society, it states:

... the disturbances which so frequently occur in the social order result in part from the natural tensions of economic, political and social forms. But at a deeper level they flow from man's pride and selfishness, which contaminate even the social sphere. When the structure of affairs is flawed by the consequences of sin, man, already born with a bent toward evil, finds there new inducements to sin, which cannot be overcome without strenuous efforts and the assistance of grace. (G&S, 25)

Although these articles refer to the social and collective dimension of evil, as well as to its experiential aspect, no clear insight is given into how pride, personal sin, the rejection of God, and the evils inhering in social structures are connected. Likewise, when the document talks of "individual men and their associations [cultivating] in themselves the moral and social virtues" (G&S: 30),

and when in connection with human progress it exclaims “the order of values is jumbled” (G&S: 37), we have instances of the Council trying to say more than it had the language to express. It indicates a general direction, but falls short on the provision of guidelines for action amid the perplexities of contemporary society. This failure to delineate an adequate theology of sin, when faced with the ambiguities of human progress and the increasing complexity of social relations, was partly responsible for the immense change of view that took place in the Catholic church during the late 1960s. Then there was a swing from a naively optimistic view of society, thinking that utopia was around the corner, to an angry one, that blamed sinful social structures for every evil.

It appears that the Council was more concerned about sin in society, because of its harmful effect upon individual morality, than because of its consequences upon people. It recognized that people “are often diverted from doing good and spurred toward evil by the social circumstances in which they live and are immersed from their birth” (G&S, 25). As Otto Semmelroth explains in his commentary on this article:

Affected by the consequences of sin, [social] disorder in turn exercises a seductive fascination on man’s susceptibility to sin. Here there is no hope for man if he does not seek strength beyond his own powers from the helpful influence of grace. (in Vorgrimler, 1969: 169f)

The Council adds, admittedly rather in passing when it was dealing with religious freedom: “Many pressures are brought to bear upon men of our day, to the point where the danger arises lest they lose the possibility of acting on their own judgment” (DH, 8).

On a practical level, the Council recognized in the Decree on the Laity (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*) that the church’s apostolic endeavours should be concerned “with the common attitudes and social background of those members for whom [they are] designed. Otherwise, those engaged in the apostolate will often be unequal to the pressure of public opinion or of social institutions” (AA,

18). Where public opinion and social institutions have a deleterious effect, they can only be countered by organized action.

Where the Council does examine the harmful consequences of social arrangements, it puts the harm down to misplaced development that intensifies social inequalities. This comes over in its reflection on socio-economic matters:

While an enormous mass of people still lack the absolute necessities of life, some, even in less advanced countries, live sumptuously or squander wealth. Luxury and misery rub shoulders. While the few enjoy very great freedom of choice, the many are deprived of almost all possibility of acting on their own initiative and responsibility, and often subsist in living and working conditions unworthy of human beings. (G&S, 63)

While the Council speaks out against widespread evil, it only hesitantly examines the inbuilt socio-economic mechanisms that sustain such inequalities and deprivation. Nevertheless it did admit that: "In many instances there exists a pressing need to reform economic and social structures" (G&S, 86). Here it appears to have in mind the breaking up of large estates where land is needed and not properly used, the provision of better working conditions (G&S, 71), and a more healthy system of world trade (G&S, 85).

Another passage from the Council, one dealing with atheism, gives a hint of how evil in society, particularly when it is upheld by Christian believers, "can have more than a little to do with the birth of atheism." The language is very cautious, as the Council was venturing on to new ground in suggesting that Christians had a responsibility on the social, and not solely doctrinal, level to reveal God to their contemporaries. If they "are deficient in their religious, moral, or social life, they must be said to conceal rather than reveal the authentic face of God and religion" (G&S, 19). Whether or not the god they evidently adhere to is worthy of credence or not, depends on the values that are actually upheld in their actions and social involvement.

Neither the documents nor the impact of the Council can be easily summed up; it opened the church's doors rather than showing how to proceed once one emerged. Since many ideas remained implicit, this led to later disagreements about what the Council actually meant. Its statements more indicate a transition the church should accomplish, than a final point of arrival. The openness to society that it engendered enabled church members to think of society in structural terms, and that prepared the way for understanding social sin. With hindsight one can read this notion back into its texts, but the Council did not however attain that insight itself.

2.3 Medellin (1968)

In order to grasp how Vatican teaching developed, some attention has to be given to the Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops, which took place in Medellin, Colombia in August-September 1968. Although this was a meeting of bishops in one continent, it set the agenda for many initiatives throughout the church. Medellin was very aware of the widespread and entrenched injustices in Latin America; many of its documents begin by outlining the sinful situation in which millions of Latin Americans find themselves; gone is the euphoria of the early sixties and the Council, which rather thought that 'development' would lead the poorer countries out of misery.

Surprisingly, the Medellin chapter on "Justice" has a far less searching analysis of the ills of Latin America than the one on "Peace." The former diagnosed the continent's "almost universal frustration of legitimate aspirations" (MDJ, 1) as due to:

the lack of socio-cultural integration, in the majority of our countries, [which] has given rise to the superimposition of cultures. In the economic sphere systems flourished which consider solely the potential of groups which great earning power. This lack of adaptation to the characteristics and to the potentials of all our people, in turn, gives rise to frequent political instability and the consolidation of purely formal institutions. To all of this must be added the lack of solidarity which, on the

individual and social levels, leads to the committing of serious sins, evident in the unjust structures which characterize the Latin American situation. (MDJ, 2)

This chapter has, what Baum (in Fagin, 1984) terms a 'soft' notion of liberation, and hence also of social evil. Basically, once people are converted to the Christian message, they will in turn bring about the requisite structural changes.

We will not have a new continent without new and reformed structures, but, above all, there will be no new continent without new men, who know how to be truly free and responsible according to the light of the Gospel. (MDJ, 3)

By contrast, the chapter on Peace in speaking of "those realities that constitute a sinful situation" (MDP, 1), espouses a 'hard' notion of liberation and hence of social evil. While it is admitted that the misery in Latin America is partly due to natural causes, the document systematically names the socio-economic and political tensions that negate peace. Here it spells out the various tensions between classes and those caused by internal colonialism within Latin America, as well as international tensions and neocolonialism from other continents.

In speaking of this situation as 'sinful,' and not as an unfortunate convergence of trying circumstances, Medellin brings out that the situation results from human choices or as is often the case a failure to choose. Gustavo Gutierrez explains: "An unjust situation does not happen by chance; it is not something branded by a fatal destiny: there is human responsibility behind it" (1973: 175). But what people have brought about by greed, the abuse of power as well as neglect, can also be overcome by people taking responsibility for changing the situation. Hence, in speaking of a "sinful situation" in Latin America, Medellin was not simply describing the social order to be found there, but challenging everyone to repudiate the whole system.

This can only be accomplished when structural sin is named and analyzed, otherwise it cannot be seen clearly and wrestled with. This is difficult because the sinful situation itself shapes people's perceptions of themselves, their interests

and social aspirations. For instance, it systematically thwarts “the legitimate aspirations of the ignored sectors” (MDP, 4), while leading the dominant sector to “characterize as subversive activities all attempts to change the social system which favours the permanence of their privileges” (MDP, 5). People from both the dominant and marginal sector of society, in divergent ways, are “caught in repressive structures beyond their personal choice, structures that affect every aspect of their being; thus personal growth becomes available to them only as they, in solidarity, struggle for emancipation” (Baum in Fagin, 1984: 84).

With the advantage of hindsight, Baum draws out the contrast between the chapter on Justice and that on Peace:

... The ‘soft’ notion of liberation supposes that oppression in society is produced by sin, which in one way or another we all share, and hence must be overcome by the conversion of people from sin to grace, while the ‘hard’ notion of liberation considers reflections on sin in general or the sin in the hearts of people as an inappropriate analysis. It is necessary to focus on social sin, in the Latin American case on imperialism, colonialism and the structures of marginalization. These shall not be overcome by the entry of individuals into greater holiness, but if at all, only as the oppressed in solidarity wrestling together to overcome the evil system. (Baum in Fagin, 1984: 83)

The Medellin documents set the tone for the Synod of Bishops that met in Rome three years later.

2.4 “Justice in the World” (1971)

The document produced by the synod, *Justice in the World*, is the first statement addressed to the Church as a whole which speaks clearly about structural evil.⁶

⁶ The Medellin documents, although very influential, came from the combined meeting of the bishops’ conferences of Latin America; hence they are not authoritative statements addressed to the whole world. The Synod of Bishops, however, is representative of the whole Church and thus its statements are authoritative throughout the world. Yet a question arises here. For, while Paul VI agreed that the 1971 synod’s statements on justice and the priesthood should be published, they have never been officially endorsed word for word by any pope. This has led some to question or try to undermine their veracity, particularly of the claim: “Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel.” (JW, 6) But judging by its reception in many corners of the world, and the frequent appeal to the above statement, there can be little doubt of its affirmation by the church at large.

The urgency of dealing with the structural dimensions of sin was brought out by Archbishop Plourde. Addressing the synod, he said the Church's "moral teaching must at all costs stop giving privileged treatment to private ethics, wherein sin is seen primarily as a private matter, rarely as association, consciously or not, with the forces of oppression, alienation and physical violence" (reported in McCormick, 1973: 94 n91; reprinted 1981: 464 n91). While not providing any theory about social sin or structural evil, it nevertheless perceives

the serious injustices which are building around the world of men a network of domination, oppression and abuses, which stifle freedom and which keep the greater part of humanity from sharing in the building up and enjoyment of a more just world. (JW, 3).

After mentioning the effects on "those who suffer violence and are oppressed by unjust systems and structures," the synod speaks of "a world that by its perversity contradicts the plan of the Creator" (JW, 5). In mentioning sin as going against God's plan for the world, the synod brings out a fresh aspect of social sin.

Like the Medellin documents, the synod describes some of the structural injustices that afflict the world, and then ends by speaking of education for justice. This gives an insight into how social institutions, not only impose upon people from outside, but form them from within.

The school and the communications media, which are often obstructed by the established order, allow the formation only of the man desired by that order, that is to say, man in its image, not a new man but a copy of man as he is [viz. someone confined by narrow individualism and with a mentality that exalts possessions]. (JW, 50)

For education to help people break out of such confines, this demands

a renewal based on the recognition of sin in its individual and social manifestations. ... It will likewise awaken a critical sense, which will lead us to reflect on the society in which we live and on its values; it will make men ready to renounce these values when they cease to promote justice for all men. (JW, 51)

Commenting a year later on *Justice in the World*, McCormick adds that we often

fail to recognize the sinfulness of our situation, as our perception “is rooted in the values and behavioral standards of our culture” (1973: 464).

2.5 Paul VI (1962-78)

Both Paul VI's encyclical, *Populorum Progressio* (1967) and his apostolic letter, *Octogesima Adveniens* (1971), deal with various social injustices, the requirements of true human development and the varied role of Christians in this process. Although more space is given to detailing the injustices inherent in different social structures, Paul VI, nevertheless, calls for a change in human attitudes and national ambitions as well as in structures, otherwise, he warns:

the most revolutionary ideologies lead only to a change of masters; once installed in power in their turn, these new masters surround themselves with privileges, limit freedoms and allow other forms of injustice to become established. (OA, 45)

By the mid-seventies, considerable controversy had arisen over the validity of Latin American liberation theology. With this in mind, the Third General Assembly on the Synod of Bishops called by Paul VI in 1974 declared in its closing message that the church “can draw from the Gospel the most profound reasons and ever new incentives ... to eliminate the social consequences of sin which are translated into unjust social and political structures” (in Gremillion 1976: 597). Here there is an explicit linking of sin, its social consequences and unjust structures.

In the Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, that Paul VI produced in 1975 from the findings of the Synod, he said:

The Church considers it to be undoubtedly important to build up structures which are more human, more just, more respectful of the rights of the person and less oppressive and less enslaving, but she is conscious that the best structures and the most idealized systems soon become inhuman if the inhuman inclinations of the human heart are not made wholesome, if those who live in these structures or who rule them do not undergo a conversion of heart and of outlook. (EN, 36)

In affirmation of liberation theology, Paul VI goes on to say: "The necessity of ensuring fundamental human rights cannot be separated from this just liberation which is bound up with evangelization and which endeavours to secure structures safeguarding human freedoms" (EN, 39). How such statements are to be read depends upon what is understood by 'structures' and 'systems,' and what is included within the notion of "conversion of heart and outlook." If a structure is some particular, and rather evident, social arrangement such as a country's legal system, its constitution, its production planning or welfare service, this can always be abused by unscrupulous individuals. Certainly, no set of structural arrangements, however well thought out, will bring justice about in any society without people trying to be just to one another. But, if 'structures' and 'systems' are taken in a deeper sense, as the underlying social patterns which often preconsciously form people's perceptions of and attitudes towards one another, then it is not so easy to distinguish between personal conversion and structural change.

While Paul VI seemed clear in his own mind about what was required, particularly in the developing world, his terminology was ambiguous. It could be interpreted in diverse ways by people with different experiences of social injustice and with varying understandings of the relation between self and society.

2.6 John Paul II & the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (1978-1989)

With the election of John Paul II as pope, and following that his appointment of Joseph Ratzinger as cardinal prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (henceforth CDF), official church documents have taken a new line.

John Paul II's own theological approach stems from his earlier studies in, what might be termed, 'personalist phenomenology.' His study, *The Acting Person*,

endeavours to come to grips with “human reality at the most propitious point, the point that is indicated by the experience of man and which man cannot abandon without a feeling of having abandoned himself” (Wojtyla, 1979: 22). This study brings out how above all a false image of human nature leads people into social enslavement. Writing in 1977 in a country dominated by Marxism, he rejected as “prejudiced and misleading” the view that:

the danger of ‘dehumanization’ of our present-day civilization lies chiefly in the system of things — man’s relationship to nature, the system of production and distribution of material goods, the blind pursuit of progress, etc. ... [for] it is man who creates the systems of production, forms of technical civilization, utopias of future progress, programs of social organization of human life, etc. Thus it is up to him to prevent such forms of civilization from developing that would cause a dehumanizing influence and ensuing alienation of the individual. (Wojtyla, 1979: 297)

This outlook is given a theological underpinning in his first papal encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis*, where John Paul II takes up the Council’s theme that Christ “fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his most high calling” (G&S, 22). The truth Christ brings will make man free (see John 8:32). But “man’s true freedom is not found in everything that the various systems and individuals see and propagate as freedom.” Instead, Christ “frees man from what curtails, diminishes and as it were breaks off this freedom at its root, in man’s soul, his heart and his conscience.” This has been confirmed by the example of those who “have reached true freedom and have manifested it even in situations of external constraint,” like Christ himself when he appeared before Pilate (RH, 12). John Paul II thus sees the Church’s task of making “every element of this life correspond to man’s true dignity” and being “aware of all that is opposed to that process” (RH, 14).

2.6.1 Cardinal Ratzinger and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

Although they are not such high level documents as papal encyclicals, in order

to understand the controversy about social sin, attention must be given to two documents coming from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The 1984 "Instruction on Certain Aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation'," *Libertatis Nuntius*, took the understanding of 'personalism' further than John Paul II. This document signed by Cardinal Ratzinger displays his neo-Augustinian position, which essentially restricts the battleground between sin and grace to the human heart. In this vein, the CDF states:

Liberation is first and foremost liberation from the radical slavery of sin. (Intro.)
Christ, our Liberator, has freed us from sin and from slavery to the law and to the flesh, which is the mark of the condition of sinful mankind. (IV, 2)

... sin is the greatest evil, since it strikes man in the heart of his personality. (IV, 12)

... the full ambit of sin, whose first effect is to introduce disorder into the relationship between God and man, cannot be restricted to "social sin". The truth is that only a correct doctrine of sin will permit us to insist on the gravity of its social effects. (IV, 14)

... the specific character of the salvation he [Jesus Christ] gave us ... is above all liberation from sin, which is the source of all evils. (VI, 7)

The overall impression given, although it is difficult to pin this untidy document down, is that the work of salvation and liberation take place in the human heart. Consequently, caring for the poor, working for social justice or struggling to overcome political and economy enslavement, are not so much part of the redemption but merely effects flowing from it. At the very least, this overlooks how people have in struggling against unjust social structures often found God anew and been transformed in their hearts.

Nuntius libertatis fuelled the controversy over the acceptability of liberation theology. Its publication evoked many strident replies; one of the most important being from Juan Luis Segundo. He claims that this document makes distinctions into separations (1985: 63); whereas according to Cardinal Ratzinger "where there is no dualism there is totalitarianism" (1987: 151). The divergence between

these approaches is evident in their views on how the person is related to social structures. Ratzinger basically separates the person and morality, along with grace and salvation, on one side from secular social, political or economic structures on the other side. "Structures, whether they are good or bad, are the result of man's actions and so are consequences more than causes." Seeming what is required to overcome unjust structures is "the effective search for justice, self-control and the exercise of virtue" (IV, 15). To this, Segundo retorts:

The reader may ask what the purpose of self-control is when the document is speaking of "structures which are evil and which cause evil." Well, although it may seem strange to the reader, self-control is the solution proposed for the overthrow of such structures. If there were self-control and the practice of virtue, there would not be unjust social structures. (1985: 64)

Another reason for the CDF's downplaying any concern with structures is because such concern is too closely connected with Marxist thought. Marxism is the only social theory mentioned that offers "a scientific analysis of the structural causes of poverty" (VII, 2). So if attention was given to the unjust structuring of society, this would in their view lead to the acceptance of the whole Marxist theory and programme of action. In this vein, 'capitalism' would be viewed as the fundamental structural evil, and 'class struggle' as the strategy for overcoming it. But, while such borrowing from Marxist thought would "give the initial impression of a certain plausibility," it would oversimplify and "prevent any really rigorous examination of the causes of poverty" (VII, 11). It would also obscure how there are other structural evils beside economic ones, such as racism, sexism and environmental degradation.⁷

The CDF is rightly concerned about the totalitarian view (whoever might have held it) that "new structures will of themselves give birth to a 'new man' in the

⁷ This perspective is evident, for instance, in the draft document "Reconciliation and Penance in Southern Africa," drawn up in October 1982 by the SACBC Theological Advisory Commission. It begins by claiming that "the basic division in SA society is the division between *poor* and *rich*." (TAC, 1982: 3) Archbishop Hurley called this statement "highly controvertible." He added: "Many would say that the division between rich and poor is due principally to the division between white and black and the dispossession of the blacks by the whites during the colonial era." Whereas, the opening section of the TAC report makes racialism secondary: "the unique feature of capitalist development in SA and its resulting divisions is the fact that it was shaped, enhanced and legitimised, but also restrained, by RACIALISM. ...racial divisions were strengthened by capitalism because they served the interests of capitalism's needs for cheap labour" (TAC, 1982, 6).

sense of the truth of man" (XI, 9). Or that "the overthrow by means of revolutionary violence of structures which generate violence is not *ipso facto* the beginning of a just regime" (XI, 10). Yet while this is true, the CDF fails to see how structures actually enter into and so shape people's personalities; in particular how evil structures distort people's self-understanding, twist their feelings, severely restrict their ability to make free and responsible decisions, and even obscure the revelation of the true God. One reason for this failure is that the members of the CDF are looking at the struggle for justice from afar, not realizing that the poor are often members of the Church whose daily lot is to struggle in faith against the oppressive structures that constrict their whole lives and threaten their very survival. One summing up of this document on its first appearance was:

Unfortunately, [it] does not provide sufficient criteria for distinguishing between the creative good that is struggling to be born and so upsetting the present order of society, and the destructive forces of evil which may masquerade as order and stability. (Connor, 1984: 7)

2.6.2 An Analogical Understanding of 'Social Sin'

Later in 1984, John Paul II issued his apostolic exhortation, *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, as a follow up to the 1983 synod of bishops. As far as social sin is concerned, here one senses a wish to make up for the ineptitude of the CDF Instruction earlier that year. Relying upon the view that language makes use of analogies, John Paul II addresses the issue head on by stating: "one can speak of *personal* and *social* sin; from one point of view, every sin is *personal*; from another point of view every sin is *social*, insofar as and because it also has social repercussions" (R&P, 15). These two points of view, however, do not have equal weight; the personal viewpoint provides the prime analogate. Hence he explains:

Sin, in the proper sense, is always a *personal act*, since it is an act of freedom on the part of an individual person, and not properly of a group or community. ... Hence there is nothing so personal and untransferable in each individual as merit for virtue or responsibility for sin. (R&P, 16)

According to the theory of analogy, 'proper' does not stand in contrast to 'improper,' but brings out what is 'primary' from whatever is 'secondary' or 'derivative.' Hence social sin is a derived notion.

Three meanings or aspects of 'social sin' are then distinguished:

- (1) Every personal sin not only has consequences for the person committing it, but because he or she is joined in solidarity with others, it "has repercussions on the entire ecclesial body and the whole human family."
- (2) Some sins are social in that they "constitute a direct attack on one's neighbour." Particular instances of this are sins against justice, human rights, others' freedom, dignity and honour. "The term *social* can be applied to sins of commission or omission," on the part of workers as well as political, economic and trade union leaders.
- (3) When relationships between various human communities are not "in accordance with the plan of God, who intends that there be justice in the world, and freedom and peace between individuals, groups and peoples." Instances of this, such as the class struggle or confrontation between blocs, are referred as 'social evils' or 'situations of sin.' When these become widespread and "reach vast proportions as social phenomena, almost always become anonymous, just as their causes are complex and not always identifiable."

John Paul II adds that this third understanding of social sin "obviously has an analogical meaning." While these distinctions open the way for sensible discussion, one is still left with the problem of how to understand the interrelations between these three aspects of sin. But on the practical level, John Paul II makes sure talk of social sin is a challenge to action, rather than an excuse for inactivity. After stating that instances of "*social sin* [in the third sense of the term] are the result of the accumulation and concentration of many *personal sins*," he comes out forcefully:

It is a case of the very personal sins of those who cause or support evil or who exploit it; of those who are in a position to avoid, eliminate or at least limit certain social evils but who fail to do so out of laziness, fear or the conspiracy of silence, through secret complicity or indifference; of those who take refuge in the supposed impossibility of changing the world, and also of those who sidestep the effort and

sacrifice required, producing specious reasons of a higher order. The real responsibility, then, lies with individuals. (R&P, 16)

In 1986 the CDF issued *Libertatis Conscientia*, Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation. Apart from its correcting the earlier instruction, its main point of interest is its preference for the term 'structures,' instead of speaking of 'social sin.' For instance it observes: "he [sinful man] makes his own contribution to the creation of those very structures of exploitation and slavery which he claims to condemn" (LC, 42).

The CDF still clearly asserts the primacy of persons over structures, but its previous one-sidedness has gone. For instance, it now recognizes that oppressed people "should take action, through morally licit means, in order to secure structures and institutions in which their rights will be truly respected." Unlike the previous document, it does not claim that moral integrity is sufficient, but rather "a necessary condition for the health of society." Hence people should "work simultaneously for the conversion of hearts and for the improvement of structures" (LC, 75).

2.6.3 Structures of Sin

By 1987 in John Paul II's encyclical, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, the term 'social sin' only appears in a footnote quoting *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia* of three years before. Clear preference is now given to the term 'structures of sin,' which

are always linked to the *concrete acts* of individuals who introduce these structures, consolidate them and make them difficult to move. And thus they grow stronger, spread, and become the source of others sins, and so influence people's behaviour. (SRS, 36)

Such structures are not limited to the terms of a socio-political analysis, since being ethical in nature, they go against "the Triune God, his plan for humanity, his justice and his mercy." Furthermore, they "introduce into the world influences and obstacles which go far beyond the actions and brief lifespan of an

individual" (SRS, 36). Throughout the rest of the encyclical many instances are given of how various 'structures of sin' are morally opposed to and can only be overcome by the exercise of human solidarity.

To draw this section of papal teaching to a close, an overall comparison can be made of the two recent popes. Paul VI in addressing situations affected by unrestrained economic exploitation in developing countries and political liberalism in Europe stressed the need for structural change. Whereas, John Paul II having experienced the shortcomings of 'restructured society' in Eastern Europe stressed the importance of conversion of hearts. As Francis Schüssler Fiorenza explains:

Both describe redemption as a renewal of creation and both view this new creation as the overcoming of sin. Paul VI used the image of new creation as a contrasting image to concrete situations of injustice, whereas John Paul II refers more to the new creation in the hearts of people. (1984: 210-211)

Most statements coming from the Vatican, being usually addressed to recipients throughout the world, must inevitably be rather general. They can both take up and stimulate further reflection in local churches throughout the world. Hence, consideration has now to be given to how various local churches have themselves used and developed such notions as 'social sin' and the 'structures of sin.'

2.7 Puebla (1979)

The Third General Conference of Latin American Bishops, held at Puebla, Mexico in 1979 took up the findings of the Medellin, correcting and extending them. In dealing with the prevalent social evils of Latin America, it follows the lead of John Paul II in combining concern to change unjust structures with a call for people to change their outlook and be converted to gospel values. For instance, the enduring reality of poverty "calls for personal conversion and profound structural changes that will meet the legitimate aspirations of the people for authentic social justice" (Puebla, 30; see also 16, 73, 186, 452, 1155).

Whereas structures that have been revitalized by gospel values would “exert a restraining influence on the evil that arises in the human heart and manifest itself socially” (438).

Puebla characterizes sin, not primarily as an action, but as “a force making for breakdown and rupture.” This makes it easier to grasp how people can leave “the destructive imprint of their sinfulness” on “the various structures they have created” (281). Also, sin as a destructive force manifests itself with a certain continuity from one level to another.

Sinfulness on the personal level, the break with God that debases the human being, is always mirrored on the level of interpersonal relations in a corresponding egotism, haughtiness, ambition, and envy. These traits produce injustice, domination, violence at every level, and conflicts between individuals, groups, social classes, and peoples. They also produce corruption, hedonism, aggravated sexuality, and superficiality in mutual relations (Gal. 5:19-21). Thus they establish sinful situations, which, at the worldwide level, enslave countless human beings and adversely affect the freedom of all. (328)

Whilst one may sense that this view is basically correct, it still requires explanation.

2.8 Other Episcopal Conferences and Meetings

In examining their local situation, several other bishops’ conferences speak of ‘social sin’, though none subjects the term to a close examination. For instance, the Canadian bishops began their statement on “Sharing National Income” in 1972, just after *Justice in the World* appeared, by boldly stating: “The riches of Canada are unequally shared. This inequality, which keeps so many people poor, is a social sin” (Sheridan, 1989: 229).

2.8.1 Ireland

The Irish bishops in their 1977 Pastoral Letter on Justice also make use of the

same document, though they distinguished two somewhat distinct uses of the term 'social sin(s)':

As well as remembering the communal or social aspects of personal sins, we need to think of something we could call 'social sins' — the things we do or fail to do as members of organisations or as voters who elect governments.

A particular use of the term 'social sin' is in connection with our involvement in or condoning of unjust structures and unjust situations in our society. (116-117)

Their distinction somewhat anticipates those drawn by John Paul II in *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, though it fails to bring out his third meaning, viz that of a situation of sin.

2.8.2 United States of America

A better insight into the social aspects of sin is provided by the US Bishops' pastoral letter on racism, *Brothers and Sisters to Us*, of November, 1979.

The structures of our society are subtly racist, for these structures reflect the values which society upholds. They are geared to the success of the majority and the failure of the minority; and members of both groups giving unwitting approval by accepting things as they are. Perhaps no single individual is to blame. The sinfulness is often anonymous, but nonetheless real. The sin is social in nature in that each of us, in varying degrees, is responsible. All of us in some measure are accomplices. (USCC, 1979: 3f)

This brings out, much more clearly than other statements, that sin — in this case, racism — is sustained in society by the its members of all races upholding the values and structures of racism in what they do.

2.8.3 Southern Africa

This theme recurs, though not quite so clearly, in the 1988 pastoral letter, *Justice and Peace in Southern Africa*, of the Interterritorial Meeting of the Bishops of

Southern Africa (IMBISA).⁸ It states:

Sin is at the root of many cruelties and sufferings. We realize clearly that when someone decides on an action which is wicked and carries it out, that is his or her 'personal' sin. What is not so obvious is that the sum total of evil in the world is more than the sum total of these personal sins. Why should this be so? Because often the personal sins of individuals form a pattern for a group. The sinful pattern hardens into social attitudes, customs and systems and institutions which are handed down from one generation to the next. In this way social sin is very much a reality.

It is as if a net ensnared each one of us, causing us to contribute to the evils of society. The fathers of Vatican II spoke about this in the constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes* No. 25) and the present Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, emphasises structural sin in his recent encyclical, "Social Concern" (see nos. 16 and 36). Clear examples of social sin can be seen in the evils of discrimination, the denial of basic human rights, exploitation, permissiveness, violence and conflict. Whether we like it or not, just by living in Southern Africa we are caught up in and challenged by these evils as part of our environment. (63-64)

This text makes the observation that personal sins can often provide a pattern for group behaviour. But, although referring to John Paul II's *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, it sticks to the term 'social sin,' rather than speaking of 'structures' and 'mechanisms.'

2.8.4 Santo Domingo (1992)

Thirteen years after meeting at Puebla the Latin American bishops met at Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic. It said nothing new about 'social sin' as

8 An earlier, but abridged text, released by SACBC (paragraphs 26-28) reads much more easily:

26. Sin is at the root of much cruelty and suffering. When someone acts wickedly we realize clearly that he or she is committing a personal sin. What is not so clear is that the mass of evil in the world is far greater than all personal sins. Why is this? Because often the personal sins of individuals become group sins which harden into social customs and systems and are handed down from generation to generation. Group or social sin is a very great evil. It is like a net that ensnares people causing many to add to the evil of the world.

27. Examples of social sin are found when a group rejects others because of their race or nationality or religion, or treats them unjustly in regard to work and wages, or gets a bad name for sexual immorality, or promotes violence and war. Whether we like it or not, just by living in Southern Africa we are caught up in these evils and have to struggle against them day after day.

The emphasis here is more on how a 'group' sins, and hence how each individual has to struggle against group pressure.

such, even though it mentioned many instances of injustice and particularly “the growing impoverishment in which millions of our brothers and sisters are plunged — to the point where it is reaching intolerable extremes of misery” (2.2.4). The meeting, however, broke new ground in giving a clearer recognition of ‘the other,’ in particular, to women, indigenous peoples, mestizos and blacks. The fact that Pope John Paul addressed a special message to indigenous peoples, and a nother to African Americans was a gesture of accepting them in their ‘otherness.’

In Jon Sobrino’s view the Santo Domingo meeting was theologically retrogressive, compared with Medellin and Puebla. Its more explicit recognition of the other was, however, an advance. He explains its significance:

If it is hard to achieve recognition of the ‘poor,’ recognizing the ‘other’ can be even harder, although they are often the same person or group. ... The ‘other’ leads us not only to what is different, but to the unknown. ... In fact the ‘other’ is a way of understanding what we call ‘alterity’ in the mystery of God. To face the other, to let the other be other, is a way of facing the mystery of God. And that is as hard today as it has always been. (in Hennelly, 1993: 196)

This line of thought, or rather letting the other interrupt one’s own line of thought, has been treated most fully by Emmanuel Levinas (1969). It is important as it brings out the damage that could be done if one only thinks in terms of systems and structures. An approach to social justice that was confined to improving systems and structures — however correct that might be — but which did not allow the irruption of the other would be basically unjust.

2.9 Summary

Official Catholic social teaching has developed tremendously both in scope and depth over the last century. This development has not been even, as varying points of view have at times been stressed and taken into the overall teaching. As far as understanding social evil is concerned, six main points stand out:

1. Instead of society being viewed as a given with its own inherent and natural divisions that should be upheld and respected, there has been a gradual recognition that various societies are brought about by the differing activities of their members.
2. Instead of assessing any action, programme or social arrangement according to a pre-determined natural law, the overall criterion is how far it accords with the unfolding plan of God, particularly in making human life for all ever more human.
3. There has been a growing recognition that people's actions (and omissions) have lasting repercussions for good or ill upon the structuring of society; whilst social structures likewise influence, but do not completely determine, people's activities for good or ill.
4. The prime analogue when sin is viewed as *an action* is personal sin; responsibility for one's own actions and their repercussions upon society lies with each person.
5. But when sin is viewed as *a destructive force* it can permeate through people's attitudes and values, their activities and relationships, and be built into the structures of society.
6. The church's stance towards longstanding social evils has shifted away from simply voicing moral indignation to revealing how people are caught as both accomplices and victims in their own sinful structures.

Nevertheless, the notion of a social structure, how it is brought about and sustained over time, and its relation to the values and attitudes of the human heart remains unexamined. There is also ambiguity over how a person is responsible for sinful structures, which he or she neither brought about nor has any direct means of overcoming.

Contemporary Theological Approaches to 'Social Sin'

"For in vain is a net spread in the sight of any bird." (Proverbs 1: 17)

In this chapter, a brief mention will first be made of the factors intrinsic to traditional moral theology that made it rather overlook social concerns. Then an analysis will be made of the growing awareness of the reality of social evil amongst Catholic moral theologians over the last three decades. This drew its impetus from several sources: biblical exegesis, an inquiry into the limits of individual culpability, and the struggle for justice and liberation. But since the streams from each of these sources have now rather coalesced, a composite picture of 'social/structural evil' can be drawn. This will combine the views and suggestions of various writers who have treated the topic in passing. They have, in the course of either a general study of moral issues or an investigation into a particular problem, alluded to the presence and influence of social evil, but hardly given the topic any detailed examination. Then, after reviewing these contributions, attention will be directed to those writers who treated the topic more systematically and ventured some theory on it. This more thematic treatment is found in the works of Gustavo Gutierrez, Patrick Kerans, Gregory Baum and Juan Luis Segundo, as well as a number of journal articles; these contributions will be examined in some detail.

3.1 The Christian Focus on the Individual

The Catholic church's own pattern of ministry, as it developed over centuries, led it to focus upon the individual rather than society. In his study of the development of Catholic moral theology, John Mahoney (1987) shows why this occurred. Most moral theology was written and taught to help confessors deal with individual penitents making their confession. Consequently, it dealt mainly with the various sins people were likely to commit. The confessor was required to know the law and be able to judge which actions were sinful and their gravity. He was inevitably more preoccupied with forgiving sin than showing the good that could be done. Moral theology thus tended to concentrate more on the disorders brought about by individuals than on the overall social order that embraced everyone (see also Baum, 1975: 196-200). Mahoney remarks that this made

it difficult to handle the idea of collective responsibility on a large scale. There is no lack of material in the manuals on the morality of petty conspiracies to rob, or to do harm. And one of the most highly developed topics in the tradition is that of 'co-operation', or sharing in the wrongdoing of another. The presumption in all these cases, however, is that the total number of participants is small, and that a large measure of the total responsibility can be assigned to at most a few individuals. (1987: 34)

In dealing with cases of 'co-operation' it was also presumed that everyone involved had a fair understanding of what activities were involved and their likely consequences. But this has ceased to hold in contemporary society, where it is very hard to trace the full ramifications of any action. The complexities and opacity of society today, as well as its being more global in character, call for another approach.

Furthermore, this deep seated social change helps explain the current widespread dissatisfaction with the administration of the sacrament of confession or reconciliation. A study presented to the SACBC pointed out that "the present system of individual confession — something inherited from an age prior to mass society — fails to come to grips with the real evils of society that none can

escape” (Connor, 1982: 5; see also Sievernich, 1987). Its ritual hardly addresses the widespread social evils in which many find themselves involved, yet through little or no choice of their own. The personal sins that they might confess, real as they may be, seem hardly to be connected with the vast evils afflicting whole societies. The way the sacrament is conducted seems to legitimate the individualism it is meant to counter (see Schindler, 1989: 60-70). In any case, the individual acting alone can normally do little or nothing to overcome deep seated social evil. It can only be tackled through people cooperating on projects together; whereas by itself individual confession does not provide that kind of thrust.

Another influence that took moral theology away from social issues was the concern, stemming from Augustine’s theology, with the supernatural dimension of human life. “It was not enough to love God and one’s neighbour; it had to be done with ‘supernatural’ love” (Mahoney, 1987: 88). Hence, Augustine could only recognize the social order brought about by (pagan) rulers or the virtues spoken of by philosophers, as “a good of little importance.” They lacked supernatural or “rightly ordered love.” Mahoney comments that:

... one consequence of this for moral theology was to lay all the stress on supernatural moral activity as alone sufficient for salvation, to the detriment of merely human, natural, and terrestrial moral behaviour. Morality became a two-tier activity in requiring supernatural motivation and even ‘infused’ moral virtues which alone could count with God. (Mahoney, 1987: 89)

This is another instance of a distinction being made into a separation, and even an opposition. It is important at times to acknowledge God as the source of one’s giftedness, as distinct from trusting completely in one’s own efforts. Augustine himself said in his book, *Faith, Hope and Charity*, that God’s mercy “both makes the good will of man ready to be helped and helps it when it has been made ready. ... His mercy ... goes before the unwilling that he may be willing; it follows the willing that he may not will in vain” (1947: 397). But he did not try or expect anyone to demarcate God’s gifts off from humanly acquired abilities and insights. Yet some later theologies put them in two separate realms; the gifts of God or the

supernatural came to be located within the individual while merely human abilities were exercised in public life. What encouraged this was the general experience that it is much easier to be morally good and attentive to God as an individual without public responsibilities, than as a servant of the public taking responsibility for others. Once acquired human abilities are *morally differentiated* from our being gifted by God, the problem is further compounded. This, in short, is why spirituality in the minds of some does not involve social concern, and may even be regarded as a distraction. The horizontal and vertical concerns of life are set in opposition. Whereas both — insofar as this is a valid distinction at all — require the full development of human ability and our being gifted by God.

It must be added, however, that although theology and spirituality did not adequately recognize social sin, in many cases practice was better than theory. Rosemary Haughton recounts a number of people, even though they kept to an ‘individualist’ type of piety, who did not surrender to the built-in hypocrisy of their class or ethos. Although they could not escape or pull down the un-Christian social and political edifices of their time, they refused to surrender to them.

The holier individual Christians were, the more they resisted the destructive doctrines of their time, even though this resistance was often ‘instinctive’ and combined with the normal acceptance of social structures and attitudes which we now recognize as anti-human. (Haughton, 1971: 202)

Without fully realizing what they were up against, their personal integrity did not allow them to accept without question all the assumptions of their time.

3.2 The Rediscovery of Eschatology

The need for broadening moral theology becomes apparent once a sense of the Christian community and its role in preparing for God’s reign is recovered. Then at least the first fruits of salvation may be sought, not solely in the hearts of

individual believers or in saving souls, but also in the transformation of their relations and society. In this vein, Charles Curran points out

An eschatological vision calls for a continual effort to change the social, political and economic structures in which we live. However, the fullness of the eschatological vision will never be totally achieved. The Christian recognizes the power of sin in the world and the need to struggle continually against the forces of sin. The kingdom will never be perfectly present in this world; its fullness lies beyond our grasp. Imperfection and lack of completeness will characterize our structures. (Curran, 1979: 124; also reprinted in Tracy, 1978: 151-3, and in Curran, 1985)

With this in mind, one must ask how evil is embedded in society, in what ways it might be overcome and people liberated from it, and what is the role and responsibility of Christian groups and communities in tackling social evil at its roots. Yet, as Mahoney remarks:

As moral theology has [begun] ... to address itself to nuclear warfare, environmental and population problems, world poverty, and economic policies at national and international levels, the Church's individualistic moral tradition has experienced considerable difficulty in adapting its thinking to such issues of macro-ethics, as well as to the moral implications of increased democratic participation in public policies and decisions, and to the new social phenomenon of what might be called responsibility spread thin. (1987: 34)

The remainder of this chapter traces briefly how Catholic moral theology over the last thirty years or so has moved towards macro-ethics, in particular how it has accorded social evil an influence that formerly went unrecognized. The extent of this shift of focus is brought out by McCormick in his overview of fifty years — 1940-1989 — of moral theology.

The age of justice. There has been a sea-change of moral consciousness during the past 50 years. During that period we gradually began to speak of sin not simply as an isolated act of an individual, but as having societal structural dimensions. We began to see that the sins and selfishness of one generation became the inhibiting conditions of the next. The structures and institutions that oppress people, deprive them of rights, alienate them are embodiments of our sinful condition. The notion of systemic violence and social sin entered our vocabulary and is so much a part of it now that John Paul II uses it freely. (McCormick, 1989: 19-20)

3.3 New Directions of Approach

Various writers have over the last few decades directed attention to the social ramifications of sin and evil. Their approaches have varied with their social situation, their theological background and current preoccupations. Although their terminology has varied tremendously, it is possible to discern a certain convergence on a common set of issues. Five main approaches may be distinguished, coming from those grappling with

- a) the crimes against humanity of World War II (3.4)
- b) the exegesis and theology of 'original sin' and 'the sin of the world' (3.5);
- c) the morality of personal culpability (3.6);
- d) the social ethics of justice and peace issues in the First world (3.7);
- e) liberation issues in Latin America and other parts of the Third world (3.8).

Admittedly, in many instances these approaches overlap, so no rigid demarcation is possible. Each approach will be examined in turn for its contribution towards understanding structural evil.

3.4 A False Start with 'Collective Guilt'

After World War II some attempts were made to work out a theory of collective guilt and responsibility for the atrocities of the Nazis. (Here one must ask why were these questions mainly asked about the defeated, and not about the victorious too.) For instance, Robert d'Harcourt (1946) of the Academie Française asked, in a rather accusatory article, why the average German did not recognize his or her share of responsibility in the crimes committed by the *Schutz-Staffel*.

He [the average German] refuses to admit a bond of guilt. He does not see it as having anything to do with him. He either fails to perceive or only remotely perceives any link between crime and its encouragement. Yet his own silence in the face of evil was a great encouragement; his applauding the use of force when it trampled justice underfoot (in the treatment of Poland, the bombing of Rotterdam, and the killing of the Jews) provided even more positive encouragement. (d'Harcourt, 1946: 173)

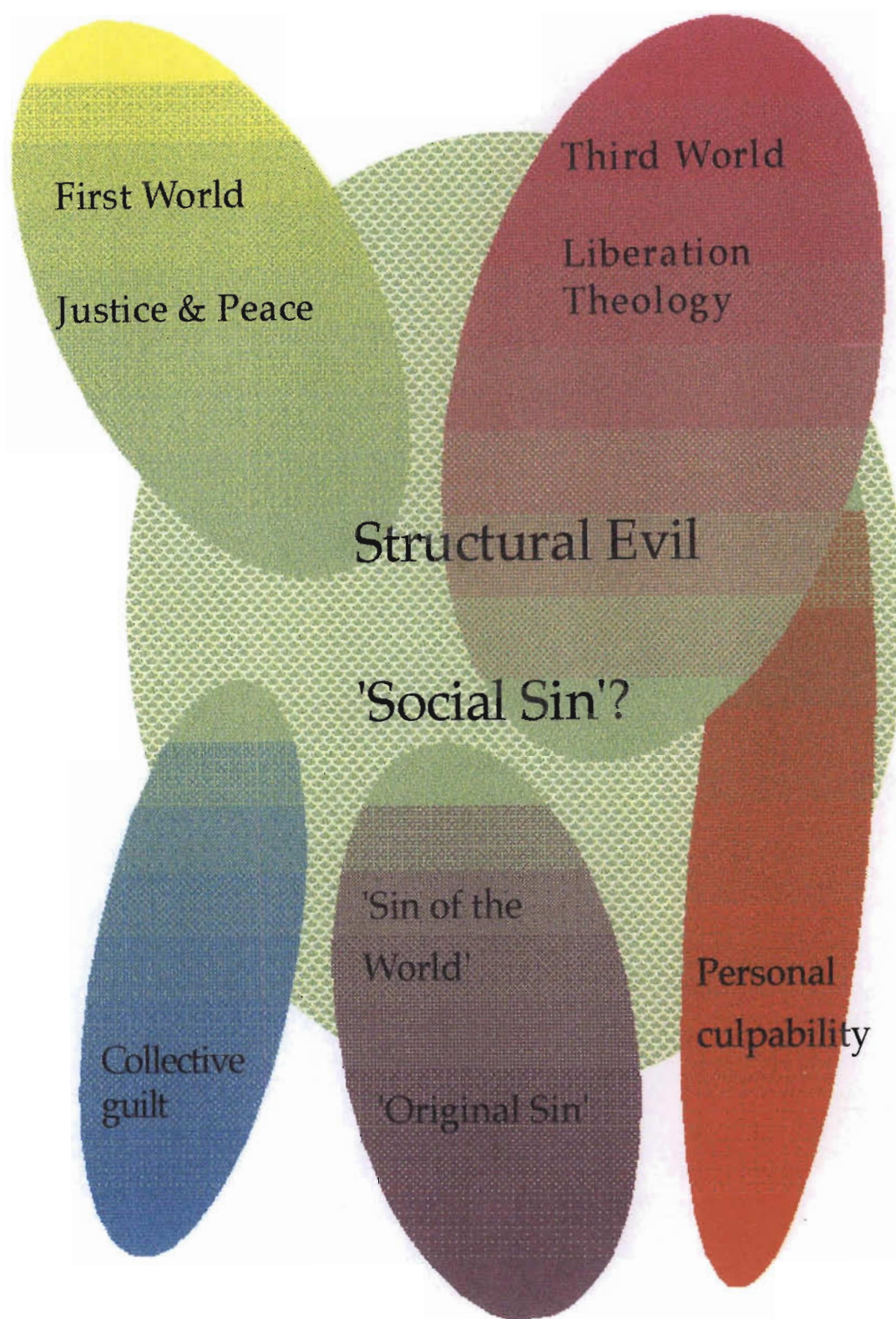


Fig 3 *Five Approaches to the Theology of Structural Evil*

Throughout the article d'Harcourt concentrates attention on the *actions* (including *omissions*) various people committed. "The German sinned in electing Hitler; he sinned more gravely in applauding his bestial conduct. More gravely, because by this time he could no longer plead ignorance as an excuse" (1946: 187). The nearest d'Harcourt comes to seeking an underlying explanation, or showing how the German situation was *ideologically structured*, is his mention of 'the morality of success.'

The real collective sin of Germany is not so much the atrocities of the concentration camps as their being prepared to renounce their consciences in favour of success; this is what prepared people for and opened the way to the camps. The 'morality of success' or *Erfolgsmoral* is the real German sin. ... Karl Jaspers put his finger on this 'seed of evil' that was prior to and without which Naziism could not have come about. (d'Harcourt, 1946: 180)

One weakness of d'Harcourt's approach is his lack of a language for speaking about collectivities; he can only treat them as individuals *en masse*. Hence he asks: "Is collective responsibility anything different than the sum of individual responsibilities?" (1946: 194).

Several years later Yves Congar, drawing on his own experiences before and during World War II, took a more nuanced approach. He pointed out that people were gaining a new outlook (*l'esprit moderne*), one that combined a sense of history with a more realistic and analytic grasp of social entities (1950: 261). This made one seek out new categories, besides those of traditional individual morality, for dealing with socio-historical guilt and collective responsibility (1950: 267f). Although Congar carefully distinguishes between guilt, responsibility and (due) punishment, in the end he admits: "The question of a collectivity's moral guilt and its legal responsibility is so complex that the human administration of justice is inevitably overwhelmed by it" (1950: 284). Congar does not limit his analysis of collective guilt and responsibility to Germany under Hitler. He also asks about the collective responsibility of the Catholic Church for the schism of the 11th century, the breakup of the Western Church in the 16th century, and such events as the massacre of St Bartholomew's day in 1572 (1950: 393ff). He

ends by giving some guidelines on how divisions may be overcome.

Despite these efforts, no satisfactory theory of collective responsibility was developed on a theological level. The confusion between guilt and responsibility, and between moral guilt before God and the legal concept of guilt, was never fully resolved. Nor was it ever fully worked out to what extent a people can be identified — morally and legally — with its leaders. Another theologian, Bernard Häring, with his own experience as a German of Nazi coercion and World War II, concluded:

Only if each individual member of the community incurs guilt through the one common reprehensible action can there be collective guilt. 'Collective guilt' is therefore due to the guilt of each individual and is the sum of individual culpable acts. ... Collective guilt in the sense of the post-war indictments does not exist. (1961: 86)

Another German theologian, Franz Böckle, says clearly: "There is no collective object of action and consequently no collective guilt" (1980: 104). Summing the matter up years later, Enda McDonagh pointed out that the "idea of collectivity was under-developed and guilt is not a happy starting-point for fruitful discussion of the moral subject" (1975: 21).

Despite the inadequacy of this approach, it came as a surprise to find a recent article by Geoffrey Turner employing the term.

Of course, collective guilt is a deeply unpopular idea. It involves the suggestion that someone who has not perpetrated a crime or some other shameful act in some way carries the guilt for that act by virtue of sharing a social identity with the criminal. Is our reluctance to accept this idea the result of genuine moral difficulties with attributing guilt to someone who might with some justification claim to be innocent, or is it the result of two centuries of social conditioning in a liberal individualistic society? It may be both. (1989: 124)

Yet later in the same article, Turner admits that "perhaps 'guilt' is not the best word. ... It is rather a collective shame, a collective responsibility and a collective sin. At any rate it involves a sense that we are all in this together, like it or not"

(1989: 128). He seems to be using “collective guilt” in a double way: as a condemnation of Thatcherite individualism and as belonging to a nation that exploits other nations. While both these nuances have their point, to identify them may lead to overlooking how a very communally organized society may in its own way be just as much entangled in social sin as a highly individualized one.

Since a society is neither simply a collection of individuals nor a super-individual, the notions both of ‘collective guilt’ and ‘collective responsibility’ have not been fruitful ones. They can also easily be used as a way of blaming people indiscriminately (see Weber’s entry in Macquarrie & Childress, 1986: 99a; also Molinski’s in SM, V, 322b).

Actions of such enormity were later called ‘crimes against humanity’ by the United Nations.

