

Duty

INTRODUCTION

LOCKE, discussing in the course of his essay *Concerning Human Understanding* "why a man must keep his word," notes that we meet with three different answers to this question. "If a Christian be asked, he will give as reason: Because God, who has the power of eternal life and death, requires it of us. But if a Hobbit be asked why? he will answer: Because the public requires it, and the Leviathan will punish you if you do not. And if one of the old philosophers had been asked, he would have answered: Because it was dishonest, below the dignity of a man, and opposite to virtue, the highest perfection of human nature, to do otherwise."

With these three answers Locke introduces us to some of the alternative views on what is perhaps the central problem concerning duty. All three acknowledge the existence of duty and the force of obligation. By accepting the question they affirm the proposition that a man *must* or *ought* to keep his word. But why? What creates the *ought* or obligation?

Two of the answers Locke cites—that of the Christian and that of the Hobbit—seem to derive duty from the commands of law, the law of God or of the state, in either case a law to be enforced by the sanctions of a superior power. Accordingly, the citizen has duties to the state, the religious man to God. Yet it does not seem to be entirely the case that such duties rest exclusively on the *superior power* of God or the state. Men who obey either divine or civil law from fear of punishment alone, are said to act not from duty but from expediency—in terms of a calculation of risks and consequences.

Obedience to law would appear to be acknowledged as a duty only by those who

recognize the authority of the law or the right of the lawmaker to command. They would be willing to obey the law even if no external sanction could be enforced against them by a superior power. Those whom the law binds in conscience rather than by its coercive force obey the law because it is morally right to do so. The sense of the law's moral authority is for them the sense of duty from which the dictates of conscience flow.

Locke's third answer—that of the ancient philosophers—shows that duty is sometimes understood without reference to law, divine or human. We share this understanding whenever, having made a promise or contracted a debt, we feel an obligation to discharge it even if no superior commands the act. Here, furthermore, the obligation seems to be to another individual—to a person who may be our equal—rather than to the state or God.

As indicated by Locke's statement of this ancient view, it is the honest or just man who acknowledges such obligations apart from the law or his relation to any superior. Virtue may, of course, also direct a man to act for the common welfare and to obey the laws of the state or the commandments of God. But the immediate source of the obligation to act in a certain way toward one's fellowmen is placed by the ancients, according to Locke, in "virtue, the highest perfection of human nature." On this view, virtue alone provides the motivation. Without it men would act lawfully only because of the law's coercive force. Without it men would recognize no obligations to their fellowmen or to the state.

THESE TWO conceptions of duty—for the moment grouping the Christian and Hobbit an-

swers together against the ancient view—may seem at first to be only verbally different. It seems certain that dutiful conduct would frequently be the same on either view. Yet they do conflict with one another, and each, if examined further, presents difficulties.

The theory that duty arises from a man's own virtue receives its classic expression, as Locke intimates, in the ancient philosophers, particularly Plato and Aristotle. It appears in *The Republic*, for example, when Socrates has to meet Glaucon's argument that men abide by moral rules, not simply because they ought to, but in order to avoid the pain of censure and punishment. Glaucon claims that, given the possession of Gyges' ring which can render a man invisible to others, "no man would keep his hands off what was not his own when he could safely take what he liked." He could "in all respects be like a God among men."

Against this Socrates sets his conception of the "just man" who does what he ought to do because it is just, and because justice is essential to the very life and health of the soul. According to Socrates' way of thinking, it is ridiculous to ask "which is the more profitable, to be just and act justly and practise virtue, whether seen or unseen of gods and men, or to be unjust . . . We know that, when the bodily constitution is gone, life is no longer endurable, though pampered with all kinds of meat and drinks, and having all wealth and all power; and shall we be told that when the very essence of the vital principle is undermined and corrupted, life is still worth having to a man, if only he be allowed to do whatever he likes with the single exception that he is not to acquire justice and virtue, or to escape from injustice and vice?"

On this view, it seems to be the virtue of justice which lies at the root of duty or obligation. But for Plato justice, though only one of the virtues, is inseparable from the other three—temperance, courage, and wisdom. It is almost indifferent therefore whether one attributes moral obligation to the particular virtue of justice or to virtue in general. As the chapters on JUSTICE and VIRTUE AND VICE indicate, Aristotle differs from Plato, both with respect to the virtues in general and to justice

in particular. For Aristotle it is justice alone, not virtue in general or any other particular virtue, which gives rise to duty or obligation.

