The following essay is an attempt to give insight into the philosophical foundation for the ideal of interpersonal justice so beautifully and generously embraced by the three great inspirational leaders of the Society of the Sacred Heart. St. Madeleine Sophie, St. Philippine Duchesne, Mother Janet Stuart all expressed their central conviction that justice begins with justice to the individual human being, the ground of rights and the call to responsibility. They recognized such justice as the manifestation of true love. Such love was not for humanity, but for human persons. It was not directed toward social institutions, but toward the development of persons who could influence such institutions by their own integrity.

In the Network of Sacred Heart Schools the promotion of social justice is very strong today, as indeed it should be. But justice must begin among the personal relationships of students with one another and with their teachers and administrators. The helping of those in physical need is a blessed work, but it will never fructify completely in the absence of right relationships in one's family, school, community, business.

The philosophical form of this essay acts as symbolic recall of the philosophical dimension present until about thirty years ago in the Sacred Heart curriculum: logic in the Second Academic Class; Rational Psychology in the Third and Fourth Academic classes.

**HUMAN PERSONS: THE FOUNDATIONS OF JUSTICE**

Like every philosophical endeavor, this essay aims to integrate our experiences as persons, that is, as people who are responsible beings. The special area to be investigated is that of *rights and justice*. It is my contention that there is considerable clarity to be achieved in this area by attending to the realm of the interpersonal.
It is John Macmurray who has told us that it belongs to the nature of humanity to be a "community of persons in relation" (*Persons in Relation*, 1961). In this context human responsibility means the ability to respond to other persons. For this reason responsibility is as important as rights. Also for this reason justice will prove to be not so much the proper distribution of material things (although this is very important) as it will be the proper ordering of interpersonal relationships. Such a state of justice is not something received with human existence; it is the result of human freedom exercised as responsibility in relation to the Good.

Hence justice is a social virtue concerned with community, although it is a virtue originating in individual human persons.

A human person, as Thomas Aquinas teaches, "refers to that which is most perfect in the whole of nature." (*Summa Theologica*, I). One's response to the value of the person takes the form of receptivity to the appeal of the Other. The Other as an individual appeals for the fulfillment of basic needs - life, liberty, food, clothing, shelter. The Other as person appeals for respect and generosity. Respect for the Other as for an end is the basis for recognizing the Other's right to be human to the fullest. In this view, justice is right relationships between persons.

The rival and more common definition of justice as giving to everyone their due is largely derived from the notion of the human being as an individual and a possessor. This was the earliest notion suggested to Socrates who rejected it as a universal principle, since it would necessitate one's returning to a violent man his knife with potentially disastrous consequences for others. Plato modified this common view of justice in the *Republic* to mean that each one should perform their own function in the State so that the proper functioning of each part - the commercial, the military, the administrative - would result in justice.
This view of justice regards human beings as complete human beings only in relation to their work, not in relation to one another. Unlike John Macmurray, it does not understand the authentic human person to be essentially related to others.

Nevertheless, in at least one section of his *Republic* Plato provided for community, and here community was grounded in the Rulers' relating to the Good. This relationship, this openness to the Transcendent Source of values united the philosophical community of Platonic Rulers in a fellowship that enabled them to seek the common good, the welfare of all, the fulfillment of the basic human needs of others, to seek Justice. By denying personal possessions to these rulers, Plato allowed them to concentrate on *being* the kind of rulers they should be, just rulers. And yet, even here the interpersonal aspect of justice is missed.

It was Aristotle who fully saw the necessity for friendship to exist in a State if justice is to prevail. (*Nicomachean Ethics*, VIII & IX). Although Aristotle did not elaborate upon the nature of human persons, he pointed to a situation that we can all experience, namely, that reality, insofar as it begins with me, is interpersonal. The Other is necessary for me to be, to be myself, which is to transcend myself. This interpersonal reality is our primitive condition. The Good appeals to us in and through the Other who, rather than limiting us, opens us to our full development. Human persons are the bearer of rights in the sense that they arouse responsibility in others. This responsibility is to the Good mediated through the appeal of other persons.

