

us against those in the latter days who would teach that "at last we shall be saved in the kingdom of God."<sup>51</sup> There is little reason for concern or urgency if everyone will eventually obtain the same heights. Starting at the "bottom" and working our way up as eternity unfolds would not be too unpalatable. Time is one thing man has an infinity of; he might as well see and do everything on the grand tour.

The final judgment of God is predicated, not upon what the individual was "in the beginning" or upon what he *might* have become, but upon what he *did* become. It should not be regarded as a tentative, interim judgment that can eventually be reversed or modified. "Worlds without end" just might mean forever. That it doesn't is too great a risk for any wise man to take.

Mortal man is a dual being of spirit and flesh. He has been "added upon" with this second "nature," this body, so that he might bring it into submission to the righteous will of his spirit and "present it pure before God."<sup>52</sup> Out of the division and corruption of his present being will come the unity and perfection of his immortal being in the resurrection. "I say unto you that this mortal body is raised to an immortal body, that is from death, even from the first death unto life, that they can die no more; their spirits uniting with their bodies, never to be divided; thus the whole becoming spiritual and immortal, that they can no more see corruption."<sup>53</sup>

This is the true, the ultimate nature of man.

<sup>51</sup>2 Nephi 28:8.

<sup>52</sup>*Teachings*, p. 181.

<sup>53</sup>Alma 11:45.

## "MAN" AND THE TELEFINALIST TRAP

*Kent E. Robson*

Far too often, I suspect, when people begin to talk about men, their talk wells up out of strong feelings and emotional views and such talk pricks us deeply if we have contrary views. After all, we are all men and we usually react strongly to being told how or what we are or are not, especially if we disagree with what we are told. When we are pressed a little to justify our views we often grasp in the most careless way at any straw of support. Such grasping takes several forms. It may include ignoring certain data of the situation, or it may mean quoting a whole bevy of scriptures and claiming that they say something they do not, or it may aim at intimidation by the sheer force of vociferous indignation or vitriolic expatiation. One of the great merits of a roundtable such as this is that ideas and views are recorded in the written word, and a fundamental benefit of the written word is that the ideas may then be examined and re-examined and evidence assessed and re-assessed, independent of the rush of time and passions of the moment. The preceding two essays competently provide such opportunities for us, but I hope that this topic will continue to be discussed in many future essays because much remains to be done to deepen our understanding of the problems and issues involved.

There is much in both of the essays that I admire. I admire above all the cour-

age of the two participants to attack such a broad issue. Whenever we come to discuss "nature" or the "nature of" anything, the timid (and perhaps the bewildered) are quickly left behind, and the problems are only compounded when our topic is the intricate one, the "nature of 'man.'" Both of the preceding discussants have done much to indicate that Mormon writers have not been shy and timid in a discussion of this topic, and the two participants have ably sketched out interpretations of some Mormon positions.

### THE TRAP

In spite of my admiration for their handling of the issues, the work of both participants suffers, I believe, from a crucial and serious logical mistake. The mistake is not a new one (it was committed by Plato, Aristotle, Bishop Butler, and Lecomte du Noüy, among others). I shall call the mistake the "ethical argument from design," or it could be called, following Donald Davidson,<sup>1</sup> the "telefinalist trap." The steps in the "trap" can be described roughly as follows:

1. Man (man's nature) is thus and so.
2. This reveals a plan, purpose, or meaning.
3. The plan implies (suggests) a goal (destiny).
4. We ought to promote (cooperate with the planner in attaining) the goal.

The crucial mistake in the sketch lies in the step from three to four. In short, the argument can be formulated as saying: since we *find* certain characteristics in man (or in the world), we *ought* to act in a certain way. All such arguments I claim involve a suppressed premise. I want to show as clearly as I can why this is so, and I believe that it will be instructive to see how the participants make this mistake. Before doing this, however, let me say that there is much unclarity and confusion extant concerning the other steps in the argument sketched above, some of which comes out in the preceding two essays. I shall, therefore, begin with the earlier steps.

The very first thing we need to explore is what this Roundtable is all about. It is not enough simply to say "man." I know lots of men, but I have never encountered "man." I understand quite well what it means for this or that man to have this or that purpose or intention. But I find my understanding fails me when I contemplate what the purpose or intention of "man-in-general" is. The reason is that there is no such thing as "man-in-general,"<sup>2</sup> so surely such a thing couldn't have purposes or intentions. "Well," someone might say, "of course, we don't believe that 'man-in-general' exists as a person does. It is only a concept." I find this rejoinder entirely sensible, but how does it help us? For if "man" is just a concept—perhaps an abstract entity—then surely we can say that "man" *does not*

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<sup>1</sup>In the first part of this paper I am heavily indebted to Professor Davidson from whose lectures on ethics I have taken many of the ideas for this section of my paper. Naturally, I am solely responsible for any mistakes. The reference to "telefinalist" comes from the book *Human Destiny* by Lecomte du Noüy where du Noüy talks of the "telefinalist hypothesis."