3.5 The Exegesis of ‘Original Sin’ & ‘Sin of the World’

The reappraisal of such terms as ‘original sin’ and ‘sin of the world’ from the 1950s onwards opened the way for a more social awareness of the reality of sin. The work of Dubarle, Vanneste and Ricoeur showed that original sin affected people through their being born and brought up within a fallen human history. Sin took hold of people not just as individuals, but through their incorporation into a sinful society. These insights have been summed up by Kevin F. O’Shea:

The world — the atmosphere, the spiritual climate, the milieu, the human situation — in which we live our own personal history is truly infected by the Sin of ‘the world.’ This means that true community life is impossible unless sin is overcome and blotted out. ... When transgressions, or sinful acts, occur, much of the root cause to which they ought to be imputed lies in the tainted situation of men, in the milieu in which personal relationships in community are obstructed. The power of sin is *around* us, as a circumscribing influence, as well as in our hearts. (O’Shea, 1968 in Taylor, 1971: 97)

This reappraisal of traditional terminology opened the way for a reconsideration

of the person as a moral agent; instead of being more or less autonomous, it showed how each person is liable to come under various social influences for good or ill.

The Johannine notion of "the sin of the world" (1:29), where the world stands in opposition to the Word that made it, "the world knew him not" (1:10), provides the main scriptural basis for working out a theology of social sin and its overcoming by Christ.

The world as structural sin is contrary to the reign of God and its justice. Humans are either beneficiaries from or victims of the sin of the world. Jesus is the one who unmasks structural sin, and reveals the justice of God which runs counter to it; yet at the price of his passion. He is the first instance of someone overcoming the solidarity of the sin of the world by dying at its hands. (Gonzalez Faus, 1986: 88; see also Mauro, 1987; Pinto de Oliveira, 1988)

It is the continuing task of the church, alive with the Spirit in Christ's body, to effect other instances of liberation from the sin of the world. It is beyond the scope of this study to detail how this might take place; yet any understanding of social sin is ultimately only of value in facilitating the church's task of liberation, where

a segment of society [the charismatic community church] experiences alienation from existing social structures. ... Their alienation has an inherently hopeful dimension that motivates them to work for new social structures, religious and political, that symbolize greater human equality. ... [So A]uthentic Christology must parent a spirituality that not only has the power to root out personal sin, but can motivate the church to work constructively for the eradication of the sin embodied in social structures. (Pawlikowski, 1987: 296)

3.5.1 'Principalities & Powers'

Mention should be made here that there is a whole biblical approach to social evil using the scriptural language of the principalities and powers. Its leading exponent today is Walter Wink. Likewise, some of the contributions in Clarke (ed. 1980), *Above Every Name: The Lordship of Christ and Social Systems*, link

the biblical portrayal of Christ conquering the principalities and powers with contemporary concern for culture and society. This line of approach runs parallel to the theological tradition followed in this study. Its strength lies in providing graphic language for preaching, as it captures well "the experience of something that is terrifyingly threatening and blindly and mercilessly cruel" (Nolan, 1988: 45), but it deals less well with the complexities of socio-political existence today (see Curran, 1979: 124f; also in Curran, 1985 and in Tracy, 1978: 151-3).

3.6 The Question of Personal Culpability

Taking as their starting point the question of personal culpability, moral theologians have over the last few decades increasingly recognized the influence that other people and society as a whole have upon a person's action. Already in nineteenth century literature there is a portrayal of the social involvement of evil. Böckle observes: "The individual is exposed, society is exposed and the individual is exposed as a representative of society" (1980: 74). Hence, interpersonal and social factors must be taken into account in assessing guilt and in finding ways to overcome personal sin. This approach, which has led to an appreciation of the social or communitarian nature of sin, is best exemplified in Piet Schoonenberg's ground breaking study, *Man and Sin* (Dutch original, 1962; English translation, 1965).⁹

Relying upon an exegesis of 'the sin of the world' (John 1:29), Schoonenberg asks "how we must conceive that solidarity [in sin] to make it intelligible?" It would be insufficient to view the sin of the world as "the sum total of the individual sins considered without inner connection." Nor is it sufficient to say either "that the guilt of one person simply passes to another person" (1965: 103), or that people share the punishment due to sin. Drawing on the existentialist understanding of 'situation,' Schoonenberg brings out how one person's free action

⁹ His chapter "Original Sin and Man's Situation" in Taylor (1975: 243-52) reproduces the same ideas, much of it verbatim.

"always puts the other into a situation, which appeals to him for good or for evil," and "to which he *must* react by means of a free decision" (1965: 104). Because human beings do not exist, or live and act, but from within their situation and in response to it, each person is "interiorly affected by the[ir] situation" (1965: 105). Hence we do not exercise a total, but 'a situated liberty,' since "our freedom has never existed but as affected and restricted in its field of action" (1965: 106) by the actions and attitudes of others. Others' attitudes and actions may be helpful, directing us toward goodness and enhance our freedom. But their sins, as well as our own past experience, also provide "the raw materials with which, our free decision takes shape" (1965: 111). In this light, Schoonenberg brings out how 'the sin of the world' takes hold of people in two different ways:

In some it is a sinful self-determination, an action, and especially an attitude. In others it consists in the fact of being situated, of being affected in their own liberty, by the sins of another group. This latter element must be added to the personal sins if we are to speak rightly of the sin of a community, of the world. (1965: 105)

It is quite possible, and indeed very likely, that some people help maintain the sin of the world in both these ways.

Schoonenberg then examines (1965: 111-118) how the sin of some can influence others. Firstly, bad example or the lack of good example displays the appeal of evil; it shows the possibility of incorporating sin into one's lifestyle. Secondly, when social pressure accompanies bad example, the group brings home to a person that its condition of acceptance is conformity to its sinful outlook and activities. Thirdly, for want of living examples, especially in new and unfamiliar situations, people may have no sense of the values and norms that should guide them. In times of social transition, when people's moral formation should be widened and renewed, it is often retarded instead. For instance, "the world of industry and the world of communication have not yet been ... introduced within the horizon of morality" (1965: 115). Fourthly, in some situations values and norms can be so obscured and forgotten that little or no moral formation can

take place. This might hold for someone born into a family of thieves, so that a certain sector of morality simply escapes them. In this case “the obscuration of values and norms, precedes our existence and encompasses it” (1965: 116). Finally, Schoonenberg suggests that the situation may be wider than a family or neighbourhood, as “in the history of mankind [there are] certain thresholds [of moral awareness and action] beyond which a community seems unable to proceed by itself alone” (1965: 118).

This analysis of how the social situation can diminish a person’s freedom and so reduce their ability to act morally could simply become an excuse for not making an effort to overcome evil. This is not what Schoonenberg intends. Instead, in examining how social structures shape people’s outlook and abilities, one is already finding ways of diminishing their influence. As Häring states:

The contaminating power of perverted social, economic and political structures, scandal as solidarity in corruption, must be investigated in order to strengthen both our compassion for the weak and the particular responsibility of the social *elites*, the call to responsibility in view of the uniqueness of each person in and for the community. (Häring, 1974: 101)

So, while understanding should be extended to those morally weakened by their situation, since “guilt ... is not simply a question of individual morality” (Böckle, 1980: 75), this needs to be combined with accepting responsibility for overcoming that situation.

3.7 **The First World Approach to Social Justice**

While those dealing with the question of culpability had to move from personal to social considerations, those concerned with social ethics have had to go somewhat in the opposite direction. Since certain social situations are recognizably evil, one must then investigate how far those persons involved in them and even upholding them are themselves sinful people. To what extent are they victims of society, unable to do otherwise? How much are they gripped by a false

consciousness, or duped by some ideology? To what extent are people free, or are they merely manipulated by society. As people became troubled by these questions, a new sense of being wronged appeared.

3.7.1 Increase of Social Pressure in Contemporary Times

During the 1960s many in Western society woke up to find that the society brought about by modern technology and government was beyond their control. This might be summed up as the setting in of a mood of disillusionment with progress, technological control and economic efficiency. This had its effect on theology. So, for instance, Herbert Marcuse's critique of *One Dimensional Man*, dominated by "technological rationality and the logic of domination" (1964: 144) is echoed by Monden (1966). The latter asserts that "the pressure of society on the free activity of the individual" is "equally or even more decisive than biological conditioning." Going on in this pessimistic vein, he states:

Most human beings seem to be unable to think or to act with real autonomy; they are *mass products*, who feel, react and judge collectively, who are without defense against the pressure of prevailing opinions, propaganda slogans, the hidden persuaders of a clever advertising technique, the daily doses of suggestion served up as 'objective' news releases by the opinion-shaping media of press, radio, movies and TV. (1966: 23)

This enormous increase in social pressure is seen as a modern phenomenon, applicable both to the free world and the totalitarian powers. Monden continues:

This increasing planetization of all relationships oppresses the individual with a crushing sense of his own helplessness, of being in the grip of powers which no force of personality can control. (1966: 25)

In reaction against this kind of social pressure with its attendant evils, Milhaven notes that by the end of the 1960s a new sense of sin had emerged.

The new sense of sin is responsible, too, for the white anger, bordering on desperation, of younger Christians who resort to sit-ins, the destruction of files and

disruption of lectures, etc. If my contacts are typical, it is more the evil they incredulously see going on which rouses them to action rather than any good they hope for by their efforts. (1970: 96)

This period of disillusionment and consequent anger, which erupted in both society and the church during the 1960s, gradually gave way to a more measured approach. Haughton (1971), after providing a brief resume of this period of turmoil, shows how by the early 1970s some were beginning to realize how crucial personal holiness was for resisting social evil. Instead of demonstrations, and expectations of quick change, people learnt from their Latin American counterparts to analyze the system and learn how to work within it for their own purposes. It came to be accepted that, unlike with personal sins, social evils cannot simply be overcome by individuals making an extra effort; awareness raising or conscientization is first called for. Then strategic actions that weaken the supports of the prevailing social evil must be planned. Curran remarks:

Too often in the immediate past some people readily accepted the need for social action and social change, but they quickly became disillusioned when such change did not occur. If the experience of the last decade teaches us anything, it is the need for a long-term commitment to bring about the kinds of social changes which are necessary. ... Relatively oppressive and unjust structures will not be changed readily or quickly. (Curran, 1979: 124)

So, what began as a very emotional reaction against the oppressive features of Western society gradually matured into a number of organized movements working for social justice. To sustain themselves and direct their activities, they depended upon an analysis of their society as well as a theology of its ills and how they might be overcome.

This type of approach relying on some insights from the social sciences has not viewed society as merely a collectivity of individuals, as the 'collective guilt' approach did. It has begun to investigate how a person is in society, and society in its members; and how sin may make its appearance in both. With the good of society being its prime concern, this social justice approach is complementary to the personal culpability approach that seeks the good of the person.

3.8 Liberation: The Historical Nexus of Social Evil

While 'Northern' theologians tend to speak in broad categories, Latin American theologians stress more the historical situation of social sin. Typically, the former speak in general terms of "consumerism, neo-colonialism, militarism and sexism" (McCormick P.T., 1989) and "economic oppression, racism, ecological pollution, and sexism" (Lamb, 1982: 4) as social sins. Latin American writers took a different tack. For instance those contributing to the volume of papers edited by Rosino Gibellini (1979), and also Jose Maria Diaz Mozaz (1986) from Spain, are more specific. They stress the urgency of economic dependency, political suppression of one class by another, and the imposition of an alien culture; theology cannot be indifferent to these realities. Likewise, Gutierrez stresses not only that social sin is in each instance historically situated, but also has to be tackled historically. He makes this important proviso:

We do not come to know history, which is an indissoluble mixture of nature and society, except in the process of transforming it and ourselves. As Vico put it long ago, we really only know what we ourselves do. For people today truth is what we make true, what we '*veri-fy*.' Knowledge of reality that does not lead to a modification of it is really an unverified interpretation, an interpretation that is not transformed into truth. (Gutierrez, 1979: 19)

In short, we really discover how sin grips our particular society when we struggle to transform it. Though Curran, a Northern theologian, recognizes that

the Christian and eschatological vision must be willing to become incarnate in concrete historical, cultural and political circumstances even though one recognizes the risks involved. ... strategies [for changing social structures] can and should be very specific, but they can never be absolutized and removed from critical reflection. (1979: 124)

Yet it is far easier to keep a critical distance from social sin, when due to one's position in society, one is not suffering under it.

3.8.1 Challenge from the Non-person, the Dehumanized, the Marginalized

It is important to recognize another difference in the situation between Latin America (and the Third World generally) and the First World, particularly post-Christian Europe. In the former the central issues of life are social, political and economic: how to survive as a people amid appalling living conditions and under political oppression. Whereas in Europe the burning issue facing Christianity is basically one of belief. Gutierrez explains:

In a continent like Latin America, the challenge does not come to us primarily from the non-believer, but from the *non-person*, that is to say, from the individual who is not recognized as such by the existing social order: the poor, the exploited, who are systematically deprived of being persons, they who scarcely know that they are persons. The non-person questions before anything else, not our religious world, but our *economic, social, political, and cultural world*; and thus, a call is made for the revolutionary transformation of the very bases of a dehumanizing society. Our question, therefore, is not how to announce God in an adult world; but rather, how to announce him as *Father* in a non-human world. What are the implications when we tell a non-person that he or she is a child of God? (Gutierrez & Shaull, 1977: 79)

It seems a lack of appreciation of this difference is partly responsible for the misunderstandings about the whole purpose of liberation theology in the Vatican. There is a failure to grasp that the boundaries between faith and unbelief run differently in the First and the Third Worlds. In the latter, Gutierrez remarks

Sin is found in the refusal to accept any person as a neighbor, in oppressive structures built up for the benefit of the few, in the despoliation of peoples, races, culture, and social classes. Sin is basically an alienation, and as such, it cannot be found floating in the air, but is found in concrete historical situations, in individual and specific alienations. (Gutierrez & Shaull, 1977: 84)¹⁰

In Western Europe, however, the antithesis between faith and unbelief lies more on the level of meaning and culture. For instance, genuine faith is incompatible

¹⁰ Although I do not have the Portuguese original, but after comparing it with Gutierrez's *A Theology of Liberation* (1971: 175), I rather suspect the translation of this last sentence. It would make better sense, if it read: "Sin is the basic alienation, though it cannot be found as such floating in the air, but is found in concrete historical situations, in individual and specific alienations."

with the prevailing contempt for others or with merciless exposure of others' limitations (see 20.8 below). Social sin is primarily located in the lack of genuine human meaning evinced by the prevailing culture of Western Europe.

* * *

While the varied approaches mentioned above to understanding social evil were initially stimulated by different situations and preoccupations, after running at cross purposes for a while, they have now rather run together. Various authors have learnt from one another, and more importantly from experience in struggling with social evils, so that now there is some common awareness of the issue. This now makes it possible by drawing upon a number of writers to build up a composite picture of social sin as it is generally understood.

3.9 Social Sin as a Residual Category in Non-Thematic Approaches

Although many writers mention social sin, in most instances their understanding of it is not very deep. One or other term is used without much distinction. Many refer to social sin, social evil or the collective sinfulness of the world, but do not explain it further. Its existence and hence influence is readily recognized, but it hardly fits into the clearly accepted theological understanding of human action, motivation, habits, sin, consequences, circumstances, etc. While there is little doubt of it being an influence to be reckoned with, it still remains in the conceptual twilight, "something of a theological pariah" (Schindler, 1989: 135). Thus in many works of moral theology social sin or structural evil are treated as — what Talcott Parsons calls — a 'residual category.' It is "given one or more blanket names which refer to ... facts known to exist, which are even more or less adequately defined, but are defined theoretically by their failure to fit into the positively defined categories of the system" (1968: 17). It comes in from some-

where else, from another way of understanding, as a important factor even if it cannot quite be grasped within the terms of traditional moral theology. Bernard Häring provides a telling instance of this when speaking of liberation, he says:

Each sin is *somehow* responsible for oppressive structures, exploitation, domineering attitudes, for keeping people in slavery, for the debasing of ethnic groups and social classes, for the manipulation of public opinion. (Häring, 1974: 123; italics added)

The 'somehow' shows an awareness that personal actions and social structures are connected, but does not elucidate the connection.

Likewise, Albert Nolan states that in South Africa "*somewhere* between the sinner and the sufferer there is a comprehensive, all-pervasive and unjust system" (1988: 68; italics added). He rather juxtaposes persons (sinners and sufferers) over against society (the system) as though they were two different realities. Apart from saying that "sins become institutionalised and systematised in the structures, laws and customs of a society," no clear account is given of how all sin can be "both personal and social at the same time" (Nolan, 1988: 43).

It could be said that the main point of this study is to elucidate Häring's "somehow" and Nolan's "somewhere." The next step, however, is to sort out the various ideas that different theologians have loaded into this residual category.

3.9.1 The Social Dimension of (any) Sin

It has long been recognized that every sin has in a very general sense a social dimension (Peschke, 1975: 220); its effects are not limited to the individuals concerned. For instance, adultery has "destructive effects reaching beyond the life of the person and family involved; it unravels to some degree the fabric of the community" (Schindler, 1989: 136). Even someone's sinful thoughts and attitudes affect how they perceive others and hence relate to them, and so have social repercussions. Speaking in this general fashion, Peschke goes on to say:

Many sins affect our fellow-men more or less directly by causing harm to them. This is true of all the sins of lovelessness and injustice, of scandal and evil cooperation. To this category also belong the promotion and perpetuation of deficient social conditions or a bad public climate, or even the neglect to fight against an environment contaminated by evil. (Peschke, 1975: 220)

While it is true enough, it does not bring out that sin in some way inheres in society. With other authors, when 'social sin' is spoken about something more definite, permanent and hence 'structural' is usually meant.

3.9.2 Social Sin as Inducement for Personal Sin

One of the most evident effects of social sin or sinful social structures is how they lead people into personal sin. Taking up from Piet Schoonenberg (1965), Peschke looking at our human "situation in a sinfully distorted world" says:

Modern individual and social psychology makes us realize to what extent the decisions of the human will are influenced by a man's whole education and present environment. This influence makes itself felt in several ways.

There is first the impact of a bad example and a demoralizing public atmosphere. ... Not seldom, the evil example equals an invitation to do likewise, e.g. to make profit by dishonest means.

The force of evil is intensified if it is accompanied by group pressure. In that case, doing the good excludes a person from the group, which is hard to bear. The others, even though unconsciously, do not consider him any longer as a fellow-member. ... He is threatened with exclusion from the group and its support if he does not conform to its evil attitudes and demands. (Peschke, 1975: 238f)

The effect of sinful social structures on personal behaviour is noted by Monden, who remarks that

Even so-called intellectuals are more susceptible to such influences [coming from the opinion-shaping media of press, radio, movies and TV, which seem to be 'objective'] than they like to think, especially since, to a great extent, these suggestions are received not on the level of clear consciousness but through the unconscious. (1966: 23)

The recognition of such social influences can lead people to adopt a minimizing attitude towards moral responsibility and even to the effective denial of personal sin altogether. But in response, Häring states that one can see “in all these new insights a vigorous challenge and call to responsibility. Each person chooses his own interpretation” (1974: 14). We can let ourselves be taken in by sinful social structures, or realizing their influence can seek to combat it.

Once we have understood the dreadful power of alienation embodied in institutional structures and in public opinion, it becomes all the more evident that a one-sided ethic of obedience that produces uniformity and enslavement under collective prejudices is no more than another form of alienation and of complicity in the sin of the world. The same applies to an ethics that preaches only sentiment, interior feelings or vague attitudes while failing to lead or to educate towards courageous responsibility and prophetic frankness. (Häring, 1974: 65)

It is part of the acceptance of moral responsibility in today’s world to work on the social structure so people can see the reality of their situation and involvements clearly, map out strategic action to overcome evils, and act with freedom.

3.9.3 Social Sin more than the Accumulation of Individual Sins

A situation of social sin is not simply one where a majority of the people involved *each as individuals* are committing some personal sin. Instead, the situation has itself come to be defined, or altered to a significant extent, through the sinful activities of those involved. After some initial hesitation, there is now general agreement that one must envisage sinful social structures or social sin as more than the mere accumulation or repetition of personal sins. It has its own kind of enduring reality, even though this has been brought about by the personal activities of people. Even the very cautious statement of Karl Lehmann, as president of a subcommittee of the [Catholic] International Theological Commission, admits: “there is no doubt that, through the force of sin, contempt and injustice can be incorporated into social and political structures” (Lehmann, 1977: 10). Even though there is no thorough explanation of how this happens, it

is generally accepted by Häring, Curran, Lamb and others that:

The doctrine of social sin ... holds that the effects of individual sin can become embodied in different social systems and structures around us. Social sin is a hardening of the consequences of personal sin into the structures of institutions. The existence of these sinful social structures often oppress people, deny basic rights, cause pain and inhibit freedom. (Lane, 1984: 128) ✓

Not only do sinful social structures inflict injustice and oppression on others, they also lead people into committing further sin so long as they continue willingly to uphold them or refuse to struggle against them. They represent for society, Sievernich states, "what concupiscence means for the individual: *arising from sin and conducing to sin*" (1987: 56; see also Podimattam, 1987: 491). In fact, the direction that concupiscence takes in individuals may often derive from the false values upheld in society. For instance, envy and covetousness are easily aroused by a consumerist society that identifies human worth with acquisition and consumption.

3.9.4 The Influence of Social Sin on Understanding

One of the basic ways in which social sin operates is through clouding people's understanding. As Jim Wallis points out:

Often, we are involved in destructive social arrangements without being aware of it. We are barely conscious of the harm we inflict on others when it is done through the social institutions to which we belong. Personal sin is more visible to us than sin rooted in the system. ... We cling tenaciously to the beliefs and symbols that make our institutions seem right and good, and we easily overlook the sin built into the system, even as it destroys others' lives and eats away at our own humanity. (Wallis, 1981: 35)

The net result is that social sin leads to the kind of moral blindness that is itself blind to its own existence; people come to accept institutionalized injustice and suffering as normal, or even regard them as the will of God.

Such blindness calls for a prophetic ministry that can "awaken the collective

consciousness about structures, situations and widespread practices that do the terrible work of the robbers" (Häring, 1981: 260) in today's socio-economic world. In this vein McCormick says it is not enough to state that social structures are oppressive, but one has to investigate both their operational and ideological aspects. The former "are the concrete patterns of behaviour [such as tax systems, trade agreements, and health delivery systems] that make up a person's environment" (1981: 470). Underpinning these, however, are ideological structures which enslave "when some value other than the individual persons who constitute these communities is the organizing and dominating value" (1981: 470). Thus with a wrong value scale, where social life as a whole is arranged to support the superiority of one race group or promote enjoying the good things of life solely in economic terms, then this ideological structure blinds everyone to other values and more human priorities. McCormick adds that, although operational structures merit direct and decisive action, "the lasting success of this action is inseparable from the modification of the ideological structure" (1981: 471).

Effectively changing the ideological structure of society calls for what Herbert McCabe calls revolutionary change:

[The revolutionary] proposes to change not merely this or that detail within society, but the structure, and hence the values of the society itself. The revolutionary does not propose something that in terms of *this* society is better; he wants to change the terms. He wants history to advance not simply further along established lines, but along new lines. (1968: 28)

This brings out that if a society is to succeed in overcoming the structural evils inherent within it, this will entail a rewriting of its own history. Society's previous blindness will be exposed. Fundamental social change is effected through overcoming the conditions from which a particular social evil can arise. Simply hammering against their operational structure is an instance of tackling problems at too superficial a level; it can often be counterproductive. Instead one has to work out methods of direct action that will strike at a more basic level of the evil.

3.9.5 The Interplay of Personal and Social Sin

Not only does social sin stem from and lead to a clouding of human understanding, it also results from and further reinforces perversity in willed human activity. Sinful social structures do not “result from certain anonymous laws of evolution” (Lehmann, 1977: 9).¹¹ Nor do they derive just from moral blindness, which might to some extent be excusable, but above all from people actively perpetrating or acquiescing in evil.

... In particular these global imbalances, and the degradation of human dignity which they bring, are a result of man’s inhumanity to humanity. They are a consequence of human sinfulness. Gone are the days when we could exempt ourselves from responsibility for such inequalities by suggesting that they were ‘the will of God’ and, therefore, that they should be accepted in a spirit of Christian resignation. They are caused, in fact, to a large degree by the will of human beings. (Lane, 1984: 111)

While it is relatively easy to grasp how a socially induced blindness or distorted view can influence human action, it is much more difficult to follow the full repercussions in both the person and society of evil in the will.

3.9.6 Society or a Group as the Subject or Agent of Sin

Enda McDonagh, almost alone among contemporary writers, raises the issue of “the group as subject of moral obligations and moral response.” He points out that as yet

very little awareness of the need for a further analysis of the group-subject of morality has appeared in moral writing. Social responsibility tends to be discussed in terms of the individual’s obligation to society or to the group, which is indisputable and more easily handled. The group itself as moral subject has received little attention. (McDonagh, 1975: 22)

This approach seems to gain some plausibility from the fact that certain groups

¹¹ The text of the International Theological Commission continues: “A Christian is always to remember that social institutions have resulted from social conscience itself and that they are morally responsible.” (Lehmann, 1977: 96) The translation is not quite clear. But, if this is simply pointing out that we are morally responsible for the social institutions we bring about, there is no problem. But if it claims that we are always conscious of what we are bringing about, then it overlooks the effects of the unintended consequences of human action. See 12.4 later.

or organizations are considered in law to be ‘moral persons’, and can be held liable for their activities. But it should be noticed that these are companies, corporations, institutions and organizations with a written and approved constitution, which demarcates the duties and responsibilities of the various office bearers. So if a company as a whole is at fault, it is easy enough to discern how that resulted from the failure of various individuals within it to exercise their responsibilities. But it is much more difficult to trace the connection between individual and corporate responsibility, when the grouping is looser, such as those living in a certain neighbourhood, a nation of people, or a social class (see Himes, 1986 & later 12.3.1). As many have pointed out, for instance, Podimattam: “A structure [or society] as such can hardly be the subject of ethical activity: structures in themselves can never be guilty” (1987: 491).

So far in contemporary moral theology, I have found no reference to the behaviour of a crowd, mob or mass of people.

3.10 Domination by Economic Concerns

In reading through the literature on social sin, it is noticeable how frequently examples or explanations are concerned with economic issues. Whereas much less attention is paid to adverse structural repercussions of, for instance, the operation of the law, governmental organization and procedures, ethnic pride and nationalism, military affairs, and the stresses placed on marriage and family life today. One reason for this concentration on economic concerns could be that in his social analysis Marx found the basis for human alienation in the historical anomalies of the economy. So, while his analysis has been refined and corrected, little new ground has been broken. This focussing on economic issues is also in keeping with the adoption of the mechanistic root metaphor. It is easier to understand economic activities as the operations of a huge machine, than it is to subsume other spheres of human life under this model.

Another reason for being preoccupied by economic issues is given by McCormick is that “the single dominating and organizing value in American culture is economic — the good life” (1981: 471). This observation also applies outside North America. McCormick continues:

This means that other values will be pursued and promoted only within this overriding priority [of economic success]. Thus, justice in education, housing, medical services, job opportunity is promoted within the dominance of the financial criterion — “if we can afford it,” where ‘afford’ refers to the retention of a high level of consumership. The dominance of the economic value is the root of enslavement, the ideological structure. (1981: 471)

While there is considerable truth in this, it is hardly the full story. One could well argue that many woes in American society derive from its being extremely prone to litigation.

Curran (1979: 124) warns against reducing social problems to just one issue, “be it that of class, sex, race or country.” Although he admits one aspect may be “more significant in a particular situation” and so should be tackled as a matter of strategy.

3.11 Social Sin as Contrary to the Providential Ordering of Creation

As a corrective to the conception of social sin as some kind of entity existing on its own, Charles Curran reminds us that

from the earliest pages of Genesis sin is described in terms of our relationship with God, neighbor, the world, and self. ... In this perspective all the aspects of sin become apparent, especially social sin and its influence on our political, social, and economic structures. (Curran, 1982b: 45f)

Dermot Lane provides a deeper and more dynamic understanding of this relational aspect of social sin, when he says:

Nevertheless, ‘social sin’ is completely contrary to God’s plan of creation and

salvation. According to the Christian doctrine of creation, the fruits of the earth are intended for the use of every human being and not just to be confined to a powerful, privileged few. Furthermore, this social state of affairs clearly contradicts God's grace of salvation which is offered to all humanity in Christ. In addition this sinful situation inhibits the visible growth of God's Kingdom as present reality and future promise. (Lane, 1984: 111; see also Gonzalez Faus, 1986: 88, quoted above)

Understanding this aspect of social sin is important, as it brings out that sinful social structures can rightly be called sinful. They are not only damaging and harmful to human life and society, but they are sinful in being a direct affront to God and his whole purpose. They embody an anti-God thrust.

Although neither dealing explicitly nor solely with social sin, Juan Luis Segundo brings out how it contributes to atheism. Drawing upon the Council's statement that: "To the extent that they [believers] ... are deficient in their religious, moral, or social life, they must be said to conceal the authentic face of God and religion" (GS, 19), he points out that the values Christian believers cultivate in their lives and society are what decide whether the god that their actions declare is a false deity or the true God. "Human beings share responsibility *in common* for the 'god' they convey to others." He continues: "Christians, even in their efforts to propagate their faith, are *responsible* for the denial of God on the sociological level" (Segundo, 1984: 66). Hence in supporting or not opposing the evils embedded in society, those who verbally profess their faith in God can in fact obscure his presence. Because they see religious believers acquiescing in social sin, some people cannot in truth accept their God. But, as Segundo, adds "the 'god' rejected by nonbelievers is often not the genuine God" (1984: 67).

3.12 The Social Mission of the Church

Since social sin both obscures the presence of the true God and persistently inflicts injustice on humankind, part of the church's social mission "is to promote a praxis that is redemptively transformative of these sinful structures" (Lane, 1984: 128). This calls for what Häring calls a "prophetic ministry," whose

social critique is not an application of a static doctrine but a wholesome shock for consciences awakened to the dignity of the poor and downtrodden, and to the all-embracing solidarity of humankind. Thus it unmasks the ruthlessness and stupidity of greed and lust for power (cf James 2:5-6; 4:2).

The prophet does not offer recipes or magic solutions but he does proscribe the deviations, the dehumanizing errors and practices. He points to corporate sin in the light of a [what Harvey Cox terms] "power doctrine of corporate grace." (Häring, 1981: 259)

Lane cautions, however, that this is not the whole task of the church, since "No amount of freedom from unjust structures will free us from our natural propensity to personal sin" (1984: 128).

* * *

After this resume of the main characteristics of social sin, as a number of contemporary writers have envisaged it, it is now time to examine how they and others have explained its workings, in particular their understanding of 'structure.'

Theological Explanations of 'Structural Evil'

"No, because when you weed out the darnel you might pull up the wheat with it.
Let both grow till harvest; and at harvest time I shall say to the reapers:
First collect the darnel and tie it in bundles to be burnt,
then gather the wheat into my barn" (Mt 13: 29-30).

The previous chapter outlined some of the factors which led theologians of various traditions to begin to think in terms of structures. What they all found was that sin involved more than the ready and willing acts of free individuals. Most theologians have simply acknowledged that not everything could be accounted for in terms of individual human autonomy, but have hardly investigated further. This chapter examines the work of the few who have given some account of how sin and evil come to be structured.

4.1 Understanding of 'Structure'

As mentioned earlier (3.3) such terms as 'social sin', 'the [sinful] system', 'structural evil' and so forth are used by many authors in a loose fashion. One of the few works that begins to spell out what is meant by 'social systems,' a term that

Above Every Name: The Lordship of Christ and Social Systems. In his Foreword Clarke states that the various contributors “all related positively to the well-known framework of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann” (1980: 4), which he then explains:

Basically, then, what ‘social systems’ means for us is less a thing or a complexus of things than a phenomenon or process. When humans act and interact as humans they embody their personhood and relationships — for weal or woe — in time, space, matter; in, for example, dress, furniture, architecture; in language and symbols; in customs and laws; in economic processes and social patterns; in the overall organization of human life on planet Earth and beyond. In very diverse ways, the family is a social system; so is a business corporation; so is a cocktail party. (1980: 4)

Later in the same volume, Philip Land provides a convenient summary of this framework:

How structures result from and in turn influence human conduct are described by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann [(1967: 53-61)] .. Here the authors trace the socializing process of coming to know and describe its impact on individuals and society. There are three dialogically related moments: i) *externalization*, the process by which persons or groups impose order on their environment, and then impress that order — that image — on their world; ii) *objectivization*, in which the product of externalization is experienced by the receiving society as an autonomous reality confronting it as an external and coercive fact; iii) *internalization* of the structured and objectified reality by others, in succeeding generations, through the formation of socially induced mindsets (attitudes, values, mentalities) which have a powerful and often determining influence on how we work, what we produce, what and how we consume, etc. (Land in Clarke, 1980: 239 n2)

The Berger-Luckmann framework is also utilized by Patrick Kerans (see 4.6 below), also partly by Juan Luis Segundo (see 4.8 below), and alluded to by both Schindler (1989: 138) and Mynatty (1991: 14). Kenneth R. Himes likewise draws on it to conclude: “social sin is an expression that has come to the fore due to our appreciation for what modern social science has taught us about the influence of social groups and institutions in shaping individual life” (1986: 188).

Although Gregory Baum is critical of the Berger-Luckmann framework as being

too much “a legitimization of the precarious social order!” (1975: 108; also see 4.6 below), it appears to be generally adopted — often more implicitly than explicitly — by those writing on social sin at least in English. Whereas Hugues Puel (1991), writing in French, stresses the importance of distinguishing between structure, system, regime and institution.

While Berger and Luckmann do provide considerable insight into social processes, their theory is not without its shortcomings. In being a sociology of *knowledge* it is weak in dealing with action as such, and because it deals with what is known can hardly contribute to explaining how the unintended and unforeseen effects of human action influence social structures. These and other points will become more apparent after examining the theory of Anthony Giddens (Chapter 12 onwards).

Nevertheless, it continues to shape the predominant outlook of the writers we are currently examining. In this vein Clarke explains how ‘social systems’ are taken into theological reflection:

What helps to make such human [social] creations theologically interesting is that they take on a life of their own, embodying and reflecting us who have projected them, and yet standing in their own right over against us, and — what is theologically even more interesting — profoundly influencing us in our personal and relational life. We have created them, but they in turn create — or deform — us. Though not simply identical with ourselves as persons or with our personal relationships, they remain within the sphere of the human. ... They [as human embodiments] are appropriately viewed as sharing in the sin/grace dialectic so central to the Christian interpretation of history. (1980: 4f)

Yet it will be important to note that when terms from social science are given a theological interpretation, their meaning can be subtly altered.

4.1.1 The Social Dimension of Contemporary Moral Problems

Many issues, which at first sight appear to be solely matters of personal morality,

on closer examination turn out to be mainly structural problems. In his survey of moral theology over fifty years 1940-89, McCormick comments:

We are much more concerned about the rights of people that are denied by social structures. A symptom of this is the fact that the major problems in bioethics are perceived to be problems of access and distribution, problems of social organization and social responsibility. The same is true in other areas. For example, the women's issue is seen to be a structural problem. (McCormick, 1989: 19-20)

Even though individuals may have good intentions and generosity towards each other on a personal level, many of today's issues cannot effectively be tackled without analyzing and transforming the structure of society. Yet this is not all, as in the very effort to construct society anew, the power of sin becomes evident in a different guise. Matthew Lamb provides a reminder of this:

Individuals may have the best will in the world, may be good and upright, and yet by their actions contribute to social and historical processes which oppress and dehumanize. There is a pathological distortion of human existence — a tendency to distort life into death and good into evil. (Lamb, 1982: 3f)

The realization that sin continually works out its damaging effects through social structures profoundly challenges the whole programme of the Enlightenment. As Lamb observes: "The Enlightenment crusades against prejudice seem rather self-forgetful of the deeper strains of bias which have turned the Enlightenment tools of emancipation into new forms of slavery" (Lamb, 1982: 7).

An instance of this given by McCormick when he assesses the pervasive impact of technology, which

may reinforce some deeply embedded Western and American value priorities: efficiency and comfort. If these are indeed the values that shape the perspectives of many Americans, it should be fairly clear that we are knee-deep in danger that they will corrosively affect our judgments of the morally right and wrong, and more generally of the priority of values. (McCormick, 1989: 23)

A more positive note about modern society is, however, struck by Meehan. He takes over Chenu's distinction between neighbours and associates. "Our lives on

this planet are tied together not only by the geographical happenstance of living close to one another” as neighbours. Now “we are also *associates* to one another through the complex interweaving of independent structures” (Meehan, 1982: 9). This brings a fresh dimension into moral considerations, but is not in itself a change for the worse.

4.1.2 Hearts or Structures: A Sterile Dichotomy

Many arguments have taken place within Christian communities during the last couple of decades as to which should have priority: the vertical or horizontal dimensions of Christianity; the conversion of hearts or changing social structures; saving souls or working to improve the world. Some have tended to ignore or downplay social structures, sinful or otherwise, as they do not attach any importance to them. Others have argued that if a sufficient number of people had a change of heart, then society would change automatically. Whereas others have pressed for structural change, at times ignoring or even trampling on individuals in the process. These differences have led at times to rifts within parishes and churches between ‘the charismatics’ and ‘the politicals’ with each group pushing its own programme of action. Arguments have often erupted over practical issues, such as, whether church funds should be spent on improving the liturgy or on social action projects. While there were some efforts to bridge the gap, the extreme intolerance shown by a few on each side did not help mutual understanding. This sometimes resulted in each faction objecting to a caricature of the other. For instance, Cardinal Ratzinger, after objecting to a view of social liberation which he rather equates with godless anarchism leading to tyranny, declaims in Augustinian fashion:

Only he who takes the measure of his action from within and need obey no external constraint is free. Therefore, he is free who has become one with his essence, one with the truth itself. For he who is one with the truth no longer acts according to external necessities and constraints; essence, willing, and acting have coincided in him. In this way, man can touch the infinite in the finite, unite himself to it, and thus become infinite precisely in the recognition of limits. (1987: 72)

This may be read as a salutary warning not simply to follow the prevailing social fashion, but in making up your own mind to be true to yourself before God. But its depiction of the individual as able to be free from all the necessities and constraints of society is very inadequate. Ratzinger overlooks how society, besides constraining people, is the necessary enabling medium for human action. While some theologians may have overstressed social influences, Ratzinger goes to the other extreme. Both sides have fallen victim to facing a false dilemma. It is impossible to overcome evil if some aspect of reality is ignored, denied or neglected. To warn people about the false positions they may fall into or adopt Pierre Bigo (1977: 137-41) lists five false alternatives, namely:

to change people themselves or to change society;
values or structures;
individual sin or collective sin;
temporal or eternal;
natural or supernatural.

They are false because an unnecessary dualism is set up, and then one part set against the other. Basically, it is not a case of either/or, but of both/and. For instance, Curran points out that: "Any theological ethics which fails to recognize both [personal change of heart and structural change] will tend to be inadequate" (1979: 127).

Going one step further, Gutierrez points out that both "hearts" and "social structures" are in fact "interdependent and complementary because they are grounded in a common unity" (1979: 11). It is not a question of bringing two different realities into relation with one another, but of seeing them as two aspects of one reality. Hence

The view that a structural transformation will automatically produce different human beings is no more and no less 'mechanistic' than the view that a 'personal change of heart' will automatically lead to a transformation of society. Any such mechanistic views are naive and unrealistic. (Gutierrez, 1979: 11)

In this statement a hint is given of the need to move beyond the mechanistic

root metaphor for understanding persons in society.

4.1.3 Against a Purely Personal or Spiritual Salvation

The above insight of Gutierrez provides the basic insight that undercuts any view of Christian salvation as a purely spiritual matter for the individual alone. While a valid distinction can be drawn between personal and social sin, between hearts and structures, they remain aspects of one reality. But to separate and even oppose them against one another plays — wittingly or unwittingly — into the hands of those wishing to suppress social transformation. The results of an exclusive concentration on individual sinfulness are described by Jim Wallis:

A sole emphasis on Jesus as personal Savior can, and has, led to a defense of the status quo. In the name of Jesus, our blindness increases. What a terrible reversal of the original gospel message! The reversal is so complete, the blindness so total, that today wealthy and powerful interests actually use evangelism to focus people's attention on their personal sins and to distract their attention from the reality of exploitation and oppression. ... [Whereas] to convert to Jesus Christ is to rise above both personal ego and cultural blindness. (Wallis, 1981: 35f)

A similar point is made by Klaus Nürnberger, who adds "a strong spiritual commitment tends to absorb all energies and to relativise the importance of social structures." In practice, he adds: "Christians often develop their own ecclesial group-selfishness and fail to see beyond the fence of their church yards" (1988: 306). In these ways, the very individualism inherent in a purely spiritual approach further entrenches social sin.

4.2 Sin as Addiction & as Disease: Its Dehumanizing Effects

In the last few years attention has been drawn to the varying paradigms for understanding sin. McCormick P.T.¹² (1989) in his study, *Sin as Addiction*,

¹² Though both are writers in moral theology, Patrick T. McCormick should not be confused with Richard A. McCormick, SJ.

distinguishes six models, namely: sin as stain, as crime, as personal, the spirit of sin, sin and sickness, and sin as addiction. He points out that the prevailing criminal model of sin impeded any understanding of social or structural sin. (1989: 172) He then focuses — in line with current American preoccupations — on sin as addiction. This model brings out how individuals can be affected by sin, but it does not explain how it spreads socially.

Kevin T. Kelly also outlines several paradigms of sin, of which the last two are of interest here, namely, 'sin as disease', and 'sin as systematic dehumanization;' and the naming of their effects through 'historical-cultural realism.'

The analogy with disease helps

in moving away from a too act-centered and morality-based view of sin. ... Nevertheless, it failed to draw attention to the reality which should provoke real guilt in the human family, namely, the horrific suffering inflicted on our fellow human beings by all the dehumanizing factors at play in our world today. (1989: 490f)

This leads to considering "sin as systematic dehumanization;" but here a "purely theoretical discussion of sin is useless and almost blasphemous. ... That is why it [theology] is concerned to 'name' the dehumanizing presence wherever it is found in our contemporary society" (1989: 491). Naming sin calls for "historical-cultural realism" to link it with reality, which is always historically and culturally conditioned. In other words, various "institutions, structures, and ways of acting" humanize or dehumanize people in different ways depending upon the prevailing culture. This viewpoint thus "recognizes the possibility of ethical pluralism. Consequently, sin, seen as *person-injuring* and/or *systematic dehumanization*, needs to be recognized as being to some extent contextual and relative to culture and history" (1989: 491).

Kelly, following McCormick, brings out how structures may be sinful on two counts. Not only do they replace justice and freedom by oppression, but

part of their *person-injuring* lies in the fact that they can even affect a person's "core experiences of freedom and dignity." Consequently, these sinful structures can be self-generating to the extent that people allow themselves to be conditioned into accepting them as either normal or at least inevitable and unavoidable. "That's life," as the fatalistic saying goes. (1989: 496)

The insight given here is that structures are not just outside people, but can enter into the very constitution of their personality. The above formulation, however, seems rather inadequate, since if someone's core (experience of) freedom is injured, they are in no real position to allow or refuse how they are conditioned. Kohut's understanding of the formation of the self should throw some light on this issue (see 7.3 below).

4.3 The Moral Ambiguity of Structures

In some instances, especially during the 1960s revulsion with many kinds of institutions, which were admittedly often deficient and unjust, the popular idea arose that all social structures are inherently sinful. The sense of being feeling trapped is portrayed by Monden: "Not only is man become more mechanized, he is also become gradually more socially *anonymous*, or depersonalized" (1966: 25). In this vein, I remember during 1968 at the international Pax Romana assembly in Philadelphia the youthful resentment against all institutions, and Eugene Carson Blake being asked whether one should work with them at all. He replied that as young man he had accepted to work through institutions, including latterly the World Council of Churches, as he could not see himself working continually or effectively as a lone individual. Unlike his questioners, he did not expect to find some domain in life that would be devoid of all moral ambiguity.

Today no serious theologian would appear to disagree with Meehan's statement that:

Sometimes structures contain a mixture of good and evil. That is another way of saying that they often have elements of hurtfulness and helpfulness, elements that foster the dignity of some and may conflict with needs of others. (1982: 9)

Since our human world is morally ambiguous, a purely manichean reaction that dismisses all social structures as evil is totally misleading. Though still worried about this in the 1980s, Ratzinger rightly declares “that it is not the struggle *against* institutions but the effort to create *just* institutions that render freedom possible” (1987: 62).

Part of the difficulty lies in confusing two different ways of speaking. The first is to focus on the prevalent evil in society and name that as a specific structure (or system). So, taken as plain statements, there is no problem with saying “The apartheid system is sinful.” or “The Nazi horror was an evil structure.” Such denunciations need at times to be made. But neither apartheid nor Nazism exist on their own; they are or were embedded in all the other social processes for running the country. Not all of these processes, such as growing and distributing food, building roads, houses and hospitals, are totally bad. Nor was all social interaction in South Africa or Germany completely sinful, although it could hardly escape being marked by the overriding sinful situation. The second way of speaking looks at the overall social structure or system, and then delineates its sinful aspects alongside its positive ones. As Podimattam observes: “It is indeed problematic to characterize specific social structures and economic systems as such as social sin for no structure is the exclusive outcome of sinful activity” (1987: 492). After all, Puel observes, “a political or economic structure may have been established with good intentions, but when put to use it can turn out a disaster; and at times the opposite may equally well happen” (1991: 129). Just as concupiscence is found only in a reasonably well functioning individual, so social sin can only exist in a society that in a number of other respects functions fairly well.

Several authors help demarcate where the various strands of sin may be embedded in social structures. They provide some more clarification of what is meant by “structures” . Their contributions will now be examined in turn.

4.4 A Basic Alienation Evident in Various Alienations (*Gustavo Gutierrez*)

The theology of liberation runs counter to Teilhard de Chardin and those theologies that were enthusiastic about human progress and development, which tended to subsume sin into some higher process. Gustavo Gutierrez stresses its reality as:

a social, historical fact, the absence of brotherhood and love in relationships among men, the breach of friendship with God and with other men, and, therefore, an interior, personal fracture. When it is considered in this way, the collective dimensions of sin are rediscovered. This is the Biblical notion that Jose Maria Gonzalez Ruiz calls the "harmatiosphere," the sphere of sin: "a kind of parameter or structure which objectively conditions the progress of human history itself." (1973: 175)

The rather awkward notion of the 'harmatiosphere' stands in contrast to Teilhard de Chardin's speaking about the 'biosphere' and the evolving human world as the 'noosphere.' After mentioning some instances of sin (see 3.251 above), Gutierrez says that for liberation theology sin is:

the fundamental alienation, the root of a situation of injustice and exploitation. It cannot be encountered in itself, but only in concrete instances, in particular alienations. It is impossible to understand the concrete manifestations without understanding the underlying basis and vice versa. Sin demands a radical liberation, which in turn necessarily implies a political liberation. Only by participating in the historical process of liberation will it be possible to show the fundamental alienation present in every partial alienation. (Gutierrez, 1973: 175f)

This depiction of social sin, while bringing out that it needs to be tackled on a political level, guards against regarding it as purely socio-political aberration.

4.5 The Structuring of Bias (*Patrick Kerans*)

Patrick Kerans' small volume, *Sinful Social Structures* (1974), was the first book written in English on social sin. He begins by locating the origins of thought about social structures in the heroic optimism of the Enlightenment, which held that humans could themselves as adults overcome evil by fashioning a just,

humanized society. "It is out of the doctrine that man must and man can reform society in order to reform himself that a new ethical vision of society — and a new sense of responsibility for history — springs" (Kerans, 1974: 27).

Kerans raises a crucial issue for theology: how far is the Enlightenment search for innocence compatible with the Christian faith in the necessity of redemption? He shows too how all human issues, including the mystery of evil, came to be treated as scientific problems. "Science brought security because it worked" (1974: 37). Yet the overall result of confining attention to what humans could accomplish is that the full reality and mystery of evil is overlooked.

Kerans finds in the scriptures two views on sin. The Yahwist account of the fall, for instance, "focuses on one aspect of sin, namely, on *guilt*, on the terrible consequences of the individual act of sinful freedom." Whereas for Paul particularly in Romans "all men share a *solidarity, a complicity in sin*" (1974:61). This biblical dialectic allows Kerans to state: "It is, I believe, in the interplay between these two experiences of sin, namely, the reign of sin and the sinful act, that we will find meaning for the notion 'social sin' or 'sinful social structure' " (1974: 60; also see 3.3.5 above).

Following Ricoeur, Kerans shows how the paradox of sin can best be understood at the moment of repentance, as then "a person recognizes himself as having been 'in a situation' which was not neutral. He insists that he was 'captivated' by the temptation ... *but this captivation became captivity only because it was freely willed*" (1974: 66-7). This can be somewhat explained in terms of Bernard Lonergan's account of *bias* or being *knowingly ignorant*, where on the individual level a person refuses to grow through not recognizing the new demands that other persons or the situation are making. This, however, is a precarious situation as the realities of life may shatter the self image that that person is holding to. But if someone becomes "part of a group which shares his values and reinforces his image of himself, that group will also reinforce his biases. Group

bias is much tougher, much more resistant to light" (1974: 71). Examples of group bias are evident in racial and class distinctions. "To share in group bias is to pursue only those avenues of investigation or reflection which tend to bolster the prestige or power of the group" (1974: 71). This might be so widespread as to become a general bias. An example given by Kerans is the assumption "that the forms of political democracy developed in North America are superior to all others and that other forms should be 'contained' — by war if necessary" (1974: 72).

Bias can easily enter the way people structure their situation. Kerans distinguishes between a person's circumstances and situation. The circumstances are "all the factors which are 'not me' and over which a person has no control, but which impinge on him." Whereas a person's situation "includes the subject ... [and] those factors in a person's circumstances with which he is prepared to deal, of which he is conscious, concerning which he is deciding." But since no one can know or deal with everything, "each situation is never more than a part of circumstances; and usually a distortion" (1974: 73).

The way people come to grasp their situation, Kerans explains, is not by testing everything on its own merits, or reinventing the wheel, but by taking on the symbolic universe of meaning that undergirds their society. People take on the common stock of knowledge that their society provides of "how things are" and "what is to be done." So "reality itself [comes to be] limited to that which everyone thinks it is" (1974: 76). Relying upon the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966; see 4.1 above), Kerans states:

Men not only order their lives pragmatically through social order, they provide each other with safeguards against the ultimate terror, the nightmare of chaos. This, then, is the ultimate restraint over freedom which forms the background, the framework of every situation. The individual who casts aside the agreed-upon structures will have to face isolation and the ultimate terror of meaninglessness. It takes a very strong-minded person to be sure that he, and not the others, is in touch with reality. (1974: 76)

Since people are so reliant upon the socially accepted and acceptable understand-

ing of reality, it is easy for bias to enter and distort their perception of reality. Once an irrational element is introduced into a social situation, probably because some people did not want their position challenged, it becomes "destructive of coherence, of meaning, of well-being, perhaps even of life. But once it is there, it will provoke not a reversal of the irrational but an accumulation of the irrational" (1974: 77).