*Human Rights*. If persons are the bearers of rights, it seems necessary at this point to analyze what is actually meant by the familiar expression - human rights. First of all, they are intimately related to the quality of society for which human persons have assumed, as Pierre Teilhard de Chardin strongly teaches, responsibility for its evolution. Indeed, the, quality of society radically depends upon the existence of justice between persons. Persons are not confined
to the finite order; they are open to infinity. This means that the mind is related to Infinite Being as truth; the will is related to Infinite Being as the Good which comes face to face with us in the phenomenal world, appealing for justice: the right to be treated as persons - to be respected, loved, promoted. The response to the appeal, to human rights, is a response to God's command to treat persons as ends and never as means, to respect them, and to promote their personal development. This is the ground of justice. To become a just person is to accent one's responsibility to the persons surrounding one. Genuine commitment to God entails a commitment to justice, the right relationships between persons. Only when the relation between the person and God is right is there a real ground for personal union with others.

*Law and Justice.* Human freedom to transcend the self and respond to the other's appeal is the origin of human law in any society. For, in a temporal and changing world, justice needs to be institutionalized, and in every age the social institutions must be reviewed for their quality and efficacy. All irrational things are subject to natural law, but in the rational world, the law is subject to human persons - made by them and for them. The necessary evolution of laws to keep pace with the advance of human consciousness is achieved at the cost of individual egoism which diminishes as human persons take ever more seriously their responsibility for justice. Where there is no justice, there is no union, and where there is no union, there is no progress in moral consciousness. An organization of justice is a necessary complement to the spirit of justice in a society. Such an organization must provide for the continuation of the freedom to innovate and to progress which originally made possible the questioning of any present system. In freedom persons must be able to remain themselves. No order of justice trying to achieve social unity should violate the rightful freedom of individuals.
Love Basic to Justice. That is why love is basic to justice, since love always personalizes by differentiating ever more deeply what it unites. Teilhard de Chardin taught this. For him, love is not the passing feeling of this or that individual. It is the universal urge to unity in the universe, a unity of centers to centers, a personal unity. It is true that love is found at reduced levels in the impersonal universe, but at the personal level, it is guided by intelligence. As a freedom to respond to values, the human person can never be so united with others as to jeopardize that unique freedom which characterizes each person. The unity of persons, so aptly called community, safeguards their uniqueness when their individual relation to Infinite Being is acknowledged. This is because their relationship to God constitutes them as persons in their unique freedoms. To love God is to love those who are directly related to God. Through religion justice to others as individuals and persons becomes a sacred responsibility.

In this context, love, as St. Augustine so well saw, is the basis of justice. Justice, according to Augustine (The Morals of the Catholic Church I), is one of the four main forms of loving God. From the other cardinal virtues, which are named in the Old Testament, (Wisdom VIII) he distinguishes it as emphasizing "right relationship." Rightly related to God, persons are properly related to themselves and to the external world of persons and things. Not only does justice produce harmony within and peace among persons, but like the other moral virtues, it prepares one for the vision of God. This vision begins now with an understanding of what we believe. To the just belongs this understanding. Augustine thinks that the public order of just transactions among persons is impossible unless there are just persons rightly related to God. This Augustinian emphasis upon personal order as the preliminary to social order is constantly recurring. If a person is not rightly related to the Transcendent Other, at least by responding to the order of reason, "then, there is certainly no justice in an assembly made up of such persons.
As a result, there is lacking that mutual recognition of rights which makes a mere mob into a 'people,' a people whose commonweal is a commonwealth" (*The City of God*, XIX). To give God the just measure of love is to give without measure. It is but just on God's part, one comes to see, that God's comprehensive commandment should be a commandment to love. For, love is the one thing that is so much one's own that circumstances and people cannot interfere with the giving of it. Augustine reminds us that while "no other creature can separate us from the love of God," a creature can separate us, none other than oneself (*The Morals of the Catholic Church*, I).