Justice differs from the other virtues, according to Aristotle, in that it "alone of the virtues is thought to consider 'another's good' because it concerns the relation of a man to his neighbor." The other virtues, such as temperance and courage, do not give rise to obligations, *unless* they are somehow annexed to or united with justice. Whenever Aristotle speaks of duties he does so with reference to the obligations that follow from justice—"the duties of parents to children and those of brothers to each other . . . those of comrades and those of fellow-citizens."

Whereas for Aristotle justice always refers to the good of another, or to the common good of all, such virtues as temperance and courage, when they are isolated from justice, concern the well-being of the individual himself. That is why only justice entails duties, which are obligations to act in a certain way for the welfare of others. If the good of no other individual is involved, it seems that a man has no duty to be temperate or courageous, even when he possesses these virtues.

Precisely because of the essentially social character of justice, Aristotle raises the question "whether a man can treat himself unjustly or not." He is willing to admit that a man can do justice or injustice to himself only in a metaphorical sense. What he calls "metaphorical justice" is not a relation between a man and himself, but a relation between one part of himself and another.

Aquinas seems to follow Aristotle in connecting duty with justice and with no other virtue. "Justice alone of all the virtues," he writes, "implies the notion of duty." If he also intimates that duty may somehow enter into the acts of other virtues—as when he says that "it is not so patent in the other virtues as it is in justice"—his position still remains fundamentally Aristotelian. Referring to that "kind of metaphorical justice" to which Aristotle appeals in stating the sense in which a man can treat himself unjustly, Aquinas explains how "all the other virtues" can be said to "involve the duty of the lower powers to

reason." Apart from this metaphorical duty of the passions to obey reason, duty in the strict sense comes, in the opinion of Aquinas, only from the precepts of justice, which concern the relation of one person to another.

ON THIS THEORY, duty is not coextensive with morality, the sense of duty is not identical with the moral sense, and specific duties obligate a man to other men even when no general law exists to be obeyed. Difficulty is found with this theory by those critics who think that the whole of morality, not simply one part of it, involves duties. Does not the sense of duty operate, they ask, in matters which do not affect any other individual or even the common good? Does a man, for example, have a duty to tell the truth only to others, but not to seek it for himself? Kant, as we shall see, holds that there are private as well as public duties, or, in his language, internal duties in the realm of ethics as well as external duties in the realm of jurisprudence.

The Hobbist theory of duty seems to face similar difficulties. The specific duties which are determined by the precepts of justice may, as we have seen, not always be the same as the specific duties imposed by civil law, though they will be identical whenever the law of the state is itself an expression or determination of justice. But when law rather than justice is the principle, duty seems to consist primarily in obedience to the law or rather to the lawgiver who has superior power and authority. Only secondarily, or in consequence, does it involve obligations to other men who are one's equals.

With Hobbes, for example, justice, and the obligation as well, begin only with the establishment of a constituted authority with the power of making laws. "Where there is no Commonwealth," he writes, "there is nothing unjust. So that the nature of justice consisteth in keeping of valid covenants; but the validity of covenants begins not but with the constitution of a civil power, sufficient to compel men to keep them." Duty and justice are both said to be "laws of nature," but, Hobbes adds, they "are not properly laws, but qualities that dispose men to peace, and to obedience," until "a Commonwealth is once settled," and then

they become "the commands of the Commonwealth." In other words, "it is the Sovereign power that obliges men to obey them," and obedience, which is said to be "part also of the law of nature," is its proper expression.

So far the two conceptions conflict or at least diverge. But if the legal theory of duty goes no further than the enactments of the state, the same question arises here as before. Does a man have no duties apart from his relation to the state? Can duty be coextensive with morality if the only rules of conduct to be obeyed are laws imposed from without—regulations which have authority simply because they come from one who has the right to command? Again, as we shall see, Kant would say no.

WE HAVE now stated the questions about duty which raise difficulties for Aristotle and Hobbes. Though they differ in their theories of law and justice, as well as in their conceptions of duty, they seem to concur in thinking that doing one's duty does not exhaustively solve all moral problems.

The same questions do not, however, seem to present difficulties to other moralists—to Kant and to the Stoics of antiquity, such as Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus. On the contrary, their moral philosophy, by making the sphere of duty coextensive with the whole of moral life, seems to prevent such questions from being raised.