If there is no open and trusting discussion to reveal the falsity of some biased view, everyone is likely to use their social position to defend themselves, thus skewing the situation even further. "People expect the worst of others and prepare for it by accumulating power" (1974: 79). This leads to inequality, short-sightedness, narrow self-interest and defensiveness being built into the social structures which channel people's perceptions and interactions. The most threatening instance of this was the policy of nuclear deterrence being based upon 'the balance of terror' between the super-powers. Kerans sums up his analysis:

A social structure can be sinful ... in its source: a social structure emerges as people act out a decision which is biased, narrow and destructive. It can be sinful in its consequences: others confronted with a situation so structured are provoked to react defensively and so to reinforce the destructive characteristics of the situation. Still other people, lacking the power to react defensively, will experience sharp limitations on their effective scope of freedom and hence will experience the structures as offensive to their human dignity. (1974: 79)

This resume of Kerans' position indicates at least the depth of his insight. Its central point, which will be examined later (9.5), is its metaphor of being 'knowingly ignorant', which derives from Lonergan's notion of 'bias' and ultimately from Thomas Aquinas' view of evil as the choice of the trivial over what is important.

Surprisingly, only Baum (1975), McCormick (1981) and Lamb (1982) make any reference to Kerans' work, and none seem to follow up all the issues he raises.

4.6 Four Levels of Social Sin (Gregory Baum)

Some early hints of at least the need to consider structural issues are found in Gregory Baum's article "Man in History: The Anthropology of Vatican II" (in Dunphy, ed 1967). There, after speaking about the demonic forces whose "evil transcends the malice of man," he observes that: "In the political order the suffering imposed on people is so vast and the structures so immobile that the good will of men, even when there are many of them, often remains totally ineffectual" (in Dunphy, ed 1967: 171). Baum captures the mood of the late 1960s, which was beginning to look at the theology of revolution, when he says: "While individuals, even in high positions, are incapable of changing the structures that are responsible for this misery, we know that the structures must be changed as quickly as possible" (1967: 172).

A more thorough treatment of social sin, however, emerges only after Baum had taken two years off from theology to study sociology in depth. This led him — following Johann Baptist Metz — to attempt a *deprivatized* reading of the Gospel and hence of sin. In forgetting its social dimension "we have lost the key for understanding the violence of our history and the collective evil in which we are involved" (Baum 1975: 197).

The most important contribution Baum makes to understanding social sin comes in his distinguishing its four levels, namely:

(1) the injustices and dehumanizing trends built into various institutions ... which embody people's collective life; (2) the cultural and religious symbols that reinforce and legitimate unjust institutions; (3) the false consciousness created by these institutions; and (4) the collective decisions, generated by the distorted consciousness, which increase the injustices in society and intensify the power of the dehumanizing trends. (1975: 201f)

As an example to test Baum's analysis, one might take the 'hit squads' that have in recent years been operating in South Africa. On the *first* level, there is the overall unjust situation, which can only be upheld by putting inordinate power

in the hands of a few and exempting their activities from all normal political scrutiny. "This evil" Baum explains "may go on without anyone being fully aware of it. ... only after a long time do the negative effects appear, and when they do, they are not immediately recognized as effects of the system" (1975: 201).

On the *second* level is the ideology of 'national security,' which justifies any action done purportedly in defence of one's country. This ideology as well as the state, cultural and religious symbols surrounding the military "legitimate and reinforce the unjust institutions and thus intensify the harm done to a growing number of people" (1975: 201).

As long as the ideology of national security is accepted, it engenders on the *third* level a false consciousness "through which people involve themselves collectively in destructive action as if they were doing the right thing ... [and defending] our collective well-being" (1975: 201). This ideology is accepted with varying degrees of intensity; some have passionately accepted it, others acquiesced, and still others struggled against it and resigned from the military or the police. On this level, "people, open to the Spirit, are able to become aware of, and turn away from, the taken-for-granted injustices built into their society" (1975: 202).

Whether there are officially constituted 'hit squads' in the SAP and SADF or merely groups of mavericks operating on their own is rather a quibble about words. But certain groups have been able collectively to make decisions, such as selecting targets for assassination, that further

increase the injustices in society. ... These collective decisions, made by councils or boards of various kinds, appear as if they are based on free choice and deliberation while in fact they may simply be the rational consequences of the distortions built into the institution and duplicated in consciousness. (1975: 202)

In other words, on this *fourth* level, operatives simply carry out without question what they have come to understand their organization or unit is all about. Insofar as they suppress their conscience, their "personal sin clearly enters

into the creation and expansion of social sin.” Furthermore, when acting with deliberate hate or sadism “a person or a group of persons can magnify the evil done by institutional life and give a twist for the worst to human organization” (1975: 202). Here, one might add, the hostility that the actions of hit squads engender only seems to confirm their diagnosis of the prevalent dangers to state security.

In a reasonably just society, there is no guarantee that a group of soldiers, police or anyone else might not carry out assassinations, but its likelihood is considerably reduced. Firstly, with a fair level of equality before the law social antagonism between groups would not be too high; also no group of people will be entrusted with enormous state power without strict surveillance and accountability. Secondly, the cultural and religious symbols are more likely to support genuine public service; at least, no section of the population would be publicly depicted as expendable. So, thirdly, it would be much more difficult for any group to envisage forming a hit squad as part of their normal service to the country and all its people. And, fourthly, with public opinion more concerned and due accountability from all ranks expected, and not being shielded from surveillance, any group could hardly reckon on getting away with assassinations with impunity. In short, when a society is relatively devoid of social sin, because reasonable standards of truth, freedom, and justice are upheld, then it would offer no encouragement to personal sin.

As Baum observes: “Human limitations and personal sins compounded have created social sins, and conversely social sins create an environment that promotes personal sins” (1975: 204). To grasp what is happening both poles should be examined. Hence he suggests that moral theology, traditionally concerned with the individual, would benefit from also submitting “the social environment to the detailed criticism that we apply to the actor” (1975: 204).

Mention has been already been made (2.2 & 2.6 above) of Baum’s comments on

some Vatican and episcopal documents dealing with the sinful structures of society.

4.6.1 The Baum-Bryant Debate

Several years later, Baum's treatment of social sin occasioned a debate with Darrol Bryant (1983, 1984 and in Foster and Mojzes, eds 1985¹³) and others in *The Ecumenist*. Bryant accepts "Baum's analysis of social sin [as] rich and often helpful in understanding the dynamics of contemporary society" (1983: 51). Though he adds that often "the labelling of an institution or system as 'sinful' precludes the discriminating analysis of social institutions required" (1983: 53). Much more careful analysis in each case is required, than speaking in sweeping terms about social sin.

The chief fault that Bryant finds in Baum is his neglect of "the ontological component to the disorder that pervades our humanity and is manifest in our life together" (1983: 51). "To identify sin with a given social structure is to confuse the reflection with its source. Sin arises from the broken relationship of the creature with God" (1983: 52). Overlooking this, Baum's account leads to too much politicization of the Christian faith. Bryant objects to Baum's taking over too much of the Enlightenment project of restructuring society, and abandoning the Christian teaching that "our humanity is flawed, broken, or wounded in such a fundamental way that it will not be overcome by any form of social engineering or transformation" (1983: 49).

In his reply, Baum admits that more needs to be said on "the ontological roots of

13 This appears to be a reprint of the original article, which may or not have been published, from which the shortened version that opened the debate in *The Ecumenist* was taken. The reprint there omits Bryant's criticism of Walter Rauschenbusch, and concentrates on Gregory Baum's contribution. Others who entered the debate were Douglas Webster (1984) and Martin Rumscheidt (1984).

There is a glaring omission in the first paragraph of *The Ecumenist* version. It reads: "...human life is inexplicable simply in relation to its *transcendent* source and end." Whereas in the Durwood and Mojzes book, it reads: "...human life is inexplicable simply in relation to itself. Rather, the Christian vision requires that we understand the unfolding of human life in all its dimensions in relation to its transcendent source and end." (1985: 149)

human sin and the transcendent divine mystery which is the source of human redemption" (1983: 54). But basing himself on "the hermeneutics of suspicion" he warns that affirmations about "the universality of sin and the selfishness of the heart" have historically been used in many instances "to relativize or even make invisible existing structures of oppression" (1983: 55). Baum also calls for "the hermeneutics of *Sitz im Leben*," for an understanding in the given situation of the political implications of every religious statement. But he rules out both seeing faith as having an exclusively political meaning (Alfredo Fierro, 1977) and "attaching absolute importance to political strategies" (1983: 59). Instead, Baum argues that "the option for the poor" as a commitment in faith provides "an ongoing critique, to be applied even to societies that have created many structures that protect justice" (1983: 59).

In his comment on this exchange, Douglas Webster asks how the structural analysis of sin is to be taken: "in the name of a redefined transcendence and grace rather than Enlightenment humanism" (1984: 18). This prompts the question of whether insights and terminology taken from (Enlightenment) sociology can be used — and transformed in the process — to speak about the ontological place of humanity before God. Or do we have to remain with an Augustinian view of sin, because sociological terminology carries too many overtones of human innocence and suggests the perfectibility of society without conversion? Hence due to this kind of worry Bryant asks: "If we believe that the overcoming of sin requires divine action, as Baum says he does, then what does this entail for the Christian in society?" (1984: 21)

4.7 Two Aspects of Structural Injustice (Donal Dorr)

A further insight into how social sin functions is provided by Donal Dorr, when he shows that organizations may be unjust in two ways. Firstly, they may be unjust *in what they do*, for instance exploiting the Third World so that many people are entrapped in poverty. And, secondly, injustice may be found *in the*

way they are designed. In the latter case, such organizations “concentrate almost all power at the top; and that is itself an injustice, built into their structure; it deprives the ordinary workers of any effective control over the policies of the organisation in which they work” (Dorr, 1984: 59).

This distinction, however, is not quite as clear as it might first appear, as one can talk about organizations at different levels. For instance, a distinction needs to be made between the policies of particular banks and the institution of banking as such. To what extent is the crippling burden of Third World Debt due to a deliberate policy or to the overall design of the world banking system. Also “what they do” is open to ambiguity as covers what an organization intends to bring about, as well as what results from its action, whether this is intended or not, foreseen or not. Dorr’s observations must be set alongside those of Lane, who points out: “Social sin is not normally planned in a deliberate or conscious way; instead it arises indirectly as a consequence of human blindness or personal sin” (1984: 111).

4.8 An Evolutionary Approach (*Juan Luis Segundo*)

The approach of Segundo to the question of sin in society is significantly different from that of the authors already mentioned. Although he would hardly disagree with them about what are instances of social sin in today’s world, he puts the whole issues in a different perspective, an evolutionary one that takes much of its inspiration from Teilhard de Chardin. But, before examining Segundo’s views, it should prove helpful if this new approach is viewed as part of a larger theological issue.

Understanding sin and evil has always proved difficult; there have been two basic approaches in the history of theology, that of Irenaeus and that of Augustine. All the authors mentioned above have generally held to an Augustinian view of sin, as the privation of a good that should be present. That

privation has initially resulted from someone choosing evil when they could and should have chosen good; this has been an abuse of human freedom. Sin has then spread into the structures of society, making it more difficult for people both to grasp what is good and to put it into effect. Whereas if social sin did not distort people's outlook and inclinations so much, each person would be that much freer in making a choice between good and evil. This approach relies upon the root metaphor of humans at one time, before the Fall, being completely free to choose between good and evil, as well as mature enough to grasp the implications of the choice they made.

An alternative approach to sin and evil stems from Irenaeus of Lyons. He viewed humans as initially immature or childlike, hence likely to fall into error and so still needing to learn by experience the difference between good and evil. To begin with human knowledge and freedom was deficient, but growth was possible even if sin occurred in the process. Although not worked out in a thoroughly systematic manner, "Irenaeus sees our world of mingled good and evil as a divinely appointed environment for man's development towards the perfection that represents the fulfillment of God's good purpose for him" (Hick, 1966: 221). In his efforts to make sense of sin and evil we see Irenaeus drawing upon a different root metaphor from that of Augustine (see also Chapter 20).

In placing sin and evil within an evolutionary perspective, Segundo's approach (1974, 1977 & 1984) is much more Irenaean than Augustinian, though the scope of his theory goes far beyond that of Irenaeus. Segundo sees the universe finding its destiny in Christ through the process of evolution. As evolution takes place in the pre-animate as well as pre-human stages, one can look for an analogue of sin in these stages as well. This he finds in the process of entropy that runs contrary to evolution; evolution has to contend with entropy, the process in which energy is dissipated, complex structures break up and the universe eventually runs down.

Evolution moves toward ever more complex and potent concentrations of energy. ... it is *negentropy*. So if evolution tends toward ever more concentrated and powerful syntheses of energy, then it does so by *running counter to the statistically greater tendency toward ever simpler syntheses of degraded energy*. It is a minority current running against a majority tendency. (Segundo, 1974: 23)

Segundo then uses this image as the key for interpreting personal growth and social development, or their being thwarted by sin. "The tendency toward sin is the tendency toward the degeneration of energy which, of and by itself, would make all further evolution impossible. Of itself all sin is anti-evolutionary" (Segundo, 1974: 27). Here Segundo is not so much concerned with the morality of an individual's actions, as with viewing sin in a socio-historical perspective.

There is a fundamental ambiguity inherent in human life and society. This is evident when society or people *en masse* are examined. To some extent people inevitably belong to the "mass" , to those who have delegated their "power of judgment and decision to others *in any given area or aspect of their existence*" (Segundo, 1974: 38). Being part of the mass of people in society has a moral ambivalence. Human society could not continue without conformity and conservatism. But if the development that society also needs is to take place then some — a minority — must act contrary to the "simplistic, mechanical syntheses" favoured by the conservative majority. For the minority not to go against the mass would be sin: "the rejection of a creative but costly liberty." Segundo thus depicts the ambiguity inherent in human society that people face:

On the one hand he [mass man] is a *brake* operating against such [new and richer] social synthesis because the statistical laws of least effort are operative in him. On the other hand he is the indispensable *base* of solidarity required so that societal life may exist at all and so that out of this base the possibility of new syntheses may rise through the work of minorities. (Segundo, 1974: 38)

To sum up, social evolution occurs when there is "a *dialectical* rhythm at work in the interaction between masses and minorities, facile syntheses and difficult syntheses, sin and grace" (1974: 130). Social sin is thus the occurrence of people holding on to facile syntheses with low concentrations of energy and hence,

through their passivity and conservatism, blocking the breakthrough of society to a new threshold.

From even this short resume, it will be evident how divergent are Segundo's views on sin from the other authors mentioned above. Surprisingly little use or even discussion of his views has taken place; Kirk (1979) is a partial exception. Though Haight does criticize Segundo for reducing graced freedom to activity and sin to passivity. Since "it is precisely in the activity of freedom, when freedom is most free and powerful, that it can be most sinful" (Haight, 1985: 148).

While Segundo's approach offers many new and intriguing ideas, its validity in a number of crucial areas nevertheless remains an open question. For instance: in view of advances in science and cosmology, to what extent can evolution now be understood as negentropy? Furthermore, is Segundo's view of evolution based on that of a particular species on its own or that of the cosmos as a whole? How on a human level can one assess which actions genuinely contribute to social evolution? After all, some extremely complex systems have perished, while simple ones have persisted. In human endeavours, let alone biology, which syntheses are in fact facile and which rich in concentrated energy? At times, complex biological and cultural systems seem to reach an evolutionary dead end; for instance, dinosaurs and Byzantine civilization. Also, to what extent is his contrasting (individual) human freedom with (statistical) sociological prediction a false dichotomy? Is his understanding of human freedom as being unrestricted by social considerations adequate? So, while certainly stimulating inquiry, Segundo's suggestions call for further investigation.

It will, however, be easier to assess Segundo's views later, in the light of Giddens' understanding of action and social structures. Also, his view of sin as being anti-evolutionary can be better examined when it is clearer how social sin runs contrary to what Aquinas speaks of as the providential ordering of creation.

4.9 Terminology alien to Theology (*Angelo Bertuletti*)

After examining the notion of social sin as it has been presented by Gutierrez, Boff and Segundo, as well as the approaches of Schoonenberg, Ricoeur and others, Angelo Bertuletti questions the suitability of 'social sin' as a theological term. He asks whether in "referring a theological-ethical category of sin to a collective subject, one does not risk excluding the very moral responsibility that this expression was intended to promote in the conscience of the believer" (1985: 57f). He sees in the introduction of this term the continued danger of "technico-scientific rationality dominating and emptying out the ethical-symbolic universe that [should] mediate social relations" (1985: 58). His overriding concern is that no way of speaking about sin should diminish the dimension of human freedom, and hence of personal responsibility. As the term 'social sin' appears to do that, Bertuletti calls it an 'impertinence.'

While one can accept Bertuletti's concern that people should not use the term 'social sin' as a way of evading their personal responsibility, one has to question his conception of the lack of relation between a person and society.

4.10 Classification (*Marciano Vidal*)

Drawing upon Pope John Paul II's apostolic exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia* (1984), Marciano Vidal (1986) offers a classification of sin, in which the social dimension progressively increases:

- social repercussions of every sin (both individual and intra-individual)
- collective sin
- interindividual and social sin
- structural sin

He sees collective sin, his second category, as the responsibility not of a single person, but of a group. It is not "the sum or juxtaposition of individual sins; it is

a properly constituted evil entity, which has a dynamic unity rooted in the convergence of powers and wills directed towards a common morally negative value" (1986: 399). Vidal quotes Santamaria, who writing in 1959, spoke of collective sin as

an organized action, for example, of a legislative assembly or the electoral body as whole ... [which] does not conform to the just law of the community, and consequently, with eternal law. ... but instead brings about a certain order amid the disorder. (in Vidal, 1986: 400)

The phrase "order amid disorder" is reminiscent of the Chicago sociologist who in the 1930s, when the Mob terrorised the populace, wanted to call crime 'social disorganization,' until someone pointed out that it was the best organized activity in the city. Likewise, the operations of a death squad or gang of bank-robbers have their own internal ordering, but thrive upon and in turn further overall social disorder.

Vidal uses the term 'social sin,' his third category, to speak about actions or omissions that run counter to the common good and bring about or reinforce social injustices. They are more likely to be committed by groups of people or their leaders than by isolated individuals.

Following John Paul II, Vidal speaks of 'structural sin,' his fourth category, which is "an objective concretization of personal guilt; such concretization springs from personal responsibility but comes to be seated in human structures" (1986: 401). He explains that the notion of structure comes from considering

human reality as a synthesis of both intimacy and openness, which Ortega y Gasset describes as 'me and my circumstances' or as 'interiority (*ensimismamiento*) and alterity.' Circumstances or alterity encircle the person at the centre (*entorno*), who at the same time sets out the circle of his social surroundings (*contorno*)" (1986: 401).

Since "the social surroundings are neither completely determined nor completely undetermined," (1986: 402) they are open to being shaped by human freedom,

and hence people must in some degree be held responsible for any injustice they embody. Vidal continues:

The degree of participation in structural injustices can be gauged by criteria of *action* and *passion*: in what degree does each person shape the unjust social situation or lets himself be shaped by it. ... All sin, whether individual or structural, arises in the interior of man. [But] the precise shape of each sin derives from the joining once again of the personal and structural dimensions. (1986: 403)

Although Vidal's classification makes some useful distinctions between various understandings of sin, it does not bring out the connections between them. It does not show, for instance, how — using Vidal's categories — structural sin may trap people so they are engaged even before they realize it in supporting social injustice. To some extent, however, his classification anticipates the distinction Giddens draws between systems and structures.

4.11 Some Conclusions & Issues still left Open

The past few decades have seen a growing consensus amongst theologians about the reality of social or structural sin. To begin with an attempt was made simply to transfer the notion of sin with all its implications of guilt from an individual to a collective subject. The shortcomings of this approach were only overcome once theologians gained insight from the social sciences into how society was structured. This then allowed them to see that social sin is not an action as such but a structural reality. It derives from the wrong doings of individuals and becomes in turn the condition for further wrong doing.

Yet this insight into its being not an action, but rather the result of and condition for action, poses a difficulty. If it is not an action undertaken by some particular persons, then where does responsibility for it lie? How can it be effectively identified, grasped and tackled? A partial answer to these questions comes from recalling that speaking about sin arises primarily in the context of conversion, confession and redemption. Sin is not usually recognized and acknowledged

while it is being committed, but when it is being overcome. This applies to sin on a social as much as on a personal level. Hence any inquiry into social sin makes most sense when people are seeking to transform their society. If they are to promote justice and peace in modern society, then they must give attention to the sinful social structures and conditions that ruin people's lives, and which would otherwise undermine their best efforts. This calls for reflection on what social position and attitudes they should adopt. Sometimes, the adoption of a critical social stance is effected through *the option for the poor*, where people endeavour to assess society from the viewpoint of its most vulnerable members. Furthermore, through making efforts to transform society people are likely to discover how its sinful structures are much more deeply entrenched than they first envisaged.

In applying the notion of sin to society as well as to persons, there is both a continuity as well as some changes in its meaning. Speaking of social *sin*, and not just evil, underlines how the very structures of society, particularly the conditions which people have shaped for themselves and others, are against the will and purpose of God. They are not simply an accident or calamity, such as the physical evils of drought or fire.

Whereas personal sins have usually been thought of as wrong *actions*, the growing understanding of social sin also has brought *omissions* to the fore once again. Many sinful social situations come about, or become entrenched, because people neglect to do the good they can and should. This is evident in the different ways that personal and social sin need to be tackled. Personal sin calls for each individual to repent of their past wrong doings and some resolution to avoid them in the future. Social sin, on the other hand, can hardly be overcome by individual effort; it requires group effort and cooperation, where people strive to uphold a higher set of values and shape society accordingly. This is likely to demand long term efforts, even running over generations. The individual's struggle is primarily against the wrong he or she has done, even if they are not

fully blameworthy. Whereas once people become socially aware they are often required to tackle sinful situations which they personally had no hand in bringing about. They are not responsible — in the sense of being guilty — for bringing them about, but they willingly accept the responsibility of working to transform them. Not to accept such a responsibility in one or other form at all may well be a personal sin of omission, that of acquiescing in the prevailing social sin. This is one way in which personal and social sin exacerbate each other.

While there is a readiness among theologians to speak about social sin, oppressive structures, sinful situations, etc there have only been slight attempts to examine the operations of such 'social structures' and how they endure. A useful distinction has been made between *operational* structures, the organizations that are readily evident in society, and *ideological* structures, the symbols and ways of thought that shape people's perceptions of themselves and others. These, however, have not been linked with *personality* structures or defects which make people prone to accept a distorted perception of reality or go along with the unjust procedures practiced by an organization.

There is a growing realization of how extensively in the modern world our human activities themselves set the conditions — for good or ill — for human living. In previous ages people's life chances were much more circumscribed by the natural forces of climate, disease and scarce resources. Whereas today how these forces affect people depends largely on their social position and the structure of their society. It is in response to the evils of our modern world being increasingly brought about through our human activities that theologians consider social sin an appropriate term for today.

This, however, has led some writers to identify all social sin with one prevailing manifestation of sin, namely that found in excessive *possessive individualism*. In its social form excessive possessiveness easily becomes the institutionalization of greed, where whole societies suffer from an unjust distribution of life chances.

Excessive individualism heightens people's perception of themselves and their activities, but leaves their dependency upon others in society in the shadow. As a result persons, groups and even nation states come to think of themselves as *self made* with no ties or obligations to others. In this instance, social sin lies predominantly in using others in society while disavowing any obligations that arise from belonging to it.

There is no denying that excessive possessive individualism is especially important as it stems directly from the mechanistic root metaphor of society, which has largely brought the modern age about. Nevertheless, it is still only one manifestation of social sin. Other manifestations can be found in religious fanaticism, militarism, sexism, racism and nationalism, and in cultures that promote environmental degradation and substance abuse. Only latterly are some theologians turning attention to these other instances of social sin. An analysis of them in depth will have to draw not only upon the mechanistic root metaphor of society, but examine what is amiss in the creation of society as a common artistic enterprise. So far, this theological task has only been hinted at.

The Adoption of Sociological Terms into a People's Theology

*"There are some things in Paul's letters hard to understand,
which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction" (II Peter 3: 16).*

This chapter continues the examination of how people have envisaged sin and evil as present in social structures. It concentrates upon the contrast between two different approaches to social evil, and the confusions that arise when they are not distinguished. One approach is 'experience near' while the other is reliant upon theory and so 'experience distant.' While the former lends itself to rhetoric and the latter facilitates analysis, yet both approaches rely upon and complement one another.

5.1 Two Approaches to Social Sin

At present, many people feel a need to speak about or rather cry out against the structural evils or social sin — militarism, sexism, endemic poverty, racism, and

political oppression — that they are facing. Yet there is considerable confusion when it comes to explaining them or working out strategies to overcome them. One reason for this is that similar terminology is used for two different approaches to the same topic.

In the first approach, such terms as 'the military machine', 'the wheels of sexism', 'the stairwell of poverty', 'the apartheid system' and 'one dimensional society' often graphically depict the life experience of suffering people. They feel as though they are being ground down by some faceless machine, or are locked into a structure from which they cannot change, or are in the grip of a system which they cannot escape and that thwarts them at every turn. This sense of being — due to one's social position — overwhelmed by some evil was alluded to during the Council (see 2.2.2 above and G&S, 13).

In South Africa the term 'the system' is applied to apparatus of apartheid, including the bureaucracy which both supports and lives off it, the country's discriminatory laws and their enforcement by 'agents of the system,' as well as the systematic dispossession of land, economic exploitation and other inequalities. To sum all this up as 'the system' aptly captures a sense of what people are up against. In some ways this is a brilliant term for depicting a crucial aspect of the whole process of apartheid as it afflicts so many people. For instance, Desmond Tutu speaks of the children that "starve in resettlement camps, the somewhat respectable name for apartheid's dumping grounds for the pathetic casualties of this vicious and evil system" (1983: 125). Nolan in his chapter "Unmasking the System" (1988: 68-88) provides a summary of how the victims of the system understand it. Other writers make similar points by speaking of a deep "structural malady in society" (Sebidi, 1986: 22), or of "the need to redeem social structures" and the "struggle to combat evil structures and institutions" (Mkhatshwa, 1984: 3f).

More specifically, Frank Chikane addressing European Christians distinguishes

primary and secondary sins. Secondary sins are those committed by people in large measure due to their inhuman conditions. But, Chikane points out:

The primary sinners are those who invest in South Africa and give loans to this evil apartheid system to allow the tiny white minority to use these resources to hold power and to maintain this brutal system at the expense of hundreds of thousands of lives. (1986: 4)

In this passage, which links economic investment with supporting a social system, a hint of a socio-economic analysis is evident. But the weight of the message is carried much more by an appeal to the experience of those brutalized by the system.

The second approach is that of the social theorist or political scientist who produces a detailed analysis of how society is organized. This analysis or explanation relies upon one or other social theory. Although it also uses such terms as 'structure', 'system', 'institution', and 'social forces', these take their meaning from a theoretical explanation of how society maintains itself through the ongoing interaction of its members in their different roles. The social scientist is not directly describing observable features of society, but bringing out the underlying pattern by which its members' interactions are ordered. For instance, a 'social structure' is not encountered as an entity in one's experience, but has a virtual presence as both the medium and the outcome of people's social interaction.

The structures social scientists perceive are 'experience distant', and only make sense in terms of their theory. They are not trying to describe what it feels like to live in a particular society, but to explain what makes it possible for people to live in society at all. The structures, systems and institutions and forces that the social scientist speaks about are not exactly the same as those that oppressed people brush up against every day. Structures for the latter are very concrete as they need always to be reckoned with in everyday living; their speaking about them is 'experience near' or derived from the problems they have to face each

day.

Some of the different perspectives on social sin are summed up in the diagram below. The gap between an ‘experience near’ and an ‘experience distant’ approach to social structures depends both upon people having different concerns and their varying positions in society. The social scientist, who is usually in a not too disadvantaged social position, is concerned above all to understand the workings of society as a whole. He or she is somewhat cushioned against the worst experiences of society, or can look at them from a distance. Whereas the socially oppressed or disadvantaged know the structures and system of society as something constraining them and blocking their living as fully human beings.

		Type of Social Concern	
		<i>Scientific</i>	<i>Everyday</i>
Social position	<i>Powerful</i>	Experience distant — theoretical	Hardly averted to
	<i>Powerless</i>	(Danger of reification)	Experience near — concrete

Fig 5.1 Ways of Perceiving Social Structures

It is instructive to add at this juncture that those who are socially privileged or in a position of power hardly ever notice or pay attention to the structures of society at all. That is, unless they are social scientists or others concerned to look into the workings of society. Since structures do not curb or limit them, but provide the

basis for their life and development in liberty, they are not problematic and so hardly noticed. Generally on a theological level, too, the socially privileged consider that individual conversions or a personal change of heart are sufficient to overcome evil in society.

For telling how well a system or organization is working, the powerless person who experiences its effect at first hand has a privileged position. The patient in a hospital, the passenger on a bus, the customer in the store is in the best position to tell whether they are getting the service these organizations were set up to provide. The same holds true for a society as a whole; its most vulnerable members are in the best position to judge whether or not it is working effectively. They will be the first to know *that* something is wrong, even if they are not always able to specify *what* is wrong. Often the person able to take a more experience distant or scientific approach may better diagnose precisely what has gone wrong.

Furthermore, unless it is clear there are at least two approaches, and hence two perceptions of social structures and the evils they may embody, confusion is likely to arise. As Gregory Bateson points out, speaking about a system as a whole is different from talking about events and experiences taking place within it. "The entities and variables that fill the stage at one level of discourse vanish into the background at the next-higher or -lower level" (1980: 120). Language is of a different logical type depending upon whether one is talking about the system or structure of society as a whole or are speaking from within it about some aspects of its functioning, or in this case very urgent ones in its malfunctioning. The person who identifies too readily a particular element, such as the mistreatment of people in a law court, or detention without trial as the system as a whole is crossing from one logical typing to another. Speaking in this way may be very good, and even necessary, for rhetorical effect, but it can obscure how the underlying causes of evil that maintain the malfunctioning of the whole system need to be changed.

5.1.1 The *Kairos Document* & its Reception

This clash of approaches is evident in the *Kairos Document*, where it speaks of “apartheid as a system’, “causes and interests’, “the structures of oppression’, “social forces’, “the mechanics of injustice and oppression’, and even more strangely of the “structural, institutional and unrepentant violence of the State.” One can recognize in this important and timely statement a genuine cry of protest. But as it has but little theory underpinning it, it is a poor instrument for social analysis or planning social change. In this vein, Nel notes a similarity between the document and contemporary social and political theory, but adds that the latter “reflects much more sophistication with reference to social analysis and models for relating theory to practice” (Nel, undated: 6).

Part of the confusion and acrimony that the *Kairos Document* generated arose, I suspect, from its not being clear whether it was giving an ‘experience distant’ analysis of the social evils afflicting South Africa or making an ‘experience near’ appeal against the sufferings inflicted upon so many people. As Nel observes:

When the situation in which people find themselves is so desperate that they feel trapped by systems or structures, it is impossible to provide a balanced picture of a highly complex social reality. It causes them to seek refuge in a structural interpretation of their reality, which, in turn, makes them vulnerable to conform to a Marxist social analysis. It begs understanding! (undated, 9f)

Yet on the other hand, the very strength of the *Kairos Document* and similar statements, or rather the colloquial discourse from which they were drawn, depends to a considerable extent upon its using technical language to depict everyday experience. The two ways of speaking cannot be separated, as the power of such terms or metaphors about structures and systems derives in each approach from their use in the other approach. People rightly perceive that their problems are more deep seated than if a number of individuals treated them badly; their sufferings arise from the unjust organization of society itself. The experience of being hemmed in by structures, crushed by an inescapable system and generally manipulated by those with power, is intimately connected with the

structures inherent within human interaction that the social scientist perceives.

One of the features of those mentioned above who speak about social structures, institutions and systems from an experience near point of view is the absence of any theory of how society works. It is left open whether they might be alluding to Karl Marx's distinction between the material infrastructure and ideological superstructure of society, to the structural functionalism of Talcott Parsons and Robert Merton, or to Alfred Schutz's phenomenological account of the constitution of society. Neither Tutu, Mkhathshwa, Chikane nor Nolan give any hint of how 'structures' and 'systems' might be understood in terms of one or other theory. In the case of the *Kairos Document* this same lack of specificity led to considerable debate over whether it should be construed in a Marxist sense or not. So, it appears evident that these sociological terms have been taken back from the social sciences and re-used in an ordinary, non-technical sense as a way of describing people's direct experience. There is nothing inadmissible about this, except that it can give the impression that social structures and the system are as evident features of the South African landscape as police stations, mine head-gear, church spires and silos. This leads — in Ryle's terms -to 'a category mistake' or a fallacy of misplaced concreteness.

5.2 The Double Hermeneutic

Before examining this category mistake, however, it will be helpful to introduce at this juncture some observations of Anthony Giddens on the features of modernity. He calls this intermeshing of the colloquial 'experience near' and the scientific 'experience distant' approach a 'double hermeneutic.' He explains:

The relations between sociology and its subject matter — the actions of human beings in conditions of modernity — has to be understood instead in terms of the 'double hermeneutic.' The development of sociological knowledge is parasitical upon lay agents' concepts; on the other hand, notions coined in the meta-languages of the social sciences routinely reenter the universe of actions they were initially formulated to describe and account for. But it does not lead in a direct way to a transparent

social world. *Sociological knowledge spirals in and out of the universe of social life, reconstructing both itself and that universe as an integral part of that process.* (CMOD: 15f)

Such terms as 'structure', 'system', 'force' and 'social interest' were themselves originally taken from everyday experience. It is very apt and convenient to speak of the 'structures of society' in an analogous way to the 'structures of a building.' Society like a house encompasses a number of inhabitants; it does not change as they come and go; it exerts certain constraints upon them and channels their activities as the walls and passageways in a building do. Thus these sociological terms in being derived from everyday experience, used next in a theoretical sense, and then returned in a modified form to depict some people's experience of society are taken through a double hermeneutic.

Another instance of this 'double hermeneutic' at play in a theological document is found in the 1977 Statement of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference on "The Current Situation and on Citizenship for all Race Groups in South Africa."

Realising that South Africa has entered a critical phase in the rejection of its people of a social and political system of oppression, we add our corporate voice as leaders of the Catholic Church in this country to the cry for a radical revision of the system. (SACBC, 1980: 41)

While this was a good rhetorical statement for expressing the urgency of the situation, it can give the impression that a leader or some group is in a position to revise the system from the outside. The same difficulty occurs with those who rightly call for the 'dismantling of the apartheid apparatus' as though it were some tangible entity apart from people, their deficient attitudes, mistaken perceptions, distorted set of values and consequently harmful manner of interacting.

5.3 Misplaced Concreteness

Although using scientific terms to enlighten everyday experience is at times helpful, it does not lead to complete clarity, but brings its own confusion. "The point is not that there is no stable social world to know, but that knowledge of that world contributes to its unstable or mutable character." This leaves the scientific investigator at best only "one step ahead of enlightened lay practitioners of the discipline" (CMOD: 45).

In particular, the adoption of technical language into colloquial discourse leads to the problem of concreteness. It is easy, unless there is some realization of how "the discourse of sociology and the concepts, theories, and findings of the other social sciences continually 'circulate in and out' of what it is that they are about" (Giddens, 1990: 43), to picture social structures and systems as quasi-independent entities. Structures become reified, and it is overlooked how their continued existence depends upon their reproduction by social actors. This holds for each social theory — Marxism, structural functionalism or phenomenological sociology. In each theory, despite their differences, social structures are abstract patterns of interlinkage between certain related roles; they are neither the occupants of those roles nor tangible entities that can be isolated, experienced or dealt with on their own.

Yet, fairly frequently the mistake is made of confusing experience near and experience distant terms. In this manner, some have totally identified the infrastructure or system of apartheid with police stations, casspirs, law courts, the mining houses, hostels, beerhalls and so forth. Undoubtedly there is a link, as each of these is a manifestation of the system that oppressed. But its not so simple, as in destroying these symbols one is not totally revising the system or dismantling the whole apparatus. When evils become embedded in a social system, a deeper change than either destroying its manifestations or a personal change of heart is called for. I think it evident today that as many manifestations of apartheid are slowly and painfully withdrawn, society does not immediately

become all right again.

An example of a disastrous attempt in another continent to effect deep seated social change, by tackling surface structures only was Prohibition in USA earlier this century. In order to cure drunkenness and alcoholism, and prevent the real personal, family and social evils stemming from it, the law enforced the closure of breweries, wineries, distilleries, and forbade the sale of alcoholic beverages. But the actual effect was to increase the consumption of alcohol; to establish bootlegging with distilling becoming a big illegal business, so that organized crime was set up by the Mafia; this in turn provided funding for drugs, prostitution, and protection rackets. Because a whole social evil was too closely identified with the drinking of alcohol, the deeper and wider dimensions of the issue were overlooked.

5.4 Complementary Theological Approaches

The need for complementary theological approaches is brought out by James W. Fowler in his study of Black theologians (1981a). Using his "stages of faith" schematism, he draws a distinction between "Ideological" theologians (Stage 4: "Individuative-Reflective" faith) and "Theologians of Balance" (Stage 5: "Conjunctive" faith). Those in the individuative-reflective stage have broken the bond which bound their self-identity and their outlook on the world together. Instead, in this 'demythologizing' stage, they reflect critically upon both their own identity and various social outlooks. At this stage they grasp 'reality' in terms of a coherent set of conceptual meanings, with everything fitting nicely into their logical categories. Hence in this fourth stage of faith, socially aware persons — Ideological Theologians, articulating a People's Theology — will have a keen sense of the impacts for good or ill that various social outlooks and forces have upon people.

[The] dangers [of this stage] inhere in its strengths: an excessive confidence in the conscious mind and in critical thought and a kind of second narcissism in which the

now clearly bounded, reflective self overassimilates 'reality' and the perspectives of others into its own world view. (Fowler, 1981: 182f)

Thus, for instance the *Kairos Document*, which must be located at this fourth stage, gives an excessively real depiction of 'social structures' and 'the system' as something quite apart from one's self-identity.

When people realize that the whole of life and its problems cannot be neatly encompassed within the clear distinctions and abstract categories of the fourth stage, they become more receptive to a conjunctive understanding of faith. Theologians of Balance in the fifth stage of faith accept "as axiomatic that truth is more multidimensional and organically interdependent than most theories or accounts of truth can grasp" (Fowler, 1981: 186). In relation to social sin, the person recognizes how various distortions, prejudices and evils are not just inherent in an impersonal social system, but also built into people's self-system.

What the previous stage struggled to clarify, in terms of the boundaries of self and outlook [social reality], this stage now makes porous and permeable. ... [Its] new strength comes in the ... capacity to see and be in ... one's group's most powerful meanings, while simultaneously recognizing that they are relative, partial and inevitably distorting apprehensions of transcendent reality. (Fowler, 1981: 198)

Thus theologians of balance do not simply reify social evils, but recognize how they are dialectically related both to people's conscious perceptions as well as their unconscious attitudes. Furthermore, they can appreciate in the way social evils are sustained the link between their own and others' approach to reality on both conscious and unconscious levels.

Although not too much should be made of the contrast, examples in South Africa of Ideological theologians and theologians of Balance may be found in Simon Maimela and Bonganjalo Goba respectively. Maimela speaks out stridently as follows:

Under the system of Apartheid, humanity is thrown into a situation in which one powerful section of the society is favoured while the powerless section of the society

is sentenced to a life of poverty, starvation, chronic unemployment, dependency, misery and degradation (*sic*) — all of which are provoked by socio-political systems of structural inequities and injustice. (Maimela, 1987: 112)

He brings over, through a variety of metaphors, the effects upon people's lives of an unjust social system. Whereas, without minimising its evils, Goba takes a more dialectic view of social evil. In his analysis of social sin he follows Gregory Baum. He too speaks of "Apartheid as an embodiment of social evil," but adds that a merely political understanding of sin as an act of collaboration with oppressive structures

seems to fall into the same dilemma of Marx and Rousseau for maintaining that human nature is a kind of *tabula rasa*, something good made evil by social institutions which further create social classes. If you change these institutions human beings discover once more their natural goodness. I do not want to suggest that the change of human social institutions is not important, but the point which I want to emphasize is that the institutions are the embodiment of human desires and values which can be both positive and negative. (Goba, 1988: 75)

Goba's approach has, at least in these passages, a more inclusive view than Maimela's.

Fowler's distinction between Ideological theologians and theologians of Balance bears some similarities to the experience near and experience distant distinction. If his analysis holds up, then the different viewpoints correspond not just to someone's social position but also to the development of a person's faith, or at least their understanding of faith. He warns, however, that

Stage 5 theologies need on-going involvement with the *unintellectual*, struggling people of faith. They also need the sharp, critical warnings from the Stage 4 theologies that faith resolutions won too easily can be what Bonhoeffer called 'cheap grace' and what Sartre called 'bad faith.' (in Mahan & Richesin, 1981a: 87)

In other words, Ideological experience near theologians who are articulating the people's cries in the face of social evils and the more academic or experience distant theologians of Balance need to complement one another.

Fowler's terms 'ideological theologians' and 'theologians of balance' are not the happiest of choices. 'Ideological' could be taken to mean those fixed in their outlook and values with a mind set that legitimizes a particular social position, usually one of privilege. This is not what Fowler means, but this is a charge that might be laid against some theologians of balance. Also, in speaking of the latter as 'balanced' the impression could be given that others are 'unbalanced.' Every theologian is expected to be 'balanced' in the sense of be of sound mind, but not always so impartial that they cannot argue passionately and persuasively when necessary.

The difference that Fowler seems to wish to bring out between ideological and balanced theologians is akin to that between the arguments presented by the counsel for prosecution (or defence) and the summing up made by a judge. The former rubs our noses in the dreadful facts, the latter speaks with judiciousness after reviewing from a distance all the evidence and arguments. The judge endeavours to combine commitment to justice with impartiality in making a judgement between the partial views that both advocates are expected to put forward. It is crucial to the whole process that none of the interlocutors mistake their role; any audience too has to take account of who is speaking and what their purpose is.

Similarly in theology, some writings take on the task of advocacy, while other more systematic ones are renowned for their judiciousness, their ability to bring out the order inherent in various experiences and link different insights. In this vein, works of advocacy, like the *Kairos Document*, cannot be faulted for not having the judiciousness expected in a work of systematic theology, such as Barth's *Church Dogmatics* or Rahner's *Foundations of the Christian Faith*. But, whether the judiciousness of a systematic theologian is a higher stage of faith than that of a theological advocate is a moot point. On this, however Fowler does have the backing of the Johannine view (17: 7-10) that advocacy leads towards judgment. Likewise, in the legal profession someone only after practising as an

advocate, and learning from the inside the tricks of that profession, is one eligible to be appointed a judge.

Similarly, when a writer — including oneself — speaks of ‘systems’ and ‘structures’ it is important to know how strictly these terms are being used. How in any given instance does their use stand along the spectrum that stretches from rhetoric to social science? Likewise, some self-knowledge is all-important, as then one might grasp more clearly in which direction both oneself and others are moving through the double hermeneutic, where the same terms loop in and out between experience near concerns and experience distant views of society and its problems.

This study, it needs hardly be said, is experience distant. Its purpose is neither to analyze any one society nor inveigh against any particular instances of social evil. It is hoped, however, that by examining in general terms how people become implicated in evil and it in them, any subsequent analysis might be sharpened and instances of social evil more clearly located.

Intermezzo

“Others directed the people by their advice,
by their understanding of the popular mind,
and by the wise words of their teaching” (Sirach 44: 4).

6.1 A Look Backwards Reveals Four Convergent Issues

The first part of this study has offered an overview of the use, and even abuse, in theology of the various terms clustered around the idea of ‘social sin’. Although many individual theologians and church documents have appealed to this notion, few have examined it in depth. Sometimes it has been used to explain why an individual goes wrong, sometimes to point out what is wrong with society, and sometimes to make a rhetorical point or even offer an excuse. Although many issues have been touched upon in the course of the last few chapters, four major ones have surfaced:

- a. the theological problem of speaking about sin in social terms;
- b. the interrelation of self and society and how structure explains this;
- c. the persisting effect of evil in society;
- d. whether and how one might oneself as a member of society be implicated in its evils.

The title of this study, *Sin, Self and Society*, designates a point of convergence of these four issues, which arise in explaining the structure of evil from a theological point of view.

6.1.1 A Question of Theological Propriety

The first issue is the appropriateness of speaking about 'social sin', 'structural sin', 'the structures of sin' in theology: do these terms actually reveal aspects of the relationship between God and humanity, or do they obscure the position of people before God and the response required of them? Might such a notion as 'the structures of sin' be consigned after all to the theological dustbin, along with such notions as limbo, the state of pure nature and angelic hierarchies which were postulated to cope with mistaken problems? Only gradually and to a limited extent have papal documents taken over this terminology proposed by some theologians. John Paul II speaks thus speaks of "social sin" as analogous to "personal sin"; instead of talking of "structural sin" he gives preference to the term "structures of sin" (see 2.6.2 & 2.6.3 above, but also 11.6.1 below). The hesitancy shown by the papacy in accepting such terms is due, at least in part, to its not wishing to canonize terminology that sounds very striking, but actually blocks understanding. Such hollow terminology may then prevent, or be used to excuse, people from taking the actions required of them.

Presupposing such terms have a theological validity, do they refer simply to a breakdown in the development of human society or to some kind of offence against God as well? When do the "contradictions and imbalances" spoken of by Vatican II (G&S, 8) cease to be just variations in human fortune and become a moral evil? There is no doubt about the reality of widespread affliction and suffering found in many societies, which might be recognised as due to sin, but it is much more difficult to say when it was committed or by whom. In the terminology of Thomas Aquinas, it is easy enough to point out how socially widespread is the penalty of sin (*reatus poenae*), but much harder to pinpoint where guilt (*macula culpae*) lies. Since society as such does not commit sin, both everyone and no one appear to be guilty. This, in turn, makes it hard to say who, if anyone, should repent and make recompense, and how that might be done constructively.

6.1.2 Embedded in our own Structures

A theology of social sin needs to draw upon an adequate theory of the interrelationship between self and society: this is the second underlying issue of this study. This interrelationship, especially when its negative aspects are considered, has usually relied upon the metaphor of a structure that we ourselves build or a web that we collectively spin. This latter metaphor was aptly used by Maurice Merleau-Ponty in his reflection on the world situation in 1960:

The fall is not an accident; its causes count us as accomplices. There is equal weakness in blaming ourselves alone and in believing only in external causes. In one way or another we will always *miss the mark* if we do. Evil is not *created* by us or by others; it is born in this web [*le tissu*] that we have spun about us — and that is suffocating us. What sufficiently tough new men will be patient enough to really re-weave it? (Italics in English translation, 1961: 35)

While social scientists have spoken of social structures binding — admittedly with various degrees of flexibility — the activities of the changing population of persons who make up society, psychologists have spoken — with various degrees of sophistication — of society shaping the psychological structuring of the self. This transposes the question of the interrelationship between self and society, at least on a theoretical level, to an inquiry into the relationship between ‘social structures’ and ‘psychological structures’.

In each case, it is necessary to ask precisely what are these structures, what kind of reality do they have, where can they be found. Is it sufficient to say that psychological structures come about through the internalisation of social structures, and social structures derive from the externalisation of psychological structures? If so, by what processes are internalisation and externalisation carried out? Which comes first? This latter issue arises in practical religious terms in the debate between those advocating a ‘change of heart’ for individuals and those pressing collective change through the ‘dismantling of oppressive structures.’ To move beyond this rather sterile dichotomy, a more comprehensive grasp of the interrelationship of self and society is required.

6.1.3 Where Evil continues to Cling

The third underlying issue concerns the persistence of moral evil in a society. The growth and persistence of moral evil in an individual are portrayed as the acquisition of bad habits, or vices, which while not totally indomitable, have an appreciable influence on a person's outlook and activities. Yet that does not explain sufficiently why evil persists in a society, or an organization, when its membership is continually changing. Why, for instance, do seemingly good and reasonable people perpetuate social practices that bring such harmful consequences upon others and sometimes themselves too? Does one have to agree finally with Val in Marilyn French's novel that "the institutions get us all in the end. Nobody escapes" (1978: 546). "No matter how you struggle" (1978: 595)? Although French's novel deals with sexism, does the same hold for racism, economic exploitation and political domination as well? What has to be investigated is whether one has in the end any freedom in relation to oppressive social institutions, or whether they completely determine one's fate.

6.1.4 Between You, Me, Us and Them

A fourth underlying issue is the link between speaking about self (from a first person point of view), addressing another self (in the second person), identifying with other selves (in the first personal plural) and speaking about selves (from a third person [plural] point of view). All these modes of speech and awareness are different, yet intertwined. Similarly, in speaking about society, especially a society one is closely involved with, one is not just making detached observations, but in some degree taking a stand vis-à-vis society. Part of finding out about society is a matter of carving out a role for oneself within it. Each role, whether that of the average citizen, a member of the police force, a cabinet minister or visitor from afar, opens up a limited range of perspectives. Even the professed stance of the sociologist, while often insightful in some areas, leaves aside others. There is no perfectly neutral standpoint that provides one with an all encompassing vision of society. Furthermore, on a more personal level, in getting to know other

selves one shapes oneself, and often to a considerable extent them too, through the stance one takes and the response one makes towards them.

Being self-implicated with others and in society has important repercussions in studying social evil. When someone declares a social practice to be evil and provides good reasons why, that person is drawing upon and perhaps partly formulating anew his or her own ethical standards. One is recognizing that there is something here to be exposed, resisted and as far as possible overcome. This holds in some degree for any discussion of good and evil. However, the repercussions of dealing with social evil are likely to be far more extensive than combatting purely personal evils.