<sup>2</sup>As Aristotle pointed out long ago in Book XII, Sec. 5, of his *Metaphysics*: "there is no universal man."

have purposes or intentions, since concepts and abstract entities don't have purposes. Only persons have purposes.

In fact, I believe that if we are to make any sense of God having purposes or intentions, we must conceive of Him as a person (certainly not as a world force or something of the sort).<sup>3</sup> There are some people who talk of the purposes of inanimate objects: of the purposes of tables, trees, wheat, the earth, the universe, etc. I find such talk hardly intelligible. I can understand how a person could use something (a table) for some purpose he (the person) has, but not how a table could have a purpose or intention. Tables simply don't have minds, which I consider to be a prerequisite for having purposes. Furthermore, if such inanimate objects did have purposes, I don't know how we would know of them. It is hard enough to guess or fathom the purposes or intentions of men. If we were to ascribe purposes and intentions to objects such as the universe, we would have to conceive of such an object as if it were a person (intelligibility considerations to the contrary), as Hume pointed out in the first few chapters of his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*. And so likewise with God. Hume observed that in order to make any sense of God having purposes we must conceive of God having a mind very much like a human: "Add a mind *like the human*, said Philo. I know of no other, replied Cleanthes. And the liker, the better, insisted Philo. To be sure, said Cleanthes."<sup>4</sup>

Second, since it is men who have purposes and intentions, and since men have many, many different purposes and intentions, it strikes me as highly implausible that they all have one ultimate, supreme, over-arching purpose, which we could describe as *the* purpose of men. Notice here that the phrase "the purpose of man" is ambiguous between (a) the purpose that some man has, and (b) the purpose that some other thing (a non-man—perhaps the universe or God) has for man. Only by taking alternative (b) can we talk of a purpose that applies to all men, and then the purpose is not their own purpose.

Boyd, in his article, points up the risk of using words like "natural" and "nature." Let me only mention one further difficulty that he does not. I claimed earlier that the first step in the argument from design was to give us a *description* of, for example, the nature of men. As it was formulated step one asserts: man's nature is thus and so. Some people, however, use the word "nature" as if it were partly a *normative* word, that is, as if a description of nature also tells us what is good, commendable, or what we *ought* to do. If "nature" is used in the normative sense, then we skip at once from step one to step four of the argument. Step four, of course, tells us that we ought to do something. Bishop Joseph Butler in his *Sermons* uses "nature" in this normative sense when he says "nothing can possibly be more contrary to nature than vice."<sup>5</sup>

Step two in the telefinalist argument sketched above indicates that a description of nature is supposed to reveal or indicate a plan or purpose. I have already

<sup>3</sup>See the perceptive essay "Theses on the Idea that God Is a Person" in *The Theological Foundations of the Mormon Religion* by Sterling M. McMurrin (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1965), pp. 115-140.

<sup>4</sup>David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (New York, Hafner Publishing Company, (1959), p. 38.

<sup>5</sup>Quoted in *Ethical Theories*, ed., A. I. Melden (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960), p. 208.

talked about purposes; let me add here a little about the notion "plan." Before theories of evolution were developed, people often used to believe that the orderliness of the world provided an iron-clad proof that God existed, since the order could not have come about by chance. Even now, some people think that evolution cannot explain the *unlikeliness* of the state of the universe, or how there could be a physical state of the universe that makes it possible for evolution to take place. What we are supposed to see as a consequence of this view is that there must be a "plan" in everything. What people often fail to understand when they make such a suggestion is that the unlikeliness of a state of affairs doesn't have the slightest tendency to show that there is a "plan" in all things (or any thing for that matter), for *every* other possible state of affairs is equally improbable. Just as in a lottery, it is extremely unlikely that Jones or Brown or whoever will win. Still, *someone* will win, and the unlikelihood is only a measure of one outcome, given a large number of possible alternatives. If someone I prefer (such as myself) wins the lottery, it does not prove chance was not operating; if the universe is one I prefer, that in itself does not prove it was planned. We should also notice that the relative probability of one outcome often depends on how we classify the evidence. For example, if we drop a large number of coins on the floor we can classify the probable outcomes either as "half heads" and "half tails," or as "coin 1 = head," "coin 2 = tails," etc. According to the latter method of classifying, the probability of a certain outcome becomes extremely small. We use one method rather than the other, I suppose, because the one is easy and practical to describe. The outcome of these comments is that unlikeliness tells us nothing unless it was planned. The state of affairs must both be unlikely and must be planned to be so. Then we can't use the unlikeliness to discover the plan, but must know of it *prior* to seeing the unlikely state of affairs.

Step three in our "telefinalist" argument is designed to impress on us that we not only must know that there is a plan, but also what the goal or end of the plan is. This presupposes that we can distinguish where things (man, the universe) are going from where they are planning to go. We can indeed often do this with human affairs, but even there it is seldom possible to be certain of what a person intends to do. One inexplicable act renders such explanation dubious. Unless we always know the goal of a man, for example, we can't help him along.