As we turn to examine their conception of duty, we must observe that, in two respects, it alters Locke's threefold division of the answer to the question, Why must a man keep his word? In the first place, Locke's statement of the answer given by "the ancient philosophers" seems to have only Plato and Aristotle in mind, certainly not the Stoics. In the second place, Locke's statement of the Christian position seems to associate it with the Hobbist answer, against that of Plato and Aristotle. That association may be justified on the ground that duty to God, like duty to the state, involves obligation to a superior. But Aquinas, as we have seen, seems to agree with Aristotle about justice as a source of duty; and, as we shall see, he also seems to agree with Kant and

the Stoics about the pervasiveness of duty in the realm of morals. Locke's statement of the Christian position, which selects one aspect of it only, may therefore be inadequate.

The point which unites Kant, the Stoics, and Aquinas is their agreement concerning the existence of a law which is neither enacted by the state nor proclaimed by God in his revealed commandments. This law the Stoics speak of as "the law of reason," Aquinas calls "the natural law," and Kant conceives to be "the moral law within." The common conception thus variously expressed is more fully treated in the chapter on LAW; but that ampler discussion is not needed to perceive that the law of reason or of nature is a moral law, in that its general principles and detailed precepts govern the entire range of moral acts.

"Morality," according to Kant, "consists in the reference of all action to the legislation which alone can render a kingdom of ends possible." By this he means that "the will is never to act on any maxim which could not without contradiction be also a universal law." This law is also moral in the sense that it exercises only moral authority and should prevail even without the support of the external sanctions which accompany the positive commands of a superior. "The idea of duty," Kant declares, "would alone be sufficient as a spring [of action] even if the spring were absent which is connected by forensic legislation . . . namely external compulsion."

Making the natural or moral law the principle of duty introduces the element of obligation into every moral act. Whatever is right to do we are obliged to do in conformity to the law of nature or in obedience to the commands of the moral law. We need no external promulgation of this law—*i.e.*, no express formulation in words by a lawgiver—for this law is inherent in reason itself. Its various maxims or precepts can be deduced from what Aquinas calls the "first principle . . . of the practical reason" and Kant "the categorical imperative." Or, as the Stoics say, since reason is the "ruling principle" in man, man's duty consists in "holding fast" to it and "going straight on" so that it has "what is its own."

On this theory, we are obliged in con-

science to do whatever reason declares right, whether or not others are directly involved. The distinction between public and private morality—between the spheres of justice and the other virtues—is irrelevant to conscience. Conscience, according to Kant, functions equally in the spheres of internal and external duty. In both the realm of ethics and the realm of jurisprudence, conscience, applying the moral law, dictates our duty in the particular case. We stand in no different relation to ourselves and others, since the moral law is universally and equally binding on all persons. The obligation is in every case to obey the law. It is not a duty to persons, *except* as the moral law commands us to respect the dignity of the human person, ourselves and others alike.

The element of a superior commanding an inferior seems to be present in this conception of duty through the relation of reason to the will and appetites of man. Acting dutifully consists in the submission of the will to reason, and in overcoming all contrary inclinations or desires. But though Kant sometimes speaks in these terms, he also conceives duty as carrying with it an obligation to God. "The subjective principle of a responsibility for one's deeds before God," he says, is "contained, though it be only obscurely, in every moral self-consciousness."

Nevertheless, Kant insists that "the Christian principle of *morality* itself is not theological." It rests, in his opinion, on the "autonomy of pure practical reason, since it does not make the knowledge of God and his will the foundation of these laws, but only of the attainment of the *summum bonum*, on the condition of following these laws, and it does not even place the proper *spring* of this obedience in the desired results, but solely in the conception of duty, as that of which the faithful observance alone constitutes the worthiness to obtain those happy consequences."

It is "through the *summum bonum* as the object and final end of pure practical reason" that, in Kant's view of Christian morality, we pass from moral philosophy to "*religion*, that is, to the *recognition of all duties as divine commands*." Christian theologians like Aquinas and Calvin, however, seem to go fur-

ther than Kant in equating conformity to the moral law—or the natural law of reason—with religious obedience to God. Nor does he explain this equivalence by reference to the fact that God has made man's attainment of the *summum bonum*—or eternal happiness—depend on his free compliance with the moral law. Rather, for Aquinas, the natural law is “nothing else than the rational creature's participation in the eternal law” of God—the “imprint on us of the divine light.” As God is the author of man's nature and reason, so is He the ultimate authority behind the commands of the natural law which He implanted in man's reason at creation.