What complicates matters still further is the realization that no one is fully aware of her or his own involvement in society or their relations with others. Someone's social involvement and personal relations are likely to affect that person in ways that he or she does not fully recognize, and about which he or she might be seriously mistaken. Thus a prevalent social evil can distort one's own perception of oneself, one's society and one's involvement in it.

Upon recognizing this possibility, one becomes suspicious of any view that purports to explain fully how evil is inherent in society; within the explanation offered is likely to be an element of justification for the social stance taken up by the persons or party expounding that view. For instance, to what extent are those advocating a personal change of heart trying to absolve themselves from making any attempt to change their society as a whole? Conversely, how much are those pressing for structural change running away from the need to confront their own and others' moral weaknesses. This, however, does not necessarily mean that their views are merely special pleading for themselves and devoid of all insight. Nevertheless, their degree of validity still have to be weighed.

This study is more concerned with the foundations of morality than with particular moral issues. Nevertheless, an inquiry into the workings of good and evil must assume that certain activities and social conditions should be striven for and efforts made to overcome whatever is contrary to them. It is simply assumed that people should strive to bring about a society of peace, based on truth, justice, love and freedom. This will involve fighting against such evils as lying propaganda, economic and sexual exploitation, racism, brutalizing violence and sheer indifference to others' plight. No attempt is made in this study to detail all that this stance entails nor to justify it; it is simply assumed.

For instance, although this study mentions racism as a form of social evil, it neither tries to defend this position nor examine all its ramifications. It simply assumes that allotting a society's benefits and burdens according to racial criteria should be rejected, but that obliterating all consideration of people's ethnic origin and culture should also be avoided. Working out how this applies, for example, to educational policy would require a special investigation. The hope is that this study into the influence of structures might help refine such an investigation, but not dictate its results.

To take another example, this study assumes that authoritative power should be exercised as a service to benefit the governed, and not for the personal aggrandizement of the ruler at the cost of people's lives and wellbeing. But if unscrupulous people threaten him or ill-advised citizens seek to deprive him of his position of power, then he has a duty to defend his office. That will involve putting people's lives at risk and possibly diverting tax money from crucial development projects. The moral and political intricacies of such a question are beyond the scope of this study. But its examination of structures might cast light on how, for instance, emergency measures originally required to maintain social stability can over time become unduly oppressive or even totalitarian.

In the course of this study it is contended that structural evil derives from distorted rules and a lack in the necessary resources for human activity. Various examples, which presume a definite moral stance, will be given to illustrate this principle, so it can be used to analyze various situations. It would, however, go far beyond the scope of this study to spell out the right rules or show how resources in various circumstances should be fairly apportioned. That would involve writing a substantial ethic dealing with good and evil in each area of life. This study presumes without argument that certain activities are evil, but directs its attention to why they are so persistent and cannot easily be overcome.

6.3 Three Resource Persons

The overview of the literature presented in Part I showed the need for a more comprehensive theory relating sin, self and society. To formulate that one will have to draw upon further sources of understanding. Deeper insights into the workings of society, the shaping of the human person, and their mutual influence upon each other are required. Also required is a theological understanding of sin that is faithful to the Christian tradition yet sufficiently open and sophisticated enough to be reinterpreted in the light of contemporary human sciences.

In the chapters that follow extensive use will be made of the works of Thomas Aquinas, Heinz Kohut and Anthony Giddens; it would be too facile to say that each one supplies the requisite understanding of sin, self and society respectively. While that may be the prime contribution of each, they each hold some views about the other two terms of our trilogy. Thomas' treatment of sin occurs in the midst of an extensive treatment of human life and growth as part of the unfolding from God of all creation. Kohut's psychology of the self attempts to deal with the ways in which the evil prevalent in society permeates — or fails to permeate — people's sense of who they are. Implicit within Giddens' understanding of society, as he himself admits (CPST: 90), is an ethical critique, even though its

..... Experience distant

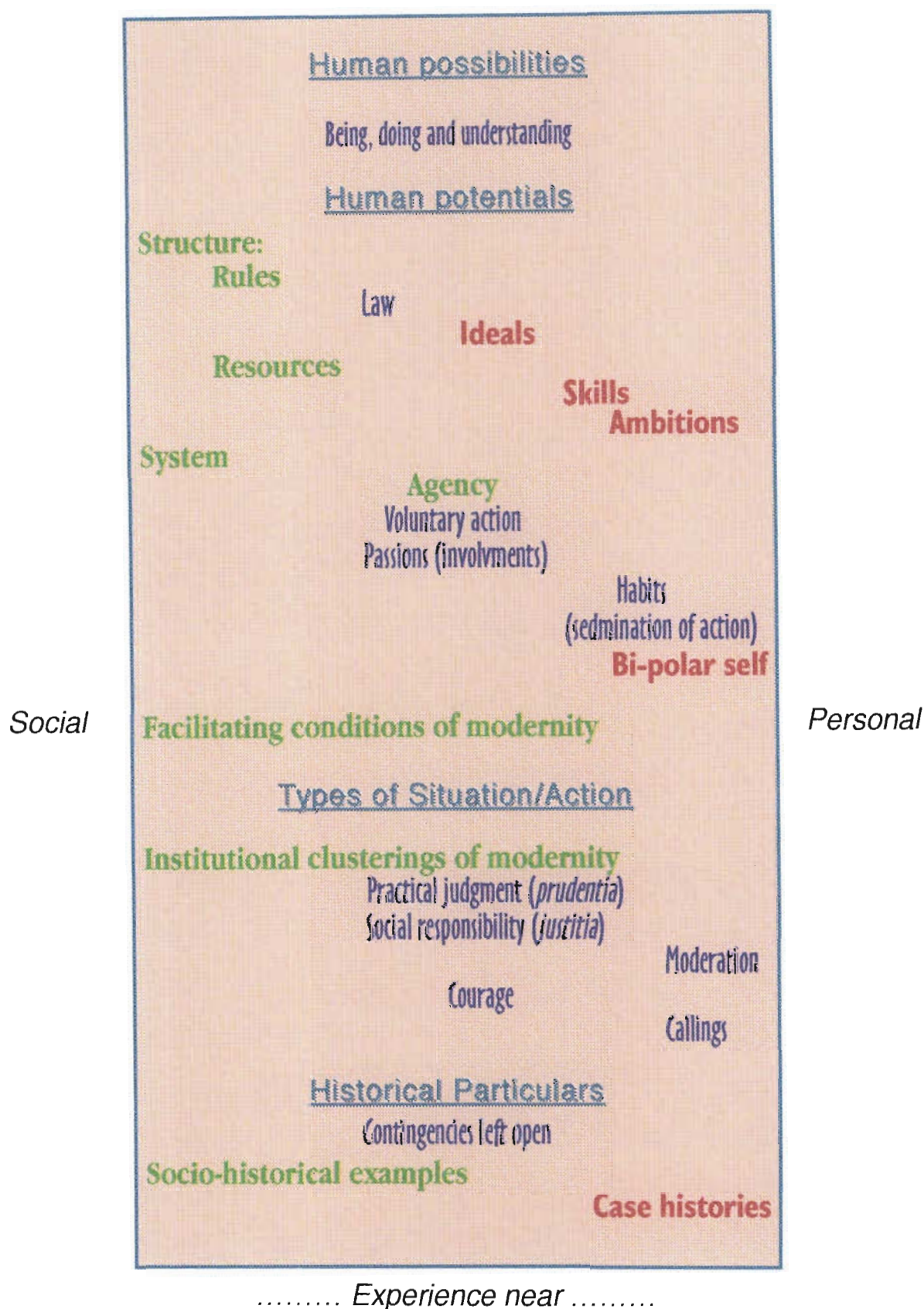


Fig 6.1 The Interlinking of Concerns from

Thomas Aquinas

Anthony Giddens

Heinz Kohut

basis is not very explicit. Furthermore, Giddens' theory of society both presupposes and contributes to a fairly comprehensive understanding of the self; so much so that a recent book of his (1991) is sub-titled "Self and Society in the Late Modern Age." The considerable overlap between these three authors makes it possible, not just to draw upon them in isolation, but to test their insights against each other and sometimes draw their views further than they had thought out themselves.

6.3.1 Thomas Aquinas: Representative of Theological Tradition

In a theological study such as this, Thomas Aquinas hardly requires any introduction, but a word needs to be said about how this thirteenth century theologian, who wrote in Latin and drew upon a vast array of sources, might be approached. One could take a purely historical approach, looking behind his texts to discover what was happening in the thirteenth century schools of Europe and what arguments were current at the time. This is enlightening for showing why Aquinas dealt with certain questions, and where he agreed or disagreed with his sources and contemporaries. Secondly, one could carefully scrutinize his works so as to grasp both their overall plan and see how this is worked through in detail in each section. The thousands of pages he wrote give ample scope for this. There are many sections of his works, especially those dealing with the daily issues of life, for instance, his remarks on brotherly correction, moderation in living, and procedure to be following in court, which still speak directly enough to us today. But as soon as one tries to put his more technical vocabulary into a contemporary language, not just rendering it into Latinized English (or Anglicized Latin), difficulties occur. The cultural gap between his time and ours, between the language of the medieval and the 20th century university then becomes apparent. In dealing with his philosophically-based terminology, one has to make a reading before the text and decide which contemporary philosophy his work is, or is to be, related to. Richard Schenk (1989) notes how Thomas Aquinas has been interpreted in relation to several philosophical traditions. To

these could be added various studies exploring connections with the masters of Indian thought. Consequently, it may well be asked: where is the real Thomas Aquinas?

An answer lies in remembering that Thomas, especially in the more technical sections of his works, was *in dialogue*. Many of the articles in his *Scriptum Super Libros Sententiarum*, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, *Summa Theologiae* and especially *Quaestiones Disputatae*, look at the issues raised by his predecessors and contemporaries. In these articles he distinguishes, refines, corrects, deepens and combines the various ideas, lines of thought and arguments they introduce. He often presupposes much of what has been said in the past, for instance, in the scriptures or by the church fathers and the philosophers, and concentrates on elucidating the key points and the disputed issues so they may be understood better. Thomas' technical thought has thus to be understood over against his named or unnamed dialogue partners.

Even though Aquinas' personal contribution to this dialogue finished with his death, that does not mean all conversation is ended. It is still often possible for it to continue with more partners. As in any conversation a person can take up a point made before and apply it to a new issue. Earlier views may be built upon or given a novel twist, though fresh evidence and better argumentation may also show how earlier views have to be rejected or extensively revised. Thomas does not offer, as some have claimed, a timeless *philosophia perennis*, but on many issues his method makes him still today an eminent dialogue partner. In this connection David Tracy (1989) observed that among the main theologians contributing to the Second Vatican Council, those who based their approach on Thomas (Chenu, Rahner, Congar and Schillebeeckx) remained open to contemporary thought, while those who drew their inspiration from Augustine and other patristic figures (Bouyer, Ratzinger, von Balthassar and de Lubac) have come more to reject it. While this does not prove any particular point about Thomas' thought, it does give some assurance that placing him in dialogue with

modern writers, such as Heinz Kohut and Anthony Giddens, can be a fruitful exercise. This study is thus more concerned with using Aquinas' thought rather than expounding it for its own sake.

If one wanted to place this study within Thomas' systematic presentation of theology, as laid out in the *Summa Theologiae*, it would fall in IaIIae and form a section between sin (*peccatum*) and law (*lex*), incorporating elements from both. The IaIIae looks generally at human actions (*in universale*, IaIIae 6, intro), leaving a consideration of particular types of action till IIaIIae. Only in dealing with particular actions (*in singuli*) does moral awareness attain its full apogee. Both *peccatum* and *lex* for Thomas have a wider meaning than sin and law in contemporary English. The section on sin deals with human failure generally, but particularly with culpable failure, while that on law includes custom and culture as an unwritten law.

6.3.2 Anthony Giddens: Sociologist of 'High Modernity'

Why is Giddens rather than, say, Talcott Parsons, George Herbert Mead, Georges Gurvitch, Jürgen Habermas, Coleman, Norbert Elias or any other social theorist, selected for this study? A full answer would require an exposition not only of Giddens' views, but a comparison of them with all the other writers mentioned. That cannot be undertaken here. Though to a certain extent Giddens has himself undertaken such a project, as Richard J. Bernstein testifies:

Giddens is in the process of attempting nothing less than a rethinking of modern sociological tradition. He has written incisively and provocatively about Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Parsons and Habermas. He has grappled with every major sociological movement, including the varieties of structuralism, functionalism, systems theory, ethnomethodology, phenomenological sociology and symbolic interactionism. (1989: 19)

His theory thus takes account of the phenomenological view of social reality advanced by Berger and Luckmann (1967), but goes beyond it. Since Land, Kerans,

Himes and other theologians (see 3.4 above) have drawn upon the work of Berger and Luckmann to help explain social sin, Giddens' critique of it applies to them as well. Any advance in theological understanding in this area must take Giddens' work into account. But the range of Giddens' thought is not limited to the above; Bernstein continues:

He [Giddens] has a keen sense of the relevance of contemporary philosophic currents for social thought ranging over Anglo-American, German and French philosophy. He has expanded the domain of sociological thinking by showing the importance of themes as diverse as Heidegger's reflections on temporality and the significance of time-space studies in human geography. (1989: 19)

Contemporary theology too has to contend with these lines of thought. So while Giddens is not the only social theorist deserving attention, his works cannot rightly be overlooked. As Craib testifies towards the end of his critical study: "it is difficult now to think of social theory, or sociology itself, without Giddens" (1992: 191).

6.3.3 Heinz Kohut: Breaking down and Artfully Reassembling the Self

Kohut began his career in psychoanalysis as a very orthodox Freudian, but gradually forged a more comprehensive understanding of the human self that went beyond, yet could still to a considerable extent incorporate, Freud's theories. Together with a number of disciples and collaborators, Kohut founded "Self Psychology." (Since his life and writings are not well known everywhere, more details are given in an appendix.) His work, which focused initially on narcissism, examines psychological development prior to the Oedipus complex. In fact how a person negotiates this stage depends largely upon the quality of the self structure laid down earlier. Whether or not the stirrings of sexual awareness become problematic for a growing child depends in Kohut's view upon the degree of firmness of the self that has been formed through supportive relationships from birth. Self Psychology dwells on some of the formative experiences which open up or close off human possibilities. He shows in the former case

how a strong, cohesive self structure is brought about, or in the latter how the self is weak, hollow or fragmented.

The usefulness of Kohut's exposition of the self for this study is threefold. First, his enquiry into the initial foundations of human development brings out aspects of the self that are common to all. These aspects, it must added, are potentialities that might be thwarted or, more happily, developed and structured in a great variety of ways. His analysis of the self elucidates some of the invariant possibilities for human diversity. Related to this is, second, the great allowance in his theory for social and cultural diversity. In different societies, cultures and families the underlying potential for building a self structure will be actualized in many different ways. No single model is normative. Third, personal and social relations are intrinsic to his view of the self. Instead of treating the self as an autonomous unit, or expecting it through therapy to become self-sufficient, Kohut continually stresses how the self develops, or fails to develop, largely in response to the personal and even cultural support it receives from others. His concern, as a therapist, is with the appropriation (or internalization) of that support by the individual, but he continually insists that the self does not exist as a unit on its own. It must always be understood and treated as belonging within a more or less supportive environment. Yet what actually constitutes support will depend in each instance on the kind and degree of self-structure that has already been built up. All in all, Kohut's usefulness for this study lies in his offering a theory that deals with some of the underlying features common to all people, yet allowing for diversity, and capable of viewing the self within a more encompassing environment. Although his case-studies inevitably deal with the pathology of particular individuals, the overall theory of Self Psychology that will be drawn upon in this study is capable of a much wider application.

Unlike many other psychotherapists, Kohut's attention is not confined to treating patients in a clinic. He was also interested in history, culture and social issues, and speculates on how self psychology can throw light on them. One

reason he gave for specializing in psychoanalysis was his desire to understand the social pathology he witnessed as Hitler took over his native Austria. He examines from a psychological point of view why Hitler was so persuasive with many German people. In his later writings Kohut offers a number of hints for understanding and responding creatively to, what might be termed, the problems of modernity. These sorties from psychology into social issues do not amount to a full scale theory of society, but they show some of the links of the self with society and the repercussions when they break down.

6.3.4 An Outcome from Combining Resources

Neither Anthony Giddens, Heinz Kohut nor Thomas Aquinas speak of structural evil or social evil as such, But, it is the contention of this thesis, that each from his own angle can be used to throw light on how evil becomes consolidated in social structures. In each case the understanding of human life and experience is sufficiently rich for them to provide resources for appraising another area of human experience. Each is concerned, admittedly in different ways, with the opening up or the closing off of human possibilities.

Kohut examines the repercussions of various formative experiences in building up (or the failure to build up) a firm cohesive self open to life's possibilities. Giddens provides a way of grasping how people through their interactions both draw upon and in turn reaffirm the structure of their society. Various kinds of possible interaction are opened up or closed off, made easy or difficult, depending upon the prevailing social structure. Thomas Aquinas works on two levels. His overall project (at least for the section of his writings we shall be concerned with) is to show how humans participate for better or worse in the unfolding and completion of God's creation so that they come to share in (or exclude themselves from) the uncreated life of God. Within that he provides an analysis of the dynamism of human living, showing how various human possibilities are opened up or closed off through one's own decisions, the way one is caught up in

events (*passiones*), the character strengths and weaknesses (*virtutes et vitia*) one cultivates in oneself, the responses one makes to evil (*peccatum*), and to good (*lex*). Thomas, in examining closely the dynamism of living, or the workings of human nature, and not confining his attention to overarching theological themes, makes possible a correlation between his views and the findings of the human sciences today.

These three approaches are neither reducible to nor fully translatable into one another. Each offers a real yet partial glimpse of human life, but none offers to explain it comprehensively. Each in its own way acknowledges that reality overflows their description of it. Nevertheless, there are points of convergence as they are all grappling with human life and history.

6.4 Three Root Metaphors

Mention has already been made (1.1) of the organic, mechanistic and artistic root metaphors operative in different epochs for both understanding society and acting within and upon it. In order to understand Thomas, Kohut and Giddens it is important to locate the root metaphors which guide their thought, though none of them is restricted to only one metaphor.

Society in Thomas' time was certainly conceived in organic terms, and strong echoes of this run throughout his writings. His approach, however, is much looser than that of John of Salisbury in the 12th century, who made a tight correlation between the bodily and social organs. Nevertheless, Thomas in his treatment of the transmission of original sin remarks that "in political matters all the members of a community are thought of as limbs or members of one body, and the community as a whole as one person" (IaIIae 81, 1). He also, following St Paul, speaks of the church as a body. But he is not rigidly bound by this single metaphor; so, for instance, he compares a king not just to the head ruling a body, but in a slightly more mechanistic mode to a helmsman guiding a

ship to port (RP 1). The ruler must make his own choices in directing the city. He also qualifies the organismic metaphor, as a family or political community is not an unconditional unity (*non simpliciter unum*), but a unity of order among parts that can have a sphere of action distinct from that of the whole (*pars eius totius, potest habere operationem quae non est operatio totius*, *Ethicorum Aristotelis ad Nicomachum Expositio*, I, 1; D'Entrèves, 1965: 191).

When it comes to explaining the working of the will, Thomas reaches the limits of the organismic paradigm. In his understanding, nature is the power inherent in various entities that enables each to seek its own proper fulfilment; water tends to find its own level, plants grow and flower, animals live and breed, each according to its own nature. The same holds for human beings in that they will existence, life, health, sanity and goodness in general as they are inclined to these by nature. These ends are consented to by the will naturally (*θηλεσις* or *voluntas ut natura*) for their own sake. But the will is also exercised in making a free choice (*βυλεσις* or *voluntas ut ratio*, IIIa 18, 3) when it selects one means rather than another to attain its end. So, for example, we will health but choose a particular medicine or exercise to promote it. In this second instance, the will, as mistress of its own actions, operates in a manner that transcends the workings of nature (*domina sui actus, praeter modum qui convenit naturae*, IaIIae 10, 1 ad 1). Instead of being directed towards a single aim, it can deliberate about and choose from various aims. Nevertheless, when making a free and creative choice the will must incorporate the workings of nature. Creativity, which is characteristic of *human* nature, derives from, is sustained by and yet also develops human nature.

Thomas brings a similar outlook to his understanding of society. Living in society is natural to human beings as political and social animals, but what kind of society they try to fashion — whether a monarchy, aristocracy or democracy — and how well they accomplish this will depend upon the explicit choices they make. Similarly, Thomas describes the possession of material goods as natural to

human beings (*possessio rerum exteriorum est homini naturalis*, IIaIIae, 66, 1), but how goods should be held, exchanged and divided amongst different people is the subject of legislation (*ius positiva*) that human reason must devise (*per adinventionem rationis humanae*, IIaIIae, 66, 2). As circumstances change, the laws regulating economic and political arrangements must be adjusted so that they continue to promote the general welfare (*lex humana recte mutatur, inquantum per eius mutationem communi utilitati providere*, IaIIae, 97, 2).

All in all, while Thomas' understanding of human *nature* is grounded in the organismic paradigm, he recognizes it as a metaphor, as a symbol that both provokes and guides further thought. Unless people take thought, weigh options, make choices and generally shape their own selves and society in an appropriate fashion, *human nature* does not flourish. It should be added, however, that although his initial paradigm is an organismic one, his ultimate paradigm is that of *participation*. The thread running through all his works is that of creatures participating, each according to its potentiality and with one another, in the unlimited life of God. Each and every creature through its being (*esse*), doing (*agere*) and having (*relatio*) shares in and is in some degree drawn to share in the complete actuality (*actus purus*) that is God. Making this vision of participation as explicit as possible, in all its ramifications, was a driving force in all Thomas' writing (see 10.5.2 below). Although impossible to capture in any single image, this sense of participation permeates his treatment of practically every topic.

Both Giddens and Kohut were initially locked into mechanistic paradigms. Their earlier works drew heavily on Marx and Freud respectively. As their writings progressed they each came to be more flexible in their thinking, and guided by a more artistic paradigm. This is evident in their view of what they hold to be the truly human ideal. Kohut in one of his last writings speaks of a historical shift in this, with which he strongly identifies.

... an ideal of independence, which undoubtedly functioned as an important value for certain individuals during certain periods of history, must, in a broader psychological perspective, be evaluated as an idealistic and unrealistic abstraction. As the self psychologist sees it — and we believe that we are here in tune with the essential psychological problem of our century — the dominant positions in the value scale of modern man are occupied by those values that further and buttress the maintenance of man's creative-productive self. (SS IV: 522)

This overall view of persons as independent entities, whose relations with others were mainly incidental to their constitution as selves, was a central feature of one variant of the mechanistic paradigm. The ideal it projected was that people would become independent individuals able to stand on their own two feet psychologically, capable of entering into contractual relations over possessions in the market, and free to make their own choices in the field of politics. Kohut departed from this ideal when he recognized that a person's self could neither be explained sufficiently, nor treated therapeutically, when viewed primarily as a mental apparatus subject to various drives and blockages. Human life, he realized, should be seen in more creative terms in which people assemble, and often have to reassemble the self, through their drawing support from others and in turn joyfully supporting them. Explaining how this is accomplished, or not accomplished, is an underlying thread that runs throughout Kohut's writings.

Although Giddens ranges over a vaster panorama of human history than Kohut, a similar concern can be found in his writings. He quotes with approval Mumford's description of a human being as "a mind-making, self-mastering, and self-designing animal" (CCHM: 156). Justice is not done to this view by any narrow form of historical materialism, evolutionism, or structural-functionalism; all these theories treat people as "social dupes." They view people as largely ignorant about their society or even about what they want, and so subject to manipulation by social forces. While Giddens recognizes that people's knowledge is bounded, nevertheless people are themselves continually involved through their interactions in the reproduction of their society. But this does not

take place in a purely mechanical fashion, as the possibility of some social change is inherent within every human interaction. In short, people in their dealings with one another are continually both upholding and refashioning society, though not always in ways they intend or even realize at the time.

Taken overall, the approaches of Giddens and Kohut are guided mainly by the artistic root metaphor characteristic of contemporary thought, while that of Thomas offers sufficient leeway to be taken up in this way. Each of them, in being guided by an artistic root metaphor, has a greater openness to one another's contributions than would be possible with a mechanistic root metaphor. After all, art can much more easily incorporate diverse motifs than diverse machines can interchange parts.

6.5 A Look Forwards reveals a Programme for this Study

The following chapters attempt to interweave these three paradigms for understanding human affairs, draw on these three authors as resources and explore these four underlying issues, so as to throw light on the structuring of evil. They are arranged in four groups; three deal respectively with potentials, actions and outcomes, while the last offers some further reflections. A word will help explain this arrangement.

In the normal cycle of events potentials when stimulated issue in actions, which produce outcomes. In turn outcomes help stimulate and determine the potential for further actions. This is the way events flow. But our understanding tends to work more in the opposite direction, we experience outcomes, then look for the actions that cause them, and from that deduce the potentials underlying them. In short, knowing the effect we can inquire into what causes it.

The following three parts of this study, however, are arranged in the opposite order: potentials (Part Two), their actualization in processes and actions (Part

Three), and outcomes (Part Four). The reason for this is that already some discussion of outcomes has taken place (Part One). Besides the specific mention (1.6) of various kinds of structural evil, the whole review of the literature in the preceding chapters should have conveyed a general idea about the processes that persistently bring about socially deficient outcomes. Equipped with this initial understanding, it should not be too big a step to discuss potentials first, before going on to action and showing how these result in various outcomes.

The final three chapters (Part Five) offer some more specifically theological reflections. The whole discussion has been a theological one from the start, but these chapters look at several issues that go beyond the view of psychology or sociology on their own.

Part Two on potentials begins with Chapter Seven examining the differing views of the self presented by Thomas, Giddens and Kohut, and how each in his own way points out the ambivalences inherent in being a self. Thomas' understanding of sin is explored in Chapter Eight, and some initial connections between his views and modern concerns about structural evil are brought out. The examination of the self continues in Chapter Nine, which looks at how a wrong kind of pride and narcissism can distort the self and its relations with others. Only in recent decades have sin and evil been spoken of in structural terms. Chapter Ten examines why this is necessary; it does so by contrasting Thomas' understanding of medieval society with the modern world as Giddens portrays it. Overall, these four chapters being to show how in the modern world human potential (both self and society) comes to be a structured potential, but its structuring may, due to sin, come to be flawed.

A semantic approach is taken in Chapter Eleven in order to test what actually is implied by such words as "structure" and "evil," and how they can be used analytically or rhetorically. Some linguistic therapy is undertaken here to dispel false expectations about the reality of "structural evil." This first chapter in Part

Three is really a bridging chapter, as it begins to take time into account, and so prepares the way for examining action and process in the next three chapters.

Both Thomas and Giddens have intricate analyses of human action, though they approach it from different directions. Thomas focuses on the individual agent, looking at what makes action voluntary and what determines whether it is good or bad. Giddens examines more the effect of social conditions, which may either be acknowledged or not, on the outcome of action. He shows, using the notion of the duality of structure, how society makes action possible, shapes it to some extent, and how in turn action comes to re-shape society. Chapter Twelve, which combines Giddens' theory of structuration with Thomas' analysis, is at the centre of this study.

Although Giddens' account shows the workings of society, it still must be complemented by an examination in Chapter Thirteen of what holds a society together and why do its members identify with it. Thomas sees this primarily as a moral rather than a sociological problem, while Kohut's account of transferences and the sustaining role of selfobjects shows how people may acquire a healthy sense of belonging to society or an unhealthy merger with it. This chapter is rounded off with a look at the continual reflexivity between the self and modern society.

While Chapters Twelve and Thirteen will have dealt mainly with the normal course of events, Chapter Fourteen offers an explanation of what is happening when that breaks down. It shows how structural evil is found in a distortion of the rules (logical, moral and practical), a deficiency in the symbols, and a lack in the resources required for sustaining a sound society. There are failures in its system of communication, legitimation and domination.

Part Four on outcomes points out some of the practical results of the material presented so far. The ways in which recurrent social failures become apparent is

looked at briefly in Chapter Fifteen. This chapter draws upon Giddens' view of modernity to show how evil can enter into each of its institutional clusters. It brings out how various structural evils cannot be ascribed to any one source, be it capitalism, sexism or militarism. After looking at the social manifestations of evil, Chapter Sixteen views the correlative weakening of the self that is induced by modern society and in turn contributes to its system deficiencies. A special instance of this is treated in Chapter Seventeen, which looks at the relations between leaders and followers, and why the former are allowed, even at times encouraged, to exercise power in a thoroughly destructive fashion.

Part Five endeavours to take up some of the theological issues raised by various writers mentioned in Part One. The three chapters of this section basically relate social sin to charity or self-giving, to faith and to hope. Having examined the ways evil can be at work in society, it is now possible in Chapter Eighteen to assess anew the validity of speaking about 'social sin,' and show to what extent its various manifestations are not just unfortunate occurrences, but aspects of sin as the rejection of God's loving purpose. This, however, raises questions about whether social sin is a moral failure in relation to one's fellow human beings across society or also usurping of God's purpose. This leads (Chapter Nineteen) to an examination of pride, the substituting of one's humanly constructed world for that fullness of reality to which God is through faith calling one. In the final chapter this problem is transposed to the collective historical level. This enables one to examine whether the providential outlooks that have underpinned much of Western society are more a manifestation of idolatrous trust in humanity than genuine hope in God.

Potentials and Threats for the Self in Modern Society

In interacting with others around us we constantly move between perceiving actions, assessing outcomes and weighing capabilities. This applies to groups and individuals, to others and ourselves. All the time our minds move from past to future and back, looking for connections between what people say and do, their accomplishments and failures, and their likely capabilities for both. We might ask whether they (or we ourselves) have fully developed their (our) capabilities or lived up to them on a particular occasion, but we cannot see those capabilities directly, either in others or ourselves. However, the results of previous actions performed, whether by particular individuals or by others who set a standard, indicate to a considerable extent what capabilities people have and how these might be brought out. This holds for life as whole, though it is especially apparent in child-raising and education. We do not just see actions, nor people or things in isolation, but a world of people disclosing, discovering and forming both their own and each other's capabilities through their actions and the processes in which they (and ourselves) are caught up.

The next four chapters, without excluding action and its various outcomes, focus on human capabilities (potentials), both those inherent in individuals and those that come to the fore through various forms of social action. These chapters look at capabilities for harm (threats) as well as for good, and show how modern conditions increase the scope for both.

The Self and its Ambivalence

“We are already God’s children, but what we shall be in the future
has not yet been revealed” (I John 3: 2)

Before focusing our investigation on the self in this and the following chapter, a few preliminary remarks must be made about how our views and assessment of the self are intertwined with our understanding of both what society is and should be. Our understanding on self, society and how evil might wreck them are co-dependent.

7.1 Three Co-Dependent Notions

At first sight it might appear easier to examine the *self* before treating of *society*, simply because the notion of ‘self’ pertains to one tangible individual, while any notion of ‘society’ is both more complex and attenuated, as it embodies many individuals. This is true only to a certain extent as both notions presuppose one another. Whenever one is brought to the foreground in any investigation, the other usually recedes to the background, but does not entirely disappear.

For instance, in counselling or psychotherapy the analyst concentrates attention on the self of a particular individual, the analysand, but their common endeavour would not be possible without some shared understanding of society and

reference to its expectations. After all, there is no understanding of the self, without some reference to one's position in society, one's past experience of it, one's present attitude towards it and one's ability (or inability) to act within it in the future. Likewise, when investigating social institutions and the changes they undergo, although no detailed account need be taken of the self experience of each member, there would be no point in speaking of institutional or social change unless in some degree it shaped people's outlook and altered their conduct, or at least had to be taken account of when accounting for their actions. Not only do *self* and *society* presuppose each other, but neither notion can be reduced to the other. On this point, even though their concerns are very different, both Kohut and Giddens would readily agree.

Giddens speaks of "the *double involvement* of individuals and institutions: we create society at the same time as we are created by it" (1982: 14, *italics his*). Neither is pre-eminent; 'society' is not just a mechanism constraining the activities of 'individuals', nor is it just the outcome of a multiplicity of discrete activities undertaken by particular individuals, each with his or her own distinctive properties (see RMC: 230). Society, or at least some facet of it, shapes to some extent how each person develops even his or her most personal attributes.

Although Kohut focuses more on the self and its development, he does not view it as an entity that can exist in isolation. The view of the healthy self that he gradually came to espouse is that of a person surviving and growing psychologically in "an empathic-responsive human milieu" (RESS: 85). The self depends upon such a supportive milieu just as much as the body does on an optimal amount of oxygen in the atmosphere. In reaching this understanding, Kohut broke with the mechanistic view of the self as an independent entity governed by its own internal drives, but at times also subject to various external forces, against which it must put up defenses. He grants that a 'drives and defenses' view has a certain validity in pathological cases, when the self is already breaking down due to a lack of empathic support. However, his overall outlook is

summed up in the following passage from one of his last writings:

If we accept the presence of a milieu of responsive selfobjects as a necessary precondition of psychological life; if, moreover, we acknowledge the fact that the healthy, normal human being is psychologically constituted in a way that he survives only in such a milieu [one derived from interaction with others in society] and is equipped with the ability to search for and find such a milieu, then our outlook on man — on his psychopathology and on his behavior in the social and historical arena — will be determined by this basic assumption. It is quite in harmony with this assumption that we have come to the conclusion that some of the greatest achievements of adult life become possible only if childhood functions have remained accessible, or have become accessible again, perhaps due to the renewed availability of wholesome selfobject responses. Some and perhaps all creative achievement, for example, rests broadly on the functional patterns that are the essence of happy playfulness in childhood. If, however, the requisite selfobject matrix is absent later in life, whether in adolescence, adulthood, late middle-life, or in old age, then the self will be endangered, may lose its cohesion, and, as pride and assertiveness are gone, creative-productive activities will cease. (SS III: 309f)

Besides bringing out the double involvement of self and society, this passage also presents an ideal of human wholeness. The healthy self is strong, complete and independently creative because it is capable of drawing upon and contributing to the matrix of life, understanding and empathic support it shares with others. This ethical ideal espoused by self psychology, Kohut recognizes, “not only influences our therapeutic strategy but also determines our investigative aims” (SS III: 308). As an ethical and interpretive ideal, it stands in contrast to “the prevailing value system of Western civilization.” Here Kohut has in mind Western individualism, which assumes that “man’s life from childhood to adulthood is a move forward from a position of helplessness, dependence and shameful clinging to a position of power, independence and proud autonomy” (SS III: 308). Although Kohut’s main concern as a psychologist is with the experience of the analysand, that is, with what he or she appropriates from the surrounding environment, rather than with the social milieu as such, he consistently rejects the view of the self as an entity complete in itself. The quality of care and response offered by others to a child in its early years provides the basic pattern of the self, and something of this needs to continue throughout life.

For Giddens, too, no watertight division can be made between what a society *is* and what it *should be*. Without going into details, he says: “I would want to claim not just a few especially contentious concepts such as these [power, class, ideology, and interests] but the whole conceptual apparatus of social theory is in some sense ‘ineradicably evaluative’ ” (CPST: 90). That is why “moral critique cannot be clearly and absolutely severed from the other tasks of social science” (RMC: 292). Giddens sees the social sciences as part of critical theory, able to contribute to an intellectual, practical, ideological or moral critique of what is taking place in society.¹⁴

Although it is beyond the province of either psychology or sociology to describe any particular action or state of affairs as ‘sinful’, as a transgression of God’s law and a rejection of his love, nevertheless both these sciences can put their finger on human faults and failings. Furthermore, the insights they provide can bring greater precision to our understanding of how sin occurs and its lasting effects. However, only in the next chapter will we look at the theology of sin. In the meantime, attention will be given in this chapter to how there is a certain complementarity between the views of Thomas, Kohut and Giddens on the self, despite their very different approaches.

7.2 Knowledge & Self-knowledge in Thomas

In various of his writings (Ia 87; QD de Veritate q 10; SCG III, 46; QD de Anima 16 ad 8) Thomas touches on the question of self-knowledge. He continually insists that we attain knowledge of ourselves (and of God) not directly but through our

¹⁴ Much more could be said about the distinction yet underlying connection between *values* in morality and *facts* in the social sciences. Their differentiation goes back at least to Hume’s drawing a contrast between *is* statements and *ought* statements. That they cannot be divided into watertight compartments has been shown by Henry Veatch (1971), Bernard Williams (1985) and Alisdair MacIntyre (1981, 1988) among others. Already in 1961 Gunnar Myrdal was exploring this point in relation to the social sciences. He comments at the beginning of his study of poverty and development in Asia: “Every study of a social problem, however limited in scope is and must be determined by valuations. A ‘disinterested’ social science has never existed and never will exist. For logical reasons, it is impossible. A view presupposes a viewpoint. Research, like every other rationally pursued activity, must have a direction. The viewpoint and the direction are determined by our interest in a matter. Valuations enter into the choice of approach, the election of problems, the definition of concepts, and the gathering of data, and are by no means confined to the practical or political inferences drawn from theoretical findings” (1968: 32).

knowing other things. Only by reflecting upon the process by which we know things apart from ourselves are we able to move forward to understand ourselves. Human beings are unable to take a straightforward look and comprehend their own essence or even fully their own capabilities.

The explanation Thomas gives for this is central to his view of human life and development. Human beings, unlike angels, do not have innate knowledge, but come to develop their minds or intellectual capacities by getting to know the various things around them (Ia 55, 2). The human mind “starts as a sheer potential for understanding — a blank page on which nothing is written — and only later acquires actual understanding” (Ia 79, 2). Initially the human intellect has to be actualized by what it understands. The corollary of this is that the quality of mind and outlook a person develops depends largely on what they have come to know and the respect in which they hold it. This is why it is all-important for a person’s development that one gain a true perception and appreciation of creation as a whole, as well as one’s place and obligations within it.

In this vein, Thomas distinguishes two levels of self-knowledge. The first is when a person through her own acts of understanding something perceives herself as possessing a mind. This is a matter simply of being present oneself to one’s own mind. But a deeper level of self-knowledge is attained when someone comes to understand the nature of the mind, recognizing what links it and differentiates it from other things. Acquiring this is likely to be a long, and even painful, process demanding diligent and subtle investigation. However, Thomas adds that many people remain ignorant or have propounded wrong ideas about the mind and its nature (Ia 87, 1).

Taking this line of thought a step further, we can see how people with an erroneous or too limited view of what they are as human beings, or of themselves personally, will meet great difficulties when it comes to developing their

full potential. For instance, if the dominant image of a culture is a mechanistic one, in which human beings are viewed as basically complicated pieces of machinery, then people will tend to overlook, or be unable to make much sense of, those aspects of life that do not fit in with this view. Likewise, those who view human relations in terms of a military chain-of-command will be hard put to fathom individual initiative, spontaneity and collective responsibility.

Since Descartes, whose dominant view of knowledge is that of images in the mind reflecting reality out there, but not really affecting the mind that contains them, it is perhaps difficult to appreciate that knowing is an aspect of being. For Thomas, knowing — like living — is a way of being. Gaining reliable knowledge, including self-knowledge, is a central avenue for human beings to extend their participation in the whole ensemble of being and develop themselves individually and collectively in the process. For Thomas, knowing is a form of participation, whereas for Descartes and many of his successors, knowing is predominantly a matter of mirroring reality out there. This is why Thomas can speak of wisdom, knowledge and insight as intellectual *virtues*, as acquired strengths that go towards building up a person's character, putting him or her in touch with reality. Knowledge alone, however, even though it foreshadows in some degree the appreciation of divine glory, is insufficient (IaIIae 57). It still has to be taken up into good action. A person with practical wisdom (*prudentia*), itself a moral virtue, is someone regularly capable of drawing upon what he knows in order to put projects or plans into effect that will contribute to a worthwhile life for himself and others. If, however, a person — or especially a group of people — are dominated by ideas that are too shallow, false or twisted, they cannot fully grasp, appreciate or respond to the whole ensemble of life and being in which they are involved. Wrong ideas in general about human nature and persons, or an inadequate understanding of their own selves personally, can inhibit action or lead them down paths harmful to themselves and others.

In his account of the acquisition of knowledge (Ia 79) Thomas argues that the

mind is involved in both an active process (*intellectus agens*) and a passive one (*intellectus possibilis*). We actively make sense of things around us. We do not only see, hear and touch them, but work out their significance and the connections between them. Yet our “making sense,” although active, is not a making of them into something different, as we might make stones and sand into concrete or a pig into bacon. Knowing, though it does not alter what is known, is the actualization of the potentiality of things to be understood. In this respect, the human mind is passive, as it is changed in grasping the understanding that things yield. But its active power, somewhat akin to a beam of light illuminating objects in the dark, reveals things within a pattern of meaning. Hence, we do not just grasp things as such, but as being evidently of this or that kind. We never simply know something to be there without knowing something about it, without having some sense-image or appearance to go on (*nisi convertendo se ad phantasmata*, Ia 84, 7).

Thomas does not have in mind a “snapshot” view of knowledge, as though a person occasionally looked out the window to check up that something was there. His view of knowing and understanding is far richer. He understands *intelligere* as *intus legere*, a reading within something, a penetration into its essence (QD de Veritate 1, 12). But like reading, this takes time. Attaining the right balance between actively making sense and being open to whatever understanding things might yield may be a long process. This will require both the ability to examine things from different angles and the cultivation of our powers of apprehension and judgment. Knowing, discovering the sense of whatever is present and going on around us, as well as what is absent or not going on, is a crucial aspect of human life. Without it our ability to enter into, respond to and enjoy life would be severely curtailed. Knowing also puts us at a distance from things; it allows us to see them as different from ourselves, and so enables us to become free from their immediate attraction or repulsion. Without the distance that knowledge provides, our free choice would be limited, as we would be too caught up in whatever attracted or repelled us at each particular

moment.

For instance, a cow might due to lack of food be hungry or even when food is available too sickly to eat, but it cannot deliberately fast. It is unable to put eating, or refraining from eating, into a wider pattern of meaning. Likewise, all the cows in the field may be eating at the same time, but it is beyond them to issue invitations to celebrate a feast together. Humans, however, when a meal is set before them are not limited to sensing that food is here for the eating, but are also able to pick up the humanly significant aspects of the occasion.

While Thomas, when he speaks of the agent intellect, does recognize the imaginative or innovative power of the human mind, his account does not offer much scope for innovative variations in understanding. He recognizes that people vary, and so are liable to take things up each in their own way (*quidquid recipitur in modo recipiendi*, SLCE 24a & Ia 84, 1). Nevertheless, variations in ways of understanding are, like bodily variations, merely incidental. Thomas does not dwell on how people from diverse cultures may understand things and events in a different light. This is in keeping with the organismic root metaphor guiding his thought; people are as similar as their bodily constitution is.

When it comes to self-knowledge, Thomas is quite clear the human mind cannot so understand itself that it immediately apprehends itself (*mens nostra non potest seipsam intelligere ita quod seipsam immediate apprehendat*, QD de Veritate 10, 8). Although one can in general know what minds are like by observing other people, one cannot know one's own mind directly, but only through a process of reflecting on its own activities. This is because the mind at rest is not a determinate thing, comparable to a limb or a bodily organ, but is simply a potentiality for knowing. Being open to all kinds of (further) knowledge, limits cannot be put on it, so it cannot be specified as such. But once it is put into operation, that is when a person is actually knowing (pondering over, grasping, wondering about, considering) something, then he can both perceive

that he has a mind and — with more difficulty — grasp something of its nature (Ia 87, 1). Furthermore, by reflecting upon what one's mind has been grappling with or wondering about, one comes to know one's mind through the notions that have made it active (*per intelligibiles species quas efficiuntur quodammodo formae in quantum per eas fit actu*, SLCE 15a). In other words, one perceives one's own mind through recognizing that one has something in mind. This means that the human mind, not knowing its own essence, always remains something of a mystery to itself. People are not perfectly transparent to themselves, and hence liable to be deceived about even their own thoughts, actions and motives.

Thomas' account of self-knowledge focusses upon knowledge, and so might be taken to be only concerned with philosophical inquiry. But his account can be broadened out into an inquiry about the self. No human being is able to perceive her own self directly; she cannot simply by some form of self-contemplation see or say completely who she is. No one can isolate a kernel or essence, and claim this is himself or herself, neither more nor less. Nevertheless, a person does begin to recognize who he is in what he has done and what has happened to him. The self is revealed in the account he gives of himself. Yet this story does not reveal the self completely, as neither the story nor the telling of it is finished. So long as he is alive the person both continues his story through undertaking further activities and reviews his previous story to meet new conditions. In short, the self is open to change, but its character is partially evident at any given time in the as yet unfinished account that it gives of itself. This conception is similar, as we shall see (7.5 below), to Giddens' view of the self in high modernity as a reflexive project, whose identity is continually reconstructed through the re-working of self-narratives. Before examining that, however, attention will be given to Kohut's psychological understanding of the self.

7.3. The Structure of the Self

Before depicting the structure of the self, we must ask what in fact are we talking about when we use that useful but elusive word 'self.' Kohut readily admits that, though his studies centre around the psychology of the self, the self cannot be defined.

The self ... is, like all reality ... not knowable in its essence. We cannot, by introspection and empathy, penetrate to the self *per se*; only its introspectively or empathically perceived psychological manifestations are open to us. (RESS: 310-11)

Reviewing the various experiences we have of ourselves and others precisely as selves provides some pointers to the self. Our experience of being a self may be analogous to but is not the same as our experiences of various objects, things or events distinct from us. Rather, through being a self, as a centre for receiving impressions, we are able to experience objects (HDAC: 99). A further aspect of the self is found in the sense of continuity running through all the changes taking place in our lives. Although our minds and bodies change over time, even though our character and personality alter, we still recognize after many years that the underlying self is the same (RESS: 179). Furthermore, in wondering what it would be like to be another person, we are asking what kind of self does he or she possess. Another aspect of the self becomes evident in its being the centre for organizing our activities (see ANSE: 120; RESS: xv). Linked to this is a sense of freedom and capacity for taking initiatives that arises from being a self (HDAC: 99).

Jacoby remarks that Kohut, in making the self the focal point of his psychology, has brought "a 'Ganzheits' psychology — a psychology of psychic wholeness — into psychoanalysis" (1990: 63). As the centre of the psychological universe, the self has a wholeness and vitality of its own, which is more than the sum of its parts (see RESS: 97). Although it is possible to distinguish various poles, drives, defenses and abilities within the self, the self is more than these. Instead of thinking of them as parts that together make up the self, they should rather be

considered as partial — either healthy or pathological — manifestations of a greater whole, the self.

It has been asked whether Kohut in speaking of the self is not simply adding another concept to Freud's tripartite description of the psyche as id, ego and superego. Kohut is very clear this is not so. The abstractions in each case belong to different levels of concept formation. "Ego, id, and superego are the constituents of a specific, ... experience-distant abstraction in psychoanalysis: the psychic apparatus." In other words, the meaning of these three terms can only be grasped in terms of a fairly complex theory, which has been elaborated to explain certain aspects of human activity. "The self, however, ... is ... a comparatively experience-near abstraction" (SS II: 584) or concept. We do not need to grasp an elaborate theory to gain an understanding of the self, some reflection on our own and others' experience is sufficient as a start. For instance, in assessing the strength, harmony and cohesion of the self, we are making a conjecture about that person's ability to respond to the future: how vigorously will he respond? how balanced and organized will her actions be? how integrated will be the overall effect of what they do?

In thinking about the self, two complementary approaches have to be kept in mind, so we see the self both as the centre of one's life and involvements (of one's psychological universe) and as an enduring structure we can experience. The ability to reflect on our involvements brings us to self awareness. In this sense the self is "a content of the mental apparatus, ... not one of the agencies of the mind" (RESS: xv; SS II: 585). In other words, if one thinks of the mind as an apparatus or mechanism, the self is not a part of it like an ability or a drive; rather, the self is an achievement elaborated by the working of the apparatus, and self awareness is a further elaboration.

The point of these considerations that is important for a study of sin is that elaborating a self is a human achievement, but it may be a faulty achievement.

Weaknesses or distortions in the structuring of the self, however they may have come about, inevitably weaken one's approach to life and bring distortion into one's involvements. Furthermore, such weaknesses and distortions are not easily averted to, because the very ability to bring them to self awareness is itself weakened and distorted. We can never entirely get out of ourselves to grasp the self as a whole and see what we really are like.

7.3.1 Selfobjects

Central to Kohut's understanding of the self is the concept of 'selfobject.' This psychological term, which he coined himself, refers to "objects which we experience as parts of our self" (SS IV: 457). Kohut several times takes pains to point out that "the concept of a selfobject refers not to an object in the social sphere, to an object in the interpersonal sense of the word, but to the inner experience of an object" (SS IV: 670). They must be distinguished from true objects that we experience as independent centres of initiative. Nevertheless, our experience of true objects, particularly other people who are important in our lives but also cultural objects, can leave through a transference a lasting impression or imago within the self. This can then be "either used in the service of the self ... or experienced as part of the self" (SS IV: 455).

Since selfobjects are not interpersonal, but intrapersonal, "the expected control over them is, therefore, closer to the concept of the control which a grown-up expects to have over his own body and mind than to the concept of the control which he experiences over others" (SS IV: 457). Problems arise, however, when a person is insufficiently mature enough to distinguish other persons with their own independent existence from the imago that he has assimilated from his previous experience of others.

Of particular importance for this study is Kohut's notion of 'cultural selfobjects,' which shape the whole way we relate to our social milieu. He asks at the end of a

letter written in 1980 to colleague:

... we accept the fact that the need for a selfobject milieu of mirroring and idealizable selfobjects is not a sign of immaturity, that it is not defensive, ... [but] is primary and normal. ... How do friends serve our selfobject needs, how does the marital partner, how does the surrounding professional or national group, and how, last but not least, does the culture — via the artists, writers, and other creators of the selfobject climate that surrounds us — in which we live? (SS IV: 651)

Besides linking the very structure of the self to a few important individuals, particularly parents, selfobjects also link us into society; they make it our society, not just a jumbled mass of happenings out there. Their importance will be examined further (see 13.6.2 below) when the bonding of society is explored.