For Augustine, then, a human being is a social animal by reason of moral exigency. The society formed with God as the common object of love is a just society because persons who are rightly related to God will enjoy personal harmony and social peace. This love entails justice, the responsibility of giving to the other what his or her dignity requires. Devotion to the common good is a sacred obligation flowing most immediately from God's command to love one's neighbor. This common good is the direct object of social justice. Augustine understood this when he said: "From this precept of brotherly love proceed the responsibilities of human society (*The Morals of the Catholic Church*).

It is noteworthy that in his directions on how to proceed along the difficult path of social justice, Augustine refers primarily to interiority: "....the first thing to aim at is, that we should be benevolent, cherishing no malice nor evil design against another." (*The Morals of the Catholic Church*). This justice, as the virtue which is the manifestation of the sincerity of brotherly love, does not remain within the one who loves. It is present within the objective social order of human goods. Some have thought that, while physical or psychological injury to another is an injustice, a failure to extend a helping hand, to respond to another's appeal is only, as they phrase it, a failure in charity (in the sense of giving when one is not obliged to give). But Augustine
unites these two acts and regards them both as failures in justice and failures in charity: "...a person may sin against another in two ways, either by injuring another or by not helping when it is in one's power" (The Morals of the Catholic Church). In fact, failure to love one's neighbor sufficiently, refusal to put oneself to inconvenience and unwillingness to suffer in order to assist another is called by Augustine *criminal*, a word generally descriptive of unjust acts of major proportions.

Augustine's conception of society as the union of all those who love God as their common Good does not eliminate the need for many different political states, many cultural communities, but by its emphasis upon the removal of all frontiers which separate persons from one another the world over, it calls for the developed nations to assist the underdeveloped nations as a social duty flowing from the law of brotherly love and grounded in the human rights of persons in need. If responsibility or duty to the eternal law of God, the law of brotherly love, is the mark of the rightly related person, the just person, this same responsibility belongs to the just State.

And so we see that Augustine situates justice within the order of persons, of interpersonal relationships rather than within the order of things when he gives priority to responsibility as the ability to respond to objective values. He defined the virtue of justice as the implementation of the law of love - the giving to God and to persons the response that is due to them, first, in accordance with their rights, and secondly, in accordance with one's liberality.

Clearly, for Augustine the foundation of justice is in God's eternal law, the criterion for the justice of all human laws. And, like Plato, Augustine thought that just rulers are indispensable for the attainment of the common good. As long as one is speaking of human rights one cannot divorce morality from politics. When by love one identifies with the other, one
will become aware of the human rights of the other as one is aware of one's own. In this view, justice to others is not attained through John Rawls' "Veil of ignorance" (a contract providing for the least members of society as though one might belong to that group), but through the open identification with the other in love. Augustine's view of justice derives from St. Paul's directives to the Romans. St. Paul clarified the way to justice, which is the way to personal and social order, and so to peace: "Owe no one anything except to love one another; for whoever loves the neighbor has fulfilled the Law. For 'Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not steal; Thou shalt not covet," and if there be any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying – 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.' Love does no evil to a neighbor. Love, therefore, is the fulfillment of the law" (Romans, 13).

It is not surprising that there is rampant injustice in our cities in a century when religion has been looked at skeptically and misrepresented by secular humanists. While religion is not a utility, merely to be used for human benefit, it so happens that religion advocates the love of others and provides the necessary power to love others. Such love is required for the constant and creative work of justice.

*Phenomenology of the Interpersonal.* In our day the phenomenologists have also underscored the relational aspects of human persons. Husserl's emphasis on consciousness as intentional entails the subject as relational, at least to objects. The subject is not something which exists prior to its relation to another.

But there is a phenomenologist who has stressed the human subject as ethically related to another human subject. Emmanuel Levinas teaches that in the phenomenal world the human face is an appeal for a relationship of respect, of appreciation, of affectivity (*Totality and Infinity*, 1969). This is not a relationship expressible in terms of enjoyment of knowledge. The expression
of the other's face is a commandment: thou shalt not kill. It calls for an ethical relationship; in facing us with a moral imperative, the human face expresses the Infinite and awakens us to responsibility to absolutes. Unlike Augustine, Levinas holds that the only approach we can have to God is the face-to-face relationship with other persons. In this interpersonal relationship the Transcendent, infinitely other, calls us forth to assist "the stranger, the widow, the orphan." The human face is the image of God, and thus the other person is the foundation of our refraining from violence, from injustice.