For Christian theologians like Aquinas and Calvin, duty to God involves obedience to the moral law which reason can discover by itself, no less than obedience to those positive commandments which God has revealed to man. Aquinas seems to think that violation of the natural law is as much a sin as violation of the divine law. Both involve a rupture of that order laid down by God, the one “in relation to the rule of reason, in so far as all our actions and passions should be commensurate with the rule of reason,” the other “in relation to the rule of the divine law.” Thus, in all moral matters, it would appear that duty is, in William Wordsworth's phrase, “stern daughter of the voice of God.” If the natural law commands us to use our faculties to the ends for which they were created, then the possession of a mind imposes upon us what Socrates in the *Apology* calls man's “duty to inquire.” If we fail to seek the truth, we sin against God by sinning against our nature, even though “Thou shalt seek the truth” is nowhere explicitly prescribed in Holy Writ.

The mathematician G. H. Hardy tells us that “a man's first duty . . . is to be ambitious”; for in his opinion, “all substantial contributions to human happiness have been made by ambitious men.”

ETHICAL DOCTRINES can be classified according to the role which they assign to duty as a moral principle. There is perhaps no more fundamental issue in moral philosophy than that between the ethics of duty and the ethics

of pleasure or happiness. This issue obviously belongs to the chapters on HAPPINESS and PLEASURE AND PAIN as well as the present one. All three must be read together—and perhaps also the chapters on DESIRE, LAW, and VIRTUE AND VICE—to complete the picture.

According to the morality of duty, every act is to be judged for its obedience to law, and the basic moral distinction is between right and wrong. But where pleasure or happiness are central, the basic distinction is between good and evil, and desire rather than law sets the standard of appraisal. An analysis of means and ends and a theory of the virtues are usually found in the ethics of happiness, as a theory of conscience and sanctions is usually prominent in the ethics of duty.

At one extreme, there is the position which totally excludes the concept of duty. This fact more than any other characterizes the Epicureanism of Lucretius. The good life for him is one where man craves nothing “except that pain be absent from the body/And mind enjoy delight, with fear dispelled, /Anxiety gone.” The life he describes—so disciplined and moderated that all but the simplest pleasures are relinquished in the effort to avoid pain—seems to leave no place for obligation or social responsibility.

In the much more elaborate moral philosophy of Aristotle, virtue entails moderation in the avoidance of pain as well as in the pursuit of pleasure. Though he admits that “most pleasures might perhaps be bad without qualification,” Aristotle claims that “the chief good,” which is happiness, “would involve some pleasure.” But even as a good, pleasure is not the only good, for there are other objects of desire.

The happy man, according to Aristotle, is one who somehow succeeds in satisfying all his desires by seeking the various kinds of goods in some order and relation to one another. Happiness itself is something that “we choose always for itself and never for the sake of something else.” Although we may also choose other things in some sense for themselves, such as “honor, pleasure, reason, and every virtue,” still they are chosen “for the sake of happiness,” since we judge them as “the means by which we shall be happy.”

In Aristotle's ethics of happiness, duty is not entirely excluded, but neither is it given any independent significance. As we have seen, it is merely an aspect of the virtue of justice, and amounts to no more than the just man's acknowledgment of the debt he owes to others; or his recognition that he is under some obligation to avoid injuring other men and to serve the common good.

At the other extreme, there is the position which identifies the sense of duty with the moral sense. In the Stoicism of Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus, to live well is to do one's duty, and to set aside all contrary desires. "It is thy duty," the Emperor writes, "to order thy life well in every single act; and if every act does its duty, as far as is possible, be content; and no one is able to hinder thee so that each act shall not do its duty." Man is not destined to be happy; his happiness consists rather in doing what is required of him at his post of duty in the order of the universe. The only good is a good will, a dutiful will, a will which conforms itself to the law of nature.