7.3.2 The Bi-polar Self: Ambitions and Ideals

One of Kohut's great insights is to recognize from a psychological point of view the bi-polar (or even multi-polar) structuring of the self. In looking at a person's orientation towards his or her future, two basic psychological functions can be distinguished. These stem from "the two poles of the self, i.e., a person's basic pursuits towards which he is 'driven' by his ambitions and 'led' by his ideals" (RESS: 180). Alternatively one may say, the self is drawn by ideals from above and pushed by ambitions from below (SS II: 435). In each person the strength, characteristics and relation between these two poles derives in large part from the selfobjects who have shaped that self. Hence a person's basic ability to face the future, to deal more or less constructively with life's events, derives in large part from the bi-polar self structure of ambitions and ideals that has been laid down through their past experiences.

7.3.3 The Grandiose Self

The pole of ambitions stems from the confirming approving response or echo that the nuclear self of the young child receives from its selfobjects, that is its

experience of its parents and other family members. The child is mirrored, its growing activities looked on with joy and basic approval by the parental selfobject. Through this mirror transference the grandiose self develops. The grandiose self derives from that early period of infancy prior to any differentiation between self and others. At that stage, it might be said, the infant wanted to control everything and everyone as though they were no more than extensions of itself. But as the growing child acquires a sense of reality through both finding a confirmative echo from its selfobjects and experiencing optimal frustration, the growing self delimits itself from the environment. Over time and through countless repetitions, a grandiose self with realistic ambitions, vigorous drive and healthy assertiveness is acquired. Instead of infantile or archaic narcissism surviving, which would endeavour to draw everything into the grandiose self, so long as "the parents' self-confidence is secure, then the proud exhibitionism of the budding self of the child will be responded to acceptingly" (SS III: 368). Their mirroring promotes the growth from the grandiose-exhibitionistic self of the child, of a mature self that is able to execute its goals, purposes and ambitions. Then, its assertiveness does not lead to wild outbursts of aggression, but is subordinated to the achievement of definite goals and performing the tasks required to reach them.

7.3.4 The Idealized Parent Imago

The pole of ideals is developed through the child being able to look up with a healthy admiration to parental selfobjects. The young child is lifted up, held, carried and calmed by these selfobjects who then seem all powerful and good. In the initial or archaic stage, the rudimentary self is merged with the idealized selfobject. But again, through transmuting internalization, the growing child gains a sense of distance from the idealized selfobject, yet takes on many of its features that it admires. So, later in life, instead of an archaic merger, the self derives inner strength from the idealizing transference established with its parental selfobjects. Having experienced parental upliftment and support in early

childhood, one no longer needs later in life to repeat the former experience, but one can draw on the experience gained in facing new challenges.

However great our disappointment as we discover the weaknesses and limitations of the idealized selfobjects of our early life, their self-confidence as they carried us when we were babies, their security when they allowed us to merge our anxious selves with their tranquillity — via their calm voices or via our closeness with their relaxed bodies as they held us — will be retained by us as the nucleus of our leading ideals and of the calmness we experience as we live our lives under the guidance of our inner goals. (SS III: 368)

At the pole of ideals is the idealized parent imago, which corresponds to the grandiose self at the pole of ambitions. The mature ideals and values which the adult self sets its sights on are the descendants of the idealized parent imago (SPHU: 35).

7.3.5 Patterns for Greatness and Perfection

This brief description of the bipolar self sets out the basic parameters of Kohut's view. His contribution to understanding the self lies in pointing out that both ambitions and ideals have their own line of development in the self. Previously they had often been confused. Though, Kohut admits that ambitions and ideals

are at times hard to distinguish, not only because ambitions are often disguised as ideals but also because there are indeed lucky moments in our lives, or lucky periods in the lives of the very fortunate, in which ambitions and ideals coincide. (SS II: 437)

Previously, too, the acquisition of ideals was taken to be a rather alien affair, a matter of society imposing its standards upon and curbing primitive drives.

Self psychology does not work with a framework of biological drives and a mental apparatus. It posits a primary self which, in the matrix of empathic selfobjects that is held to be as much a prerequisite for psychological existence as oxygen is for biological life, experiences *selfobject* greatness (assertiveness; ambitions), on the one hand, and *selfobject* perfection (idealization of one's goals, enthusiasm for one's

ideals), on the other. (SPHU: 74)

Each individual is unique in having its own pattern of self development, but the following is probably fairly typical.

It seems very likely, for example, that, while traces of both ambitions and idealized goals are beginning to be acquired side by side in early infancy, the bulk of nuclear grandiosity consolidates into *nuclear* ambitions in early childhood (perhaps mainly in the second, third, and fourth year), and the bulk of *nuclear* idealized goal structures are acquired in later childhood (perhaps mainly in the fourth, fifth, and sixth years of life). It is also more than likely that the earlier constituents of the self are predominantly derived from the relation with the maternal self-object (the mother's mirroring acceptance confirms nuclear grandiosity; her holding and carrying allows merger-experiences with the self-object's idealized omnipotence), whereas the constituents acquired later may relate to parental figures of either sex. (RESS: 179)

Various circumstances, such as the death, accident or illness of a parental figure, may lead to "a child turning to his parents in the reverse order (from a mirroring father to an idealized mother)" instead. In some instances, too, one or other pole may be laid down very weakly, nevertheless "the strength of one constituent is often able to offset the weakness of the other" (RESS: 186). So, basically, then the self has two chances to consolidating itself.

7.3.6 An Echo of Thomas Aquinas

The polarity in the self between ideals and ambitions to some extent echoes, but also addresses a difficulty in the thought of Thomas Aquinas. The difficulty is that Thomas depicts human beings as agents seeking the end they have in view and as always drawn by some good. In other words a person who strives to attain or accomplish the end she has set herself is at the same time responding to something of value. Depicting human action in this way invites the objection that a person may seek an end that is not good, but worthless or harmful. Thomas replies that even if the person is not seeking a genuine good, some aspect of what he is striving for must be worthwhile (*apparentis boni, quod quidem habet aliquam rationem boni*, IaIIae 19, 1 ad 1). For instance, even

though robbing a bank is not a good action, the person is drawn to do it by all the benefits, whether real or imagined, he might gain by getting his hands on the money.

While this explanation is coherent enough in many instances, it may sometimes stretch the understanding of good to vanishing point. It is difficult to pinpoint any good that sadists, those who torture people for the kick it gives them, or those who exert their power not to gain any advantage but just to show they have power, might be attracted by. Distinguishing, as Kohut does, between ideals (being drawn by the good) and ambitions (pursuing ends that we establish ourselves) rather overcomes this difficulty. It is thus possible for a person out of sheer ambition to seek to perform or accomplish an action which has only the slightest connection with anything worthwhile (see also 8.5.3 and 11.6.3).

The distinction between ideals and ambitions is, however, somewhat implicit in Thomas' view of society. In his view human beings are both social beings and agents who act to achieve an end. The chief characteristic of human society is that its members are both upheld by and in turn uphold the common good. While the chief characteristic of humans as agents is that they specify the ends for which they will strive.

Inevitably, there is a disparity between the interests of individual and the common good: *non enim idem est quod proprium et quod commune* (RP, 1). This disparity runs parallel to that in the self between ambitions and ideals. As Thomas points out, if each person were intent only upon their own interests, the human community would collapse. To prevent that and maintain the common good, effective government in one or other form is necessary. Those in government must have the skill to mediate between the interests of individuals and the common good of society as a whole. This requires that particular strength of character known as political discretion: *prudentia* (see IIaIIae 47, 3c).

To anticipate a little: Kohut, likewise, finds between the two poles of the self a linking area that holds ambitions and ideals in creative tension. Significantly too, this 'tension arc' derives its effectiveness from what members of a society can do in common; in recognizing that they gain assurance.

7.3.7 The Intermediate Area of Skills and Talents

A normal healthy self is not inexorably torn between its ambitions and its ideals, between its interests and its values. Between the two poles lies an intermediate area of skills and talents, which forms an uninterrupted 'tension arc' that mediates between the drive of ambitions and the guidance of ideals. Kohut emphasizes its importance, when he says: "This tension arc is the dynamic essence of the complete, nondefective self; it is a conceptualization of the structure whose presence makes possible a creative-productive, fulfilling life" (HDAC: 4f). Kohut tentatively advances the claim that, anyone not having such an energetic continuum between their ambitions and ideals would be unable to lead a fulfilling life (HDAC: 211n1). Ambitions and skills are insufficient without the ability to bring them together and implement them.

As Kohut only realized the importance of this area quite late in his investigations, he was unable to investigate in any detail what takes place. Seemingly, this intermediate area is built up in the child, generally from the age of four to ten years, through its experiencing a reassuring sense of essential likeness to its selfobjects. Even before that, there may be "a vague but intense and pervasive sense of security as he [the young child, even the baby] feels himself to be a human among humans" (HDAC: 200). But later on, especially during the latency period, through such experiences as the little girl kneading dough alongside her grandmother, or the little boy working with his father using the same tools, a twinship or alter ego transference is established. Kohut mentions these examples, but suggests that many other significant events may provide the growing self with the necessary assurance for developing the various skills and

talents that can be used creatively in adult life.

7.3.8 The Resilience of the Self

A fuller appreciation of the intermediate area of skills and talents led Kohut to see that it too can be a centre around which the self will grow so long as it is sustained by suitable twinship or alter ego transferences. If early mirroring responses are badly flawed, or no uplifting, idealizable selfobject is available, "the child will intensify his search for the structuring presence of a selfobject that is experienced as an alter ego" (HDAC: 205). Where self structure is lacking in one area, compensatory structures can be laid down in other areas. This means the self has basically three chances at consolidation, either around the poles of ambitions or ideals, or in the intermediate area of skills and talents.

Just as a tree will, within certain limits, be able to grow around an obstacle so that it can ultimately expose its leaves to the life-sustaining rays of the sun, so will the self in its developmental search abandon the effort to continue in one particular direction and try to move in another. (HDAC: 205)

Consequently, too, it is perfectly normal for people to be incorporated into society in different ways.

Certain [assertive] people are predominantly creative and self-expressive, and their creative selves are sustained by the actually occurring, or at least confidently expected, approval of the selfobject milieu in which they lives. Others are predominantly sustained by feeling lifted up by ideals — all the sustaining forces which our culture puts at our disposal ... Finally, there are still other people who derive the sustenance that maintains their selves mainly from feeling surrounded by alter egos. They feel strong and cohesive as members of a group of people whom they experience as being in essence like them, doing similar work, sharing similar biases and predilections, and the like. (HDAC: 203)

Each society, group or community requires for its health and stability a blend of all these different types of people.

7.4 The Continuous Search for Transformation

Kohut's account of the self and its search for selfobjects is incomplete. The self, besides searching for selfobjects to make up for its own deficiencies and built up its own structure, also seeks its own transformation. This stems

neither [from] an emptiness nor lack of self-structure but rather the natural desire to recover and reexperience something positive and growth enhancing. The ecstasy of romance, aesthetics, and religion become the potentially positive carriers of this necessary aspect of human experience. (Jones, 1991: 121).

In giving this description Jones is drawing on the work of Christopher Bollas (1987), who speaks of the "transformational object," which derives from the experience of the child-mother dyad but is prior to the child's being able to differentiate its relationship with its mother into a particular object. Bollas writes:

A child may endure an experience which is registered not through object representation but through an identity sense. ... A child may thus have a profound self experience without being able to link this state to any one object. Such self states are nonetheless untranslatable into that symbolic order characteristic of object representation: they yield, instead, identity senses and they therefore conserve the child's sense of self of sense of being. (Bollas, 1987: 110)

The shadow of this transformational object, or in Jones' terms 'transformational object relationship,' remains throughout life. "In times of crisis, the person longs for a transformational object who can comfort and facilitate the integration of new experience" (Jones, 1991: 119). At brighter moments a transformational object relationship may be "discovered in another person, or an overpowering piece of music, or an evocative poem or novel, or the awesomeness of nature" (Jones, 1991: 120). He continues:

Such transforming moments are not re-creations or memories of past events but rather represent a return to the foundational experiences of human life. Such a return to the wellspring of our conscious existence carries the hope and the possibility of metamorphosis, or reworking or transforming aspects of ourselves and our relation to the world. (Jones, 1991: 122)

These transforming moments, besides being aesthetic or romantic, may also be religious. In whatever form it may take — whether through art and culture, religion, going on a vacation or a change in relationships — “all of us have the drive to reexperience the moment of psychic creation and the process of metamorphosis” (Jones, 1991: 123). This drive is inescapable, but whether it will latch onto an object that can bear the full weight of the longing for change and transformation is an open question. “Bollas is aware” writes Jones “that an intrinsic drive for the transforming object relation can take negative and destructive as well as positive forms” (1991: 123).

This theme will be taken up again in this study, but two observations may be pertinent. First, it underlines how personal development comprises both formation and transformation. The interrelation between the two in a person’s life and the role played by the community has been explored by Rosemary Haughton (1967). Formation, or acquiring form, is effected through imitation, picking up good habits, assimilating knowledge, repeated practice, learning through trial and error. Transformation is effected, not through the acquisition of new abilities or items of knowledge, but through all one’s understanding and ability being put on a new level. In an experience of transformation, a person — to a greater or lesser extent — recovers and renews his or her whole sense of self.

Second, when Bollas speaks of the transformational object being known “not so much by putting it into object representation but as a recurrent experience of being — a more existential as opposed to representational knowing” (1987: 14), he echoes Thomas Aquinas’ repeated statement that the apprehension of being is prior to grasping the differentiation within being of one thing from another (*quod primo cadit in intellectu ens; secundo, quod hoc ens non est illud ens, et sic secundo apprehendimus divisionem*, Ia 11, 2 ad 4; see also QD de Potentia 9, 7 ad 15). The purpose of metaphysics as the study of being *qua* being is to enable a person to grasp over again, but with deeper insight, their primordial relation to and participation in reality. Metaphysical or philosophical insight, coming

through a recovery of the transformational object relationship, can thus open up new ways of relating self to the world.

The practical consequence of these two observations is that a person is not inevitably limited by the ideals, ambitions and skills he or she has acquired by transference from other persons and society at large. It is always possible in principle not only to look again at oneself, one's life and relationships, one's understanding and engagement in society, but to reappropriate all one's previous experience. Carrying out this reappraisal and reappropriation is part of the search for the lost transformational object that goes on throughout life. It is, however, possible to fail either wholly or partially in this search. A person may either ignore any prompting to carry it out or the bundle of ideals, ambitions and skills available to him is inadequate. In the latter case, his company and society do not offer either satisfactory role-models or a sufficiently nuanced language for him to understand himself and what is required of him.

This theme will be picked up in more detail later, but it now leads on to a consideration of how people may gain and regain their sense of self through telling their stories.

7.5 Giddens on Self-Narratives

One of Giddens' recent studies, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (1991), has focussed on the influence that contemporary social systems have on personal dispositions and the shaping of self-identity. He brings out how the self is not simply a given, objective entity, but a 'reflexive project' For Giddens, the self is not a substantial entity, but a story that is continually being refashioned in the telling.

Self-identity for us forms a *trajectory* across the different institutional settings of modernity over the *durée* of what used to be called the 'life cycle', a term which applies most accurately to non-modern contexts than to modern ones. Each of us not

only 'has', but *lives* a biography reflexively organised in terms of flows of social and psychological information about possible ways of life. (MSI: 14)

Giddens draws a sharp contrast between the self in traditional society, when in fact most people were hardly concerned about their self-identity, and in high modernity. Instead of being tightly anchored in the natural-cultural unfolding of the human life-cycle, with its well marked stages of birth, growth, puberty, coming of age, marriage, parenthood, and retirement, as well as the recurrence of the seasons each year, a person in modern society must continually refine his or her identity. "In the settings of modernity, by contrast [with traditional society], the altered self has to be explored and constituted as part of a reflexive process of connecting personal and social change" (MSI: 33). To do this many people in modern society draw on various books, programmes, courses or make use of counselling to help them find and refine themselves.

Therapy is not simply a means of coping with novel anxieties, but an expression of the reflexivity of the self — a phenomenon which, on the level of the individual, like the broader institutions of society, balances opportunity and potential catastrophe in equal measure. (MSI: 34)

Whether Giddens draws too sharp a contrast, when he says: "the level of time-space distancing introduced by high modernity is so extensive that, for the first time in human history, 'self' and 'society' are interrelated in a global milieu" (MSI: 32) might be questioned. This appears to exaggerate human autonomy, stressing how the expanded range of mediated experience, brought about by modern media of communication, enables people "to be familiar with properties of objects and events outside immediate settings of sensory involvement" (MSI: 47). But this expansion of autonomy is balanced by the body, each person's own body with all its peculiar demands and limitations, being given a central role in each person's identity narrative.

In the post-traditional environments of high modernity ... the body participates in a very direct way in the principle that the self has to be constructed. Bodily regimes, which also bear directly on patterns of sensuality, are the prime means whereby the institutional reflexivity of modern social life is focused on the cultivation — almost,

one might say, the creation — of the body. (MSI: 100)

Health concerns, fitness and beauty regimes, as well as the practise of sports, yoga and relaxation exercises, are all instances of how the body as “an action-system ... is an essential part of the sustaining of a coherent sense of self-identity” (MSI: 99). One of the implications of this concentration on the body for understanding how people may connive in social sin will be examined below (see 15.2.4 and 19.8 below).

Gaining and maintaining a sense of self-identity is an instance of the double hermeneutic, whereby technical terms originally used to explain human activities are themselves re-incorporated into the direction of those activities (see 5.2 above). ‘Self’ and ‘identity’, terms originally used by philosophers and psychologists about people in general, are now used reflexively by people to shape and sustain their own self-identity.

Self-identity is not a distinctive trait, or even a collection of traits, possessed by the individual. It is *the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography*. Identity here still presumes continuity across time and space: but self-identity is such continuity as interpreted reflexively by the agent. This includes the cognitive component of personhood. To be a ‘person’ is not just to be a reflexive actor, but to have a concept of a person (as applied both to the self and others). (MSI: 53)

After listing the variable elements that go into constructing a self-narrative, Giddens recognizes that it is possible to ask: “How valid are these conceptions? Are they in some sense ideological? Are they more to do with therapy than with any changes which might have affected the self in modern social conditions?” He explicitly brackets these issues, but considers “they signal something real about self and self-identity in the contemporary world” (MSI: 80). There are really two distinct yet interlinked questions here, a general and an individual one. On a general level, one may ask: What validity is there in speaking about the construction and maintenance of a cohesive self-identity through the continual re-ordering of self-narratives? If this way of speaking is in general valid, or at least

has some degree of validity, then one comes to a more individualized issue: How valid a summing up and revelation of a person's actual identity is the particular self-narrative he or she tells to others or even to him- or herself? Here allowance has to be made with each individual for all manner of ignorance, lack of awareness, prejudice, repression and self-deception.

No one's narrative, however, is entirely individual; it is constructed according to the rules and out of the resources that a given society actually provides. So, if its rules of logic, understanding and morality are distorted, and its resources including both the confidence to begin telling a story at all and the imagery to be incorporated into it are deficient, then its members are severely limited in the self-narratives they can fashion. This is another way of bringing out the interconnection between deficiencies in the structuring of self and of society.

Giddens lists some of the elements that go towards constructing a self-narrative: a continuous reflexivity, a trajectory from the past to the anticipated future, making one's narrative explicit, control of time, awareness of one's body, balancing opportunity and risk through a series of passages or significant transitions, authenticity and continual reference back to oneself (see MSI 75-80). But, although these elements can be distinguished, what society — as it were — offers is more packaged; it holds out various lifestyles from which the individual has to choose. 'Lifestyle' does not refer only to one's pattern of consumption, but "can be defined as a more or less integrated set of practices which an individual embraces, not only because such practices fulfil utilitarian needs, but because they give material form to a particular narrative of self-identity" (MSI: 81). In choosing a lifestyle, a person adopts "a cluster of habits and orientations, and hence has a certain unity — important to a continuing sense of ontological security — that connects options in a more or less ordered pattern" (MSI: 82).

It hardly needs pointing out from an ethical point of view that not all the lifestyle options available in modern society are equally beneficial. It is not that

there is only one good lifestyle. But some lifestyles may lead people to construct a self-narrative that fails either to address satisfactorily important areas of life, or to come together coherently. The resources a lifestyle offers in the form of know-how, role models, self-understanding, and empathy with others may be too lean or even basically flawed, so that a person's life may be destructive for others and without fulfilment for him or herself. Here one might keep in mind the effect upon a person of what Kohut terms an insufficient selfobject matrix for sustaining healthy growth in the self. He mentions the effects in poor slums (as distinct from rich slums) of a lack of cultural selfobjects.

Many of those I have treated from slum areas generally had enough calories when they were young. But the food was dreary, and that was the important thing. Everything was dreary. There was no artistry in the apartments in which they grew up. And by that I don't mean artistry in the sense of good taste—but in any taste. It was a world of cultural emptiness. ... There are enormous lessons to be learned here for political science, politics, and government. ... I know one needs food, housing, and transportation. But in the last analysis it is the deprivation of cultural selfobjects that matters most. (SPHU: 225)

The lack of selfobjects, particularly persons to whom youth in the slums could look up and from whom they could even receive some mirroring, deprived them of the resources to construct a sufficiently satisfying self-narrative.

7.6 **The Self: Substance, Structure or Story**

To return to the more general question of what is the self, three rather different kinds of answer are found. The ancient or classical view speaks in terms of the 'soul', or sometimes of the 'mind', as the defining characteristic giving existence to a human being. Although not complete without the body, the soul is conceived as something substantial with a stability all its own. On a moral level, in this view, one may inquire into the state of someone's soul. But while her degree of guilt or innocence affects her soul, it is not constitutive of it as a substance. A soul remains always substantially the same, even though sin alters its moral

standing, rendering it liable for punishment, and weakens its abilities to act rightly. If that kind of view can be accepted, it is existentially very re-assuring as it affirms every person in having a stable, homogenous core within themselves. It also affirms a person in his or her own intrinsic worth (*propriate distincta ad dignitatem pertinente*, Ia 29, 3 ad 2) right from the start of their existence, and independently of their moral behaviour or social usefulness. But it leads to such theological problems as the souls being created by God having to spend eternity damned in hell.

Giddens presents a very different view: instead of being a substance, the self — what makes a person be the person that he or she is — is basically a story.

A person's identity is not to be found in behaviour, nor — important though this is — in the reactions of others, but in the capacity *to keep a particular narrative going*. ... The individual's biography ... must continually integrate events which occur in the external world, and sort them into the ongoing 'story' about the self. (MSI: 54)

This description, at the other extreme from the substantialist view, puts all emphasis on the story that the self is able to enact and tell of itself. The rise of this second view does, however, bring its own existential problems. Mellor and Shilling, commenting on the work of Giddens among others, show what happens when the old religious assumptions about the immortality of the soul and its receiving its just reward or punishment in heaven or hell collapse. They write:

The reflexivity of modernity, which systematically undermines the religious traditions that provided us with what Berger calls a 'nomos' of explanation, is also the reflexivity of the self: self becomes a project to be worked on, something open to new designs, new methods of construction. Since this reflexivity is 'chronic', its completion is never envisaged. This means that when individuals inevitably die their self-projects will be incomplete, their fragile attempts at personal meaning left shattered by the brute fact of death. The implications of this for those who outlive them are also alarming: the fragility of all they hold dear, all they invest in socially, psychologically and emotionally, will be signalled. (Mellor and Shilling, 1993: 427)

Some implications of this issue are taken up below (Chapter Nineteen).

It might be asked of Giddens, whether instead of the “autobiographical thinking” involved in “developing a coherent sense of one’s life history” and so “escaping the thrall of the past and opening oneself out to the future” (MSI: 72), a truer or more complete story about oneself might not actually be given by someone else. How accurate can any autobiography ever be? Coherence alone is insufficient, as it might be attained by concealing or camouflaging, even from oneself, stupid and blameworthy episodes in one’s past. Even though keeping “a particular narrative going” encompasses both action and reflection, this formulation lacks any explicit reference to whether — in Kohut’s terms — a person has lived out the ideals and aspirations laid down in the nuclear self. Nor does it show the link between giving an account of oneself in a self-narrative and accountability to others.

The antinomy between the views of the self as a substance and as a story cannot be resolved when attention is concentrated upon one pole of the antimony alone. The possibility of its resolution lies at least in principle in going beyond considerations about the individual person on his or her own. Attention has to be given, not simply to self-knowledge, but to participation in a common life and society, and to the ways in which the story of each self contributes to or detracts from the story of society as a whole.

Already in Thomas’ metaphysics, being a substance is a matter of it participating in its own particular fashion in being itself. The New Testament hints at the same issue in another way. Jesus tells the seventy-two disciples to rejoice because their names are written in heaven (Luke 10: 20), and Revelation speaks of the book of life, where the names of the elect are taken up into a greater story than they could write for themselves. This leads to a consideration of how the self is constituted by the quality of its love or self-giving.

7.7 **The Will: from Passive Involvement to Active Engagement**

In moving from considerations about knowing to an examination of love (and self-love), attention is shifted from things that are known to actions that are done. This shift of focus is also evident when Giddens speaks of a person's identity, not as a stable core, but "as the capacity to keep a narrative going" (MSI: 54). This, however, is a useful overall but still an abstract description of what people do. At the experiential level, each person deals with various situations, takes up or passes over various opportunities, copes as best he or she can with particular problems as and when they crop up, choosing one option rather than another. The self that is formed in the process comes as a result of the various choices made along the way. Admittedly, some choices — such as deciding on one's career, marriage, work or home — may be much more consequential than others, as they open up or close off a whole series of further opportunities. But even a small decision, seemingly inconsequential at the time, may have an outcome that is momentous for the individual and indeed for society as a whole. Furthermore, while some choices may be resolutely pursued, such as when a person aspires to attain the goals laid down in his nuclear self, others will be much more a matter of consenting to events beyond his control, such as accepting to go to hospital and be treated for an injury or illness. Each instance reveals different facets of a person's character, and contributes towards the formation of the self.

Fundamental to Thomas' view of human action, that is freely chosen activity in which a person knows what he or she is doing, is the conviction that some good or benefit is sought. Human action aims to realize some good — transient or long-lasting, genuine or illusory (as it may turn out), easy or difficult, pleasurable or unpleasant — for oneself, or another person, or some wider community of persons. Living a moral life is primarily a matter of recognizing the true order of priorities among the many goods that one is drawn to and responding accordingly. For instance, justice to another must take precedence over mere convenience for oneself when a clash arises. Likewise, food and drink are to be taken and

enjoyed, but in moderation; alcohol up to the point when one becomes merry. Thomas, in undertaking his long and highly ordered description in his *Summa Theologiae* IIaIIae of the various desirable and undesirable qualities that people can cultivate through their activities, sought to show the true order of priorities among the many goods that people may strive for. His account, he fully recognized, was only couched in general terms; it could not solve all problems in advance. Engaging with the particularities of any given situation and bringing the best out of it requires the cultivation of practical reasoning (*prudentia*) as a paramount human quality.

The self, however, is not an isolated and indifferent spectator standing aside from the flow of life, but is immersed in it. In Heidegger's terms: *Dasein ist In-der-Welt-sein*. Each person, being part of the ebb and flow of life and history, is all the time being drawn by different and even contrary inclinations: some attractive, others repelling or challenging. In speaking about being drawn or inclined, two points must be borne in mind to grasp Thomas' analysis. First, these inclinations are passive, they are 'undergoings' (*passiones*) prior to any action. Second, a person need not and probably cannot be fully aware of all that he or she is undergoing at any given time. What Thomas terms *passiones* are not exactly equivalent to either 'emotions' or the (intense) experience of desire in modern terminology. *Passio* has a wider application. After all, a person may be deeply affected by events, but not always realize fully how she is caught up in them, nor be able to name their effect on her and so unable specify it as an emotion. Nevertheless, each person has to respond in some way to what she is undergoing; even being non-committal or opting out are themselves forms of response.

The action of the will is to transform these undergoings — whether they be attractive, repelling, challenging, exciting or deadening — into action in view of some good to be attained. Willing — in the full sense of the word — has a double sense. It is a matter of choosing from among various alternative inclinations

which one to take up, and transforming that inclination from a passive power into an active one. As Ernst explains: "The will has, as it were, two senses simultaneously: an upspringing towards the good, but an upspringing requiring formal determination as the actualization of another power" (1954: 67). In view of some greater but more remote good, someone may well choose to leave aside possible actions that are attractive and undertake one that is immediately hard or repellant. A person, by selecting and actualizing one possibility from among a range of possibilities, and in doing so making that his own, cultivates order in human affairs. Through people freely choosing and doing what they regard as beneficial for themselves and others, they — with varying degrees of success — both form their own selves and bring about a human world.

Fully human action exhibits both transcendence and spontaneity. Transcendence is evident in a person being able to stand apart from, view and select from the various options which are drawing her in one direction or another. Her response is not predetermined, but can be carefully considered so as to make the most of the various possibilities available. Spontaneity is shown in choice, in her coming down on one course of action to attain the particular good it offers. In having made a choice from among the possibilities that one might previously have been inclined to, life takes on some order. Transcendence without spontaneity would leave a person in a state of continually exploring and weighing what she might do without coming to any conclusion. Spontaneity without transcendence would make one's choice capricious, the result of a whim, with little attention being paid to whether this was in the given circumstances the best course of action.

7.7.1 Drawn by Love

Giving oneself to a particular action, selected for the good it offers, can be described as love, *amor*. What impels one to move towards something outside of oneself is called love (*Amor dicitur illud quod est principium motus tendentis in aliud*, I-IIae 26, 1). 'Love' here should be taken in neither a romantic nor a

theological sense, but simply as the inclination inherent in things to seek the good for which they have an affinity. This tendency is innate in plants and animals; they are not free to resist it. Humans, however, can also of their own free will decide to move towards goals they have thought out for themselves. Or rather, instead of everyone on their own working out their aims in life from scratch, people in large measure take up the goals laid down in their culture. They are attracted, at least initially, by what they see others having and doing. One person, by seeing another person seeking something lovable, whether the benefit that the doing of an action brings or a further good that it realizes, comes to seek that too. Love generates love.

Thomas gives an intra-personal explanation of how love generates love. Just as the intellect is attracted to all truth including its own act of understanding, and the will is attracted to all good including its own act of willing, so also can love, which is the spontaneous movement of the one loving towards the one loved, be turned back on itself. Hence in so far as someone loves something, he loves to love (*Sed amor etiam ex ratione propriae speciei habet quod supra se reflectatur; quia est spontaneous motus amantis in amatum; unde ex hoc ipso quoad amat aliquis, amat se amare*, IIaIIae 25, 2). Thomas here is not giving a genetic account of how the spontaneity of love is evoked by others, but outlining what normally transpires in an act of love. At this point Thomas is pointing out a pervasive and spontaneous tendency inherent in human activity, but which might be well or ill directed. Commenting on this question from Thomas, Cornelius Ernst writes:

But in a way the self *is* this transcendental love. ... We love ourselves to love; we satisfy a need to love by loving (for Socrates in the *Symposium* love is born of Need and Wealth). The love to love is open: it transcends the actual love of the moment. Love is world-forming because it is self-forming; and with that there emerges all the ambivalency of 'self'. The self is what is realized out of an unspecified spontaneity with respect to explicit choices. ... The self has to preside, as presence and possibility, over the acts which constitute its history. (1954: 69)

What shapes the character of a self, the personal quality of each particular individual, is not just the capacity to love, but the explicit choices he or she

makes. While the will is in general open to all good, free choice must settle on a particular good; the cumulative effect of particular choices comes over a period of time to mould the self. Love is a process of self-disposition, in which the self by giving itself to whatever inclinations, desires or tendencies it chooses comes to form itself.

Although not pursued at length, Thomas acknowledges that someone in performing a human action not only stirs himself, but is himself effected by it (*Utroque enim modo [actione et passione] possunt considerari actus humani, eo quod homo movet seipsum, et movetur a seipso*, IaIIae, 1, 3). This is most evident in the formation and growth of human dispositions. Repeated activity develops certain dispositions in a person's abilities, which are — as McDermott translates — passively active (*quaedam qualitas in potentia passiva et mota, quae nominatur habitus*, IaIIae 51, 2). These acquired dispositions, Thomas points out, may be moral virtues, strengths of character disposing a person to act in a particular fashion, or be sound habits of mind. Conversely, dispositions may be weakened or lost altogether by a failure to exercise them, as then nothing prevents disordered feelings or misleading thoughts from breaking them down (IaIIae 53, 3). Dispositions that run contrary to human nature, to what a person should be striving for to become a mature human being, are vices. They are weaknesses of character that incline a person to evil actions and slovenly ways of thinking; both of which may be sinful.

What Thomas offers over several hundred pages in his delineation of virtues, both in general and in particular, their origins, interconnections and opposing vices, is a well-rounded view of what human beings ought to be as Christian believers and members of a well balanced society. In presenting his account he draws on the received wisdom of the scriptures, ancient philosophy, the fathers of the church, and from various arguments among his contemporaries. He weaves all this material together to present a vast tapestry displaying the well woven character that a person might aspire to. For the most part, he takes for

granted the support offered by the church as a community of belief and the opportunities that a just society affords. In this respect his account is not sociological, and his ecclesiology is more implicit than explicit. Although aware of the power of example, Thomas does not dwell on the support one person may offer another, or fail to offer, in enabling the other to discover his or her own abilities and freedom. Fulfilling such an ideal, he grants, may be rendered difficult or impossible due to various contingencies — bodily or mental defects, upsets in nature, social problems and other calamities. While he fully recognizes that human life now is a journey (*in via*) that should be leading to the full vision of God (*in patria*), Thomas does not dwell existentially on what making that journey demands of a person. In Kohut's terms, his account is experience-distant rather than experience-near.

7.8 Selfobjects and Real Objects

There is a certain ambiguity, which needs to be mentioned if not resolved, in Kohut's account of the role that selfobjects play in the development of the self. To what extent are selfobjects actually other persons or are they only derived from them? This ambiguity is evident in the following passage, taken from an essay written in 1979 where Kohut attempts to clarify four of his basic concepts by juxtaposing and commenting on some passages from his earlier writings. Speaking of the self, he says:

A self [nuclear self] consists of a person's nuclear ambitions and ideals in cooperation with certain groups of talents and skills. These inner attributes must be sufficiently strong and consolidated in order to be able to function as a more or less self-propelling, self-directed, and self-sustaining unit which provides a central purpose to the personality and gives a sense of meaning to a person's life. Or, in other words (genetically speaking): A self can be said to be established at that point (in an analysis) when the selfobjects (and their functions) have been sufficiently transformed into psychological structures so that they function to a certain extent independently, in conformity with self-generated patterns of initiative (ambitions) and inner guidance (ideals). I added the idea of a self being "established" must not be taken literally, i.e. that some need for selfobjects remains in all people throughout life, and that indeed it is characteristic for a healthy self that it is not forced to go it

alone at all costs but that it can, in emergencies, turn toward the support of selfobjects. (SS IV: 452f)

In this and other passages Kohut is trying to steer between two views that he rejects. The first is the Freudian view that psychological development is simply a matter of moving from dependence upon others to autonomy. He departs from the view that in childhood we are dependent upon object relations but that as we mature we become increasingly independent. He challenges the assumption that “man’s life from childhood to adulthood is a move forward from a position of helplessness, dependence, and shameful clinging to a position of power, independence, and proud autonomy” (SS III: 308). Instead, Kohut argues, development lies in the changing nature of the relationship, we move from primary to mature narcissism with its capacity for empathy, creativity, humour and wisdom. Commenting on this new perspective introduced by Kohut, James Jones says:

Freud and modernity typify the necessary discovery of individuality and autonomy after the medieval symbiosis; Kohut represents the postmodern need to rediscover connection and community in a way that does not undermine autonomy and individuality but continues a genuine evolution beyond the enmeshments of medieval society and the brittle autonomies of modernity. (Jones, 1991: 18)

This new view of self and society, needless to say, carries ethical implications within it. It sets out an ideal of what Raimundo Panikkar (1973) calls “ontonomy,” beyond both heteronomy and autonomy, towards which human life, relationships, education, development and even law should strive. Panikkar explains:

Ontonomy rests on the assumption that the universe is a whole, that there is an internal and constitutive relationship between all and every part of reality, that nothing is disconnected and the development and progress of one being is not to be at the expense of another — not because it should or ought not, but for the same reason adduced in the case of cancer, namely that neither promotes the life of the whole organism nor is of any utility for the affected organ. (1973: 42)

While this sounds a marvellous ethical ideal, bringing it about will require a

society devoid not only of structural evil, but of all conflict and contradiction.

The second view is the accusation levelled at Kohut that in his therapy it is sufficient "for the analyst to be 'nice' to his patients, to be 'understanding,' warmhearted, endowed with the human touch" (HDAC: 95). Kohut says that a psychoanalytic cure requires much more than making up for the love the analysand was deprived of in childhood. The structure of the self will not be built up without empathy, insight, explanation from the analyst and transmuting internalization on the part of the analysand.

A real change has to take place within the analysand if she is going to attain psychological health. Then, paradoxical as it may sound, she will be self-sufficient enough to connect with others and draw from them the support she requires to sustain her through the challenges of life. Kohut's gives his main attention to how the self consolidates itself by drawing upon the matrix of support that sustain it. His concern, however, is not with examining the matrix in detail, but in how it is experienced and appropriated by the self. Nevertheless, Kohut readily admits that should this matrix of support be seriously deficient, that will have harmful repercussions for the self. Though what would constitute a serious deficiency in support turns upon the resilience and flexibility of the self; people can draw (or fail to draw) support from their surroundings, culture, relationships and memories in diverse ways. Nevertheless, all though life such support is required, though its form will vary from infancy, through adolescence and middle age to old age and death. Hence Kohut asks: "How does the selfobject milieu respond to a person's dying? Does it respond with pride in him for being an example of courage in pain and decline, or by withdrawing its mirroring from him at this ultimate point in the curve of life?" (SS III: 307).

Perhaps Kohut's dilemma may be summed up by recognizing that for a person to develop a resilient self-structure he or she will need, especially in their early years, the support of other people (real objects). But two aspects are crucial: first,

that others are in fact supportive, not just happening to be around; second, the quality of their support has not just to be felt at the time but also to be taken into the self. In other words, experiences must not remain transitory phenomena, but used to build up a person of experience. Dependence is when a person has to rely continually upon transitory experiences of others' support, guidance and encouragement. The resilient self, on the other hand, has a sufficient body of experience (or — in Kohut's terms — is rich enough in self-selfobject relationships) to deal adequately with and be further enriched by daily life. What Kohut terms 'transmuting internalization' is the process by which supportive transitory experiences of various kinds go to form a resilient, balanced and resourceful person of experience.

This, however, leaves open the question whether in any given society there are in fact people (real objects) available and capable of offering sufficiently worthwhile experiences. In this connection, Joan Lang asks: "Can we consider that the real world provides the 'favorable conditions' which Kohut considers to be requisite for the operation of transmuting internalization, as far as self-experiences and functions relating to gender are concerned?" (1984: 60). The same question could be asked about the handling of power and authority, respect for the environment, and attitudes to work. How much do culturally prescribed patterns of behaviour distort, or social constraints actually prevent, people from making the response that the growing child's (or even adult's) developing capabilities require at the moment?

To sum up, the building up of self-structure through transmuting internalization may break down at two points: suitable real objects (persons or cultural symbols) may not be available to be experienced; if available, they may be no more than transitory experiences that are not drawn as selfobjects into a person's body of experience. The first problem is predominantly social, and the second psychological, but the two can reinforce one another. Generally speaking, a lack of worthwhile experiences renders a person less capable of experiencing what is

worthwhile.

7.9 The Ambiguity of Self-love

In his discussion (IIaIIae 26, 4) of whether we should love ourselves more than our neighbours, Thomas does not just weigh self against others, but looks at both kinds of love in relation to God who is the origin of all love. Self-love neither excludes nor competes against love of neighbour, but is its exemplar. Out of the charity that unites us with God we ought to love our true selves (*secundum naturam spiritualem*). Love for our neighbours stems from our being associated with them in the love that derives from God (*secundum rationem societatis in isto bono*) and leads to a kind of union that is directed to God (*quandam unionem in ordine ad Deum*). Unity of self with God, however, is more fundamental than association with others (*consociatio*) and so must take precedence, especially if a misguided love of neighbour would lead one into committing sin. Nevertheless, each person should give preference to the common good rather than any partial good of one's own.

When speaking of love as a feeling stirring within one (*passio animae*), Thomas distinguishes (IaIIae, 26, 4) between love of friendship (*amor amicitiae*) and love of convenience (*amor concupiscentiae*). In any instance of love, there is both the person who is loved, whether oneself or others, and the good that one wishes them. A love that wills good for the other's sake results in genuine friendship, while a love that wills the other's good, but for the sake of what suits oneself, falls short of true friendship. Thomas adds later when speaking of charity (IIaIIae 23, 1) that genuine friendship, besides seeking the other's good (*benevolentia*), also requires reciprocity (*mutua amatio*). What binds people together in friendship, or renders them sociable, is their seeking for each other the good they share in common. If, on the other hand, someone has no self-love, because he or she either will or cannot seek what is good for self, then that person is incapable of love of others. Unity (*unitas*) of oneself with what one seeks is the basis of union

with another (*principium unionis, ita amor quo quis diligit seipsum est forma et radix amicitiae*, IIaIIae 25, 4), thus the love by which someone loves self is the impulse and root of friendship with others.

In his discussion of self-love Thomas stresses the importance of people knowing who and what they truly are. What people value most and promote depends upon their own view of themselves. The wicked esteem the sensual and bodily aspects of their nature, thinking those more important than their inner rational nature. In so doing they come more to hate or harm, than actually love themselves (*qui autem se amat ad bonum sensualitas contra bonum rationis, magis se odit quam amat, proprie loquendo*, QD de Caritate, 12, ad 6). It is not love of self that is wrong, but its configuration is wrong. Good people truly knowing themselves, truly love themselves (*Boni autem vere cognoscentes seipsos, vere seipsos diligunt*, IIaIIae 25, 7).

Thomas rejects the view that self-love ought to be included in the list of vices, a view based on Augustine saying that self-love leading to rejection of God makes up the City of Babylon. He is careful to point out in his reply to this objection that it is an inordinate or wrongly configured self-love that is the problem. But this is not simply one vice among the others, since it is found at the root of all sin and vice (*omnes radices et capita vitiorum includunt inordinatum sui amorem*, QD de Malo, 8, 1 ad 19).

Following Augustine, who sets the City of God over against Babylon, the earthly and fallen city, Thomas contrasts the effects of two different kinds of self-love. Among good people, a well ordered love of self, based on true self-knowledge, leads them to uphold their true selves in their integrity (*servari in sua integritate*), and to seek higher gifts (*bona spiritualia*). Accomplishing the good they seek satisfies their hearts, with good thoughts in the present, happy memories of the past, and the hope of further good in the future. They also do not experience conflict of will within themselves, because the whole self strives

towards unity (*tota anima eorum tendit ad unum*). The self-love that prevails among sinners has very different consequences. They let go of their integrity (*mali non volunt conservari in integritate interioris hominis*). They neither desire nor seek to make use of any higher gifts. Absent from their hearts is anything that they could dwell upon with delight, because they find there only past, present and future evils are abhorrent. On account of their troubled conscience they find no agreement within themselves. Sinners love themselves in a corrupt way; one that is quite different from the way good people love themselves (*Mali amant seipsos secundum corruptionem exterioris hominis. Sic autem boni non amant seipsos*, IIaIIae 25, 7). These different kinds of self-love generate two different worlds.

Before examining further the ways in which distortions appear in the self (Chapter Nine), attention will now be directed to how Thomas' understanding of sin opens the way for appreciating its social dimensions.

Sin, its Effects and Spread

“They are hatching adder’s eggs and weaving a spider’s web;
eat one of their eggs and you die, crush one and a viper emerges.

Their webs are useless for clothing, their deeds are useless for wearing.” (Isaiah 59: 5)

The purpose of this chapter is not to provide a full examination of Thomas’ theology of sin, but to pick out those points which may lead to an understanding of how sin can become embedded in the structures of society.

In Thomas’ terminology ‘sin’ (*peccatum*) is an analogical term, just as ‘health’ or ‘risk’ is. Just as healthy food, healthy exercise and public health measures all contribute to people’s health, so occasions of sin, sinful inclinations and suggestions may lead to someone committing sin, which in turn brings the wages of sin upon others. Here ‘sin’ is not being used univocally, but analogously. Although related the exact meaning varies from one use to another. The prime analogate of sin is mortal or deadly sin, which someone commits when he severs his connection with God’s love; this is not done lightly or inadvertently but results from a free and deliberate human action (IaIIae 88, 1 ad 1). Other ways of speak-

ing of 'sin' are derived from this, but do not carry its full force. This chapter explores some of the connections between the various aspects of sin.

8.1 A Slicing through Reality as a Whole

Before proceeding, however, it should be noticed that when Thomas speaks of certain activities and their consequences in terms of sin, he is not saying they fall into a particular compartment of human affairs named 'morality' or still less 'Christian or religious morality.' MacIntyre points out that "there is no word correctly translatable by our modern word 'morality' in any ancient or medieval language" (1990: 191). For Thomas and his contemporaries, what we now compartmentalize as 'morality,' 'law,' 'politics' and even 'religion' were part of a single view of how all human life reaches the goal in which its true fulfilment lies. Sins are actions or conditions that in some way fail to embody that goal.

To use one of Thomas' favourite examples, they do not embody the directedness or finality that a well aimed arrow speeding towards the target embodies. No human action — whether legal, economic, artistic or concerning domestic affairs and personal relationships — is morally indifferent; it either contributes towards human flourishing or detracts from it. Although certain types of action may when considered in the abstract be neither good nor bad, the particular human actions that people do deliberately are either good or bad due to their aim or the way the person relates them to the attendant circumstances (IaIIae 18, 8 & 9). For instance, driving a car is as such neither good nor bad, but its value is different depending upon whether one is on the way to rob a bank or visit the sick. A different finality is embodied in each instance; or rather, the life of the person on his way to rob a bank is already beginning to lack that directedness which would have enabled him to flourish before God in company with others.

Sin is not just a religious phenomenon in a narrow sense of religion being one department of life. For Thomas, theology encompasses the whole of life in its

relation towards God (Ia 1, 7). So in speaking about committing sin, one has to examine how breaching God's law includes the directing of a person's life towards self-defeat with all its deleterious attendant psychological, social and political consequences for himself and others. The theological consideration of sin is not an addition over and above the investigation of personal and social breakdown, but includes them and grounds such investigations. Likewise, grace or the supernatural is not a layer above nature, but includes and pervades the workings of nature and human reason.

8.2 Sin as Disruption of Overall Order

Following Augustine, Thomas defines sin as "a word, deed or desire which is against eternal law" (*dictum vel factum vel concupitum contra legem aeternam*, IaIIae 71, 6). As Thomas points out there are two elements here: the voluntary action undertaken and its running contrary to eternal law. In Thomas' understanding the eternal law is much more than a list of rules which people must always obey. Rather, it is the one universal plan conceived in divine Wisdom by which God directs every action and movement bringing all things to their rightful end (IaIIae 93, 1). Of itself, it is beyond full human comprehension, but "all knowledge of truth is a light shining forth from the eternal law and a participation in it" (IaIIae 93, 2).

All creatures participate in the eternal law by bearing within their various natures its impress directing them towards actions and aims appropriate to them. In this way various sub-human creatures follow the laws of physics and biology. But human beings as

reasoning creatures follow God's plan in a more profound way, themselves sharing the planning, making plans both for themselves and for others; so they share in the eternal reasoning itself that is imprinting them with their natural tendencies to appropriate behaviour and goals. This distinctive sharing in the eternal law we call the natural law, the law we have in us by nature. (IaIIae, 91, 2)

The natural law is thus not a set of injunctions which each individual must in every place and for all time obey. Rather, it becomes evident in people's continuing ability to make suitable arrangements for conducting their lives together as human beings, and to adjust these arrangements as circumstances change. Arriving at the most suitable arrangements for all, those which best enable people to live a fully human life together (the common good), is a matter of learning from experience, discussion and argument. The ability to arrive at morally suitable arrangements has to be cultivated in each generation. This is not a purely arbitrary process, as underlying it is the natural propensity in human beings to search and strive for a healthy society in which they as its members can flourish.

Exactly what arrangements will be made will vary from one place to another, but Thomas suggests they will always at the very least provide for conserving human life, male-female relations and bringing up children, overcoming ignorance and not offending those with whom one lives (IaIIae 94,2). Other less basic arrangements may at times have to be altered considerably to cope with changed conditions (IaIIae 97, 1).

8.2.1 Changeable Human Laws

Some arrangements will be a matter of custom, unwritten or customary law, others will be embodied in definite, duly promulgated laws. These human laws, as Thomas calls them, worked out by human reasoning, derive their binding force from and exemplify natural law.

Reason's ultimate standard is the law we have in us by nature, and the laws people frame are law only to the extent that they derive from that law. If they run counter in any way to the law in us by nature, they are no longer law but breakdown of law. (IaIIae 95. 2)

Thomas, in speaking of 'law,' does not primarily have in mind written legislation, but people regulating one another's lives according to law, or enactments of

the law. In order to enact the law, for instance in coming to a judgment in court, people have to use their powers of reasoning. Legislation written in advance, drawing on accumulated experience and free from the press of immediate issues, is their guide. But in applying it they still have to rely upon their own sense of what is right and wrong, to decide which pieces of legislation apply, and make their own decision about matters not covered by it (IaIIae 95. 1). Underlying this whole process of enacting human laws is natural law, the impress of eternal law inherent in human beings made and acting in the image of God. This conception of natural law is in line with Thomas' view of participation, whereby God acts [vertically] in things in such a way that things act [horizontally] themselves (Ia 105, 5). Hence, a ruler authorizing laws expresses his divine authorization. Horizontal or predicamental causality derives its being from and is penetrated by vertical or transcendental causality (see Fabro, 1961).