Now we come to the really important and crucial step in the argument. Let us assume that we know the goal of a man (or of all men). The question is: why should we help him (or them) along? Why should we do anything about it? The generalization "help people achieve their goals" holds morally only if their goal is good. We need to make sure that goal isn't diabolical, in which case it may be our duty to fight against, or attempt to frustrate, the achievement of the goal. Two puzzling examples may help to point up the importance of separating the questions "what is the goal?" from "what should I do about it?" Suppose we are walking in the mountains on a nice summer day and we come upon a cool mountain stream. Suppose also that we come by some process to see that the goal of the Demiurge (Plato's master craftsman and builder in the *Timaeus*) is to have the stream run down hill. What are we obligated to do about it? Perhaps the answer is to quickly remove our hat and begin wildly to scoop the water down hill so as to help the stream along. But this follows only if we know independently that the goal of the Demiurge is a good goal. If we believe, on the other hand, that the aim of the

Demiurge is a morally corrupt one, then perhaps our duty is to wildly scoop the water back up hill so as to frustrate the Demiurge.

To take another case, suppose we come upon a tug-of-war with five people on each side. What is our obligation? Should we pull on the winning side to "help processes along," or should we pull on the losing side to "assist the underdog," or should we perhaps simply step forward and cut the rope in the middle (after all, maybe they were trying to break the rope). Whatever we decide, we not only need to know the goal, but whether the goal is good and whether we have an obligation to do anything about it. Lecomte du Nouÿ, in some passages thought by some to be replete with wisdom, makes the silly claim that nature wants to "deepen the chasm between man and beast" (as if the Demiurge was trying to make men better and dogs and cats worse) and that therefore, "man ought to deepen the chasm," i.e., help nature along.<sup>6</sup> This, of course, only follows if one supplies the suppressed premise that "man ought to do what nature wants or plans."

#### BOYD AND TURNER IN THE TRAP

Boyd tells us that to understand man, "his *destiny* as well as his origin, his *potentiality* as well as his actuality, must figure in any description of his total nature. . ." (italics added). I have already mentioned that we must consider all men and not just "man," and therefore different men may have different destinies or potentialities (a position, I suspect, very much in accord with some passages of Mormon scripture),<sup>7</sup> in which case we would have to take note of alternative destinies and potentialities. But still the crucial question is this: even if we assume that all men have only one destiny, must we assume that all men should try to reach that destiny? (We presuppose here that men have a choice in the matter!) And the immediate reply is no! unless the description of the destiny imports some positive normative assumptions, unless we know independently that the destiny is good and that we ought to achieve it.

Boyd seems to admit that there are alternative potentialities, for subsequently he talks of the "highest potentiality." But in spite of this admission, he goes on to say that "to become Godlike [reveals] man's true nature." Here I am fairly certain that an unmentioned assumption is made, namely "that to become Godlike is good," and what results is that "*true nature*" no longer just describes man, but also prescribes in some sense what we should do, e.g., "we ought to become Godlike." But as I have indicated the passage from "is" to "ought" always needs explanation, and to think otherwise is to jump from step one of the "trap" to step four without seeing the difficulty. Perhaps the clearest statement in Boyd's paper of this crucial mistake is found where he says:

The presence of spiritual and rational powers within him [man] demand that he function spiritually and rationally if he is to live the only kind of a life which may be considered normal and natural. . . . The natural man, then, is the righteous man. And to live naturally means to live in accordance with moral and spiritual laws, the observance of which is the

<sup>6</sup>See passages to this effect in *Human Destiny* (New York: Longmans Green and Co., Inc., 1947), pp. 225-227 and *passim*.

<sup>7</sup>Cf., for example, Abraham 3:18-19.

only way man can actualize his divine potentialities. The sinful, wicked life is the abnormal, unnatural life for the simple reason that wickedness and sinfulness thwart the natural growth and eventual fulfillment of men.

In these passages one sees quite clearly the suggestion made that we ought to avoid the sinful life in order to lead the *natural* life. Here what starts as a *description* of man, ends as a *prescription* of what one ought to do, complete with the illicit, logically unsupported importation of normative elements into the description.

Turner, I claim, also makes this crucial mistake, which only testifies to the pernicious pervasiveness of the view that one can get moral philosophy out of theological psychology. Whereas Boyd's interpretation of the nature of men suggested that men are good, that they have high destinies, and that they ought to fulfill their destinies, Turner provides the mirror-image of Boyd's view: namely that the state of nature (with man in that state) is evil and that men ought therefore to fight against it. Using the example of the mountain stream, Boyd wants us to scoop the water down-hill, while Turner believes we should resist by scooping the water back up stream. For example, Turner says: "Alma, likewise taught that 'all men' that are in a state of nature, or I would say in a carnal state . . . have gone contrary to the nature of God. To be 'an enemy to God' is to have gone contrary to the divine nature. We are called upon to forsake the natural man and become a saint through the ministrations of the Holy Spirit." Now if Turner thinks that he is describing *as a fact* that men in a certain state are evil, no obligations follow from this purported fact without the additional (but unsupplied and unsupported premise) that "men ought to avoid evil." On the other hand, if Turner is not describing the state men find themselves in at all, but only exhorting us to avoid evil, then we may say "Good, we are happy to try to avoid evil, but now will you please tell us something about the state men are in?" Only by mistakenly conflating these two disparate aims can Turner get a prescription of what we are "called upon to forsake" out of a description of what men's state is.