Kant's much more elaborate moral philosophy presents the same fundamental teachings. This is indicated by the fact that he associates what he calls *eudaemonism* (i.e., the ethics of happiness) with *hedonism* (i.e., the ethics of pleasure). Happiness, he writes, is "a rational being's consciousness of the pleasantness of life uninterruptedly accompanying his whole existence," and its basis is "the principle of self-love." Therefore, according to Kant, both *eudaemonism* and *hedonism* commit the same error. Both "undermine morality and destroy its sublimity, since they put the motives to virtue and to vice in the same class, and only teach us to make a better calculation." Both admit desire as a moral criterion of good and evil. Both are utilitarian in that they are concerned with consequences, with means and ends. Both measure the moral act by reference to the end it serves.

For Kant, "an action done from duty derives its moral worth, not from the purpose which is to be attained by it, but from the maxim by which it is determined, and therefore does not depend on the realization of the object of the action, but merely on the principle of volition

by which the action has taken place, without any regard to any object of desire . . . Duty," he goes on to say, "is the necessity of acting from respect for the law." From this he argues that duty, and consequently all moral action, must be done because it is right, because the law commands it, and for no other reason. The recommendation of any action solely on the ground that it will contribute to happiness as satisfying the inclination of the person and achieving the object of the will, is completely ruled out. That would be a judgment of pure expediency. Worse than *not* moral, it is, in the opinion of Kant, *immoral*.

"An action done from duty," Kant writes, "must wholly exclude the influence of inclination, and with it every object of the will, so that nothing remains which can determine the will except objectively the law, and subjectively pure respect for this practical law, and consequently the maxim that I should follow this law even to the thwarting of all my inclinations . . . The pre-eminent good which we call moral can therefore consist in nothing else than the conception of law in itself, which certainly is only possible in a rational being in so far as this conception, and not the expected effect, determines the will."

This law, which is the source of duty and of all moral action, is Kant's famous "categorical imperative"—or, in other words, reason's unconditional command. According to its decree, Kant declares, "I am never to act otherwise than so that I could also will that my maxim should become a universal law." By obeying the categorical imperative, we can know and do our duty and rest assured that our will is morally good. "I do not, therefore, need any far-reaching penetration to discern what I have to do," Kant writes, "in order that my will may be morally good. Inexperienced in the course of the world, incapable of being prepared for all its contingencies, I only ask myself: Canst thou also will that thy maxim should be a universal law? If not, then it must be rejected, and that not because of a disadvantage accruing from it to myself, or even to others, but because it cannot enter as a principle into a possible universal legislation."

To say that a man *ought* to do this or refrain

from doing that *in order to* achieve happiness is, for Kant, at best a conditional obligation, ultimately a specious one since he is not unconditionally obliged to be happy. Kant does not totally exclude happiness or the *summum bonum*. In fact he says that there is no need to maintain "an opposition" between them and morality. But he claims that "the moment duty is in question we should take no account of happiness." Just as Aristotle treats duty only in terms of justice, so Kant considers happiness to have a moral quality only insofar as to be worthy of it is an end set by the moral law.

TWO OTHER voices join in this great argument concerning duty and happiness. One is that of J. S. Mill, whose *Utilitarianism* recognizes Kant as the chief opponent of an ethics of happiness. Though Mill differs from Aristotle on many points, particularly in regard to the virtues as means to happiness, Mill's answer to Kant can be read as a defense of Aristotle as well as of his own theory.

From Kant's point of view, they are both utilitarians. They both argue in terms of means and ends. They both make purely pragmatic, not moral, judgments—judgments of expediency instead of judgments of right and wrong.

From Mill's point of view, Aristotle like himself needs no other principle of morality than happiness, an ultimate end which justifies every means that tends toward its realization. "The ultimate sanction of all morality, external motives apart," Mill writes, "is a subjective feeling in our own minds." He asserts that "when once the general happiness is recognized as the ethical standard," it will appeal to "a powerful natural sentiment." Man's nature as a social being, he holds, "tends to make him feel it one of his natural wants that there should be harmony between his feelings and aims and those of his fellow-creatures."

This conviction, in persons who have it, "does not present itself to their minds as a superstition of education, or a law despotically imposed by the power of society, but as an attribute which it would not be well for them to be without." This conviction, rather than an internal sense of obligation or fear of external sanctions imposed by a superior power, is

for Mill "the ultimate sanction of the greatest happiness morality"—which aims at the greatest happiness for the greatest number.