The consequence of this is that when Thomas speaks of sin as contravening eternal law, he does not just have in mind an offence against God above and alone, but of someone going against God's will as it is manifested in the sensible and binding arrangements that people have worked out for living together. "Such just laws oblige us in conscience, since they derive from the eternal law" (IaIIae 96, 4). Though he does also recognize that in any given place not all arrangements, including legal enactments, are necessarily full of sense. Unjust laws serve

not the general good but some lawmaker's greed or vanity ... or unfairly apportion the burdens the general good imposes; ... these are forms of violence, and do not oblige our consciences except perhaps to avoid scandal and disorder. (IaIIae 96, 4)

Put in different terminology, in Thomas' view, people engage in a continual process of structuring and upholding their society through following its customs, being guided by its laws, and on occasion enacting special laws and amending them when necessary. The details will vary from one society to another, but in each case its structural arrangements gain their binding force from being expressions of eternal law. This is a classic instance of empowerment: rulers

participate in the divine power of ruling, but with the proviso that any abuse of power leads to its nullification. When they seriously depart from eternal law, the injunctions lose their binding force. It is thus possible for the law of a particular society, which includes its enactment and enforcement, to be defective by including unjust laws. Thomas did not foresee, however, these going much beyond the whims of tyrants.

In evil men both ways of being subject to eternal law are decayed as it were: the natural tendency to virtue spoilt by vice, and the natural knowledge of what is good darkened by passion and habitual wrongdoing. (IaIIae 93, 6)

Besides the impositions of tyrants, who are enemies of the common good, Thomas only hints at how perverted laws and customs can extend a detrimental influence across society.

8.3 Faults and Afflictions

In speaking about evil in human beings, Thomas distinguishes between faults and afflictions; this follows the distinction between actions (*actiones*) and their repercussions (*passiones*). “Where will is concerned badness may be distinguished as either inflicted or a fault” (Ia 48, 5). Faults (*malum culpae*) are misdirected acts of will, which are in conflict with the uncreated goodness of God. They are worse than afflictions (*malum poenae*), which are deprivations which lessen our abilities (Ia 48, 6). Afflictions are a consequence of faults, which God allows in the order of things, so that people may wake up and repudiate their faults. For instance, gluttonous over-eating as a fault results in various afflictions for the stomach and heart; from these someone might learn his lesson and so correct his fault.

This distinction allows us to clear up a certain ambiguity in the term ‘sin’ (*peccatum*). As O’Brien (see also Fearon, 1968: 255) explains:

Peccatum for St Thomas has a wider application than 'sin' in English; it includes any deviation in an action, whether of nature, art or will. *Culpa*, 'fault' is restricted to moral actions and makes explicit that evil in moral actions includes responsibility, imputability or blameworthiness. (1974: 16)

A sin in the full sense of the word is committed knowingly and willingly, and the person doing this is at fault or guilty. But it is also possible for someone quite simply to make a mistake; a person does or says the wrong thing, and in so doing brings some affliction upon him- or herself and others, but that person cannot be held blameworthy. The person may be quite oblivious either of the repercussions of his or her activity or its wrongfulness (IaIIae 76, 1). Nevertheless, damage may still result, and so not to correct and at times compensate for past mistakes, once one becomes aware of them, would be a sin of omission. Under modern conditions the range of harmful yet inadvertent repercussions that may result from the mistaken actions of a person, and especially from a group, is much more vast than anything Thomas could in his day have imagined. Today a single decision, or the release of a piece of information, may have untold repercussions throughout the network of economic and political links that span and often shape the modern world.

A tragic illustration of this was the failure in March-April 1981 by an official responsible for agricultural production in the then USSR to order the planting of more than the usual quota of spring-sown wheat because the excessively hard winter had killed large areas of autumn-sown wheat. Consequently, the USSR had a serious shortfall in wheat production, and had to order massive quantities from Canada and USA. This emptied the stocks and pushed up the world price of wheat. Later that year when a drought occurred in the Sahel, there was insufficient wheat or at too high a price to provide sufficient relief aid there. Several million people starved. In this case, what went wrong could to a large extent be traced, but frequently it is not clear what exactly triggers stock exchange crashes, extensive electrical power failures, or the collapse of governments. The lives and welfare of millions of people, who for the most part remain anonymous, can be extensively affected by the decisions, or lack of decision, coming from only a few

people. A simple mistake without any trace of malice, such as an individual failing to notice something out of the ordinary, can today have appalling repercussions across wide areas of the world. Modern technology makes possible the extensive linkage of people across the globe that medieval and even renaissance people could hardly dream about.

The debt of affliction or punishment (*reatus poenae*) that a fault incurs is due to its running contrary to the right ordering of affairs. For Thomas sin may be characterized as an action lacking the order it should have (*peccatum est actus debito ordine privatus*, IaIae 72, 1 ad 2). Whenever the due order of life and human affairs is transgressed, this will inevitably bring its own repercussions, which the transgressor experiences as afflictions.

8.3.1 Personal, Social and Eternal repercussions

Thomas distinguishes three kinds of ordering which involve human beings as “masters of their acts through their own free decision, of which they are capable by reason and will” (IaIIae 1, 2). Although free to respond as they choose, human beings are subject to the ordered dynamism of their nature, to the workings of their society, and to God who rules them with justice and love (IaIIae 87, 1). In going against any of these they will bring affliction upon themselves.

In failing to respect their own nature, which has its own intrinsic dynamism, people bring harm upon themselves and thwart their own proper development as persons. Each person is left free to choose what they should aspire to, to decide which abilities to cultivate, and so to build up their own unique character. The ability to choose and decide well, fitting actions appropriately to circumstances so that one’s own and others’ lives are developed is a matter of practical wisdom (*prudentia*). Practical wisdom is itself a strength of character (*virtus*) which is acquired through memory, insight and a readiness to learn (IIaIIae 49) and itself built up through practice. Grasping what should be done, often on the spur of the

moment, calls for inventiveness, perspicacity and a sound sense of the situation (IIaIIae 50).

For Thomas there is no book of rules which tells one exactly what to do in every situation. Laws, formulated legislation and rules, govern matters in general, but decisions about individual actions are in the hands of the individuals involved (IaIIae 96, 1). This, however, does not mean that people's actions can never be wrong. Certain types of action are inherently self-defeating for the individual perpetrating them. They inevitably result in damaging repercussions (*poenae*) for those who carry them out. As they go against the ordering of human life and development they come to thwart and even destroy the humanity of the person pursuing them.

This is perhaps more evident on the communal level where some form of governance is required. Humans, being political and social creatures (*homo naturaliter est animal politicum et sociale*, IaIIae 72, 4), must uphold some order in their dealings with one another. Concerning these terms, D'Entrèves points out that Thomas prefers to speak of *politicum et sociale*, instead of keeping strictly to Aristotle's πολιτικον ζων (1253a2-3). Thomas wishes to bring out that "man is a political because he is a social being. This means that the State must have its roots in social experience, that it cannot be, or cannot be solely, the creation of human will" (D'Entrèves, 1963: xv). Although there are many ways in which a political or religious community might organize its affairs, there are certain actions which are simply incompatible with its being sustained as social unit. These Thomas spells out in considerable detail in his treatment of justice (IIaIIae 57-122). If unjust actions are not prohibited and those perpetrating them punished, community life will collapse. In dealing with the repercussions of sin on this level Thomas points out that it is the offender's guilt (*reatus poenae*) that renders him or her liable to the punishments that those in authority might rightly inflict upon wrongdoers (IaIIae 87, 1 ad 1 & 2). Unfortunately, although Thomas speaks here of the guilty persons being afflicted with a disordered spirit

(*anima inordinata*), he does not examine the resulting disorders that may continue to afflict the community.

Affliction also results from transgressing the all-embracing order of God's rule (*universi ordini divini regiminis*, IaIIae 87, 1). This order is all-embracing because not only are people's overt activities subject to it, as they are to human laws, but also what is inwardly hidden and so beyond the competence of any human court (IaIIae 91, 4). It also embraces all people, not just those of a particular state or community, as everyone is called to flourish in beatitude with God. Furthermore, it embraces eternity, as well as time. Hence, since sin breaks the bond of charity with God, it damages the order of our will to God at its root. So long as that state endures, and it can only be rectified by God's power, it brings with it a debt of eternal punishment (IaIIae 87, 3). This, however, is not for Thomas the end of the story, because the punishments resulting from sin can, when accepted with love, become expiatory; but examining the redemptive values of Christ's passion and our own afflictions goes beyond this study.

8.3.2 The Feedback of Afflictions

Of importance for this study, however, is the possible feedback from afflictions to faults. Thomas makes the general remark: "Humans would not have incurred any harm in soul, body or exterior affairs, unless sin had occurred either personally or in human nature" (QD de Malo 1, 4). In speaking about sin in human nature, Thomas is referring to original sin derived from Adam; this weakens each person's innate inclination towards doing good (IaIIae 85, 1). On the individual level, Thomas rules out the committing of a further sin (*culpa*) being directly the affliction (*poena*) of a previous sin (*culpa*). His reasoning is that committing sin is an act of will, whereas the affliction resulting from that goes against the will. Something cannot be both willed and not willed.

Nevertheless, the afflictions resulting from one sin can remove or weaken

whatever deters a person from committing further sin. Thus such afflictions as separation from God, the loss of grace, disorder in a person's ability to act, disturbed feelings or distress (*inordinatio agentis, vel anxietas passionis seu laboris*, QD de Malo 1, 4 ad 5) weaken a person's ability to make a good choice. But if they destroyed free choice completely, it would no longer be an act of will and the person would hence not be culpable.

In his analysis Thomas deals with the possible repercussions of deliberate human actions, in this case sinful ones, upon a person's subsequent action. In the light of Giddens' stratification model of action (see 12.4.1 below), this analysis could be taken further. The unintended consequences of action can feed back to influence the unacknowledged conditions of subsequent action. Giddens depicts a much wider feedback cycle than Thomas, as it embraces elements that the actor does not intend and may not even know about. These elements may include unacknowledged aspects of the actor's personality and his social situation, as well as the social repercussions of his action. So, for instance, a person through issuing threatening orders that exceed his authority may consolidate his domineering position that made it possible for him to issue those orders in the first place. He may well be oblivious both of the behavioral disorders in himself and the injustice he does to others. Although he may not directly intend these afflictions, his action exacerbates them and makes possible further actions of the same kind. Both he and those who cannot warn or prevent him from giving threatening orders about are caught in a cycle of affliction. Thomas' analysis is useful, however, for weighing their culpability, which depends upon their degree of awareness and emotional stability (IaIIae 76 & 77; see 8.5 below), as well as a realistic possibility of acting differently.

8.4 Sin as Denial of Charity and Breach of Justice

The central characteristic of sin is its breaking the bond of charity which God establishes with and among his people. The core of sin is found in a person

preferring to possess some transitory good (*bonum commutabile*, IaIIae, 75,1) than to live by human reason and in accordance with God's law. A disordered love of self (*inordinatum sui amorem*) is at the root of all sin and every vice. Whether a particular action is a serious or deadly sin does not derive from how much it is punished, but vice versa. Sin is deadly when it kills in a person love of God and neighbour. At this point a person has cut herself off from God, who in his love is the source and goal of her life. In rupturing charity she rejects the very principle that could give order to her life (QD de Malo 8, 1; IaIIae 72, 5). She cannot progress towards enjoying life with God, because her sin in destroying charity prevents all such progress (IaIIae 88, 2 & 114, 4).

Unlike some later theologians, Thomas does not view sins against charity alongside those against justice, honesty, purity, etc. Every sin involves a failure to act in accordance with charity; this may either be deadly (*mortale*) through breaking with charity completely or be excusable or non-fatal (*veniale*) as when someone performs a good action but in a wrong way. In his comment on the *Summa Theologiae* O'Brien stresses that "a sin is mortal by opposition to charity rather than by opposition to specific commandments is his [Thomas'] emphasis; it is more important than any cataloguing of grave sins" (1974: 110). In this vein Thomas explains: "All the commandments of the decalogue are directed towards love of God and neighbour. Hence the commandments of charity were not set out in it, but are included within each of ten commandments" (IIaIIae 44, 1 ad 3). Divine commandments and human laws are important, however, as they safeguard the common good and lead people towards virtue (IaIIae 90, 3). Even virtues, or strengths of characters, are only really authentic (*virtutes informata*) when they are enlivened by charity. In other words, unless a person directs his acquired abilities of thinking clearly and acting well (*virtutes intellectuales et morales*) to benefit others, these abilities are hardly authentic as he remains too tied up in himself.

8.4.1 Thwarting God's Loving Purpose

Displaying the heart of sin — or should one say sin's lack of heart — is not easy. It is comparatively easy to speak about the conditions and criteria for it, its effects and ramifications, about types and grades of sin, but this discussion could still miss its centre. Thomas takes us close to this centre when he almost contradicts himself in two articles following one another. In dealing with the question whether God is the cause of sin, he says first: "In no way is God the cause of sin ... [if] a person freely transgresses God's command, that sin cannot be attributed to God as though he caused it" (IaIIae 79, 1 c & ad 3). Yet immediately afterwards Thomas says that although God as the first agent "is the cause of the act of sinning, he is not the cause of sin, for he does not cause the action to be sinful" (IaIIae 79, 2). This near contradiction can be examined both in terms of metaphysics and in relation to the loving purpose of God.

On the metaphysical level, Thomas explains:

Because sinful actions exist and are actions, they derive from God: all that exists, whatever its manner of existing, derives from the first existent; and all actions are caused by things that actually exist *qua* actually existent, and that actualness is derived from him who is actual by nature. Sin however names these existent actions *qua* defective, with a defect moreover that arises from a created cause — free will — precisely rejecting its orderedness to its first cause, God. (IaIIae 79, 2 — McDermott translation)

Put graphically, a murderer would be unable to plan and carry out his crime unless he together with his very ability to do anything were not part of a world created and continually sustained by God. His plunging the dagger into the victim's heart is a definite action, whose existence as an action (its being in the act) ultimately derives from and is upheld by the source of all being. What makes it precisely a sinful action is its departing from the due order (*actus debito ordine privatus*, IaIIae 72, 1 ad 2) that relates one person to another and ultimately to God. A departure from order is not something positive in its own right, but a lack or defect in being. In the case of a sin, this is brought about voluntarily. The

murderer's sinfulness lies in his rendering defective of his own free will the good order that should exist between himself and the person he made into his victim.

The full significance of this metaphysical explanation about order only comes out when it is pointed out that the power creating and sustaining each and every thing — in all their variety and activity — in existence is the loving purpose of God. As human beings we are not simply given the ability to act freely. That ability is itself an inner moment within an invitation to respond to God and be an active participant in his loving purpose. The order of grace, which God in his love initiates, is not superimposed upon, but encompasses and permeates both nature and human freedom. As O'Brien explains in his comment on Thomas' approach to morality and sin:

It is not, then, a question of seeing a natural moral structure [derived in the main from Aristotle's analysis of acting for an end], then filling it in by identifying the ultimate end as God; the vision of grace and charity is first; the moral structure is chosen to express something of its intelligibility. (1974: 114)

A central aspect of God's love — central at any rate in this discussion — is its being an enabling call echoing in our everyday human situations inviting us to build one another up. This call is not just an indifferent invitation, but one that evokes the ability to respond freely and creatively. It is evident in the very propensity of human beings to grow, to foster relationships, to cooperate, to develop their surroundings and enhance one another in society. Sin is an effort either to divert this process for our individual advantage or even to cut ourselves out of it altogether. In distorting or attempting to thwart the creative budding forth among us of God's loving purpose, sin does not halt the process but only lets its power bring destruction on ourselves and others. That someone can perform a sinful action is due to the enabling power of God's love, but in sinning he turns the effect of that love against himself and, to some extent, against others. Ernst expresses this graphically when he says: "Wherever there is love, there is an image of God, an image which can become an idol. Sin is the

disease, the cancerous growth of love" (1974: 87). Sin does not switch off the drive within us for growth, relationship and development; the drive continues but when perverted by sin turns destructive. Although not expressed in terms of human development, Thomas links failure in charity with the corruption of human life and abilities, when he says: "When charity does not grow in a person, it is liable to decline on account of the shoots of sins, which come forth from the corruption of human nature" (QD de Malo 16, 2 ad 14).

8.4.2 The Social Scope of Charity

Thomas sees charity and the effects of its denial not solely in relationships between individuals, but on a social level too. He says:

There are certain human actions which of themselves run contrary to the love of God and neighbour. Among them are those which undo the solidarity of human society (*tollunt convictum societatis humanae*); for where theft, homicide and the like are widespread and not condemned people are unable to uphold life in common (*convivere ad invicem*); actions of such a type are mortal sins (QD de Malo 7, 1).

The importance of charity in social life is evident in that its denial through hatred, apathy or envy leads to discord or active resistance to the good of others. This manifests itself in quarrelling, fighting between individuals, war between states, schism in the church and sedition within a state (IIaIIae qq 34-42).

8.4.3 Justice and Charity in Society

The arrangement of the *Summa Theologiae* on these issues provides an insight into Thomas' mind. Instead of dealing with these issues under justice, he treats hatred, apathy and envy as vices opposed to charity, and discord as opposed to the peace which is brought about by charity (IIaIIae 29, 3). Quarrelling opposes peace verbally, while fighting, war, schism and sedition are activities opposing it. Peace, defined by Augustine as the tranquillity of order, embraces both relations between people and the strivings within a person. Peace prevails when there is

no discord within or between people (IIaIIae 29, 2 ad 3). Thomas, however, does not expect members of a society always to be unanimous in their opinions, as long as there is agreement on vital issues. Argument is necessary to overcome false views. Peace is found in the harmonizing of people's strivings rather than of their views and opinions.

Charity as the bonding together of people is necessary for social life; without it society splits up. But justice is necessary to regulate affairs within society, so that everyone receives what is due to them (IIaIIae 58, 11). Hence under justice, Thomas deals with how the burdens and benefits of society are fairly distributed, honesty in buying and selling, the proper handling of cases in courts, safeguarding people's lives and their good name, obedience to authority and similar issues. Deciding what is just is a matter of weighing one person's claims against another's; the other may be an individual, a household, a company or the state. The laws of a given society specify what is justly demanded of each party.

Charity, as far as society is concerned, bonds its members together in wishing good for one another. Thomas, following Aristotle, speaks of charity as that kind of sociability (*amicitia*) in which each person mutually seeks what is good for another (*mutua benevolentia fundatur super aliquam communicationem*, IIaIIae 23 1).¹⁵ Justice, however, measures and regulates the claims of one person or party over against another. Charity is concerned with the relationships between people, justice with the rendering of actions and objects owed to them (See O'Brien, 1974: 104). Seeking justice in a dispute inevitably brings a certain divisiveness into society. For a society to be sound, justice and charity should complement each other. Charity should provide the overall ambience within which the claims and counter-claims for justice are settled.

A society held together by justice and charity is rather like a laminated wooden

¹⁵ At this point, 'sociability' or 'solidarity' — spoken of by Tischner (1982) as readiness to carry one another's burdens — is a better translation for *amicitia* than 'friendship,' which in modern society is more concerned with private inter-personal relationships than with the basis of a person's approach to public affairs.

beam. Each piece of wood must be cut exactly to size so it fits nicely with the next — an exercise in justice. But all the pieces must be glued together to support each other — the bonding of charity. The beam may be weakened by weak glue, or the pieces not being properly sized or a combination of both. But no amount of trimming the pieces to fit together more exactly will make up for a lack of glue. Nor will excess glue compensate for the pieces not being properly measured and shaped. Likewise with society, making the law more precise and increasing litigation will not solve the problems of a society where basic sociability and trust is lacking. Similarly, excessive benevolence that disregards people's just demands will both weaken society and distort the growth of its members.

Although one might work out hypothetically how all the demands of justice might be met in a society, when it comes to real life no society will hold together unless people are willing to communicate and basically support one another. A person's rightful quest for justice needs to be other directed and more than mere self-seeking. In other words, justice when it lacks charity remains at best an empty framework. Charity does not alter the framework of justice, but brings it to life and renders it authentic. Thomas is insistent on this point when he speaks of charity giving life to justice and the other virtues (*dat formam actibus omnium aliarum virtutum*, IIaIIae 24, 8).¹⁶

These considerations from Thomas show that in discerning where a society has gone wrong, we must ask two kinds of question:

1. Do its members as a whole fail to bond together, to communicate and identify with one another? If so, there is a breakdown in basic sociability, a failure in charity.

¹⁶ For Thomas *forma* is not — as with Kant — a shape which may be filled with content, but the principle which actualizes possibilities. Thus, the soul (*anima*) is the *forma* which makes the crucial difference between a creature being a living (animated) being and a decaying (inanimate) corpse. Regarding acts of justice, charity as their *forma* makes the difference between their being precise, but cold acts of judicial reasoning and their becoming actions upholding the rightful well-being of all concerned. The line of reasoning may remain the same, but the action as a whole takes on a new character as it is put into service to promote the good of others.

2. Is there an equitable apportionment of society's burdens and benefit among all its members (distributive justice), and between them in their dealings with each other (commutative justice)? If not, are failures limited to isolated occurrences, or do they continually recur with one act of injustice preparing the ground for the next? In the latter case, there is a situation of institutionalized injustice or even violence.

At first sight, sexism, nationalism, racism and religious intolerance are predominantly instances of a breakdown in sociability, while systematic political repression and economic exploitation are clear instances of institutionalized injustice. But in practice the division is not that clear, as failures in sociability easily lead to deep-seated injustices and vice versa. For instance, racial or religious discrimination provides an opening for political injustices, while economic exploitation leads to hatred and class war.

8.5 Predispositions to Sin

Thomas offers an extensive treatment (IaIIae 75-80) on the causes of sin; this focuses how dispositions to sin are formed in an individual due to ignorance, weakness or emotional instability and malice. Although Thomas' inquiry concentrates on how these influences operate within an individual, by taking his account a stage further one can see how culture and social conditions could reinforce these influences.

8.5.1 Ignorance

In his treatment of ignorance, Thomas points out that one is dealing with negatives. A person may act in ignorance but not through ignorance as such (*non peccat propter ignorantiam, sed peccat ignorans*, IaIIae 76, 1). Good sense and awareness should restrain a person from committing sin, but a lack of good sense about what is good and evil in general or an unawareness of significant

features of one's situation can remove the normal restraints. But Thomas does not leave the matter there, as he asks whether ignorance is itself sinful. What has brought it about? Is it due to negligence (*neligentia*) when a person did not make sufficient effort to find out what he should know, or a case of something he could not be expected to have known (*nescientia*)? This, it must be added, will vary in each instance depending upon the culture, a person's education and social position.

Thomas does not discuss the ambiguities of self-deception, but he does point out that ignorance can be sinful. Someone either may deliberately decide not to find out so she can sin more freely, or may neglect to find out because it is too much bother or she is too preoccupied with other matters (IaIIae 74, 3). A person may be negligent, that is, not care sufficiently (*sollicitudinis defectum*) either about what she is doing or the circumstances of her action (IIaIIae 54, 1). Although Thomas recognizes that people will sometimes make mistakes through no fault of their own, there are certain matters about which they are obliged to find out. He, however, lived in an era in which taking due care was not in principle problematic, as the time-space distancing of society was low.

8.5.2 Emotional Instability or Weakness

A disposition to sin may also be brought about by excessive anger or desire; the resulting sins are those of weakness. These may come about through great emotion (*passio*) putting other considerations out of one's mind, or pulling one in a direction contrary to one's better judgment, even to the extent of making one unable to act freely (IaIIae 77, 2 & 3). The supra-personal aspect of emotion becomes evident in Thomas' account of the workings of attraction (*amor*). He distinguishes two types of attraction: the attraction of friendship (*amor amicitiae*) and the attraction of desire (*amor concupiscentiae*). In the first, our affections are drawn to others as fellow human beings, and we want their good as though it

were our own. In the second, we are really loving ourselves, wanting the good that results from others' company and support for our own convenience and pleasure. When we don't obtain what we want our attractions might turn to hate, (IaIIae 27, 4). This latter case is in Kohut's terminology one of archaic narcissism. People in this state could easily be led into sin when their desire to gain or retain others' company or allegiance, which is really for his own pleasure or convenience, becomes overwhelming. Thomas also recognizes that in sexual matters an overwhelming desire for money may arise out of a man's wanting to gain or retain a woman not his wife (*velit accipere vel retinere aliena*, QD de Malo, 15, 1).

8.5.3 Defective Will

After showing how sin may arise from ignorance and emotional disturbance, Thomas looks at how sin arises from disorder in the will itself (*ex defectu voluntatis, qui est inordinatio ipsius*, IaIIae 78, 1). It is not that the will itself is bad, but that it is disordered or misdirected, as the person willingly lets herself be attracted to lesser goods. such as riches or pleasure, when she knows she should be seeking a greater one. Such temporal goods are not evil in themselves, but are beyond the measure compatible with reason, divine law and love of God. Her malice lies in knowingly pursuing the evil course. Thomas adds that malicious actions may arise out of a vicious habit or be due to the disorder resulting from a prior sin, but he does say that evil cannot be sought for its own sake by anyone (*malum non potest esse secundum se intentum ab aliquo*, IaIIae 78, 1 ad 2).

Thomas' analysis as John Langan has recently argued is somewhat defective. It rests upon a psychological thesis, derived ultimately from Socrates, that "no one willingly goes to meet evil or what he thinks to be evil" (*Protagoras*, 358). Langan points out that Thomas in his account of malice presumes that the sinner would choose both the greater, spiritual goods and the lower, temporal ones if he could, but opts for the latter knowing the former will be excluded. Thomas, thus,

assimilates malice to weakness; "sins of weakness occurring as the result of a gust of passion and sins of malice occurring [to borrow Bishop Joseph Butler's phrase] 'in a cool hour' " (1989: 190). His account "fails to capture what Thomas himself speaks of as sin by choice, in which 'the man who sins with deliberate malice quite simply chooses what is evil' (IaIIae 78, 4 ad 3)" (1987: 189). Thomas likewise affirms that freedom (*liberum arbitrium*) is not a disposition inclining one towards either a good or a bad action (*habitus ... habemus ad passiones vel ad actus bene vel male*), but an ability to choose freely either way (*potentia ... indifferenter se habet ad bene eligendum vel male*, Ia 83, 2). But in other places he does not entertain the possibility of someone being adverse to any higher good at all and deciding to do evil in order to show that. Langan concludes:

Thomas is too acute and too honest to deny that sins of malice can occur, but his commitment to the psychological thesis [that the object of choice is always a good] causes him to offer inadequate and misleading accounts both of the deliberate choice of evil and of the sins of pride and hatred of God. (1989: 197)

A person may spontaneously choose to do evil even when there are no predispositions, whether psychological or social, inclining him specially towards it, nor even any advantage to be gained from it. Instead he wills for the sake of will, often seeking simply and solely to defy others or impress his own power upon them. In these cases of sheer willfulness, "pure spontaneity is mistaken for something real in isolation from the acts of which it is really only the transcendental source" (Ernst, 1954: 69). Such actions are explicable, not in terms of misplaced ideals, but as arising from severely distorted ambitions at the other pole of the self (see 7.3.6 above and 11.6.3 below). Further consideration of this issue could lead us far into the Kantian problem of autonomy and radical evil, which we will not pursue here (see Ricoeur, 1965; Rawls, 1972; Watte, 1974).

Thomas' distinction between disposition (*habitus*) and ability (*potentia*) does, however, does raise questions about the nature of self-structures as well as social structures. Are they to be conceived on analogy with a disposition that inclines a person in a particular direction, or with an ability that makes action possible but

leaves its direction open to choice? Generally, 'structure' seem to encompass both these notions. But then, it must be asked to what extent may dispositions and abilities reinforce or negate one another?

8.5.4 Vice, Weakness of Character

Somewhat contrary to many modern treatments of sin, Thomas begins his discussion in his *Summa Theologiae* (IaIIae 71) with an examination of vice, the opposite of virtue. The disposition to act well, both to seek what is good and to seek it in the right way, is a virtue or strength of character (IaIIae 46, 3). Vice, its contrary, is a weakness as a consequence of which a person is inclined towards evil in what he seeks, the action he does and the way the does it. Thomas quotes with approval Cicero's definition of vice as a habit or affection of the spirit bringing instability into the whole of life and distancing it from itself (*vitium animi est habitus aut affectio animi in tota vita inconstans, et a seipsa dissentiens*, quoted in IaIIae 71, 1 ad 3). Such moral weakness does not come about all at once, but results from repeated sinful actions. Nevertheless, a person is not bound to follow it and may even act contrary to it (IaIIae 77, 4).

Following Gregory the Great, Thomas lists seven leading vices (*vitia capitalia*), which not only give rise to other sins, but also lead and direct them (IaIIae 84, 3). These are vanity, envy, anger, avarice, apathy, gluttony and lust. When a person makes one of these his goal, he commits other sins in order to attain it; for instance, telling lies to attain a reputation out of vanity. Though, Thomas recognizes, that because people are so varied there is no telling existentially exactly how one sin will give rise to or proceed from another.

Pride (*superbia*), an explicit contempt for God resulting in the refusal to accept his command (IaIIae 84, 2), is not on the list of leading sins, but as the starting-point of all sin is a kind of all-embracing vice. Its relation to the self and self-love will be examined below (see 9.4.1 below).

A question discussed in medieval times was whether the sin of pride or avarice came first. Which is more basic, the inordinate desire to excel or the excessive love of possessing? This medieval question is akin to recent arguments between those advocating pride of race or capitalist greed as the root cause of South Africa's problems. In answering, Thomas draws a distinction in voluntary activity between the intention to pursue an end (*ordo intentionis*) and actually seeking it (*ordo executionis*). The intention someone has in mind in amassing wealth is to attain distinction and eminence. Since intentions, not the means of attaining them, come first, pride, the excessive will to excel, should be seen as the starting-point of sin (IaIIae 84, 2). Kohut, however, has shown that a further question may be raised: what prompts a person to want to be seen to excel and gain eminence in others' eyes?

8.5.5 A Parasitic and Perverse Dynamism

In describing sin, Thomas speaks about it as a 'disorder,' 'lack,' 'excess or 'defect.' Nevertheless, while it goes against reason, it does not result in a totally unintelligible chaos, where no distinctions could be made between various sins and their respective gravity weighed. Although the trail of sins will vary enormously from person to person and from situation to situation, they all show the corruption of an underlying order. Sins take their pattern from the normal human desires, abilities, activities and relations they misuse or pervert. The connections between them show a kind of perverse logic, a logic which is not intrinsic to them as such, but to the structures they undermine. Since evil is a privation, there cannot be anything that is completely evil and the source of all evil (*summum malum*). Following Aristotle (1126a12), Thomas says that were all good destroyed in something there would be no subject left to be evil (Ia 49, 3).

Thomas, however, does mention a kind of perverse dynamism operating within and among people, when he speaks of the law of the members. As we have seen (8,2 above), Thomas views law, not principally as legislation, but as a continuing

process of people with integrity using their good sense in the following, making, applying and amending of both customs and written laws. Nevertheless, this whole process can in part be perverted, so that in particular instances the whole dynamism of life leads people in wrong and harmful directions. Examples of this are unjust laws and what Paul speaks of as “another law in my members” (Rom 7: 23). Unjust laws are unreasonable decrees imposed by tyrants seeking, not the common good, but their own pleasure or gain. They are not genuine law, but a breakdown of it (IaIIae 92, 1).

The other law that Paul spoke of Thomas identifies with the hold that sensual impulses have over human beings. Our suffering this inflammability, which urges us to behave like animals, is an affliction deriving from our departure from eternal law (IaIIa 91, 6). The combination of unjust laws and sensual inflammability, together with the darkening of mind that results from sin, is the closest Thomas comes to speaking about what we would today call social sin.

8.6 Overlapping Paradigms

It is not easy to sum up Thomas’ view of society; one can give it a conservative or a progressive cast depending upon which elements are given prominence. From the conservative point of view, one can emphasize the organismic paradigm in his thought. In this view society is like a body with its own ordered dynamism linking the lives of its members. Sin is fundamentally a denial of love, which weakens both the individual and the body politic. Crucial links for maintaining the integrity of both are sufficient knowledge so people do not act in ignorance, the regulation of their desires and strivings, and the formation of good habits, all of which lead to sensible decisions that accord with law. A break in any of these links is likely to have lasting consequences both for the individual and other members of society. In this vein, any transgression of law through a person’s actions not being properly ordered brings affliction in its train. Each member of the social body, and particularly its leaders, is duty bound to uphold

the good of the whole by acting justly and relating to one another by charity. Peace is found, both for the individual and society as a whole, in the tranquillity of order. When emphasis is placed upon the order given in nature and society, a conservative view emerges.

But there are other elements in Thomas' thought which lend themselves to a more progressive view. Emphasis can be placed upon the way humans are invited to share actively in God's ordering of creation. That Thomas has this in view is evident from his treatment of the goal of human life. Humans do not simply act purposefully, as animals do, but they act on purpose; they objectify the goals they will strive for (IaIIae 1, 1sc; Ernst, 1954). Their actions can be spontaneous and original, and are not bound to follow a pre-determined pattern.

This allowance for human freedom and creativity is also evident in Thomas' treatment of law, which is addressed to the intellect rather than the will. It is not simply an injunction that one must obey, but a regulative guide that shows to the person who uses it sensibly what should be done or avoided. Interpreting and applying law well is a matter of practical wisdom (*prudentia*). Thomas recognizes too that, since laws are written to cover what is usually of benefit for all, there can be exceptions on occasion. He is against framing legislation to cover every possible instance, because it would become too complicated and cumbersome. Instead, those in authority have at times to depart from the letter of the law in order to uphold justice and the general good which the law is meant to bring about; equity (*επικεια*) is the ability to make this kind of discretionary judgment.

Depending upon which paradigm is emphasized, the social effects of sin take on a different hue. In the first view, predispositions to sin and the afflictions resulting from it derive ultimately from original sin. Through the sin of Adam humanity lost its state of original justice. It has been wounded in its nature bringing about weakness, ignorance, malice and concupiscence (IaIIae 85, 3); these

weaken the human ability to act with courage, practical wisdom, justice and moderation respectively. On this view, sin is primarily a falling away from an order that was once there. Overcoming sin, then, is seen as a matter of conserving and returning to the good that previously prevailed.

The second paradigm, however, shows better how predispositions to sin may be historically shaped. Corresponding to the variety of worthwhile goals that people may objectify for themselves, there are as many ways in which their goals may be defective or the means to attain them be disordered. Ultimately, whether a human goal or project is worthwhile or defective depends upon whether or not it embodies and promotes God's love amongst his people. For instance, there is no single social pattern for holding property that is right for all time and all places; various systems may be worked out and each of them can in practice become distorted and sinfully entrenched. Overcoming sin, in this progressive view, is then primarily a matter of devising a new social pattern that will overcome previous social imbalances and distortions.

The Growth and Distortion of the Self

“The heart is more devious than any other thing,
and is depraved, who can search its secrets?” (Jeremiah 17: 9)

Two traditions tell stories of human fault and failure: the biblical tradition has its fall stories, while Greek mythology has its stories of Oedipus, Narcissus and others. Each of these stories has been told and retold many times, and used as a basis for reflection on the self by systematic thinkers, as distinct from ordinary narrators. In looking at fault and failure, Thomas as a systematic thinker in the Christian tradition has drawn mainly from the biblical stories. Kohut, in elaborating his system of thought, has drawn his inspiration as a psychoanalyst from Greek mythology. Both have tried within their own professions to clarify and give system to the basic elements of their respective traditions.

In this chapter first a comparison is made, not so much between the original stories themselves, but of the elaborated reflections made on them by Thomas and Kohut. Although neither story can be subsumed into the other, a certain coincidence of horizons will become evident. Neither the Christian theology of sin can be reduced to psychopathology, nor vice versa; although coming from their own directions they do cross some common ground. Then, later in the chapter, some of Giddens' observations are introduced, which show how modern life heightens tensions around the self.

9.1 The Story of the Fall

The prologue of Genesis contains three intertwined fall stories — Adam and Eve showing the consequences of a revolt against God, which leads next to fratricide with Cain and Abel, and then extends to Babel with its socio-political consequences. These biblical stories do not explain historically how original sin came about, but introduce the sin-themes that the rest of the Bible explores and with the coming of Christ indicates a possible resolution. The notion of ‘original sin,’ however, was crystallized by Paul when he contrasted the old Adam in whom everyone has sinned with the new Adam, Jesus Christ, who brought justification and life to all humanity (Romans 5: 12-21).

The Genesis stories indicate how the human race has through original sin been abandoned to the defects of its nature — toil in extracting food from the soil, labour in childbirth, desire and domination between men and women, jealousy and fratricide, cultural divisions and political enmities, and finally death — which God would have saved the human race from if they had remained in paradise. The inherent limitations of human nature are experienced as penalties for sin. The New Testament takes the matter further, as it stresses that not only was the human race afflicted by the effects of sin, but has come to share in the sin itself. Each person requires redemption, not just protection and/or healing from the repercussions of Adam’s sin. Timothy McDermott sums up the theological issue: “It is the New Testament, therefore, which sets us the essential problem: that of a non-personal sin inherited from another. As sin it involves the notion of blameworthiness, yet not blameworthiness of the person” (1968: 183). Thomas Aquinas is one of the many theologians to have wrestled with this issue.

Without delving here into all the intricacies of Thomas’ theology of original sin, which has been extensively examined by others (see Lottin 1954, Watte 1974, Labourdette 1985), two issues are of importance: how each and every human being shares in original sin, and the characteristics of pride which caused Adam to sin.

9.1.1 The Transmission of Original Sin

In dealing with the question whether any sin can be incurred through someone's origin, Thomas explains:

Any individual can be considered in two ways: as a particular person or as part of a corporation (*collegium*); his actions pertain to him in both these capacities. Actions which he does freely on his own authority belong to him as a particular person; but as a member of a corporation actions can also belong to him, which he did not freely undertake himself, but were undertaken by the corporation as a whole, or a majority of its members, or by its leader alone. ... Such a corporation is counted as one man, in that the various men holding different offices in it are established (*constituti sunt*) as the various organs of one physical body ...

The whole human populace, in that it receives its human nature from its first parent, must therefore be considered as a single corporation, or rather as the unique body of one man. Each man of this populace — including Adam himself — can thus be considered either as a particular person or as an organ of the whole populace ...

When we consider a particular man as an individual person, he cannot be held guilty of any defect he inherits, since guilt must be incurred voluntarily. But if we consider this same man being due to his birth as a particular organ of the whole of humanity, ... then any defect he has inherited from the first parent has the character of guilt because of its voluntary source (the first parent's actual sin). Similarly we can say that the movement of the hand by which a murder is committed is not a guilty movement if you only think of the hand itself, since the hand was compelled to move by something else; but if you think of the hand as a part of the whole voluntarily-acting man, then the movement is a guilty one, because voluntary.

Just as murder is not blamed on the hand but on the whole man, so this defect is not called personal sin but a sin of human-kind as a whole (*totius naturae*). It only belongs to the person in so far as he is tainted by his kind (*natura*). Even though the different parts of a man — his will, his reason, his hand, and so on — are engaged when the sin is committed, there is only one sin because the source of sinfulness in their actions is one, namely, the will; so too original sin in human-kind as a whole is thought of as one sin due its having a single source. (QD de Malo, 4, 1; see also IaIIae 81, 1-5)

It has been worth quoting this text at some length as it illustrates well both the strong organismic metaphor underlying Thomas' thought and his insight into the interactive relation between the individual and the human community, or person and nature. He views the whole human race, not just at a particular point

in time but stretched over history to include all the living and the dead since Adam, as one organic body. It is difficult for someone shaped by even moderate individualism to grasp this view. But its strength derives from human nature being the generative power out of which individual persons arise. As O'Brien explains in his commentary on the *Summa Theologiae*:

Generation is an activity of nature. Thus the parents do not cause human nature but cause it to come to be, in this case, their child. Original sin is a sin of nature as such, besetting the nature wherever it is found and because it comes to be. Thus whatever functions to pass on human nature by that fact and only by that fact serves to pass on original sin. (1965: 10 fn n)

Without underplaying the biological basis of human generation, Thomas rejects the view that original sin is transmitted as an infection, or as a genetic defect or passes by way of semen to the child. Although a child may inherit defects (*poenae*) in these ways, it does not share through them in any blameworthiness (*culpa*) that would need redemption. None of these explanations take us to the roots of our voluntary being as persons. Instead, the personal sin of Adam taints the whole of human-kind which derives its nature from him, and since each individual derives his or her personal being from tainted human nature that becomes tainted through its origin. The movement in Thomas' thought is from person to human nature and then back to persons again due to their emergence from human nature. Though, to anticipate a little in more modern terminology one would say, that a personal decision structures human nature, and then this structured human nature in turn structures the possibilities of later personal decisions. The generative power of nature remains, but structure both provides scope and sets limits to its proclivity (see 11.6.2 below).

If original sin were only a 'tainting,' like acquiring a bad reputation from one's forebears, it would still not have the character of fault. However, in using the analogy of the limbs of a person who commits a murder, Thomas attempts to bring out how each person as a descendent of Adam is in some way involved in the execution of original sin. ('Original sin' refers not to what Adam supposedly

did many centuries ago, but to the sin transmitted to each individual at their origin.) McDermott offers a way forward:

The non-personal blame of original sin attaches to us only in so far as we are, by nature, involved in the execution of original sin. For we are ourselves voluntarily-acting creatures called to take responsibility for our own existence, called to be voluntarily what we are by nature; so that the tainting of our nature is also necessarily a tainting of the roots of our voluntary being. (1968: 185)

Although this explanation leaves many issues open, it does bring out that original sin goes deeper than people simply experiencing the effects of their predecessors' personal sins. One consequence of original sin, our being at fault at the roots of our voluntary being, is that we are much more susceptible to respond in a sinful way to others' sins; for instance, we readily return anger for anger, or easily slip into a bad example.

Can Thomas' explanation of original sin, which has here been outlined only in the briefest terms, be transposed from its organismic root-metaphor into an artistic one? His speaking of the whole human population having been established (*constituti sunt*) as a corporation provides an opening. By no stretch of the imagination today could anyone speak of all human kind as a single corporation, in which each person functions as an organ or member within the whole. Not only do conflicts occur between nations, classes, and political rivals, but in view of the diversity of peoples it is difficult to envisage what a truly united human family would look like. There is no normative plan at hand as there is for the human body.

It is possible, however, to think of uniting humanity as a task still to be accomplished; a task that involves striving and forbearance, discovery and creativity; one that will embrace difference but yet provide unity. Furthermore, this unity must result from the acceptance of the varied contributions of all, even those whom somebody or a group finds extremely different and alien from themselves. The requisite unity of humanity in one community cannot be designed by

a lone few, still less can it be imposed by a clique upon all. Even envisaging, let alone bringing about such a human community, is a task that human beings cannot accomplish on their own. The design and the inspiration for it can ultimately come from God alone through the mission of the Word and Spirit.

The story of the tower of Babel depicts what happens when humans go ahead on their own project to the exclusion of God. They became locked into a situation of confusion, conflict and disunity which by themselves they were powerless to overcome. Their attempt to build together relying upon themselves alone, when God's design and inspiration were excluded, rendered their failure culpable. All involved in the project were through their participation blameworthy.

Now, if we transpose our perspective, instead of looking back to an already established corporate unity based upon descent from Adam, we can look forward to the future unity which each person as a member of the human race is called to accede to and strive for. But, left to ourselves, we lack both the design and inspiration that would bring this future unity about. In this perspective, original sin may be viewed as due to our being born and caught up (or as Heidegger says 'thrown') into a historical project that has excluded the Word and Spirit that could bring it to completion. This affects each one personally as our living out a human life presupposes and draws upon history.

In this vein, McDermott speaks of human history as a drama, but a drama to which God alone could give a unified sense through sending his Son.

For there is only one person capable not only of playing a rôle in the drama of human history, but also being its author. ... The authorship of human history, so to speak, was made incarnate in history when Jesus Christ was born. This was to be the first step in helping the disparate races, nations and cultures of men to unite in the family of mankind, to become one perfect Adam. (1968: 238)

When, however, Christ was rejected and killed, this step was prevented. History, which still continues in all human strivings and efforts, was now abandoned to

its own innate defectiveness. At the point where it might have come together, it falls apart. It became through Christ's rejection like a drama with a defective plot. So, no matter how well individuals personally play their rôles within the drama, their rôles are doomed because the drama is defective. The failure lies in the plot, not in the performance of the individual actors. Similarly, original sin is not a personal sin committed by those born and socialized into human history, but belongs to them as members of a history that is not only problematic, but has rejected the one who could resolve its problems. Perhaps, turning to the future, it would be better to say the one who would enable people to discover the design together and inspire them to implement it.

Besides looking at God's project for humanity as a whole, some further light may be shed on original sin by looking with Thomas' help at the particular type of sin committed by Adam and its consequence.

9.1.2 **Pride as the Archetypal Sin**

The Genesis story depicts the fall of Adam and Eve as being due to pride, to their reaching for the power to decide for themselves what is good and what is evil and of acting accordingly; their claim to moral independence is a refusal to recognize their status as created beings. This view is echoed by both Augustine and Thomas, though in somewhat different ways. The former speaks of pride as the vice of "the perverse soul that seeks its own authority in defiance of the authority of the Almighty" (*City of God*, xii, 8). "Pride is a perverse reaching upwards, by desertion of him [God] to whom the soul should cling as its one source, to make itself as it were its own source and fount of being" (*City of God*, xiv, 13). Augustine clearly makes pride the central focus of all opposition to the City of God. "No vice is more vehemently opposed by divine law, no vice gives greater right of control to that proudest of all spirits, the devil, who mediates our way to the depths and bars our way to the heights" (*The Trinity*, iv, 20).

Although Thomas quotes Augustine on pride, his approach is less dramatic and more nuanced. He speaks of pride as seeking to get above oneself (*aliquis per voluntatem tendit supra id quod est*). It lacks that reasonableness that sets one's will on what is appropriate for oneself (*ratio recta ut voluntas uniuscuiusque feratur in id quod est proportionatum sibi*, IIaIIae 162, 1). Thomas recognizes that pride, as an inordinate seeking for one's own excellence, may be a special sin. On a more general level, however, it can give rise to all other kinds of sins. But, in fact, not every sin arises from pride, as they may also be due to ignorance and weakness (IIaIIae 162, 2).

Thomas clarifies the relation between self-love and pride, which are sometimes equated. He says that love of one's own good can correctly be called pride, if the words "one's own" are taken in the exclusive sense of deriving from oneself, rather than as coming from a source that is higher than oneself. What properly speaking pertains to pride is that a person does not recognize that his own good is derived from another (*quod proprie ad superbiam pertinet, ut scilicet bonum suum ab alio non recognoscat*, QD de Malo 8, 2 ad 15).

Another line of thought that Thomas could have explored, but did not, derives from his teaching about self-knowledge (see 7.2). He says that no human mind can know itself directly (*per essentiam*), but comes to self-knowledge through apprehension of other things (see QD de Veritate 10, 8). Expressed in terms of human relations, this means that no one gains a true knowledge of self without paying attention to others, to circumstances, and to the effects of one's speech and actions. You find yourself — your particular abilities and qualities — through the mirror that others, as long as they are not too cracked or bent themselves, place before you. The person who is full of pride, however, knows it all without anyone showing him or her anything as his or her own self is placed at the centre of the world as the source of all goodness.

Following Gregory the Great, Thomas distinguishes four kinds of pride, namely,

when someone projects himself as having (*jactat se habere*) something which he doesn't have; when someone reckons that the excellence she has either comes from herself instead of from God or is due to her own merits rather than a gift from above; and when someone despising others wants only himself to be noticed (IIaIIae 162, 4).

Unlike many other sins, which are committed out of weakness, ignorance or simply from a person's turning towards (*conversio*) some lesser good, pride arises from a person turning away (*adversio*) from God precisely because he does not want to submit to God and his ordering of things. In this respect it is the most serious sin of all (IIaIIae 162, 6). Furthermore, unlike other sins which issue in evil deeds, pride also corrupts good deeds (IIaIIae 162, 5 ad 3).

In his efforts to classify human strengths and weaknesses, Thomas distinguishes vanity, conceit or empty show (*inanis gloria*) from the pride which causes it. While pride seeks excellence without respecting the order of things, vanity seeks to make this excellence apparent to others (*inanis gloria appetit excellentiae manifestationem*, IIaIIae 162, 8 ad 2).

The sin of Adam, Thomas is quite clear, in which he sought some gift higher than was meant for him, was one of pride. Put more specifically, Adam sought to attain the image of God in becoming able through his own power to lay down for himself what actions would be good and what evil (*per virtutem propriae naturae determinaret sibi quid esset bonum et quid malum ad agendum*, IIaIIae 163, 2). Adam also sought to know ahead of time whether his future would be one of good or evil. Furthermore, he also sought to exercise godlike power in attaining final beatitude for himself through his own power.

Thomas does not give the sin of pride such a central place as Augustine. Other sins, such as murder, theft, adultery or greed have their own characteristics which are different from the specific sin of pride, wanting to be above oneself.

Thomas thus classifies pride as instance of a lack of moderation. Nevertheless, he admits that when pride is considered more generally it may be regarded — to use Gregory the Great's terms — as the mother and queen of all vices. It is both a disposition from which all manner of sin may arise and a tendency to which they all may aspire (IIaIIae 162, 8). In this sense, we are all liable to reproduce Adam's sin.

9.1.3 The Location of Original Sin

Although the effects of original sin are manifold, it is not easy to pinpoint exactly what it is or where precisely to locate it. Its effects might be seen in any act of vice, but it is especially evident in the disordering of the desires (*concupiscentia*) that comes about as a consequence of the lack of original justice (IaIIae 82, 3). Pride is the paramount instance of this; it is, not just a failure out of weakness to submit to God's ordering of life, but ultimately a refusal to accept his ordering altogether. These, however, are instances of actions flowing from being (*agere sequitur esse*). Where, however, is this primordial break in being to be located? Thomas says that original sin principally resides in the essence of the soul (*anima secundum essentiam est primum subjectum originalis peccati*, IaIIae 83, 2). Only secondarily does it lie in the powers of the soul, a person's abilities, of which the leading ones are understanding and free will.