The kind of subtle confusion I have been describing comes out clearly where Turner is presumably describing the separate natures of the spirit and the body:

The spirit's will is colored by the principles of intelligence it has absorbed and by its free and rational commitments to divine law. . . . But the will of the body is to be found in its structuring. . . . It (the body) is completely amoral; it knows no virtue or shame, and has no inhibitions. . . . Upon entering mortality, the spirit-man "mounts" this, as yet, undisciplined animal for the purpose of "breaking it" to his own will and making it his servant.

As before, if Turner is describing as a fact what the spirit is like, then the spirit has no obligation to "mount" or "break" anything without an additional premise: "whenever anything is colored by principles of intelligence and rational commitments to divine law, then it *ought* to 'mount' the 'body' and make it its servant," or something like this premise. I am not at all sure that this is a good moral principle. But I am sure that if Turner thinks he gets the principle for free, from a description of the spirit, then he is wrong. On the other hand again, if he is only telling us what spirits ought to do—and we may question why they ought to do what Turner says they ought to do—then still the question remains completely unanswered, "What

is the spirit like? Give us a description of it. Likewise with the 'body!' " If its being "amoral," "an undisciplined animal," gives us a description, then it has no obligation to let itself be "mounted" or "broken." If on the other hand, a prescription is being made that "whatever is amoral, uninhibited, and undisciplined ought to become disciplined, bound, and servant-like," then we still don't know what the body itself is like, and we need a description. By confusing the two separate enterprises as Turner does, the situation is left obscure and we do not know what Turner was intending to do: to describe "man" or to prescribe to "man."

*ATTITUDINAL VIEW VS. SCRIPTURAL VIEW?*

It is interesting to compare Boyd's and Turner's aims. Boyd's expressed purpose is "to describe the Mormon concept of man as it has found expression in the theological pronouncements of Church Leaders and has been entertained in the attitudes and feelings of the vast majority of Mormons." I believe Turner thinks he has a totally different purpose in mind when he suggests in his title that he will give us a "scriptural view." Turner may not have noticed that Boyd also claimed that "the knowledge Mormons claim to have . . . is based principally upon what is found in Mormon scripture." Both writers marshal on behalf of their claims several Church leaders as well as scriptural writers. In fact, they occasionally use the same people to make their points, as a comparative list will indicate:

<i>Boyd</i>	<i>Turner</i>
Joseph Smith	Joseph Smith
Brigham Young	Brigham Young
John Taylor	Heber C. Kimball
Wilford Woodruff	Melvin J. Ballard
Lorenzo Snow	Charles Penrose
Orson Pratt	David O. McKay
Brigham H. Roberts	Alma
James E. Talmage	Paul
John A. Widtsoe	King Benjamin
Erastus Snow	Abraham
Alma	Moses
Paul	Jared
King Benjamin	Nephi
Abraham	John
Moses	

Often both writers discuss the same passage of scripture, e.g., Abraham 3:22-28, Mosiah 3:19, Moses 5:13, Alma 41:11, and Doctrine and Covenants 93:33-35. One might have expected, with these similarities in purpose, in scriptures used, and in Church writers quoted, that the end positions of both papers would not have been so far apart. There is, I believe, a lesson to be learned from all of this: it is that the scriptures (or the writings of Church leaders) do not interpret themselves. They are selected, arranged, and juxtaposed to fit the interests and purposes of the writers. This is not to say that just any old interpretation of them

is possible,<sup>8</sup> but only to deny the egregiously partial view that we only need quote a series of scriptures and all questions will be, thereby, answered.<sup>9</sup>

#### BOYD'S POSITION

I believe that Boyd does a particularly good job of indicating to us the kinds of considerations that must be taken into account in describing the Mormon view of "man." As Boyd points out, Mormons take it as more or less undisputed that men are uncreated in some sense, that they are self-existent and coeternal with God, and that they are of the "same species as God" (however many gradations of species there are). This Mormon view is in sharp contrast to many traditional and contemporary views of man, in which man must continually fear for his existence—live in fear that he may be "blotted out" by a whim of God or of the universe." In many contemporary existentialist writers this fear of the annihilation of men gives rise to despair and pessimism, and Boyd correctly suggests that this kind of pessimism is not countenanced by Mormon theology.<sup>10</sup>

Likewise, I believe that Boyd has convincingly demonstrated that men could and did make choices between "good" and "bad" things before becoming "natural" (in the sense of becoming "mortal"), i.e., before being born on the earth. In the sense of "evil" meaning "contrary to God's will," Boyd has persuasively shown that the evil in man is not a derivative of the fall. This is an important and distinctive characteristic of Mormon theology, and sets it apart from many of the traditional Christian views.<sup>11</sup>

We also owe Boyd a debt of gratitude for his interesting and substantial discussion of the view that "the natural man is an enemy to God . . ." (Mosiah 3:19). For those who agree with Boyd's position, his discussion of this scripture provides an important alternative interpretation against other more negative and prevalent interpretations. Those who disagree with his overall position must take account of this discussion.

