

Samaritan Ethics, Systems Science and Society¹

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Abstract

Contemporary approaches to ethics are centred upon utilitarian and formal ethics. Yet, these are not capable of counteracting the moral crisis in our society. We must move beyond self-interest or merely doing what is specified in codes, to Samaritan ethics, which means attending to the needs of our neighbour even when he is unable to repay us. This ethic has systemic properties; therefore, it can be incorporated into an appropriate systems science framework that includes the humanities and the historical mode of reasoning. Furthermore, rather than social, economic and political manipulation, education — in the classical humanist tradition — should be the appropriate method to help implement such ethics into our societies.

Keywords: ethics, multi-modal, humanism, community

1 Introduction

My purpose is to explore what type of ethics our society needs and how this ethic should be incorporated into systems science and injected into our communities in a manner that is non-manipulative and that respects human dignity. We start by referring to research into communities that presents a rather disturbing picture of their ethical state and links it to several other critical factors that form an exacerbating situation. Given that there is a concern, especially within governments, for this situation, we examine three ethical approaches. The first one is utilitarian ethics which drives much of our economy and which subjugates to it almost every other institution in society. Since this ethic turns out to be rather unethical, we next examine the formal approach to ethics with which governments have responded and which in turn has generated a rather oppressive situation approaching totalitarianism. We turn then to a third approach to ethics — Samaritan ethics. Samaritan ethics does not share the modernist optimism of a sustained progress for humanity in a perfect world. On the contrary, it views mankind as historically oppressed through a struggle of good against evil where evil seems to be ahead most of time, at least for the majority of people. To our knowledge, Samaritan ethics is the only form of ethics that does not turn into an oppressor of humanity, as utilitarian and formal ethics have done. On the contrary, it sustains the dignity of mankind. If its results are modest, it is not due to any fault of its own, but due to the limited number of people who are prepared to embrace it. We therefore turn to explore the most effective way to incorporate this ethic into systems science, and find that to attain this it is necessary to extend it to include the humanities. Although systems science has rejected mechanistic thinking as the only approach to scientific understanding, in practice it has not moved sufficiently away from it to be able to deal with human culture and things such as ethics. We then describe the methodology needed to attain this. We incorporate this into an appropriate framework and explain how ethics links with all levels of systemic life, both natural and ethical. We conclude

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by identifying education as the legitimate way to channel ethics into society and by mentioning some methods and tools available to help in this intervention.

2 Our Unethical Society

Due to the role the media plays in making unethical behaviour publicly known, we tend hastily to assume that such behaviour is mostly limited to our political and corporate leaders or to film and sport stars. We draw a moral line between those who are under the public eye and ourselves and, perhaps self-righteously, condemn them for their scandals. These are often amplified and even encouraged by the press which, driven by commercial interests, needs to satisfy our appetite to gloat on them. Many assume that, on our side of the moral line, we bear no responsibility for these lapses and furthermore, that we are immune from them. This assumption is not supported by our research, conducted in several regions of Europe, including Northern Sweden², Southern France³, Austria⁴ and lately, Australia. What these studies reveal is not only that public ethics is linked to private ethics, but that both are interconnected to a number of systemic factors rooted in and threatening the local community. Chief among these factors are:

1. people's withdrawal from civic institutions and duties;
2. lack of meaning in work and its connection to service;
3. managerial practices that focus on exploiting human life, technology and the environment to generate economic resources rather than utilising economic resources and technology to sustain human life and the environment;
4. fragmentation and lack of leadership in every social group, including the family;
5. decline, and in many cases collapse, of the primary to tertiary educational system;
6. lack of vision due to a confusion and erosion of beliefs;
7. people's behaviour increasingly driven by fear;
8. the destruction of the natural environment and the dismissal of natural scientists' repeated warnings of the alarming depletion of the earth's resources.

Other studies in diverse regions of the world⁵ have reached similar conclusions. Here we need to only briefly consider the links between these factors and ethics — for a previous detailed discussion can be found in the given references⁶. A subset of these links is provided in Figure 1 to illustrate the impact that ethics has on other factors critical for a community's long-term viability, as well as how other factors have an impact on ethics. In the figure, we show how self-centred ethics has led to the abandonment of civic duties, which in turn has removed all restraints from a “managerialist” culture⁷. This, in its pursuit to manage all things like a machine, has harmed our social structures and fragmented the community. Furthermore, the fragmentation of the community has undermined its traditional beliefs and the vision that sustained it in the past and led it to assimilate a variety of new beliefs oriented towards an exclusive self-fulfilment and feel-good religion, feeding in turn a self-centred ethic. Of great concern in this set of links, is the loop they form: a positive feedback that progressively exacerbates the symptom of each factor rendering the community unstable and unsustainable in the long-term. We must therefore, not only determine what sort of ethic we should adopt, but also how we should introduce it into our society to counteract the destructive feedback afflicting it.