The term essence of the soul (*essentia animae*), which Thomas took over from Philip the Chancellor, is a difficult one. ('Essence' is here not being used in the normal sense of what defines a thing as being of a specific kind; it does not simply indicate 'humanness.') But some light is thrown on what Thomas means when he also locates grace primarily in the essence of the soul. Secondarily grace works in human understanding to bring about faith and in the will to effect charity. But even prior to that, grace alters who we are; through our being graced in the essence of the soul we are regenerated as people of God. We thus come to share the life of God to some degree through a kind of rebirth or recreation

taking place in the essence of the soul (*per naturam animae participat, secundum quandam similitudinem, naturam divinam, per quandam regenerationem sive recreationem*, IaIIae 110, 4). Grace, as Ernst explains, “qualifies the whole being of man, as a kind of second nature, which, however, always remains God’s gift and never becomes so much man’s possession that he can dispose of it as he wills, since it is prior even to human freedom” (1974: 53).

In saying that original sin resides principally in the essence of the soul, Thomas is pointing to an existential lack at the core of a person that is the opposite of grace. Prior to any action on our part, we are lacking through our not sharing in the life of God that we were created for. This failure to share both goes to and comes from the core of our personal being. The point at which that sharing should take place is defective through the individual soul drawing its characteristics from the defective human community (*ut forma carni*) that brought it into being. Even though nothing intrinsic to the soul is lacking, nevertheless at its core its receptivity to grace is attenuated (*Et quamvis ab anima nihil essentialium auferatur, impeditur tamen ordo ipsius essentiae animae per modum cuiusdam elongationis*, QD de Veritate 27 6 ad 2).

Locating original sin in the essence of the soul raises the problem whether God is responsible for it as the human soul is created by God alone. Thomas replies:

Since creation involves the derivation of the soul from God alone, it cannot be said that the soul through its creation becomes befouled. Yet infusion of the soul entails a double relationship: to God who infuses it and to the flesh in which it is infused. For this reason, it cannot be said that the soul is stained through being infused by God, but only through its dependence upon the body in which it is infused (*sed solum habito respectu ad corpus cui infunditur*, IaIIae 83, 1 ad 4).

This passage should not be taken in a Manichean fashion to mean that the soul is good and the body evil. That interpretation is ruled out by Thomas speaking of original sin, not as a bodily defect, but residing in the essence of the soul. Rather, we might say, what the human community in fact supplies for the emerging self

never fully measures up to the self God is calling into being. In fact, deficiencies in that community may even obscure that call or blunt any response to it. The individual cannot be blamed for this, as he or she did not bring it about.

Evidence of this may be seen when the self is considered as a story (see 7. 5 above). No one's story begins with themselves; each person finds him- or herself born into, carried along by and having to take up an already ongoing story. This 'finding' is a matter both of discovering-cum-responding to the whole flux of events and through that shaping one's own self. To begin with one has to take over more or less as a package deal the web of meanings that culture offers and the situated opportunities society provides. But, besides offering meaning, one's culture is liable to land one in mistakes, misunderstandings and lies. Similarly, any given society will not only open up but also deny resources for life; it will offer yet also close off opportunities for development. Consequently, however ingenious a person may be in working out his or her story, it can never quite come together as a whole because it is part of a larger story that is defective.

Perhaps the closest that one comes psychologically to an experience of recognizing original sin as such is in the transformational object relationship (see 7.4 above). At some moments one experiences the lack of full integrity at the heart of the self and so searches for transformation, for wholeness. This lack, which one tries — but never fully manages — to overcome by reexperiencing the moment of one's own creation, gives a hint of original sin.

9.1.4 Social Sin, a Derivative of Original Sin

The picture that Thomas sketches of original sin is not one of total depravity, in which a self is completely incapable of any good, as some within the Reformed tradition have contended. Nevertheless, the self in its being is faulted, so no action of its own can overcome that fault; whatever good it may do on its own initiative will not bring about its own redemption or healing. On the contrary, if

it is regenerated in its being, then actions without fault can follow. Although not personally blameworthy for this lack of the integrity, it must within the ambit of grace accept responsibility for its state. With the new found ability and encouragement that are brought about by grace, which is usually mediated through supportive human relationships and sometimes through special ministries, the self can begin to take responsibility to overcome its lack of integrity and inherent sinful tendencies.

Although often equated, guilt or blameworthiness differ from responsibility. The former looks to the past, to pinning liability on the person who brought a fault about. Responsibility, on the other hand, looks to the future, to taking on the burdens of the past and striving to overcome them. No one can be blamed for what the past has made or messed up in himself, but at some point he is called to accept responsibility for traits and actions that result from past events over which he had no control. Herbert Fingarette explains this in the context of psychoanalysis, but his explanation applies to life in general.

... moral man must *accept* responsibility for what he is at some point in his life and go on from there. He must face himself as he *is*, in toto; and as an adult, being now able in some measure to control what happens, he must endeavor so to control things that he is, insofar as possible, guiltless in the future. (1963: 164)

Fingarette admits that if we always look to the past, then this seems an unfair imposition. "It is to the *future*, however, that we must look for the justification of this profound moral demand. It is not that we *were* children and thus nonresponsible but rather that we are *aiming to become* mature persons" (1963: 164). Let me just add, in case this view appears too Pelagian, that I would consider the acceptance of responsibility as itself a prime moment of grace.

This overview of original sin rules out any depiction of the self as entirely fault-free and as simply an innocent victim of pernicious social structures external to it. On that view, all that would be necessary for improving the world would be to bring about better social arrangements; no working on the self would be required.

It is not as though perfect selves would be uncovered if oppressive structures were taken away. Instead, right from our origin and prior to any exercise of freedom, our receptivity to the design and inspiration of God is adversely affected; sin has entered into who we are. Consequently, we are each called — within the ambit of grace — to take responsibility for ourselves as well as our society.

Although social sin, or the sin of the world, would not make sense without a doctrine of original sin, they cannot be simply identified. Original sin, as a doctrine, makes it clear that without redemption, human life and history will not work out successfully. Speaking about social sin comes from a realization that sin enters into the social structures which the modern world relies upon. The stories of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, and particularly of Babel, are still re-enacted in the ways people structure modern societies.

9.2 The Story of Narcissus

The story from Greek mythology of Oedipus, who on the journey back to the city from which he had been rejected as a baby came to kill a man and marry his widow, whom he eventually found out to be his own father and mother, is the centrepiece of Sigmund Freud's psychology. Although Freud mentions the myth of Narcissus a few times, he does not develop its implications to any great extent. Heinz Kohut, although he hardly mentions the original story of Narcissus, nevertheless utilizes it as the underlying motif for much of his own original work. Although recounted with many variations, the tale basically runs:

A handsome young man, Narcissus was much loved by the nymphs, including Echo, who was rejected by him. The Gods vowed to punish him for his callousness by causing him to fall in love with his own image as reflected in a mountain pool. However, the mirror image fragmented each time that Narcissus reached out to embrace it, causing him to pine away in melancholy, and ultimately to die. In his place, the nymphs found a flowering plant growing where once his body had been. (Morrison, 1986: 1).

Instead of merely taking this as a warning tale that one should not become infatuated with oneself, Kohut plots out a path for the healthy development of self-esteem. His investigations into narcissism lead eventually to his break with Freud's oedipal fixations. However, it should also be mentioned that in one of his final papers, Kohut points out that Oedipus was after all a rejected child, and suggests instead that the story of Odysseus offers "a fitting symbol of ... joyful awareness of the human self ... of the fact that healthy man experiences, and with the deepest joy, the next generation as an extension of his own self" (SS IV, 563).

9.2.1 Narcissism

Narcissism has a bad name; both classical psychology and common culture look upon it as something pathological in adults, as a defective psychological condition that should have been outgrown. Webster's *Dictionary* speaks of it as "a morbid condition characterized by excessive admiration of oneself, one's person, abilities, etc." Kohut, however, takes a different approach, one that in this respect puts classical psychoanalytic theory and the highly individualistic view of Western man (an especially male view) in question. In his view, narcissism should remain but evolve throughout a person's life. Only when it fails to develop an adult form, or regresses to an infantile or archaic form, is it pathological.

Understandably, the way narcissism is characterized depends upon how it is evaluated. But speaking of it as "an intensification of the self" is a convenient starting point. This allows us to see how narcissism ranges from the morbid self-preoccupation, mentioned above, to a healthy sense of self-esteem. Also it may be a turning in to self to the exclusion and detriment of others. Or it may be the heightened sense of self-worth that comes from acceptance by and involvement with others. On this last point, Kohut stresses that mature narcissism is not the antithesis of object love, but its accompaniment.

I do not believe in the Freudian U-tube theory that if narcissism goes up then object love goes down and if object loves goes up narcissism goes down. A passionate lover feels high in his self-esteem because the intense emotion brings together the sense of who and what he is. (SPHU: 230)

Kohut's use of the personal pronoun reveals the intensity, or shall we say the narcissistic involvement, with which he invests this and the following statement.

I have no hesitation in claiming that there is no mature love in which the love object is not also a self-object. Or, to put this depth-psychological formulation into a psychosocial context: there is no love relationship without mutual (self-esteem enhancing) mirroring and idealization. (RESS: 122 n12)

He repeatedly states: "The formulation that narcissism is replaced by object love — that narcissism is archaic and object love mature — is in error" (HDAC: 185; also SS I: 427; SS II: 764ff; SS III: 321). While both object love and narcissism have their own lines of development, the two, nevertheless, do enhance each other. Once it is recognized that narcissism normally develops during the course of life, yet also in some cases fails to develop or regresses, three forms of narcissism can be distinguished. In each case there is an intensification of the self.

9.2.2 Primary Narcissism

This state is found in the infant prior to the differentiation of self from others. At this stage "the baby originally experiences the mother and her ministrations, not as a you and its actions, but within a view of the world in which the I-you differentiation has not yet been established" (SS II: 430). It is difficult to describe or objectify this state, because it is itself prior to all objectification. But we might say that the mother's empathic support provides the baby with a diffuse and undifferentiated sense of wellbeing. At this stage, no real distinction can be made between primary narcissism and primary empathy. Likewise, by conjecture the psychological state of the infant, not its social relations, might be described not so much as a bonding of two units, but as a unity prior to division. How this comes

over to the child is explained by Kohler:

The mother's ability to soothe her child by providing successful regulation of tension is not just gradually internalized by the child *from without*, but begins by being perceived, originally, as residing *within*, as a part of the self. Child and mother, this is, are perceived by the child as merged into one selfobject unit. (1980: 95f, italics added)

This state, while appropriate and necessary at the time, cannot remain unchanged. Through maturational processes, especially that of optimal frustration (see 7.3.3 above), the self comes to be differentiated from others and its own structure built up. That eventually brings about in the adult a new form of narcissism.

9.2.3 Mature Narcissism

In an adult mature narcissism is exemplified in the sense of self-worth and self-esteem that stems from the acceptance, support and admiration received from others. This is akin to the diffuse sense of wellbeing experienced by the well cared for baby. But its maturity is evident in adults being sufficiently assured of their self-worth that they are not preoccupied by it; there is no incessant craving for others' support.

In reply to a colleague, who questioned his stressing the continuing importance of self-selfobject relationships, Kohut makes it evident that he does not regard isolated self-sufficiency as an ideal.

Throughout his life a person will experience himself as a cohesive harmonious firm unit in time and space, connected with his past and pointing meaningfully into a creative-productive future, only as long as, at each stage of his life, he experiences certain representatives of his human surroundings as joyfully responding to him, as available to him as sources of idealized strength and calmness, as being silently present but in essence like him, and, at any rate, able to grasp his inner life more or less accurately so that their responses are attuned to his needs and allow him to grasp their inner life when his is in need of such sustenance. (HDAC: 52)

Whether such supportive self-selfobject relationships are termed mature narcissism or empathy is mainly a matter of terminology. In this instance speaking of 'narcissism' stresses more the condition of the person concerned, while 'empathy' brings out more the qualities of the relationship.

Seen in this light, the maturing of narcissism is found in empathy, and the positive qualities that derive from empathy (see 9.4.5 below). Not much needs to be said about mature narcissism, as persons with sufficient self-esteem are not troubled about themselves; most of the time they can be self-forgetful in the sense of being absorbed in outward pursuits. In fact, to be preoccupied with themselves, even with their mature narcissism, would be a contradiction in terms.

9.2.4 Archaic Narcissism

Sometimes this term is used to denote the primary narcissism of the infant; it is infantile, but that is normal for infants. But usually archaic narcissism refers to those areas in the self of the adult, which have failed to develop fully or where regression has taken place. They have split off from the normal line of self development, and not contributed to the building up of a cohesive and resilient self structure. They are 'archaic' because of their tendency to revert to a stage prior to the clear differentiation of self from others. There is little reliance upon mature self-selfobject relationships, but instead a hankering after the kinds of all encompassing support that are suitably provided for infants.

Archaic narcissism may be found in two basic configurations, corresponding to the two poles of the self. From the pole of ambitions the self, or some detached fragment of it, will arise the claim "I am perfect," so all others are expected to accept and sustain me as such. From the pole of ideals will come the claim "You [an idealized selfobject] are perfect, but I am part of you" so nothing must impugn me as part of this perfection (ANSE: 27). Any questioning, or even

ignoring, of this presumed perfection is taken as an attack on the self. These two typifications are admittedly simplistic; every living instance is far more complex. But they do show the effects of not providing a child with sufficient empathic support and allowing for structure building through optimal frustration.

Even though Kohut does not advocate the elimination of all narcissism, but its transformation, most of his references to narcissistic conditions and disorders, to narcissistic injury and rage, are referring to one or other aspect of archaic or pathological narcissism. This is perhaps understandable, because when narcissism develops normally, it or its derivatives are usually called by other names (see 13.4 below).

It is not necessary in this study to examine all the disturbances of the self. The details of self pathology, which are evident in the psychoses, in the borderline states, as well as in the analyzable disturbances of the narcissistic personality disorders and the narcissistic behaviour disorders, need not detain us long here. In any case, the more extreme a disturbance in the self the less likely it is to have social repercussions. In the case of psychoses, where often organic factors have prevented the shaping of a cohesive nuclear self, patients are liable to be utterly disorganized, impulsive and grossly disordered in their thinking. Unless looked upon as purveyors of oracles, their social impact will be minimal. The same generally holds true for the self in a borderline state, where a central hollowness is covered by "a well-developed peripheral layer of defensive structures" (HDAC: 8). Though the cold, unswerving strength, derived in a borderline case from their psychotic nuclear self (see SS III: 152), may especially in ill organized situations induce people to take them as leaders (see SS II: 640 and SS III: 110). But, because of their social consequences, attention must be given to the more general phenomena of narcissistic injury and its repercussions in depression and rage.

What narcissistic injuries entail is shown by a historical example. It was claimed in one of Emil Ludwig's historical novels that Emperor Wilhelm II, due to his being born with a withered arm, was always ready to take offense. His defective limb remained a sensitive sore throughout his life. This gave him the character of someone likely to lash out at those who crossed him, and eventually contributed to the outbreak of World War I. But, Kohut points out: "Not so! said Freud. It was not the birth injury in itself that resulted in Emperor Wilhelm's sensitivity to narcissistic slights, but the rejection by his proud mother, who could not tolerate an imperfect child" (II: 629). She did not provide the confirming and approving 'mirroring' responses that would have enabled her young child to accept his bodily defect as part of himself as a cohesive whole. Instead a fragment of the self (concerned with his body-self) split off, and never reached maturity. Its archaic grandiosity and exhibitionism were never curbed, so it remained out of touch with reality. On occasion when some setback or slight was met, this fragment of the self asserted itself, bursting out in a uncontrollable rage that was far in excess of the assertiveness required to deal with the actual issue.

This example, which may or may not be historically accurate, does illustrate well the repercussions of narcissistic injury. It shows how "our ubiquitous sensitivity about bodily defects and shortcomings" (II: 630) is not solely due to the physical injury. Much more damage to both self and society is brought about by others' failure to confirm that one is a worthwhile self despite physical injury.

Narcissistic injury may be inflicted, not only when someone is unacceptable because of bodily defects or injury, but when someone is regarded as one of the wrong sex or race. Kohut makes it clear that in no way are sexual or racial inferiority biological, but are due to the lack of selfobject support at a crucial stage in a child's life.

... the girl's rejection of her femininity, her feeling of being castrated and inferior, and her intense wish for a penis arise not because the male sex organs are

psychobiologically more desirable than the females ones, but because the little girl's selfobjects failed to respond to her with appropriate mirroring, or that no alter ego gave her support during the childhood years when a proud feminine self should have established itself. (HDAC: 21; see SS II: 791)

A similar failure in psychological support can result in the little boy experiencing sexual anxieties. Summing up one case, the analysis of Mr Z, Kohut shows that behind this little boy's manifest horror at the sight of female genitals lay "a deeper and even more dreadful experience — the experience of a faceless mother, ... whose face did not light up at the sight of her child" (HDAC, 21; the full case is reported in SS IV: 395-446, see especially 432). In short, feelings of sexual shame and inferiority, obsessions about sex, or experiencing sex as an isolated drive are not psycho-biological bedrock. They arise in a self that lacks coherence due to its not receiving empathic responses from its selfobjects. Only passing mention is made of racism in Kohut's writings, but treating people as inferior on account of their race is another instance of the absence of a sufficiently responsive selfobject milieu to sustain human life.

In adult life people will respond very differently to slights or rejection on account of their sex, race, nationality, religion, profession or politics. Those who have gained in early life a firm psychic structure in the self will be able to disarm, or pass over with a sense of humour, the barbs consciously or unconsciously directed against them. In these instances, the vicissitudes of life only cause secondary disturbances of the self. "A strong self allows us to tolerate even wide swings of self-esteem in response to victory or defeat, success or failure" (SS III: 363).

Whereas the self that lacks strength, cohesion and harmony, quickly feels the pain of embarrassment or shame, and so considers him or herself inferior; their rightful pride in themselves is easily hurt (see SS I: 428). Here the vicissitudes of life are likely to bring about a temporary breakup, enfeeblement or distortion of the self. The symptoms of such temporary disorders may focus on the self, for example, a hypersensitivity to slights, hypochondria, depression, and a lack of

zest (narcissistic personality disorders). Or their symptoms may appear in perverse, delinquent or addictive actions directed towards another (narcissistic behavior disorders) (see RESS: 192; SS III: 365f).

It should be added, that although it is possible to speak about narcissistic injury and vulnerability in generic terms, each person's injury is unique. Failures in empathy occur in various ways and at varying stages of development; they may touch diverse areas of the self; and so each person's vulnerability differs. Also the self may develop compensatory structures, where in the face of a continued absence of empathic response to one pole of the self, it builds up structure around the other pole (see 7.3.8 above). All of this has to be examined in detail when dealing with each individual during analysis. Some injuries can be healed, or at least sufficient compensatory structures developed, while others are too deep seated.

Freud gave an example of a deep seated narcissistic injury when he stated that confronted with anti-Semitism his understanding stopped and he could only hate. He was unable to explore either the mind of the anti-Semite or his own reaction to such rejection (SS III: 259f). Even small slights about someone's work or activities can provoke a relentless rage in vulnerable individuals.

In the social field (including psychoanalysis), an often quite narrowly circumscribed narcissistic injury turns a former friend into a malicious injury who spends all his intellectual and emotional energies carrying out a vendetta against a group or profession, much as he may rationalize his behavior and justify his purposes by adducing other motivations. (SS III: 105)

Society reaches a danger point when a high proportion of its members, or those in positions of power and influence, are narcissistically vulnerable.

9.2.6 Narcissistic Rage

One consequence of an injury to a self that is fragmented or lacking cohesion,

one that is vulnerable to narcissistic injury, is an outbreak of rage. If someone is crossed, slighted, shamed or overlooked, their sense of self esteem is affected. This will not matter much to someone with a firm self structure; it will be felt as a fleeting annoyance. But where the self is vulnerable it can lead to narcissistic rage, to "the furor of the catatonic and the grudges of the paranoiac" (SS II: 636).

In its typical forms there is utter disregard for reasonable limitations and a boundless wish to redress an injury and obtain revenge. The irrationality of the vengeful attitude becomes even more frightening in view of the fact that — in narcissistic personalities as in the paranoiac — the reasoning capacity, while totally under the domination and in the service of the overriding emotion, is often not only intact but even sharpened. (SS II: 640)

What is the psychological origin of such outbursts of uncontrollable rage? Why does a man suddenly take up a rifle and shoot whoever he can fix in its sights, or a woman try to claw someone's eyes out? In dealing with these questions, Kohut does not regard such outbursts as the result of a failure to tame one's innate quasi-biological aggressive drive; as though each person had a head of anger within, that they had to let out gradually in a socially approved fashion otherwise it would burst out destructively. Self psychology offers a different picture.

Closely akin to, or a variant of, narcissistic rage is a child's shame and outrage at suddenly experiencing a fall or injury.

The child gives voice not only to his physical pain and fear, but also to his wounded narcissism. "How can it be? How can it happen?" his outraged cries seem to ask. And it is instructive to observe how he may veer back and forth between enraged protests at the imperfection of his grandiose self and angry reproaches against the omnipotent selfobject for having permitted the insult. (SS II: 642f)

The archaic selfobject, being regarded as omnipotent, is expected to have prevented or at least to dispel the child's discomfort. If it does not, the child takes it to be sadistic as "the consequences of its actions and omissions are always viewed by the child as having been brought about intentionally" (SS II: 643n10). This way of perceiving reality is understandable in children, but its persistence or recur-

rence in adults is archaic.

In this archaic view no distinction is made between self and reality outside it. Other persons are not recognized as independent centres of initiative with their own purposes, outlook and feelings, but rather as extensions of the self over which one is to have absolute control. One thus expects to exercise control over others in a way that is similar to one's control over one's own mind and body (ANSE: 33). There is an "uncompromising insistence on the perfection of the idealized selfobject and on the limitlessness of the power and knowledge of a grandiose self" (SS II: 643); nothing must upset this view of the self. But whenever others do not conform exactly and so fail to uphold one's idealized selfobject, then one's self esteem, even the cohesion of the self is threatened. This sparks an intense rage in the injured self, which "can never find rest because it can never wipe out the evidence that has contradicted its conviction that it is unique and perfect" (SS II: 644). This is unlike mature aggression, which is under control and can rest when the enemy who blocks the way to a cherished goal is defeated. Whereas

the enemy who calls forth the archaic rage of the narcissistically vulnerable, however, is seen by him not as an autonomous source of impulses, but as a *flaw in a narcissistically perceived reality*. The enemy is a recalcitrant part of an expanded self over which the narcissistically vulnerable person had expected to exercise full control. The mere fact, in other words, that the other person is independent or different is experienced as offensive by those with intense narcissistic needs. (SS II: 644)

Rage begins by welling up in sporadic outbursts, but if the narcissistic injury provoking these outbursts is not attended to, a chronic state results. Here a person's thought processes, their conscious and preconscious aims and goals, become increasingly subservient to an all pervasive rage. The ability to assess realistically what is taking place and to recognize one's own limitations and failures gets lost. Instead all setbacks and weaknesses in oneself are attributed to the wickedness and cunning ingenuity of one's opponent. This brings about

the gradual establishment of *chronic narcissistic rage*, one of the most pernicious afflictions of the human psyche — either in its still endogenous and preliminary form as grudge and spite, or, externalized and acted out in disconnected vengeful acts or in a cunningly plotted vendetta. (SS II: 657)

People's interactions within a closed group, especially one facing a common external enemy, whether real or supposed, can readily lead to its members sharing a state of chronic narcissistic rage.

Is there any way out of this? Since "narcissistic rage enslaves the ego and allows it to function only as its tool and rationalizer" (SS II: 646), it cannot as such be tamed. It can only be transformed by the acquisition of a new sense of self, together with a new pattern of values; that is, by the self overcoming its archaic narcissism in favour of a more mature narcissism.

The analysand's archaic exhibitionism and grandiosity must be gradually transformed into aim-inhibited self-esteem and realistic ambitions; and his desire to merge into an archaic omnipotent selfobject has to be replaced by ... meaningful ideals and by his devotion to them. Concomitantly with these changes narcissistic rage will gradually subside ... (SS II: 647)

It is difficult enough to effect this transformation in a clinical setting, but the problem is daunting when large sections of the population are liable to be convulsed in rage at any slight provocation. Nevertheless, not all narcissism or self-regard is deleterious, with effort it can grow

into realistic self-esteem and into pleasure with ourselves, ... into the socially useful, adaptive, and joyful capacity to be enthusiastic and to admire the great after whose lives, deeds, and personalities we can permit ourselves to model our own. (SS II: 620)

Some account must now be given of the positive human qualities that are the fruit of mature narcissism.

9.3 The Maturation of Narcissism

Not only does Kohut show the disorders that result from pathological archaic

narcissism, he also traces out some of the directions in which narcissism can unfold. Narcissism is not outgrown, but transformed through psychological growth or maturation. Some of the signs of psychological health that result from its maturation are:

(1) the development ...[of] realistic self-esteem; the ability to be guided and sustained by realizable ideals; and the achievement of such “wholesome transformations” as humor, creativity, empathy and wisdom; (2) the self’s progressing toward a mature attitude in relation to its selfobjects, that is, toward the acquisition of the ability to seek and find realistically available other selves who will sustain it by functioning as mirrors and ideals. (SS IV: 500; see also SS I: 445ff)

When an analysand gains these attributes, even to a modest extent, a therapeutic success has been won. These attributes, likewise, go towards forming a healthy society (see 13. 4 below). If the organization of a society, its culture, or the activities of its members, prevents their emergence and continual regeneration, then that society begins or has already begun to break up. Each of the above mentioned “wholesome transformations” contribute to the health of society, whilst their lack weakens it.

9.4 Two Traditions of Stories

Although each tradition, that of the Fall stories and those from Greek mythology used by psychoanalysis, has its own integrity, certain reference points are common to them both. This is brought out by both Thomas and Kohut stressing the importance of accepting reality and especially one’s own limitations as they really are. Both underscore how crucial others are in human life and development. Kohut brings out how quality care — not just material support — is required not only initially but throughout life for a person to retain a cohesive self. Although Thomas says little about human relations, he focuses on the grace that they mediate. Without that there is no healing and wholeness in human life and affairs.

9.4.1 Pride and Narcissism

Kohut's discussion of narcissism has many parallels in the more traditional discussion of pride (*superbia*); similar ambiguities are apparent in both terms. He (see 9.2 above) distinguished between archaic narcissism and a mature sense of self-esteem. Thomas similarly speaks of pride as being opposed on the one hand to humility (*humilitas*) and on the other to enterprise (*magnanimitas*, IIaIIae 162, 1 ad 3; Aristotle's μεγαλοψυχία). Likewise in modern English, it is important to distinguish between a person who despises others out of pride and someone who takes pride in his work or her appearance by taking due care of it.

Humility — strictly speaking — is found in the underlying reverence by which a person submits to God in his actions (*reverentiam qua homo Deo subijcitur*, IIaIIae 161, 3). But, while it is always salutary to admire in other the good qualities we lack, humility does not require us to set a lower value on what we have from God in comparison with others. In contrast to earlier writers, especially Benedict, Gregory the Great, and Bernard, Thomas does not agree that humility is the greatest virtue of all. It is not a strength issuing in action, but is a disposition (*interius in anima*, IIaIIae 161, 3 ad 3) enabling a person to bring all concerns of life into proper order. This again has similarities with Kohut speaking of humour, empathy and wisdom as the fruits of a mature narcissism.

While Thomas relates humility to moderation, he relates enterprise — the seeking to accomplish deeds worthy of recognition (*facere ea quae sunt honore digna*, IIaIIae 129, 1 ad 3) — to courage. But desire for recognition can be excessive, leading to ostentation (*ambitio*) and vanity (*inanis gloria*). Various of these qualities, which Thomas presumes people have under a fair measure of control, find their parallel in Kohut's analysis of narcissism.

9.4.2 Where Sinful Habits meet with Psychopathology

To what extent, for instance, is a person overblown with pride in himself really a

case of narcissistic personality disorder? Put the other way around, is a pathological condition of the self actually the same thing as a vice or sinful habit? Both may present similar symptoms. While they cannot be exactly equated, there appears to be a continuum between them. At one pole is the pathological case who through no fault of her own is afflicted with a severe personality or behavioral disorder; her condition is not due to any fault of her own, but is an affliction upon her. In Thomas' terms it is *poena*, not *culpa*. At the opposite pole is the person who could but has made no effort to check his haughty pride and vain sense of self-importance. Instead, he has cultivated this attitude in his dealing with others. On this count he is personally guilty (*culpa*), though likely too to be caught in the vice of his past actions (*poena*) so that he could not easily step out of the rôle he has cast for himself.

Between the two poles lay many people; at fault but not completely guilty, afflicted but able to do something about their condition. Where exactly anyone is on that continuum would have to be determined in each case. However, the purpose of therapy and counselling is to help them recognize how their behaviour or attitudes are distorted, then to acknowledge them as their own and through some struggle with themselves bring them gradually under control. To adopt a fatalistic attitude and not make that effort would both prolong the pathology and render them guilty. This, admittedly, is a very simplified account of therapy, but it does bring out the movement from affliction to accepting responsibility for it so as to overcome it. Even though their positions of pathology and sin are spread along a continuum, overcoming them both calls for a movement in the same direction. This moving away from a past that was not entirely (or even at all) under one's control is basically the same as our coming to accept responsibility for the effects within us of original sin (see 9.1.4 above).

The importance of accepting responsibility becomes apparent when one contrasts third and first person viewpoints. To say of someone, "Due to a lack of mirroring by his parents, his self structure is weak and that accounts for his shiftlessness

and unreliability,” may give a very good account of *someone else’s* debility. He still needs through others’ empathic support to name and accept his debility, understand something of what brought it about, and by not going along with it build up a more cohesive self-structure. If the analysis is correct, he cannot rightly be personally blamed for his condition. But the same conclusion cannot be drawn if I say: “Due to a lack of mirroring by my parents, my self structure is weak and that accounts for my shiftlessness and unreliability.” My being able to say this about myself (not someone else) is possible only because I have at least been able to name and to a considerable extent accept what my debility is. To that degree I have transcended it, so that instead of simply being subjected to it, it has now become a factor for me to take account of in my own decisions. As the inclination to break off a task or engagement when it ceases to be immediately attractive will still be there, it will likely still be an enormous struggle to be reliable. But the inclination has been changed from an unrecognized impulse in control of me to something I can begin to control. Although the support of others in taking this step may be crucial, nobody else can accept this responsibility for me.

9.5 The Self’s Capacity for Repression and Disavowal

Yet one avenue of escape from responsibility is through repression, the failure to accept that certain aspects of my life and involvement actually arise from within myself. Besides dealing with repression, in which archaic wishes and shameful desires may be kept out of consciousness, Kohut also speaks of disavowal. The former he terms a horizontal split and the latter a vertical one. A vertical split in the self may occur, for instance, when an intense need for mirroring is not met. Instead of being repressed, in which case the person might assume an air of pseudo-independence, this aspect of the self splits off. It is openly expressed, but in a distorted form; its real intent is disavowed.

Kohut points out how the theory of repression was especially appropriate in a

past era.

The very division that held true for the cultural and social life of Freud's time, in other words, pertained to the psyche of the individual as Freud conceptualized it. One realm—overt, easily recognized, its existence acknowledged—lived by logic and reason (in the language of Freudian metapsychology, it followed the laws of the secondary process); the other realm—hidden, hard to recognize, its existence denied—lived by archaic, prelogical rules (it followed the laws of the primary process). (HDAC: 60)

Now, however, archaic forces are still active, but thanks to Freud and others "their presence and potential for evil are now recognized, broadly discussed, and opposed" (HDAC: 60). Such forces as bizarre religious cults and political fanatics — for instance, the Japanese group that released nerve gas into the Tokyo underground or the drug culture — exist alongside flourishing science, art and technology. In other words, modern society is fragmented or split. Likewise, claims Kohut, "the psyche of modern man—the psyche described by Kafka and Proust and Joyce—is enfeebled, multifragmented (vertically split), and disharmonious" (HDAC: 60).

The nature of disavowal is best explained, not as a cognitive problem of what Kerans calls being 'knowingly ignorant' (see 4.5 above), but as a matter of whether people acknowledge the activities that they personally are engaged in, or are involved with through belonging to some social body. In normal life, in any case, we get on with many tasks without specially adverting to what we are doing or their significance. In Giddens' terms human agents routinely yet tacitly understand their own and others' actions, but without bringing such knowledge to discursive consciousness (see CS, 5). They are not continually explaining either to themselves or others what they are doing and their motivation for doing it. Disavowal comes when there is a split between what a person acknowledges as hers and what she actually does. This split usually occurs because of the clash between what she is doing and the view of the self that she cherishes. Fingarette explains that central to disavowal is

the capacity of a person to identify himself to himself as a particular person engaged in the world in specific ways, the capacity of a person to reject such identification, and the supposition that an individual can continue to be engaged in the world in a certain way even though he does not acknowledge it as his personal engagement and therefore displays none of the evidences of such acknowledgment. (1969: 91)

Instances of disavowal not only take place within an individual self, but may take place on a social level. It is possible for people not to acknowledge what in reality members of their organization are doing, or give it a different significance, as full acknowledgment would conflict with the high regard in which they hold their organization. Maintaining this high regard is vital to them as this view of their organization is a selfobject for them. A recent instance of this was the collapse of Barings Bank, where the directors in London although confronted with evidence of irregularities taking place in Singapore could not accept its significance because it apparently clashed their image of their bank as a secure and safe institution.

9.6 Modernity as a Culture of Risk

A term Kohut continually uses to describe the condition of both self and society in modern society is 'fragmentation.' Under this heading he also includes emptiness or a loss of vitality and disharmony within the self. 'Cohesion' is the healthy counterpart of fragmentation, which is experienced as "a deep loss of the sense of the continuity of self in time and of its cohesiveness in space" (SS IV: 459). In a fragmented society especially, this loss may become acute during times of transition: whether sociobiological transitions as a person grows from infancy to old age, personal-cultural transitions when a someone moves or takes on a new social rôle (SS II, 623f), and upheavals in society at large. The result is that "man of our time is the man of the precariously cohesive self, the man who craves the presence, the interest, the availability of the self-cohesion-maintaining selfobject," but the very intensity of this craving leads him to set up "a wall of secondary prideful disavowal" (HDAC: 61).

Looking at the same phenomenon from a social point of view, Giddens says that due to the modern world being a 'culture of risk' people seek 'ontological security.' The next chapter will examine the features of modern society that bring about this culture of risk; the remainder of this chapter looks at its repercussions in the individual. What Giddens has in mind is that while modern life is no longer as obviously dangerous as it was in past ages, we are now exposed to a greater range of risks over which we have practically no control. In previous times a person could identify the dangers threatening him and take steps to counter them. For instance, going on a long journey was hazardous, required a fair level of fitness, some navigational skills, the preparation of stores and often physical protection. Now the modern airline passenger does not have to meet any of these requirements. But she exposes herself to a variety of risks, many of which the average passenger is only dimly aware of or cannot fully comprehend. These risks include not only the possibility of a flight accident but setbacks due to strikes, overbooking, financial crises, diplomatic hassles, companies going bankrupt and terrorist attacks. Although most journeys today are completed without these — otherwise people would not travel — these risks remain in the background as a cloud of unnamed worries.

Although modern medicine and technology have reduced many threats to life and well-being, the very complexity of modern life has introduced many risks over which the individual now has practically no control. He or she is at the mercy of the system: be it a financial, cultural, political, medical or technological one. Here we might think of bank failures and companies being liquidated overnight, cultural changes in people's sense of their own bodies, countries collapsing into chaos, discoveries of toxins in widely distributed food, and industries becoming obsolete. These widespread disasters do not happen every day, but the risk of them is ever present. It should be added that even beneficial upheavals, such as the ending of apartheid, moving to a new job, or winning a scratch card fortune, can also disassemble the self. Today's risks are too vast for the individual to confront alone, so amid them people tend — in Giddens' terms

— to build a protective cocoon to maintain their ontological security.

9.6.1 Trust and Ontological Security

In an unsure world, everyone requires, in order to know who and what they are, some evident sense of continuity and order in events; this provides what Giddens terms 'ontological security.' This refers to

the confidence that most human beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and in the constancy of the surrounding social and material environments of action. A sense of the reliability of persons and things, so central to the notion of trust, is basic to feelings of ontological security. (CMOD: 92)

Although Giddens speaks of this as a feeling or as "an emotional, rather than a cognitive, phenomenon, [which] is rooted in the unconscious" (CMOD: 92), it might better be described as a pervasive mood or *Befindlichkeit* (in Heidegger's sense of the term; see 1963: 134) that underlies and so colours a person's whole experience. Ontological security is maintained so long a person has someone or something in which they can put their trust. Giddens' understanding of trust is fairly wide; it ranges from feeling confident that a good friend will provide support to a general reliance that a tin of meat or fruit purchased in a supermarket will not be harmful.

Trust may be defined as confidence in the reliability of a person or system, regarding a set of outcomes or events, where that confidence expresses a faith in the probity or love of another, or in the correctness of abstract principles (technical knowledge). (CMOD: 34)

People are always likely to come across particular persons or systems that are not trustworthy; one learns not to rely upon them. But the ability to single them out as unreliable presumes a pervasive sense of trust. The opposite to this pervasive sense of trust is thus not mistrust, but *angst* or *dread* (see CMOD: 36 & 100). Pervasive "trust, ontological security, and a feeling of the continuity of things and persons remain closely bound up with one another in the adult personality"

(CMOD: 97).

The way ontological security is maintained differs from one society to another. "In traditional communities, even within class-divided civilizations, the kinship system and the locality provided a fairly systematic grounding for the maintenance of routines" (RMP: 278). The same faces in familiar surroundings offered, in a largely non-problematic manner, a sense of continuity. But in modern society everyone and everything is much more mobile; "by and large day-to-day activities are not structured through kinship relations" (RMP: 278); activities are not restricted to one locality, but are taken up into more extensive social processes. So, instead of relying upon a community whose members one has known all one's life or since they were born, people have in modern society to rely much more on abstract systems trusting that their agents, whoever they might be, will have sufficient expertise to deliver the services they represent.

Instead of trust being localised in space and time (or tradition, which prevents the past being severed from the present), in modern society trust relations become vested in disembedded abstract systems. In the shift from pre-modern to modern society, kinship relations come to be replaced by "*personal relationships* of friendship or sexual intimacy as means for stabilising social ties"; while the familiar milieu of local community life gives way to "abstract systems as a means of stabilising relations across indefinite spans of time-space" (CMOD: 102). This fundamental shift brings both loss and gain for people's sense of ontological security.

There is greater security in many aspects of day-to-day life [under conditions of modernity] — yet there is also a serious price to pay for these advances. Abstract systems depend on trust, yet they provide none of the moral rewards which can be obtained from personalised trust, or were often available in traditional settings from the moral frameworks within which everyday life was undertaken. (MSI: 136)

The morality (or immorality) of an action is nowhere near as readily apparent when people are involved with abstract systems as when they are members of a

community in which everyone is reliant upon each other. In the latter instance, being a good person entails contributing to the good of the community. But when people are relying to a considerable extent on abstract systems to gain a sense of self-identity, it is far harder to work out what morality involves. This is an issue that Giddens raises, but never fully answers.

9.6.2 Spinning a Protective Cocoon

Basically many people are caught as they have to rely upon abstract systems, not only to provide them with the wherewithal for living, but to uphold their own sense of ontological security; this makes it very difficult for them to challenge the working and effects of any system, since that would undermine their own ontological security.

The risk society of modernity poses a continual threat to people's ontological security. "Living in a secular risk culture is inherently unsettling, and feelings of anxiety may become particularly pronounced during episodes which have a fateful quality" (MSI: 181f). In order to cope with impending reality, Giddens suggests, people develop a "protective cocoon ... which filters out potential dangers impinging from the external world" (MSI: 244). If, for instance, a person considered all the risks that could arise from living in a modern society, he or she would likely freeze into inaction. Depending upon a person's upbringing and experience, and above all the sense of basic trust instilled in the early phases of life, each person requires a greater or lesser degree of protection. Some can cope with more uncertainty than others. In other words, the modern culture of risk inclines people, especially those who cannot cope with much uncertainty, to regress to a state of archaic narcissism.

But comparatively few people can afford to jeopardize their sense of ontological security; they are not going to venture willingly into or even begin to think about areas that would be too distressing for their sense of who they are. They

need to keep their protective cocoon intact and so tend to avoid or put off fateful moments as far as possible.

Fateful moments are threatening for the protective cocoon which defends the individual's ontological security, because the 'business as usual' attitude that is so important to that cocoon is inevitably broken through. They are moments when the individual must launch out into something new. ... [They] do not necessarily mean facing a strong possibility that things will go awry... What tends to make the risk environment difficult to confront is rather the scale of the consequential penalties for getting things wrong. (MSI: 114)

Examining the balance of good and ill in a system with which one is involved can well be a fateful moment. Having to admit that it is exploitative or unnecessarily destructive is distressing, because that puts into question much of what one has come to rely upon for one's self-identity and inner security. People's inability to take a critical stance towards aspects of their society may be linked to their being cowed by physical force, a clinging to power, or an unwillingness to relinquish a life of affluence, but account must also be taken of the possible threat to their ontological security, which is something distinct in itself. Not everyone is sufficiently secure in themselves to question seriously the abstract systems upon which their self-identity depends.

9.7 Conclusion

As a way of summing up his whole approach Kohut several times quotes the playwright Eugene O'Neill, who says in his play, *The Great God Brown*: "Man is born broken. He lives by mending. The grace of God is glue." Kohut then comments: "Could the essence of the pathology of modern man's self be stated more impressively?" (RESS: 287) No, so long as it is remembered that both the breaking and mending, and hence the gracing too, take place not just within the individual but through people's social interactions, which bring out both their most destructive proclivities and constructive aspirations.

The Dynamism of Modern Society

They have idols of silver and gold, made by human hands.
Their makers will end up like them, everyone who relies on them.
(Ps 115:4 & 8)

The purpose of this chapter is to explain why the impersonal notion of 'structure' is so prominent in explaining modern society and in dealing with problems within it. Although it will concentrate upon modern society, some selected attention will be given to medieval society. There are two reasons for this: first, to show by way of contrast the particularity of society today; second, to show the background of Thomas Aquinas' thought. I say that medieval society will receive 'selected attention,' because what is of prime interest here is not the details of that age, but how its main features were conceived by Thomas and how that shaped his views on other issues. The bulk of this chapter, however, will be taken up with explaining what Giddens calls 'the facilitating conditions of modernity.' These open the way for both new opportunities for human endeavour and more persistent types of evil.

10.1 Class Divided and Class Societies

Although Thomas directed his attention to law and to the human qualities

necessary for life in society, he hardly questioned the prevailing social divisions of his time. His little treatise, *De Regime Principum* [RP], written for the king of Cyprus, set out the qualities required in a ruler, but is not a systematic treatment of politics. Only in a number of passing references scattered through his works do we find observations about society and politics. That he saw a hierarchical division of society as perfectly normal is evident in following passage:

Even though in a single city there may be many ranks of people, these all basically come down to the three — beginning, middle and end — that are found in any populace as a whole. Hence a threefold ranking of people is found in cities: the best people (*optimates*) are on top, the common people (*vilis populus*) are at the bottom, and in between are the respectable people (*populus honorabilis*). (Ia 108. 2)

Thomas simply mentions this division in passing when he is explaining the angelic hierarchy; it is not a topic he questions. Nor does he question the fact that neither women (IaIIae 105, 3 ad 1) nor slaves (IaIIae 98, 6 ad 2) are counted as citizens. He also say in passing, when treating of divine providence, that those with a higher responsibility issue rules for those with lesser responsibilities; in this way a political leader gives orders to the general of his army, who in turn issues orders to commanders and officers. But this political hierarchy is not too rigid, as Thomas recognizes that — in contrast with divine providence that governs everything — in human affairs higher laws and orders are more general and cannot deal with all the varying details that might occur (*non possint semper ad particularia applicari*). Therefore people in charge at lower levels must themselves judge when to put their orders into action and when they should refrain from doing so (SCG, III, 76).

Thomas' outlook here differs considerably from the modern cast of mind where administrative decisions must follow detailed bureaucratic rules and military campaigns are (meant to be) conducted according to the book. In medieval time more depended upon the competence and human qualities of the person in charge than upon any set of instructions that he (or very rarely she) had to follow. Likewise, the medieval ranking of people differs from that of modern

societies. This difference is brought out by Giddens when he contrasts medieval 'class-divided society' with 'class society' introduced by capitalism; his other category is 'tribal society' built around an oral culture.

Most of the characteristics that Giddens ascribes to class-divided societies are echoed in Thomas' writings. Both emphasize the importance of the city. While Giddens says: "the dominant structural principle of class-divided society ... [lies] along an axis relating urban areas to their rural hinterlands ... [as the city] is a 'storage contained' of administrative resources around which agrarian states are built" (CS: 183), Thomas, at the beginning of his unfinished commentary on Aristotle's politics, speaks of the city as the very highest achievement of human reason (*principalissimum eorum quae humana ratione constitui sunt*) for all other human communities refer back to it (see D'Entrèves, 1965: 196f).

Unlike in a tribal society, in the medieval city that Thomas has in mind there is a considerable division of labour. Not only were different crafts (*artes mechanica*) concerned with making things (*per modum factionis*) established, but these were also differentiated from the practical understanding of politics (*scientia politica, idest civilis*), which guides what a person does (*per modum actionis*) in ordering human relations. While Thomas recognizes the weight of custom in interpreting law (IaIIae 97,3), he says that judicial decisions should be made according to written law and recorded in writing (IIaIIae 60, 5). This goes beyond relying on oral tradition as is done in tribal societies bound by customary law.

Giddens sees in these features of medieval society the beginnings of the disentangling of the four institutional spheres (see Chapter Fifteen below) that characterize modern society. "The polity, with its officials, is separated in some part from the procedures of economic activity; formal codes of law and punishment exist; and modes of symbolic co-ordination, based in written texts, make their appearance" (CS: 183). The latter refers to both the religious and secular literature which helped define, express and later criticize the prevailing culture.

	CLASS-DIVIDED SOCIETIES	CLASS SOCIETIES (Capitalist societies)
	'Symbiosis of the city and countryside'	Commercially created 'built environment' Formal separation of economic and political spheres
MODES of DOMINATION/ PREDOMINANT SANCTIONS	Local, relatively autonomous communal production – 'allocative power' Centralized political and military power – 'authoritative power' Predominant sanction: control of means of violence	Private ownership of capital; 'asymmetrical' capitalist labour contract – 'allocative power' State surveillance – 'authoritative power' and violence extruded from labour contract Predominant sanction: economic necessity of employment
ROLE OF CLASS and CLASS CONFLICT	Class divisions but class conflict not the central dynamic – peasant rebellions, but only dominant class possess spatial stretch	Class divisions and conflict a central dynamic (although not alone decisive)

Fig 10 *Class-divided societies and class societies*

(Bryant & Jard, eds 1991: 127)

The overall differences between tribal, class-divided and class societies are set out in diagram on the following page. There is, however, one area of medieval society that Giddens does not mention, namely: the close bond that people felt with their leaders, usually kings and lords, and vice versa. The quality of life in society depended largely on how the ruler exercised power, whether he was a tyrant, a just ruler or somewhat in between. A good ruler should be excelling in virtue, as more is required to rule a household than to discipline oneself, and even more to rule a city or kingdom (*multoque maior ad regimen civitatis et regni*, RP, IX). Although Thomas locates virtue in an individual subject, its influence is not restricted to that person alone as it reaches others too. This sense of *virtus* being 'a power for good' extended towards others, while its opposite *vitium* (vice) is a 'power for evil,' tends to be lost in contemporary English. Virtue and vices have become almost entirely personal. If we ask today whether a political leader has any vices, we think of how he or she behaves in private life, not of the damaging effect of their actions in the public sphere. Thomas, however, operated out of different assumptions; some light is thrown upon his thought by what are termed 'tributary systems.'

10.1.1 Personal Allegiance in Tributary Systems

Drawing on the work of Samir Amin, Robert Heilbroner says that social institutions in a tributary system tend to

magnify the persona of a single person into a godlike ruler, the society then becoming a direct extension of the person of the shah, emperor, or king. ... The logic of tributary systems must be seen as the translation into 'history' of the biographies of their central personages, the translation reflecting the vast number of lives affected by the will and character of the ruler. (1985: 28)

Medieval western Europe fits this description. History, what happened in society, depended upon the lives, ambitions and alliances of ruling kings and lords. Particular importance was paid to marriages forging alliances between dynasties,

and finding a suitable heir who being legitimate enough would secure that the succession was also legitimate and therefore peaceful. In this vein, Thomas says that it is impossible for a city to flourish unless its citizens are virtuous, but then adds, at least its leaders must be. The good of a community is upheld as long as its members are virtuous through obeying the commands of its rulers (*Sufficit autem quantum ad bonum communitatis quod alii in tantum sint virtuosius quod principum mandatis obediunt*, IaIIae 92, 1 ad 3).

Heilbroner gives a not so complimentary explanation of tributary systems, when he says "the trappings of rule as well as the exercise of force revive infantile feelings of dependency, making possible the personality cult that is a central aspect of the nature of these societies, and the source of their biographical logics" (1985: 29). Whether this is adequate will have to be taken up later (Chapter Seventeen), after we have seen what light Kohut throws on the phenomenon of leadership. In Thomas' view, however, it is not because certain individuals are personally incomplete that they turn to a community leader for support, but that every individual, being only a part of a more perfect whole, is always incomplete unless drawn into the community of citizens (*Omnis pars ordinetur ad totum sicut imperfectum ad perfectum, unus autem homo est pars communitatis perfectae*, IaIIae 90. 2)

A good example of a tributary system centred around the personal exercise of power is that of Charlemagne in the late ninth and the early tenth century. He managed after a large number of battles to subject most of modern day France under his rule. The interesting point, however, is that in order to maintain his kingdom and stop any part breaking away from him, he had constantly to be in the saddle. By continually making personal appearances to the people in every part of the realm he kept them subject to him. Besides his administrative abilities, he had two further advantages. He was considerably taller than the average man of the time, and lived longer than usual; these made him personally even more impressive. The fact that Charlemagne's kingdom soon broke

up after his death brings out how much this was an instance of personal rule. Neither his sons nor their rivals could dominate such an extent of space. Charlemagne's dignity as a ruler lay, not in his personality, but in his godlike ability to be a nodal point uniting so many people and their affairs through time and across space (see SCG IV, 1)

10.1.2 Breaking away from Traditional Society

There are many ways in which modern societies differ from traditional ones, even from life in cities just prior to the rise of industrialism and capitalism. All kinds of technological, economic, social and political innovations could be mentioned, but underlying them (or rather their acceptance) is a more profound change. Basically, in Giddens' view, what marks the break between traditional society and modernity is that "our everyday lives have become experimental, as has the global project of human social development" (1992: 174). Neither individuals planning their activities nor those with responsible positions in society are so bound by past precedents as their counterparts in previous ages. Decisions are now called for on many more occasions and with a wider range of issues than in a society governed by tradition. Prior to modernity, tradition represented "the moral command of 'what went before' over the continuity of day-to-day life" (CS: 200). Whereas now under the conditions of modernity the sources of moral authority are more ambiguous. Uncertainty and doubt arise, because the sureties of tradition and habit have not been replaced by the certitude of rational knowledge.