Where Mill answers Kant by excluding duty—even from considerations of justice—Aquinas seems to develop an analysis in which every moral act can be regarded as obeying or disobeying the natural law and yet, at the same time, be judged as a means which serves or fails to serve the ultimate end of man's natural desire. "The order of the precepts of the natural law is," in the words of Aquinas, "according to the order of natural inclinations." The dilemma set up by the opposition between duty and happiness seems to be denied, or at least avoided, by a theory which finds a perfect parallelism between the precepts of natural law and the objects of natural desire, a parallelism resulting from their common source in the creation of human nature by God.

THE TENSION between duty and desire—between obedience to rules of conduct and unrestrained indulgence—is one of the burdens which no other animal except man must bear. It is a constant theme in the great poems. It is pivotal to the plot of most of the great love stories. It is a theme of tragedy, for in whichever direction the tension is resolved—whether in the line of duty (as by Aeneas forsaking Dido) or in disobedience to law (as by Adam yielding to Eve in *Paradise Lost*)—ruin results.

The tragedy of being both rational and animal seems to consist in *having to choose* between duty and desire rather than in making any particular choice. It may be significant, however, that the tragic heroes of poetry more frequently abandon duty than desire or love, though seldom without mortal punishment, preceded by a deep sense of their transgression. Sometimes, however, they are self-deceived, and cloak desire in the guise of duty.

There is another source of tragic conflict in the sphere of duty. Men are torn by competing loyalties, obligations which pull them in opposite directions. In the basic relationships of the family, the duty a man owes to his parents often cannot be discharged without violating or neglecting obligations to his wife. When

the moral law and the law of the state command contrary actions, duty is weighed against duty in an ordeal of conscience. Sometimes, however, one obligation seems to take clear precedence over another, as in the mind of Sophocles' Antigone, for whom the king's edict loses its authority when it runs counter to the law of God. Creon the king, not Antigone his subject, may be the play's more tragic personage. He sacrifices a dearly beloved son to uphold the authority he considers it his duty as a ruler to maintain.

If man is not a rational animal or if, whatever his nature, reason is not its ruling principle, then the sense of duty would appear to be an imposture that draws its driving force from the emotional energies with which certain man-made rules of conduct are invested. Rather than acting as a counterweight to desire, duty is itself the shape which certain desires take to combat others.

Weber cites with approval Nietzsche's theory of "resentment"—a theory that "regards the moral glorification of mercy and brotherliness as a 'slave revolt in morals' among those who are disadvantaged . . . The ethic of 'duty,' " he then goes on to say, "is thus considered a product of 'repressed' sentiments for vengeance on the part of banal men who 'displace' their sentiments because they are powerless . . . They resent the way of life of the lordly stratum who live free of duties."

Conscience, or the *super-ego*, according to Freud, is born of the struggle between the *ego* and the *id*. Translated into "popular language," Freud tells us, "the ego stands for reason and circumspection, while the *id* stands for the untamed passions." What may originally have had a necessary function to perform in the psychic economy can grow to play too dominant a part. For the psychoanalyst, not tragedy but neurosis results from an overdeveloped sense of duty. When "the ego [is] forced to acknowledge its weakness," Freud explains, it

"breaks out into anxiety: reality anxiety in face of the external world, normal anxiety in face of the super-ego, and neurotic anxiety in face of the strength of the passions in the *id*."

THE RELATION of ruler and ruled in the domestic or the political community may seem at first to impose duties or obligations only on the ruled. The ruler commands. His subjects are obliged to obey. Does the ruler in turn have no duties, no obligations to those whom he governs? If he has none, then neither have the persons he rules rights which he must respect. Such absolute rule—defined by a correlative absence of duties in the ruler and rights in the ruled—has been one conception of the relation between master and slave.

In the state rulers who are merely officeholders are obligated by the duties of their office as well as vested with its authority and power. The officeholder, duty-bound by the constitution, is not an absolute ruler. He is, in fact, a servant of the state, not its master. The medieval king who pledged himself in his coronation oath to discharge the duties of his office may not have been bound by human law, but so long as his conscience kept him loyal to his pledge, he recognized the supremacy of the natural law or of the law of God. The self-governing citizen of a republic is similarly duty-bound only when he recognizes the supremacy of the common good.

According to the theory of constitutional government, rights and duties are correlative. The acknowledgment of duties signifies that the holder of rights recognizes their limited or conditional character. To consider oneself entirely exempt from duties or obligations is to regard one's rights as absolute. Can anyone have absolute rights except on condition of being without a superior of any sort? One implied answer to this question is that neither despot nor state, but only God, is autonomous or without duty.