Thus the most primitive reality is intersubjectivity. All else is derivative. The experience of responsibility is therefore pre-thematic. The moral world is as real, if not more real, than the physical world. It is therefore consistent to die for moral principles, and social conditions arise as a result of the choices in accord with, or in discord with moral responsibility. To be a self is to be a moral personality experiencing the call to infinite responsibility. For indeed, personal existence or intersubjectivity imposes responsibilities to others, and, contrary to the Marxist position, social conditions do not dictate moral stances. The person is the responder to values, and persons are present in a variety of social conditions. But it is necessary to add that, although moral values are encountered phenomenally in the faces of persons appealing for justice, they are of transcendental origin. By responsibility toward values, which are transcendentally grounded, we show that we are receptive rather than constructive in relation to values. They come from outside our will, contrary to the Sartrian position. The Other teaches, requests, even commands our actions, symbolizing the Ultimate Other which can never be adequately represented. The relation to the other is neither one of knowledge, nor of possession, but of affectivity - an instinctive drawing and attachment to the Good. Within us, the idea of the Infinite which, as Descartes saw, is prior to the idea of the finite, is activated in the face-to-face encounter of human persons.
Whereas for Augustine, the religious relationship of the person to God with fidelity to the Eternal law of love is the foundation of justice among persons, Levinas presents a metaphysical ethics in which the Infinite is mediated through the response of person-to-person in the fulfillment of human desires. God is presented as a correlative of justice rendered to persons. Human desire for the Infinite, the Absolutely Other, is only satisfied by responding to the absolute value of the human person, and the desire is never satisfied. Desire before the Infinite is insatiable.

**Conclusion.** Nevertheless, there is basic agreement between Augustine and Levinas that the human person is the bearer of rights to which one responds because the universe has a transcendent moral purpose which all are called to realize. This purpose is the creation of true community wherein each one is enabled to be herself or himself as a human person in right relation to the Creator and to one another. Commitment to this task is a categorical imperative. Without it, there will be no justice and therefore no social order, so essential for true peace. To get what you want at the cost of injustice is to have lost what is most worth having - friendship and community. It is to have chosen alienation.

There will always be the reality of absolute otherness, personal existents, the foundation of responsibilities and rights. No person ought to subordinate another person. The pluralism of persons is the primitive reality from which we experience all else. The order of justice is based upon the ethical relation between persons. No legal system of itself can eliminate injustice.

Those who wish more justice in the world ought to concentrate on education, the education of women and men to personal responsibility in the great tradition of the Bible and of the humanities. Then the sciences may be able to serve humankind instead of enslaving it.

Only persons in conversation, face-to-face, can bring about justice. As John Wild in his
Foreword to *Totality and Infinity* wrote: It is only by responding to the other "....that I become aware of the arbitrary views and attitudes into which my uncriticized freedom always leads me and become responsible, that is, able to respond. It is only then that I see the need of justifying my egocentric attitudes, and of doing justice to the other in my thought and in my actions."

The Bicentennial Celebration of the founding of the Society of the Sacred Heart is a recognition of the passing of time; but more importantly, it is a time for reaffirmation of St. Madeleine Sophie's vision. That vision was grounded on the conviction of God's love for every human person created to image the Trinity in their love for one another. Energized by such love within one's basic interpersonal environment, all community service becomes an extended sharing of that love. Without this context, community service can often become mere self-service. Since our bicentennial celebration coincides with the bimillennial celebration of the birth of Christ, St. Madeleine Sophie would admonish us to focus on Christ as the model of personal responsiveness to the psychological and physical needs of others, first among his disciples and neighbors in Nazareth and Galilee, and then as Church extended to all people.

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