It would be wrong, however, to interpret Giddens as saying that nothing innovative ever took place in traditional societies, or that changes never occurred. The latter in any case would effectively rule out the rise of modernity. Nor does he propose "a romantic view of the past, in which people lived in harmony with one another in the local community and in harmony with nature" (RMC: 278). Clashes and conflicts, with cruel and disastrous conse-

quences, frequently occurred in traditional societies.

Social life in traditional communities was often a fraught and dangerous affair. The sources of danger or risk included above all the threat of epidemic illnesses and plagues, together with environmental disasters such as droughts, floods and earthquakes. (RMC: 278)

There was little anyone could do about them. But today, whether or not people are protected from most 'natural' as well as social disasters, depends largely upon the adequacy of human arrangements, especially the economic priorities and political outlook of those in positions of power. "In circumstances of modernity, the balance between trust and risk, security and danger, becomes radically altered" (RMC: 278; see also 9.6 above).

The most obvious discontinuities between traditional society and modernity are found in the pace and scope of change. Not only do social changes take place rapidly, but their repercussions are quickly felt across the globe. But what is perhaps less obvious is how these changes and discontinuities do in turn affect people's sense of who they are, what they can do and hence the shaping of their social institutions.

Profound changes are occurring in the texture of our day-to-day lives: these are connected to transformations affecting the global order. ... these globalizing trends create new forms of distance, cultural identity, 'otherness' and marginalization. (1992: 173)

The impact, however, is not all one way. Not only do

the transmutations introduced by modern institutions interlace in a direct way with individual life and therefore with the self. ... [But correspondingly] in forging their self-identities, no matter how local their specific contexts of action, individuals contribute to and directly promote social influences that are global in their consequences and implications. (MSI: 1f)

But in modern society there is much less certainty about the outcome and implications of what a person does than in a traditional setting. In this, modern-

ity is somewhat like a laboratory, where no one knows in advance the results of any experiment. But the metaphor only holds so long as one remembers that the same people (ourselves) are both experimenting and in the same process being experimented upon. The shaping of both self and society are two aspects of the same process. "The new mechanisms of self-identity ... are shaped by — yet also shape — the institutions of modernity" (MSI: 2).

10.2 Explaining what Makes for Modernity

A number of other explanations have been made by various authors to explain the break between traditional and modern society. For instance, Marx centres his analysis on the division of labour; Durkheim contrasts 'mechanical' and 'organic' solidarity; Tönnies distinguishes between the 'belongingness' of *Gemeinschaft* and the 'rootlessness' of *Gesellschaft*; and more recently, Sennett draws on the distinction between public and private spheres of life. Although Giddens does not dismiss these views altogether, he considers them lacking as overall explanations.

One reason for mentioning Durkheim, Tönnies and Sennett's views is because they reflect a popular but misleading view of social structures. The personal, private and intimate aspects of modern life are viewed as being beyond the reach of or not regulated by social structures. Whereas in public life, for instance, when one engages in politics or economic transactions, one comes up against impersonal social structures. It is but a short step then to suggest — as some do — that relationships that are private and personal but 'unstructured' are generally good, while 'structured' public affairs inevitably fall into the cut-throat world of economics or the dirty game of politics.

Giddens' view of social structures would not support such a dichotomy. Social structures are operative in every kind of human action; or rather no human

action, however personal and intimate, does not exemplify and continue the process of structuration. "The private is a creation of the public and vice versa; each forms part of newly emergent systems of internal referentiality" (MSI: 153). Childhood, for instance, emerges (or is even 'invented') as a specially demarcated area through the way modern society as a whole is structured.

Giddens similarly rejects Habermas' view of modernity as "the colonisation of the life world by expert systems" where "the impersonal increasingly swamps the personal" (ST: 210f). Such views only focus on one side of the dialectic between self and society. "Rather, what occurs [under the conditions of modernity] is a genuine transformation of the nature of the personal self" (ST: 211). In other words, people in *themselves* are different in modern society from people in a pre-modern era, where the opportunities for self-fulfilment or self-actualization were often less diverse.

So, instead of relying on these insufficient explanations, in Giddens' view

The dynamism of modernity derives from the *separation of time and space* and their recombination in forms which permit the precise time-space 'zoning' of social life; the *disembedding* of social systems; and the *reflexive ordering and reordering* of social relations in the light of continual inputs of knowledge affecting the actions of individuals and groups. (CMOD: 16f)

These facilitating conditions for the institutional clusterings of modernity will now be examined in turn. Although more abstract, they offer greater explanatory power than the alternative explanations mentioned above.

10.3 Time-space Distanciation

Distanciation is the process "whereby societies are 'stretched' over shorter or longer spans of time and space" (CCHM: 90). The importance of this is most evident in the expansion of surveillance activities by the state, businesses and other agencies. This expansion came first through the building of cities, next

with the rise of nation-states, and today with globalization of information. Increasing time-space distancing, the ability to exert a continuing influence over others who are not immediately present lies behind this. The same stretching of society over longer spans of time and space also underpins the emergence of world capitalism and industrialism as well as the global military order. This trend, admittedly, is not complete; it can and does break down, and it applies unevenly to different societies.

Prior to modernity each place — settlement, village, town, city or region — had its own form of time-reckoning. “No one could tell the time of day without reference to other socio-spatial markers: ‘when’ was almost universally connected with ‘where’ or identified by regular natural occurrences” (CMOD: 17). To some extent such local markers still remain, for example, milking time, market day, the monastic recitation of the ‘hours’ of the divine office, the coming of the rains, the migration of the geese, harvest time, or ‘the year of the rinderpest’; notions that convey little to those in another locality. But increasingly, the world has come to be constituted by clock time, which expresses “a uniform dimension of ‘empty’ time” (CMOD: 17). Clock time can both be quantified in precise units — hours, minutes, seconds — and has been standardized across the time zones of the globe, so that the whole world now to all intents and purpose follows the same calendar. “Everyone now follows the same dating system: the approach of the ‘year 2000,’ for example, is a global event” (CMOD: 18). However, what is important for our purposes is the realization that “the uniformity of time measurement by the mechanical clock was matched by uniformity in the social organisation of time” (CMOD: 18).

A world that has a universal dating system, and globally standardised time zones, as ours does today, is socially and experientially different from all pre-modern eras. The global map, in which there is no privileging of place (a universal projection), is the correlate symbol to the clock in the ‘emptying’ of space. (MSI: 17)

Separating the perception of ‘empty’ time and space from lived events, moments when particular individuals with all their memories and expectations bring

something about — usually together — in a given place, has ambiguous consequences. While this is necessary for the stretching of time and space, the low presence-availability can be unsettling. Many human interactions lose their face to face immediacy and all the assurance that goes with it. But, on the other hand, because they are precisely measured, space and time can be recombined in many ways to coordinate new social activities and interactions.

Perhaps the most obvious instance of this is the network of airlines that span the globe. The IATA world airways time-table, for example, is a time-space ordering device which permits the complex coordination of planes, their passengers and freight across immense tracts of time-space. (Giddens [CMOD: 20] uses the example of a train timetable.) In this light, a town or city is remote not so much because of distance, but due to flights not regularly landing there. Another instance of global time-space coordination is the continuous flow of information (day and night — if these terms are still important!) across the globe of stock market and commodity prices in different centres.

Modern social organisation presumes the precise coordination of actions of many human beings physically absent from one another; the 'when' of these actions is directly connected to the 'where', but not, as in pre-modern epochs, via the mediation of place. (MSI: 17)

Conflicts arise when members of two societies with different degrees of time-space distancing meet along what Giddens terms 'time-space edges.' The one with a higher degree of distancing is inevitably more powerful, though not necessarily better, and may easily swamp or exploit the other. This issue, which is exemplified in the tense relations between traditional and modern societies (or agents of them) will be taken later (see 15.9 below).

Two further features of society, namely 'presence-availability' and the difference between social and system integration, are linked with its stretching of time and space. The first is examined now; the second later (see 12.2 below) because of its importance for understanding social structure.

10.3.1 **Presence-availability**

In societies with low time-space distancing, human interactions usually take place between people ‘present’ to one another. Their actions share the same place.

Most city-states, like band societies and agricultural communities, can be classified within this category. Here the ‘society’ is based in the locale of the ‘community’, and the terms can be used virtually interchangeably. A ‘society’ in this sense is a ‘community’ in two ways: in terms of time-space proximity, or high presence-availability; and in terms of cultural homogeneity, founded in the similarity and continuity of traditional practices and the significance of kinship as a medium of collective organisation. (CCHM: 100f)

Whereas in modern societies, people are frequently interacting with, or at least have an influence upon and are influenced by, ‘absent’ others. Presence-availability is low. So, for instance, one frequently trusts one’s life to an airline without knowing the name of any of its employees, let alone the air traffic controllers, engineers, and meteorologists upon whom one’s safety depends.

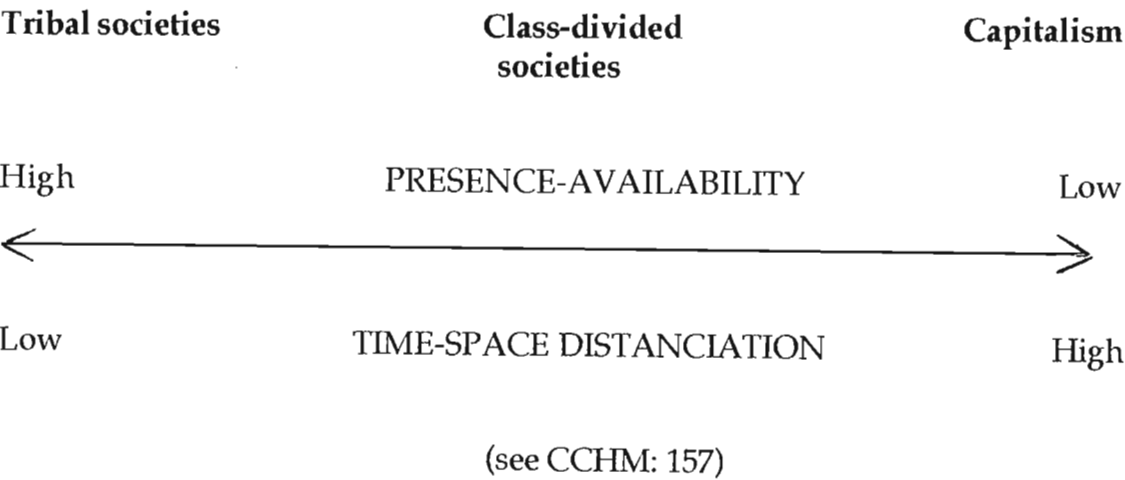


Fig 10 *Presence in Time and Space*

The overall result is that in modern societies, the full implications of human interactions both for good and ill are spread increasingly thin. More and more we are interacting with *absent* others, and so it is increasingly difficult to grasp their influence upon us or their hold over us. The continuing network of interactions that constitute modern society has both a beneficial and a harmful influence, but it is very difficult to locate precisely where any influence comes from or who is responsible for it. Hence, frequently when a disaster occurs a commission of inquiry is appointed to unravel what led up to it. As Giddens explains:

The advent of modernity increasingly tears space away from place by fostering relations between 'absent' others, locationally distant from any given situation of face-to-face interaction. In conditions of modernity, place becomes increasingly *phantasmagoric*: that is to say, locales are thoroughly penetrated by and shaped in terms of social influences quite distant from them. What structures the locale is not simply that which is present on the scene; the 'visible form' of the locale conceals the distanced relations which determine its nature. (CMOD: 18f)

For instance, what takes place in a supermarket is only superficially a matter of the face-to-face interaction between the shopper and the teller at the checkout point. The need and attraction of a supermarket, the ability to buy large amounts of food at once, to refrigerate or freeze it, the impact of advertising, the array of products available at manageable prices, the world wide expectations of a suburban lifestyle, are some examples of how a supermarket links one into a worldwide socio-economic network. The supermarket itself, and this is part of its success, is most likely part of a chain of supermarkets spanning even international boundaries. As Giddens remarks: "Modern organisations are able to connect the local and the global in ways which would have been unthinkable in more traditional societies and in so doing routinely affect the lives of many millions of people" (CMOD: 20). Perhaps the operative word here is 'routinely'; as prior to modernity there were in traditional societies always a few connections with distant places, but these were exciting, intriguing or threatening, novelties that were way out of the ordinary. But today supermarkets and other stores are recognizably similar, no matter which part of the world one is visiting; they all work by an interlinked system.

One effect of the high time-space distancing of modern organizations is that local and global issues become intertwined. "Globalisation unifies the overall human community — in some part because of the creation of high-consequence risks [such as the dangers of nuclear destruction, environmental breakdown, genetic engineering and radical doubt about all authority] which no one living on earth can escape" (MSI: 225). These high consequence risks enter local politics and economic decisions. To some extent too they influence personal decisions, such as one's choice of life-style.

The conceptual framework of time-space distancing directs our attention to the complex relations between *local involvements* (circumstances of co-presence) and *interaction across distance* (the connections of presence and absence). ... the relations between local and distant social forms and events become correspondingly 'stretched.' Globalisation refers essentially to that stretching process, in so far as the modes of connection between different social contexts or regions become networked across the earth's surface as a whole. (CMOD: 64)

In brief, instead of living in a fairly well delimited, localized society, we are now living in a modern world with a multiplicity of connections and influences. But these connections and influences cannot be identified with one or a few individuals, nor precisely located at any single point in space.

So although people might not generally wish to harm others, and are often willing to help one another in situations of face-to-face interaction, their sense of responsibility for those others to whom they are only linked via an abstract system is considerably diminished. Because these others are absent, and the effects of one person's actions upon them are considerably attenuated and scarcely apparent, people hardly recognize any obligations towards them.

10.4 Disembedding and Re-embedding Mechanisms

In pre-modern societies people's lives were generally tied to a particular town or locality. Likewise, each business, mine, factory, bank, school or university

operated with its own traditions in its own geographical place. Although people did travel, and businesses did form links, only gradually with the advent of capitalism and industrialism did national and — still later — international companies, businesses, banking and educational systems arise.

Disembedding refers to “the ‘lifting out’ of social relations from local contexts of interaction and their restructuring across indefinite spans of time-space” (CMOD: 21; see MSI: 242). Obvious examples of this are travel agencies able to sell tickets to or book hotel rooms nearly anywhere in the world; credit cards that can be used internationally; radio and TV networks purveying the same news; and standardized recipes for preparing cooked chicken, ground beef and fizzy drinks, as well as standardized labels for selling them. One result of such disembedding is that ‘modern cities’ the world over tend to offer the same range of services and so come to look very much the same.

Giddens distinguishes two types of disembedding mechanisms: the establishment of expert systems and the creation of symbolic tokens (CMOD: 22). Expert systems encompass, for instance, both periodic consultations of lawyers, doctors, architects and accountants as well as the continuous reliance upon the people who build houses, generate electricity, make cars, build and manage the traffic lights, run the airlines, or supply non-infected foods.

Expert systems are disembedding mechanisms because ... they remove social relations from the immediacies of context. ... An expert system [provides] ‘guarantees’ of expectations across time-space. This ‘stretching’ of social systems is achieved via the impersonal nature of tests applied to evaluate technical knowledge and by public critique (upon which the production of technical knowledge is based), used to control its form. (CMOD: 28)

Since “everyone in modern systems is a lay person in virtually all aspects of social activity” (MSI: 195), people in order to maintain their lives and livelihood have to rely upon experts and advisers. They have — as best they can — to decide between rival claims and sort out which systems or organizations can be trusted and to what extent. But above all “trust in disembedding mechanisms is vested

not first and foremost in individuals, but in abstract capacities" (ST: 209).

The chief symbolic token examined by Giddens is money. It is par excellence a medium "of interchange which can be 'passed around' without regard to the specific characteristics of individuals or groups that handle [it] at any particular juncture" (CMOD: 22). For this reason, Marx spoke of it as 'the universal whore'. As modernity has taken shape, monetary transactions have grown beyond exchanges involving coins or notes circulating within a particular area. Funds now flow internationally between investments, banks and currencies depending upon the degree of trust or confidence that investors and brokers have in their future performance.

The only other symbolic tokens mentioned by Giddens are the "media of political legitimacy" (CMOD: 22). So, for instance, diplomatic recognition and admittance to the United Nations gives a nation-state, its ministers and citizens, standing in international affairs. But, presumably, various logo's, product names and perhaps even items of dress or uniform that bear some international prestige could also be counted as symbolic tokens. Unfortunately, Giddens does not elaborate.

Expert systems and symbolic tokens taken together form "abstract systems" (MSI: 20). For instance, the banking system with its combination of financial expertise and its range of symbols assure clients of its reliability and trustworthiness. Likewise, "the studied casualness and calm cheer of air crew personnel ... [reassure] passengers ... how safe air travel is" (CMOD: 86). A central feature of Giddens' argument is "that *the nature of modern institutions is deeply bound up with the mechanisms of trust in abstract systems*, especially trust in expert systems" (CMOD: 83, italics in original).

If people are to make use of abstract systems, which in any case is necessary if they are to remain going concerns, various access points are required. Although

an abstract system stretches over time and space, people can only engage with it at various particular times and in certain definite places. In many instances, these might be no further away than the nearest telephone or computer terminal. But, in order to reassure people of the trustworthiness of a particular system — whether a bank, airline, medical centre or departmental store — many access points are staffed by personnel whose task it is to reassure clients of the expertise, reliability and integrity of the system as a whole. Trust in an abstract system, about whose mostly *faceless* workings the ordinary lay person is largely ignorant, is sustained by the *facework* performed at its access points. While many of the workings of an abstract system are hidden ‘backstage’, it is ‘represented’ by those personnel who are working at access points ‘frontstage’. They endeavour by their demeanour and words to provide a double assurance: “in the reliability of the specific individuals involved and in the (necessarily arcane) knowledge or skills to which the lay individual has no effective access” (CMOD: 85).

The re-embedding of abstract systems thus occurs at access points, sites or occasions where lay individuals or clients can both avail themselves of the services of the system and be assured of its reliability. But the siting of access points is not restricted to any one place or locality; people can access an abstract system with almost equal ease from a large number of appropriate places.

10.4.1 The Location of Power in Abstract Systems

The marginalized are those who do not have ready access to the abstract systems of modernity; they are hence deprived of power to give shape their own lives or gain the material wherewithal to support them. Having little or no access to modernity’s abstract systems, they have little power or leverage to change their functioning for the better.

But even those with ready access to modernity’s abstract systems — for instance, education, finance, transport and communications — cannot easily change them.

Even with the best of intentions, including a genuine desire to prevent people being marginalized, they face a whole series of obstacles.

One, the very complexity of abstract systems with their multiple inter-connections makes it often difficult to know exactly how to transform them for the better. While it is easy enough to indicate a desired goal, discovering precisely how to attain it is elusive. For instance, no one really knows how in a modern economy to attain the worthwhile goal of full employment with meaningful work for all. Nor is anyone really clear on how equal access to a country's resources for all might be effectively combined in practice with due allowance for cultural pluralism where resources are differentially valued.

Two, placing the actual workings of an abstract system backstage prevents those not directly involved in running it from immediately bringing an influence to bear on it. The function of those frontstage doing the facework is not only to reassure clients and other outsiders that all is in good hands and under control, but also to "keep concealed from others a good deal of what they [the experts backstage] do" (CMOD: 86).

Three, since members of modern society are dependent upon abstract systems for employment, livelihood, health, transport, education and other necessary services, any fundamental change in a system is likely to be — or be perceived as — a threat to their continued existence and wellbeing. Just as it would be foolish to saw off the branch one was sitting on, so it would be self-defeating to dismantle the abstract systems of expertise and symbolic tokens which uphold one's life in modern society. A system may be recognized as imperfect, even exploitative, but it may still be reckoned as preferable to no system at all.

These and other obstacles do not entirely prevent the questioning and transformation of abstract systems. Yet even those with access to them, who seemingly might be in a position to change them, have because of their dependence upon

them to maintain them at the same time as they are confronting their shortcomings. One cannot, as it were, take a section of the economic, educational, legal or political system off the road for a while, overhaul it, replace defective parts and then set it going again. There is no garage in which one can put part of society, which is not itself part of society. So any action one undertakes depends to a considerable extent upon being supported by the system one is trying to change. There is no entirely neutral point for dealing with it. This makes negotiating social transitions very tricky, as the recent histories of the former USSR, Eastern Europe and South Africa illustrate.

10.5 **The Reflexivity of Modernity**

Use has already been made of the notion of reflexivity (see 5.1 above) to explain how sociological terms or jargon become part of the vocabulary of social activists, and are then incorporated into theological reflection. This is evident in talk about ‘institutionalized violence’ ‘structural sin’ ‘social evil’, where terms derived from the social sciences are fed back in to lay experience. But, though they help reorganize that experience, they are not taken up in a strictly scientific manner.

To understand the special contribution of reflexivity to modern living, it is necessary to see how in any society reflexivity helps guide human activities. All human beings in the course of their activities fairly regularly ‘check out’ what they are doing and how it is working out. If they find their journey, their cooking, their conversation or business taking an unexpected turn, they take note, reflect upon, re-assess and redirect their actions accordingly. This Giddens terms “the reflexive monitoring of action.” But it “is not the sense of reflexivity which is specifically connected with modernity, although it is the necessary basis for it” (CMOD: 37).

Prior to modernity, “reflexivity is still largely limited to the reinterpretation and

clarification of tradition" (CMOD: 37); people worked out suitable ways of continuing what they were used to. Adaptation and change occur, but generally in the course of maintaining or even re-asserting tradition. Prior to widespread literacy and formal education, few people were in a position to take stock of their tradition and propose alternatives.

With the advent of modernity, reflexivity becomes much more thoroughgoing. "The reflexivity of modern social life consists in the fact that social practices are constantly examined and reformed in the light of incoming information about those very practices, thus constitutively altering their character" (CMOD: 38; see MSI: 243). Instances of incoming information are market research, political opinion polls, psychological profiles and analyses, opinion surveys, projective plans based on models and scenarios, the advice of marriage counsellors and management consultants. In addition on a popular level a plethora of books, magazines, video tapes and computer programmes feed back ideas and information on how people are living and might live. The unsettling feature of modernity is that all this knowledge is continually being revised. "We are abroad in a world which is thoroughly constituted through reflexively applied knowledge, but where at the same time we can never be sure that any given element of that knowledge will not be revised" (CMOD: 39). Compared to standing within a tradition, modernity offers much less continuity and hence tends to be unsettling.

A large part of the information fed back into people's understanding of themselves and what they are doing derives from the social sciences. The knowledge or information they provide "is not incidental to modern institutions, but constitutive of them. ... [The social sciences] do not simply 'accumulate knowledge' in the way the natural sciences may do" (MSI: 20). Academic studies or official statistics may sometimes provide direct information, but, more likely, it will come indirectly, via the impressions derived from academic studies or potted versions of the same, which are then sometimes taken up in a loose kind

of social analysis. But however it is derived, or with what degree of accuracy, social science concepts have become integral to the fashioning of social interaction. As has been mentioned before

the relations between sociology and its subject matter — the actions of human beings in conditions of modernity — has to be understood instead in terms of the ‘double hermeneutic.’ The development of sociological knowledge is parasitical upon lay agents’ concepts; on the other hand, notions coined in the meta-languages of the social sciences routinely reenter the universe of actions they were initially formulated to describe and account for. But it does not lead in a direct way to a transparent social world. *Sociological knowledge spirals in and out of the universe of social life, reconstructing both itself and that universe as an integral part of that process.* (CMOD: 15f)

Giddens gives the example of economic concepts such as ‘capital’, ‘investment’, ‘markets’, ‘industry’, being elaborated originally as economic concepts to explain what people were doing in the eighteenth century. But they did not remain for long at a distance from the activities they describe.

These concepts, and empirical conclusions linked to them, were formulated in order to analyse changes involved in the emergence of modern institutions. But they could not, and did not, remain separated from the activities and events to which they related. ... Modern economic activity would not be as it is were it not for the fact that all members of the population have mastered these concepts and an indefinite variety of others. (CMOD: 41)

The thoroughgoing or institutional reflexivity of modernity changes not only people’s grasp of social systems but of themselves too. The self too becomes a reflexive project, open to inputs derived from psychology, where “self-understanding is subordinated to the more inclusive and fundamental aim of building/rebuilding a coherent and rewarding sense of identity” (MSI: 75). Giddens teases out a little what is involved in keeping the project of self-development on track. It includes self-observation, reviewing the trajectory of one’s life, recognition of one’s own personal time and pace, enhancing the awareness of one’s own body and its requirements, letting go of episodes from the past, balancing opportunities and risks, being authentic by disentangling one’s true from one’s

false self, negotiating transitions as they occur, and integrating all these life experiences within a single narrative of self-development (see MSI: 75-80). Taken overall, the reflexive project of the self is "the process whereby self-identity is constituted by the reflexive ordering of self-narratives" (MSI: 244).

The crucial point for our purposes that Giddens brings out is that in moving into modernity from a more traditional society, not only have the social structures and systems around us changed, but to a significant degree people in their very selves have altered. Even then, it is not just that modern people are different from those of medieval or renaissance times, but that now becoming who one is meant to be is a continuous project always open to further revision. Attaining a sense of "self-identity becomes a reflexively organised endeavour" (MSI: 5).

10.5.1 Inherent limitations of reflexivity

It might seem at first sight that a greater incorporation of knowledge from psychology and the social sciences into the grounding of human action would lead to greater personal clarity and better co-ordination of social activities. But the human sciences are not like, say, weather forecasting. Making use of a weather forecast to plan one's activities does not significantly change the weather; it certainly does not reorganise or still less reconstitute the weather system itself. Whereas "the discourse of sociology and the concepts, theories, and findings of the other social sciences continually 'circulate in and out' of what it is that they are about" (CMOD: 43). They both arise from and contribute to the system that they are describing. "Knowledge claimed by expert observers (in some part, and in many varying ways) rejoins its subject matter, thus (in principle, but also normally in practice) altering it" (CMOD: 45).

Mention should also be made of how expert knowledge in the process of rejoining its subject matter is frequently distorted. For instance, over-simplified accounts of psychology and sociology can lead people to a very simplistic view of

themselves. They then have a distorted view of their own opportunities, motivation and responsibilities as well as false expectations of what might result from their actions.

The view that increased knowledge about social life, even when based upon reliable information, will lead to more control over the future is based on false expectations. Increased knowledge does not close off, but rather opens up possibilities for response. The more understanding people gain about themselves and their society, the greater scope they have for responding to events differently, and hence for refashioning both themselves and their society. "The point is not that there is no stable social world to know, but that knowledge of that world contributes to its unstable or mutable character" (CMOD: 45).

Giddens gives three further reasons why in practice, society does not become more transparent with everybody gaining a greater control of their fate. One, not everyone has equal access to information about their society; those in charge of the mechanisms of surveillance can use their knowledge to further their own policies and interests. Furthermore, those with greater power can deny others access to information. Two, as increased knowledge becomes available, and understanding grows, so people tend to change their ideals and values. New possibilities appear worthwhile, and older ones less attractive. Three, any action is always likely to have some unintended consequences.

No amount of accumulated knowledge about social life could encompass all circumstances of its implementation, even if such knowledge were wholly distinct from the environment to which it applied. If our knowledge about the social world simply got better and better, the scope of unintended consequences might become more and more confined and unwanted consequences rare. However, the reflexivity of modern social life blocks off this possibility. (CMOD: 44f)

Generally, as a person gains greater insight into the likely consequences of his or her action, so the more he or she finds ways of varying that action. But this in turn throws up the possibility of further unintended consequences. "The reflexive appropriation of knowledge ... is intrinsically energising but also

necessarily unstable” (CMOD: 53). Reflexivity thus both opens up manifold opportunities and reveals the risks or uncertainties involved in modern society.

10.5.2 A Theological Digression on the Antecedents of Reflexivity

A tension is evident between the overall arrangement of Thomas’ *Summa Theologiae* and some of its contents. His arrangement adopts the Neoplatonic scheme of exodus and return (*exitus-reditus*), by which creation proceeds from God and then returns to God. Humanity has its place within creation, but can freely respond to God following along the path traced out by Jesus Christ. Yet within this overall scheme, Thomas picks out moments in which human beings are not just ordered by their cosmological place in creation, but themselves may be active agents in ordering creation.

For instance, Thomas claims that as human beings are created in the image of God (Ia 93), this — explains McDermott — places upon them the responsibility of “joining God in the task of bringing creation to a successful fulfilment.” Also since Adam may be regarded as a microcosmos, “so the order man has to bring into his bodily and moral life, stands as symbol for an order that has to be brought into society and the physical environment” (1989: 108). Being in the image of God, humans have the power to originate their own works through exercising free decision and the capacity to act (*ipse est suorum operum principum, quasi liberum arbitrium habens et suorum operum potestatem*, IaIIae Prologus). Human activity is akin to that of plants and animals in being directed to an end, but what sets humanity apart is the capacity to strive for a freely and deliberately chosen end (IaIIae 1, 1). This ability to deliberate sensibly in freedom depends upon the ability to reflect upon what one has done in the past, discover one abilities and weigh what should in future be doing.

It is not only the character of the mind that gives humanity its privileged position in creation. Human activity is inwardly guided and strengthened by the

New Law, that is, the very grace of the Holy Spirit, which is bestowed in those believing in Christ (*principaliter lex nova est ipsa gratia Spiritus Sancti, quae datur Christi fidelibus*, IaIIae 106, 1). Thomas adds that this faith in Christ may be explicit or implicit (*per fidem Christi explicitam vel implicitam*, IaIIae 106, 1 ad 3). In comparison with the inward presence of the Spirit, all other laws — even the text of the gospel — are secondary; they point to the inward gift and grace of the Spirit, without which they do not heal but kill (*littera Evangelii occideret, nisi adesset interius gratia fidei sanans*, IaIIae 106, 2). Reflection, however, is important for discerning the action of the Spirit. This is most evident in the gift of charity, which is not limited by our natural and personal abilities, but comes as a created sharing in God's own love enabling us truly to love our neighbour (*caritas qua formaliter diligimus proximum est quaedam participatio divinae caritatis*, IaIIae 23, 2 ad 1). Again here reflection is required, since if one is to love one's neighbour as oneself, self-knowledge is necessary.

These excerpts from Thomas' writings begin to show a vision of human life and destiny that transcends any purely cosmological scenario. They give some initial hints of the task given to humanity to care for and actively build up a world worthy of people created in God's image. Insofar as this is a work of charity, no limit can be set to it, because it comes as a sharing in the unbounded love of the Holy Spirit (*Ipsa enim caritas secundum rationem propriae speciei terminum augmenti non habet; est enim participatio quaedam infinitae caritatis, quae est Spiritus Sanctus*, IaIIae 24, 7). Nevertheless, this call has to be incarnated within and through all the limitations of bodily life in a given society. That again requires a realistic grasp of human strengths and weakness, of opportunities and limitations, so that one does not attempt to build a castle out of dreams alone.

10.6 When Dangers Recede Risks must be Calculated

Each of the three facilitating conditions of modernity — time-space distancing, disembedding and reflexivity — contributes towards modernity being a risk

society. Although many of the dangers that members of a traditional or a class-divided society in medieval times would have had to contend with have receded, now we have to reckon with risks they could scarcely imagine.

Living in the 'risk society' means living with a calculative attitude to the open possibilities of action, positive and negative, with which, as individuals and globally, we are confronted in a continuous way in our contemporary social existence. (MSI: 28)

Increased time-space distancing exposes a person to a wide range of contingent events, about which they have little or no knowledge and negligible control. "In high modernity, the influence of distant happenings on proximate events, and on intimacies of the self, becomes more and more commonplace" (MSI: 4).

As a result of disembedding, everyone has to rely increasingly upon abstract systems, about whose workings they are largely ignorant. Although they might choose one system in preference to another (for example, a mode of transport, a medical treatment, a particular investment, a career, or a form of counselling), in the end they still have to take whatever they chose largely on trust. As long as they function satisfactorily, abstract systems confer many benefits. But "the wholesale penetration of abstract systems into daily life creates risks which the individual is not well placed to confront" (MSI: 136). There is little he or she can do to remedy matters if the currency collapses, if the systems for distributing water and power or disposing of sewage break down, if medical services collapse, or if the bureaucracy becomes too inefficient. People's dependency upon abstract systems exposes them to a set of risks that were unknown in pre-modernity, when local communities were more self-sufficient and trust more personalized.

Reflexivity makes a threefold contribution to fostering the risk society. One, the knowledge and information that people draw into their environments of action is far from certain. Much of it is a matter of conjecture; it is always open to revision.

Two, experts rarely agree among themselves. Systems of accumulated expertise “represent multiple sources of authority, frequently internally contested and divergent in their implications” (MSI: 3). So ordinary lay persons have to choose which experts to follow, thus exposing themselves to further risk.

Three, since reflexivity helps reorganise and reconstitute both the self and society it is endeavouring to understand, its findings are always necessarily incomplete. Operating with uncertain information and incomplete knowledge inevitably leads to risks. One can hardly reduce all the risks involved by undertaking a more painstaking process of inquiry and reflection, as that will reveal and open up a greater range of contingencies. In fact too much reflexivity usually leads to muddles and confusion, and a consequent heightening of the risks involved.

When taken together these three sources of the dynamism of modernity help to explain its juggernaut quality. Modern society is not totally out of control, but it does expose its travellers — who are in part drivers or navigators and in part passengers — to a variety of risks, not all of which can be predicted in time to avoid them.

Giddens contrasts the risk society of modernity with the dangers lurking in pre-modern times. Prior to the development of global — or almost global — systems of industry and surveillance, only those people who were physically robust and able to contend with various threats themselves could travel across the oceans or to distant continents. Each locality held its own dangers, due to weather, disease, hostilities, and the paucity of supplies. The dangers involved, however, were relatively clear and definite. Whereas today intercontinental travel is a reality in most areas of the world; travellers do not have to be specially robust or have any special survival skills. Thousands of journeys are completed without anyone facing any immediate dangers. Yet a breakdown in the overall system can always occur. The risk of a mechanical breakdown, a navigational error, a computer crashing, an administrative or operator failure, any one of which could precipi-

tate disaster, always lurks in the background. Nevertheless, people are prepared to travel, not because they themselves feel confident to cope with all possible dangers, but because they trust the abstract system will keep the risks involved down to a level where they do not have to be faced too earnestly.

10.7 A Receding Vision of Peace

In 1967 Pope Paul VI spoke of authentic development “for each and all [as] the transition from less human conditions to those that are more human” (PP 20). After describing some of the urgent tasks facing rich and poor, he said that “development is the new name for peace. ... Peace is something that is built up day after day, in the pursuit of an order intended by God, which implies a more perfect form of justice among people” (PP, 76). What is striking about this passage is that peace is put in the future; it is gained not through adhering to a pregiven order but by seeking one that is still to be built. This same shift from what is ‘already given’ to what is ‘not yet known or attained’ is evident when we compare Thomas’ conception of peace, which he largely took over from Augustine, with Giddens’ reflections on a possible post-modern order in the world.

10.7.1 Peace and Fears in Medieval Times

Although neither Thomas or other medieval writers claimed that their society was actually complete and at peace, they nevertheless had a clear enough conception of what a state of peace would be like. When dealing with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, Thomas writes that the fullness of joy is found in peace on two counts. The first is freedom from social disturbances (*ab exterioribus conturbantibus*), for one cannot fully enjoy whatever benefits one seeks if they are thrown into confusion. The second count is the quietening of restless desire, for one does not fully enjoy anything that does not suffice one. It is necessary for peace that we are not upset by events outside ourselves and that our longings

remain wholly united on one thing (*Haec autem duo importat pax: scilicet ut neque ab exterioribus pertubemur, et ut desideria nostra conquiescant in uno*, IlaIIae 70, 3). Both within each person and between people, peace lies in what Augustine calls the tranquillity of order (see IlaIIae 29, 1).

Thomas admits that only a true but imperfect peace may be gained in this world, because even if our hearts rest wholly in God, there are many disturbances that might arise within ourselves or come from outside to threaten this peace (IlaIIae 29, 2). But the impression Thomas gives is of peace not being too far away; it may not be attained, but it can still be described.

10.7.2 Riding the Juggernaut of Modernity

In today's world peace appears distant. Not only does the 'new world order' offer little tranquillity, but it is difficult to envisage what a truly peaceful world order would look like. All in all the three facilitating conditions — time-space distancing, disembedding and re-embedding, and reflexivity — that give modernity its dynamic impact "help explain why living in the modern world is more like being aboard a careering juggernaut rather than being in a carefully controlled and well-driven motor car" (CMOD: 53). Their effect is ambiguous; they serve both to enhance and undermine the quality of life of millions of people. "Without them the tearing away of modernity from traditional orders could not have happened in so radical a way, so rapidly, or across such a worldwide stage" (CMOD: 63).

Giddens describes the modern world as poised between the high-consequence risks of modernity and a post-modern order. Some alternatives he suggests are a general economic collapse (or series of them) or the emergence of a post-scarcity era; industrial technology could be humanised and become part of a process of caring for the planet or its undirected spread could precipitate ecological disaster; surveillance capacities could be developed — particularly the collecting and

communication of information — to bring about multilayered democratic participation or to institute totalitarian control; the world may either be substantially demilitarized or else ravaged by nuclear conflict or large-scale warfare (see Fig. 15.3 below). In each case the second alternative leads to “the other side of modernity ... [where] there could be nothing but a ‘republic of insects and grass,’ or a cluster of damaged and traumatised human social communities” (CMOD: 173). Since the dangers lurking on the other side of modernity should be evident enough to everyone, why is it so difficult to bring about a beneficial post-modern order? The risks mentioned above are not just hypothetical. Indeed, in some areas of the world, or in various quarters of the world’s cities, considerable system degeneration (see 14.8 below) has already taken place. But, since the problems are evident enough, why are they so intractable? Why cannot the dark side of modernity be confronted through well directed efforts and overcome? Why do so many projects to improve matters fail, or even make them worse?

The discussion in this chapter of the dynamism and the facilitating conditions of modernity makes it possible to give a first response to these questions. Giddens’ analysis of the risk society helps explain how various threatening tendencies are embedded in abstract systems which cannot easily be contested or overcome. The reasons that make contesting them difficult may be summed up as follows:

1. People develop a protective cocoon against the risks and dangers inherent in modern society that threaten their ontological security (see further 16.2 below). This cocoon is built up through trust, both a basic trust in themselves and in the abstract systems that support their sense of identity. Although this varies from one individual to another, it filters out dissonant or threatening information. So by and large many people find it very threatening or even impossible to tolerate any questioning of the abstract systems that uphold their ontological security.
2. A high degree of time-space distancing makes it very difficult to locate precisely from where harmful or beneficial influence derive, and also to assess

how one's own involvement in abstract systems effects others.

3. Low presence-availability usually reduces moral awareness. It is far easier for people to accept that they have a moral responsibility towards people with whom they are co-present, than towards absent others with whom they are only connected by abstract systems.

4. Disembedding mechanisms render people dependent upon symbolic tokens and expert systems, about which they have relatively little knowledge, only a restricted access and hence limited influence. Also due to their dependence upon them, people can only contest their aims and methods to a limited degree.

The marginalized, on the other hand, are without access to the services provided through the disembedding mechanisms of modernity.

5. Institutional reflexivity, whereby knowledge about society is reincorporated into it thereby reconstituting it, makes it impossible to eliminate all risk. No amount of knowledge or careful planning of one's actions can preclude them from having some unintended consequences, whether for good or ill.

For the same reason, grandiose attempts at social engineering have led to an increase in social instability, and so have failed to bring about the society planned, often with disastrous consequences.

6. Social inequalities and most likely exploitation occur at the time-space edges where various societies impinge on one another. The society in which the stretching of time and space is less will be at a disadvantage; their life chances will not be so great. Furthermore, "for all individuals and groups, life chances condition lifestyle choices (and we should remember the point that lifestyle choices are often used to reinforce the distribution of life chances)" (MSI: 86).

The coming of modernity results in some people being shown a range of new the opportunities, but finding themselves unable to take them up, because access to the means for attaining them is too restricted.

Although these six or so elements are distinguishable, none of them operate on their own. In practice they are intertwined and reinforce each another; thus contributing in not fully predictable ways to the juggernaut character of modernity. This, however, raises a moral question: if especially in social affairs the result is nearly always somewhat different from what one intended to bring about, what ought one to try and do? Does this mean that morality becomes confined to the sphere of personal relationships? Is it possible to elaborate a post-traditional morality that addresses the issues raised by abstract systems, structures and relations between absent others?

10.7.3 A Morality for Modernity

At several points Giddens mentions how the dynamism of modernity, its institutional clusterings and its facilitating conditions, cut through traditional morality. It has already been mentioned how the purer forms of capitalism have “no place for moral conceptions, social justice or patriotism” (RMC: 273). Likewise, the expansion of industrialism takes place through the overcoming of social customs and traditional sets of values. The surveillance mechanisms of modernity too has a universalizing tendency. They encompass more and more people in their ambit, assessing them as ‘normal’, ‘deviant’, ‘in need of education’, ‘undeveloped’ according to ‘modern’ criteria rather than in traditional moral categories.

Furthermore, the disturbing or threatening effects of distancing, disembedding and reflexivity, several of which were singled out, lead to our never being able “to feel entirely secure, because the terrain across which it [modernity] runs is

fraught with risks of high consequence. Feelings of ontological security and existential anxiety will coexist in ambivalence" (CMOD: 139). Knowing what morality requires under these conditions is not easy. In moving from pre-modern societies to a post-traditional one, tradition and habit have not been replaced by certitude, but by conjecture, risk calculation and weighing costs against benefits.

Part Two – A Recapitulation

These last four chapters have provided plenty of material for a kind of stock taking. This will be done by looking at how the various ideas that have been introduced might be used to address the four major themes of this study (see 6.1 above).

II.1 A More Social view of Sin

There is no understanding of sin as such, either personal or social, without some appreciation of the loving purpose of God. Thomas Aquinas depicts our ability as human beings to act freely as an inner moment within an invitation to respond to God and be drawn into his loving purpose. Human life is thus portrayed as both a journey to a destination established by God and an invitation to participate creatively in the working out of his purpose. This invitation comes from the Creator whose power sustains each and everything, in all their variety, activity and relations. It evokes in humans the ability to respond freely and creatively. Evidence of it is the propensity of human beings to grow, to cooperate, to foster lasting relationships, to develop their surroundings and enhance one another in society. The latter especially requires sociability and justice. Sociability, as a manifestation of charity, relates people to each other; justice regulates the activities between them. Charity as a divine gift does not, however, alter the framework of justice, but brings it to life and renders it authentic. Even the processes of regulating (custom and law) and directing (tradition and authority) the lives of people together, especially those that have become sedimented over time, have their anchor in the eternal law or wisdom of God.

When sin enters it makes a mess of this whole intricate process. It is primarily found in the free, deliberate and blameworthy actions of individuals (*culpa*).

These are efforts either to divert this process to the individual's unfair advantage or even to cut oneself out of it altogether. But sin is also evident in the afflictive repercussions of past actions (*poena*), which in turn act as a ground for further faults (*culpa*). Ignorance of one's situation or one's obligations, being overwrought with emotion, and gripped by vicious habits are examples of afflictive repercussions. Individuals, however, do have some degree of freedom against their tendency to mess up even further the whole process of people's lives together.

Self psychology has shown that the development of a mature self-esteem provides a basis for working with and relating constructively to others. Self-preoccupation, in its various forms, undermines that ability. Instead, it may engender similar deficiencies in others. In this way the findings of self psychology on archaic narcissism (self-preoccupation) and mature narcissism (self-esteem) parallel the relation between pride (*superbia*) as the prime source of sin and humility, which grounds all virtue, in Christian theology. Self psychology thus brings out how people may be unaware of some of the afflictions that mar their own lives, damage others' and weaken social bonds. These afflictions are largely due to injuries to one's self-esteem, particularly through others' failure to give support to the growing self. Parts of the damaged self may be split off, and so its activities go unrecognized and never be personally avowed. This can account for those outbursts of intense rage that aim at wiping the other out completely as he, she or they are experienced as a contradiction to the very existence and perfection of the self.

The various analyses of self psychology broaden the understanding of the cycles of faults and afflictions depicted in Thomas' theology. They show that more is at stake in relations between people than they consciously realize. Also self psychology in offering an expanded view of the self enables theology to overcome several inconsistencies in its traditional view of human action.

II.2 The Self Open to an Indefinite Future

Although Kohut, Giddens and Thomas adopt different approaches to understanding the self, all view it as developing through its being related to what is not-self. Kohut brings out the lasting impact that experiencing others has, especially early in life, on the structuring of the self. Three basic types of transference each give it a special kind of likeness to others. The pattern of skills, ambitions, and ideals that form the nuclear self shape its potentiality for relations with others, with society and with itself. Giddens looks at how the self has continually to take its past into account to reconstruct its own relations. Through transferences the past resonates in the present. Thomas' analyses of intellect and will, abilities that are specifically human, show how the self is formed by the understanding it seeks and the activities it gives itself to.

Elaborating a self is a human accomplishment, though largely an indirect one as it is achieved through the feedback that derives from concerns that go beyond the self; character comes mainly from the undergoing (*passio*) that results from action. Insight into one's own self, not just the awareness of being a centre from which actions can freely emanate, only comes later and is always limited. Only through reflecting upon one's actions and the abilities from which they arise can one come to some knowledge of one's self; its essence cannot be grasped directly.

Whether or not people will be able to acquire and maintain a cohesive self depends in large measure on the quality of the feedback support they receive from others and their society. As modern society emerged the kinds of support, or lack thereof, that people need to give and receive have changed. Both self and society are now perceived more in structural terms. This arises from the ability in modern society to separate time and space and continuously recombine them in different forms. Accomplishing a social transaction and its repercussions across the globe are far more highly attenuated in modernity than in medieval society. This opens up new human opportunities as well as more diffuse and persistent types of evil.

II.3 The Persisting Effect of Evil

A comparison of modern society with medieval times shows that has been a tearing away from the traditional conceptions of sociability, law, justice, and the community standards that regulated human interactions. These, when tried and tested, were seen as more or less the embodiment of the divine purpose in human affairs, as described above. But in order to keep modern society moving, time and space have been bound in new ways that present their own problems.

For instance, control by abstract systems, whether a government administration, or by business and the media, has to a wide extent taken the place of governance by rulers making and enforcing explicit laws. These reach into areas of life not previously touched. Hence, people may now have to contend with unjust, insensitive or inefficient systems, whereas formerly they were more likely to be oppressed by tyrants, who made unjust demands to satisfy their greed or vanity.

Furthermore, the increased time-space distancing and reflexivity have expanded the context in which people live, but that has resulted in a loss of contact with material reality, which in many instances has led people to a social preoccupation with their own bodies, their health and their social performance.

Also, instead of having to contend with fairly evident dangers, life in modernity is fraught with high consequence risks, which the average person has little ability to estimate or still less to counter. All in all, modern society is experimental, with the same people (ourselves) both experimenting and being experimented with.

The resulting fragmentation and powerlessness to deal with the unnamed risks of modernity heighten narcissistic tensions within the self. In order to cope many find it necessary to spin a protective cocoon around themselves to maintain a sense of ontological security. This, however, is liable to cut them off from others and lessen any readiness to review their own lives, involvements

and whatever repercussions these may have upon others.

II.4 Taking Responsibility for being Implicated in Evils

The Genesis stories of original sin bring out the ambivalence of the human condition. Although all was created good, humans are estranged in their relations with God, as man and woman, with the earth, between brothers, and between nations. An important step in a person's growth as a responsible human being is for him or her to accept having been thrown right from birth into a promising yet deficient human history. Besides offering support and holding out great hopes, both history and its future unfolding have their dark side. Accidents and inadvertent human failures, as well as psychopathology and deliberate faults, together with all their continuing repercussions, threaten human life and growth. All these factors contribute to the perverse pre-personal dynamism that is continually encountered in human affairs on both an individual and collective level. The vast complexity of modern society compounds these threats. They together with the marvellous possibilities that modernity open up makes it into a juggernaut, partially responsive to people's initiatives but never fully under control. One has to accept that one's situation is aboard this juggernaut and take up life from there.

As far as the dark side of human activity is concerned, it is possible to distinguish psychopathology from deliberate fault at their extremes, but along the continuum between them it is difficult to separate what results from afflictions beyond a person's control and what is deliberately undertaken. Actions, unlike many things, are not clearly bounded. By a process of feedback earlier actions set the conditions for later ones; one person's activity shapes the situation for others. No one starts life from scratch, but with a mixed inheritance that both enables and limits, as well as guides and misguides, their activities.

As a person grows, he or she is called to accept responsibility for this mixed

inheritance. Responsibility, however, differs from guilt or blameworthiness; they look to the past, to pinning liability on the person who brought a fault about. Responsibility, both for one's own life and at least some area of society, looks to the future, to taking on the burdens of the past and striving to overcome them. These burdens may have resulted from psychopathology, from inadvertent mistakes or freely undertaken activities; each of these too may have arisen from within oneself or be repercussions from others. These burdens too may be compounded by the failure to recognize them clearly enough, by efforts to avoid or shrug them off, and not accepting responsibility for working oneself to overcome them.

Today's world, due to its intertwined – yet partially hidden – complexity, cannot be viewed from outside, nor solutions prescribed as though one was not implicated in its problems. A starting point for an ethic that addresses the structural evils embedded in modernity, whether in society or persons, lies in the acceptance of responsibility, recognizing the burdens inherited from the past as well as the opportunities currently opening up. The call to accept responsibility is addressed both to persons as individuals and as members of various groups.