Let me add one last word of praise for Boyd's essay. I particularly like Boyd's emphasis on the "whole man"; man as a living soul; man as a combination of body and spirit. Boyd warns that to split man up into various parts and to talk of the parts results in "misuse(s) of language" and "ambiguities." I wholly agree with him here, and I hope to show him vindicated on this point when I discuss Turner's essay.

There are some points in Boyd's essay I have questions about. He writes that "all future development was potentially present in the original 'intelligences.'" This statement as it stands is terribly hard to evaluate, for it is unclear just what the claim is supposed to mean. Perhaps the best way to interpret Boyd's claim is to say that there are in intelligences attributes which will cause the future development.

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<sup>8</sup>See my remarks in the Bible Roundtable, *Dialogue*, II (Spring 1967), 86.

<sup>9</sup>After the insightful warning we received from Heber Snell on this method of using the scriptures in the Bible Roundtable, *ibid.*, especially pp. 71-74, I would suppose that writers would gradually see the dangers of this method and would not make such ambitious claims as: now, here comes the "scriptural view," where what is then done is to string a series of scriptural verses together to "prove" a point.

<sup>10</sup>cf. McMurrin, *Theological Foundations*, pp. 3-5.

<sup>11</sup>cf. *Theological Foundations*, pp. 57-68.

But Boyd also says just prior to the above passage that the intelligences have “continuity and identity throughout all time,” which might cause problems for deciding *what* is changing or *if* the intelligences are changing.<sup>12</sup> Similar sorts of problems could be raised with Boyd’s suggestion that there is an “inherent power in man to become Godlike.” Again, how are we to interpret “inherent power”?

In Section IV Boyd begins by making some remarks about “*the relation of function to responsibility*.” To illustrate what he means, he uses an example about a farmer growing wheat. In the course of the example Boyd employs some highly metaphorical expressions with which I have trouble making good sense. For example, he speaks of the thwarted “inner drive” of the wheat and of the wheat’s “responsibility.” I believe that only conscious agents, i.e., men, have *drives*, and that likewise only agents could be held *responsible*, since to make sense of applying the notion “responsibility” to an entity we need to be able to *praise* and *blame* the entity. And I don’t think we praise or blame wheat, since as Boyd points out wheat isn’t free to choose whether to realize its “function” or not. If we ignore the infelicitous wheat example, what remains of the claims when applied to men? We have here, I believe, another example of the crucial mistake described in the first part of my paper, for if Boyd is *describing* the function of men, then no responsibilities follow from the description unless some other prescriptive premises are added. If, on the other hand, Boyd is only exhorting, admonishing, or recommending to us that we should act in a certain sort of way, then it is the case that we could act otherwise. If that were not so, it would make no sense to admonish us. But if we can act in other ways, when Boyd does get around to describing men, he must admit that we have different “functions.” Furthermore, there are problems with how to interpret *functions* here. Are they tendencies, or necessary causes, or possible causes, or what? All of these problems apply to another passage in which Boyd says: “man *must* give expression to all his functioning powers, including his rational and spiritual powers, if he is to live *naturally*.” (Italics added.)

There is one more nice example of the confusion between descriptive and prescriptive claims in Boyd’s paper. He writes: “the moral *commandments* of God are *descriptive* of human nature.” (Italics added.) There is more of interest, however, in what follows this claim, for Boyd goes on to assert:

If this were not so why does nature deprive of life the man who eats and drinks in violation of the laws of health? Why does the liar find that people do not believe him? . . . The thief robs himself of his own integrity. The cheater cheats himself. The betrayer betrays himself. All this is so because ours is a moral universe in which only the highest and best possibilities are in keeping with the natural order. The laws of human behavior . . . are as unavoidable as the laws of physical science.

Perhaps the first thing to say about this passage is that nothing is more obvious than that the violators of the laws of health often live disgustingly healthy and long lives (to the chagrin of the rest of us). There seems to be no necessary connection

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<sup>12</sup>I think it is obvious that in order to advance this discussion of “intelligences,” we stand in great need of original work to deepen our conceptual understanding of the issues involved here. David Bennett suggested as much and even hints at how we might advance the discussion. See his remarks in *Dialogue*, I, (Spring 1966), 119-120.

between some violations of the health laws and a loss of life. Likewise, the liar is often believed and profits as a result, and when he isn't believed, it is because we have an institution in our language of truth-telling in which the liar must represent himself as telling the truth while concealing his real intention. Some people are just not very good at concealing their intentions. It is entirely conceivable, however, that we could have another institution, say of "lie-telling," where it would be the truth teller who would not be believed. I am afraid the moral situation is just not as clear-cut as Boyd supposes in the kind of Kantian universe he describes.