² de Raadt, J. D. R., 2000; de Raadt, V. D., 2002.

³ de Raadt and de Raadt 2004.

⁴ de Raadt and de Raadt 2005.

⁵ Ahlmark, 1998; Buttimer, 1990, 1998; Dodds, 1997; Edwards and Brown, 1996; Nixon et al, 1999; Ryn, 1990; Råberg, 1997; Schutte, 2000; Smailes, 1995; Sorensen and Epps, 1996; Taylor et al, 1997.

⁶ de Raadt, J. D. R., 2000; de Raadt, V. D., 2002, de Raadt and de Raadt 2004a; de Raadt and de Raadt 2004b.

⁷ Protherough and Pick, 2002.

3 Approaches to ethics

There are three main ethical frameworks — utilitarian, formal and Samaritan — that have played an active role in shaping our history:

3.1 Utilitarian Ethics

Utilitarian ethics, the idea that our actions should be determined by the pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain, or in economic terms, maximisation of profits, has its main origins in the work of three British thinkers Smith⁸, Bentham⁹ and Mill¹⁰. I have critically discussed this ethic from a philosophical and theological standpoint elsewhere¹¹. In fairness, it must be granted that their conception substantially differed from the utilitarianism that is promoted today. They assumed that the pursuit of pleasure or economic profit took place within a just and civilised framework that not only encompassed the pleasure of the senses but also of skill, benevolence, amity and piety¹². Modernity and post-modernity have progressively dismantled such a framework; all its constraints have been removed leading to a type of unrestrained utilitarianism, ruthless and unlike anything envisaged by Smith, Bentham or Mill. An example of its callousness is supplied by a much-quoted statement by Milton Friedman — one the chief advocates of contemporary utilitarianism: “the social responsibility of business is to increase its profits”¹³. As might be expected, commercial enterprises have fully exploited this characterization and used every mode of manipulation open to them, including sex, to promote consumerism and greed among the people. The empirical evidence of such manipulation is daily provided for us on television. Moreover, in the last years we have seen this approach to “social responsibility” extend its grip beyond the boundaries of the law, such as the Australian Wheat Board’s criminal collaboration with Saddam Hussain in order to secure wheat sales (Baker 2006) or the notorious fraud by Enron managers. It is most disturbing to note that:

The Enron debacle is exceptional only in its scale. Other former Wall Street favourites have engaged in creative accounting to pump up their stock prices. Lucent, Sunbeam, Waste Management, Xerox and Cendant are only some of the more notorious cases of companies forced to restate previously reported earnings, causing their stock prices to crater. People lost billions of dollars, misled by phoney numbers ratified by the accountants.¹⁴

The unrestrained nature of the utilitarian approach to management is in itself of great concern. However, of even greater concern is the indifference of the public to it, as shown in surveys and voting in elections¹⁵.

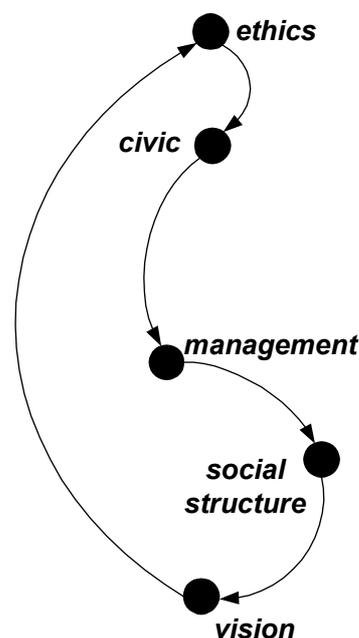


Figure 1: Ethics and links to other factors

⁸ 1970.

⁹ 1948.

¹⁰ 2004.

¹¹ de Raadt 1989, 1997.

¹² Byam 2002.

¹³ 1970.

¹⁴ New York Times, 2002.

¹⁵ Faler, 2005; Bagaric, 2006; Grattan, 2006; Teixeira, 1992.