There is something fundamentally wrong, however, with the claim that God's commandments are laws in the same sense as physical laws. Consider a commandment like *Thou shalt not kill*. Here there is no guarantee that everyone will obey the commandment. Obedience here has real meaning, because lots of people have disobeyed this commandment. But nothing and no one disobeys a law of nature, say, the law of gravity. The logical point I am making is that people sometimes obey and sometimes disobey a moral or legal law, but such notions (and some others such as coercion and punishment) do not apply to laws of nature.

#### TURNER'S POSITION

The great merit of Turner's essay lies in his pointing out that men are different; some have high aspirations with respect to the gospel plan and some low ones. This is not just an empirical observation but a point of doctrine. Because of a belief in freedom of choice and a doctrine of progression or retrogression, Mormons believe that men may progress toward becoming better, or retrogress in the direction of evil. To call retrogression unnatural and contrary to the nature of men, is to *define* this aspect of human behavior out of the concept of man's nature, which by definition makes the nature of "all" men good while ignoring the nature of evil men as if they didn't have a nature (or purposes). Now, it is completely consistent to make these claims about men being different and still to believe that there are more good men in the world than bad ones—as Turner seems to believe—or even that there is some good in the most evil of men.

It is a little curious in Turner's paper that he announces he will give us the "scriptural view" and then immediately launches into Joseph Smith's "King Follett Discourse."<sup>13</sup> I certainly don't find this discourse among my standard works. Still,

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<sup>13</sup>It was pointed out to me by Kenneth Godfrey that the "King Follett Discourse" has had an interesting history. If you have a first edition copy of Vol. VI of Joseph Smith's *Documentary History of the Church*, copyrighted in 1912 by President Joseph F. Smith, you will discover that pp. 302-317, which were to contain the "Discourse," are completely missing. Although the "Discourse" had been prepared by B. H. Roberts to fit into the missing pages, Roberts was on a mission for the Church when Vol. VI was printed. Apparently someone didn't share Roberts's enthusiasm for the "Discourse" and left it out. It was not until the second edition of Vol. VI was printed in 1950 that the "King Follett Discourse" was included in Joseph Smith's *History of the Church*. Of course, the same version of the "Discourse" was printed earlier in *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith in 1938. I understand, however, that the "Discourse" did enjoy a fairly wide circulation before this time.

What some people may also not know is that there are different extant versions of the "King Follett Discourse." In some cases it makes some difference as to which version one quotes from. For example, Turner writes "Joseph Smith asserted that many Mormon apostates would share in the devil's fate." In substantiation, Turner refers to the "Discourse" (*Documentary History of the Church* version, p. 314, and printed in *Teachings*, p. 358) which says: "when a man begins to be an enemy to this work he

I do admit it as a legitimate source of information—along with many others of its sort—and we shouldn't narrowly exclude it by claiming to see only a "scriptural view."

We should be rather careful, however, in our use of even "modern day" scriptures. For example, Turner claims that

An analysis of the Prophet's teachings and of the standard works fails to support the assertion that man was morally good while in that unorganized and independent state of existence. Indeed, the issue of man's moral nature is not even mentioned until after the "intelligences" were made subject to divine law. The term "noble and great," . . . is applied to organized intelligences *only*. (Italics added.)

As evidence for this view Turner offers Abraham 3:22f. But verse 22 reads as follows: "Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones." Neither in this verse nor in those following is there the slightest hint that "noble and great" apply to organized intelligences only, or that these same terms could not apply to man at another time. In a continuation of the passage quoted above concerning when the terms "noble and great" apply, Turner writes: "men did not come under moral condemnation *until* 'the light' was revealed to them and they, exercising their God-given agency, rejected it" (italics added). In substantiation of when man came under moral condemnation Turner offers D&C 93:31 which reads: "Behold, here is the agency of man, and here is the condemnation of man; because that which was *from the beginning* is plainly manifest unto them, and they receive not the light" (italics added). Again the passage doesn't substantiate the claim. There is no suggestion of a time up *until* which man was not under condemnation for failing to receive the light. On the contrary! Men are always under condemnation whenever they fail to accept "the light." From these two above claims for which Turner offers the two scriptural verses mentioned, Turner draws the conclusion that "for all practical purposes, the moral nature of man had its beginning at his birth into the family of his father." Only now we see that this assertion is completely unsupported, since the scriptures offered as evidence don't support the claim. Here is a good example of going to the scriptures with such strong preconceptions that one fails to see that the scriptures offered as evidence for the preconceptions contradict them. It may be flamboyant to claim that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, but when it comes to theology, the scriptures provide some objective constraints and the beholder better have a fairly astute eye.

In the very next paragraph of his essay Turner makes an assertion of the greatest importance for the rest of his essay, yet he does so with such insouciance that one

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hunts me, *he* seeks to kill me, and never ceases to thirst for my blood. He gets *the spirit of the devil*—the same spirit that they had who crucified the Lord of Life—the same spirit that sins against the Holy Ghost. *You cannot save such persons; you cannot bring them to repentance; they make open war like the devil, and awful is the consequence*" (italics added to indicate differences with the following passage). But in the *Times and Seasons* (Vol. V. No. 15, Aug. 15, 1844) version, there is no mention of the word "devil." This version reads: "When a man begins to be an enemy, he hunts me. They seek to kill me; they thirst for my blood; they never cease. He has the same spirit that they had who crucified the Lord of Life: the same spirit that sins against the Holy Ghost. You cannot bring them to repentance. Awful is the consequence."

is tempted to believe he doesn't understand the crucial importance of his claim. He writes: "It is *generally acknowledged* that attributes, whether moral or otherwise, have no real existence independent of some spiritual or natural organism capable of manifesting or interpreting them" (italics added). What is at stake in this claim is one of the most thorough-going and important of philosophical problems: namely, the problem of universals. There have been traditionally three major sorts of positions taken on the problem. Some have held that universals (or properties, or attributes, or characteristics) are *real* things in the universe independent of minds; some have maintained that they are *concepts* in the minds of thinking beings—they are indeed real concepts but only in minds; and some have maintained that they are only *names* which are convenient for classifying things and have no real existence. People holding the first view are called realists, those holding the second conceptualists, and those holding the third nominalists. It is not entirely clear whether Turner is maintaining a conceptualist or a nominalist position (I suspect that it would be the former if it were made clear), but what is clear is that is false that only one position is *generally acknowledged*. To make such a claim is to ignore—in a way that undermines one's own position—the subtle and sophisticated arguments offered on behalf of another position, e.g., as in Bertrand Russell's chapter "The World of Universals" in his book, *The Problems of Philosophy*,<sup>14</sup> or in W.V.O. Quine's chapter "On What There Is" in *From a Logical Point of View*.<sup>15</sup>

When Turner says "there must be lovers and haters before love and hate can come into being," he should realize that he is propounding views contrary to Plato when Plato raised the profound question, "Do the gods love piety because it is pious, or is it pious because the gods love it?"<sup>16</sup> The first half of the platonic question suggests that there are good things, pious things, love and hate, etc., *independent* of the gods and even they must adapt their behavior thereto, whereas the second half suggests that if things are good, pious, loved, or hated just because the gods say so, then it is conceivably possible, as some of the medieval theologians claimed, that murder is bad only because God says so and he could change his mind and make it good and obligatory. Personally, I find such a suggestion morally abhorrent. Now I am not at all sure which way Turner wants to go on this question, but there is some reason to believe that he would have to take the latter position to be consistent with his suggestion that "God and Satan, respectively, personify good and evil . . . that make for the two antithetical poles of existence available to men." In other words, Turner seems to claim that man could not simply be good by adhering to good principles, just as God must do to be good as on the platonic view. Turner seems to deny that God and Goodness are essentially independent and to suggest that God somehow brings the Goodness into existence.

A little further on in the paper, Turner introduces in a most casual manner a view of "evil" that I suspect is quite controversial. He writes, "Suffice it to say, truth is the origin of law, law is the origin of good, and *good is the origin of evil*" (italics added). Such a claim sounds as if it has much in common with the classical Christian theodicy which was, as Sterling McMurrin points out, "constructed pri-

<sup>14</sup>(New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp. 91-100.

<sup>15</sup>(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), pp. 1-19.

<sup>16</sup>Any standard version of the *Euthyphro*, XII, 10 A.

marily on the Augustinian doctrine that evil is a privation of the good and has therefore only a negative reality."<sup>17</sup> But, as McMurrin further suggests, "the one explanation that does not appear in Mormon literature is the complete denial of the reality of evil." Evil is an *opposite* to good in Mormon scriptures and not something that arises out of the good, as we are told in 2 Nephi, 2:11-16. Turner appears not to have come to any final view of evil, however, for later on in the essay he writes: "To deny the possibility of evil in the very fabric of some men is to deny the righteousness in the very fabric of others. . . . Is there not 'an opposition in all things'?"

There are some little syllogisms presented by Turner to prove that man is not universally good. However, Turner's syllogisms don't touch Boyd's argument, which is that man is good because he is destined to be Godlike. What Turner's syllogisms turn on is whether man is *of* God, and that is surely a premise Boyd would deny on any ordinary interpretation of "of," since man is self-existent. There are two separate arguments at issue then: (a) that man and Lucifer are *of* God in some sense and (b) even if man is self-existent, is there something in his nature that destines him to become Godlike. Turner's syllogisms together provide a *reductio ad absurdum* argument for (a) but they don't affect (b). Notice also that the first premise in Turner's syllogisms is redundant, especially in the second syllogism. As the conclusion of all of this, Turner makes the extraordinarily impetuous claim that "needless to say, truth and logic are not synonymous terms. If they were, there would be no such thing as the 'only true and living church.'" This conclusion doesn't in any way follow from the supposition, nor from the little syllogisms presented.

When Turner begins to talk of "man," he tells us in colorfully metaphorical language that man is "a house divided against itself." Turner is only warming up with this metaphor, however, for he has more in store for us. For example, he writes: "the spirit is law-abiding and truth-seeking, but the 'flesh' is corrupt and untamed. It must be disciplined." When Turner really waxes hot a little later in the paper, then we find even more reckless metaphors:

Like a rider and his horse, they (the spirit and the body) are separate, but interacting entities. *Each has a will of its own.* . . . Upon entering mortality, the spirit mounts this as yet undisciplined animal for the purposes of breaking it to his own will and making it his servant. (Italics added.)

You will remember that Boyd warned us about the "misuses of language" that result when we begin to split up man, or the soul. I offer the above passages as ample evidence for Boyd's assertion. What Turner says here borders on the incoherent. Why is this so? Simply because he speaks of man as if there were in each and every man *two* persons, not one, as if these two persons were involved in a slugging match to the finish. I have heard extremes in this direction before, but I have never heard anyone audaciously claim that the body has a "*will*" of its own. If such claims were true, why would the body die when the spirit leaves it? Why couldn't the "*will*" of the body carry on with the body's activity and even glory in the fact that now it is rid of that troublesome "rider"? The answer is simple: there are not two wills, but

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<sup>17</sup>*Theological Foundations*, cf. pp. 91-109.

one, and when that "will" is gone, i.e., when the seat of conscious activity ceases, the body is dead and inert. When we are alive, it is not the body that has desires, beliefs, intentions, etc., but the person. It is not the body that has drives and instincts, but rather "I." I have them! I, the man, the person am responsible for them because "I" am the one who can make choices. It is entirely unintelligible to hold my body responsible since the body doesn't make choices; it doesn't have a mind; it is not a seat of conscious activity; it can't think and deliberate and therefore cannot be subject to "praise and blame." To carry over and apply these mental terms and predicates to the body is to commit a "category mistake" by applying the wrong sorts of terms to the wrong sorts of objects (unless one holds a materialist theory of mind in which the spirit or the mind is identified with the brain). It is as if one were to cuss a stone for not doing its duty, an obviously irrational thing to do, since stones are not the sorts of things that can have duties.

There is a totally different ethical problem that Turner may be concerned about here: it is the problem of how I can intend to do the best thing, and yet not do it. This is an old and serious moral problem, one that Aristotle and Paul were concerned with. It is the Aristotelian problem of *Akrasia*—"weakness of the will" or incontinence. But this is a completely different problem from the one Turner poses for us when he talks as if there were a war going on between the spirit and the body.

When Turner is finished setting up his dichotomy between spirit and body, he says: "man cannot act *in spite* of God, but only *because* of God. It is by his good pleasure that 'all things were made which live, and move, and have a being.' Without him, man is about as self-sustaining and self-directing as a chicken with its head cut off." Turner again fails to appreciate here that (a) his statement seems to go contrary to his earlier view that man is self-existent and the source of his own activity and (b) that his statement implies a controversial theory about universals as mentioned earlier, in which supposedly Goodness and God can't be separated. What is even more distressing, however, is that again, the statement is not supported by the scripture Turner quotes. Doctrine and Covenants 45:1 reads: "Hearken, O ye people of the church, to whom the kingdom has been given; hearken ye and give ear to him who laid the foundation of the earth, who made the heavens and all the hosts thereof, and by whom all things were made which live, and move, and have a being." Naturally this quotation has to be reconciled with a quotation on "intelligences" such as Abraham 3:18-21. But there is no indication in the quotation that "man cannot act *in spite* of God." Where Turner got this incautious idea from I can only guess, but it is certainly not from the Doctrine and Covenants quotation. Furthermore, there is, in the quotation, no hint about God's "good pleasure," as if God were sitting around eating grapes and then just for the fun of it decided to create man. Turner's remarks betray an, at most, impulsive insight into what he thinks God's pleasures are. I, for one, am not nearly so sure about them.

Turner is worried about the "eddies of humanistic philosophy" that are becoming currents by magnifying "man's virtues and minimizing his faults." He claims that "this has the natural effect of putting God and his word in a rather poor light." How should we take "natural effect" here? Is it a "necessary effect," or a "logically necessary effect," or an "empirical tendency," or what? If it is an em-

pirical tendency then evidence should be forthcoming, but none is. Even if the statement about "humanistic philosophy" is correct (which I doubt), I see no obvious way in which Turner's statement about a "natural effect" follows from it.

Turner started off by telling us that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, but I suspect that he only succeeded in describing his eye to us. He ends his paper with a quotation from Alma in which Alma describes how we will become resurrected and immortal. Turner asserts that "this is the true, the ultimate nature of man." We can agree that this is how men will end, i.e., as resurrected (if that is what ultimate means here), but what then? The implied question of the Roundtable must still be answered: is man good or evil?

It is my own view that when Mormons stress the negative characteristics of men they stand in a tradition which has had numerous vocal representatives in the Catholic-Protestant tradition. In so far as Mormons stress the positive characteristics of men, they come much closer to emphasizing a distinctive Mormon view.

I share Turner's concern about "eddies of humanist philosophy." However, I am not as sure who the humanists are. Nothing Turner said persuades me that the most insistent Church "humanists" are not perhaps the purveyors of an existentialistic humanistic despair of sin and woe. I, myself, would like to believe that the majority of men are more good than bad, that there is some good in every man, and that there is some foundation for this view in Mormon scriptures.