3.2 Formal ethics

The main response to this crisis has been through formal ethics, that is, a set of codes or policies that specify what ought and what ought not to be done. We have been inundated with such codes directed to corporate and professional practice and with government policies aiming to control almost every aspect of human life. Not only do such codes and policies violate freedom in order to impose a desired pattern of behaviour on people but also, rather than encouraging people to become more ethical, they have the opposite effect. For example, excessive government regulations have been blamed for driving people away from participation in volunteer organisations¹⁶. Furthermore, the increasing control over people is carried out by politicians and civil servants who regard themselves — just as totalitarian regimes do — to be immune from the vices of the population (Harrison, 2006). Such idea is not new. The law of the ancient Pharisees oppressed people in a similar way, such as when it forbade Jesus healing a sick man on the Sabbath (Mathew 12:10).

Since the 18th Century, modernism has added another major flaw to formalised ethics, a flaw also present in utilitarianism. It is the assumption that unethical behaviour is solely rooted in ignorance of what is right and wrong and that therefore, by specifying these in a code, people will act ethically by following it. Such assumption is accompanied by the view that “...the world as we know it is pretty much perfect...” and inhabited by an essentially good mankind (Joyce, 2001). Today, we may not believe this to be universally true, but we nevertheless project the idea that it is virtually true in our occidental democracies and their institutions. Not only have countries such as the USA and its allies assumed it, but they have also taken it into their own hands — even using military force when necessary — to impose upon the rest of the world socio-economic the building they have erected on its foundation. However, history points out that this assumption is false. Perhaps the greatest evidence against it, as experienced in our times, has been provided by the war in Iraq. It has shown to us an army of “liberators” carrying out, such as in the Abu Ghraib prison near Baghdad, the same brutalities performed by their enemy Saddam Hussein whom they sought to defeat.

Yet, we must resist the temptation to rush in to condemn these atrocities and overlook the commonality that exists between its perpetrators and each one of us. This commonality should shock us as much as the atrocities themselves. For most of the people who tortured prisoners in the Abu Ghraib prison, were not the hardened criminals with which we associate such cruelty. Judging from the photographs, they could have been anyone’s brother, sister, son or daughter. One woman, described by her relatives “...as a kind young woman who loved athletics and the outdoors...”¹⁷ became a mother not long after these events. What these events tells us, is that there are undesirable properties in everyone of us which, given special circumstances and regardless of codes or rules of ethics, will lead us to perform actions associated with people such as dictators and criminals that are quite out of character from our everyday behaviour. Furthermore, we cannot necessarily blame these actions on special circumstances. We are responsible for them.

3.3 Samaritan Ethics

A third approach to ethics is by taught by Christ. He held no illusionary assumptions regarding the goodness of mankind as the incident of the woman caught in adultery reveals (John 8:3). His challenge for anyone without sin to cast the first stone issued to the teachers of the law and Pharisees who brought her, exposed that none of these men could honestly regard himself as blameless. This exposed the inability of the law or any ethical code to help a society out of its moral crisis. Thus, he introduced a distinction between justice — as represented by laws and traditions — and “agape” love. Unfortunately, English has only one word “love” to

¹⁶ McCallum, 2005; Bandow, 1997.

¹⁷ MSNBC, 2004.

translate three Greek words with different meanings: agape, eros and philia. According to Richardson¹⁸ "... [agape] differs from [eros] in that the latter is brought into action by the attractiveness of the object loved, whereas agape loves even the unlovable, the repellent and those who have nothing to offer in return. According to Christ, agape is the essence of ethics, as illustrated in his story about the Samaritan (Luke 10: 33 – 37) who helped a half-dead man who had fallen victim to robbers on the road. The Samaritan's ethic exhorts us to serve others even when they cannot repay us: food for the hungry, shelter for the homeless, liberation to the oppressed. It has three main qualities. Firstly, rather than based on a static codification of rules, it is founded upon systemic interactions between people. There is only one central principle that guides its action, agape. Agape is dynamic; rather than following a rigid code of rule, agape leads us to respond, in a creative manner if necessary, to unforeseen circumstances of human need. Secondly, this ethic is open to all, regardless of their moral, social or legal standing. This is implied by the choice of the Samaritan character in the story; a 1st Century Jew looked down on a Samaritan and did not associate with him. Thirdly, because the ethic is oriented towards action, it has a dynamic impact on a person and his community and can thrust them forward. Through his acting ethically, a person's character will gradually improve as well as bring favourable change to his community. Many experiences point out that Samaritan ethics can be contagious; once a person starts acting ethically, others will join in. Thus, accounts of prisoners in concentration camps attest the change in attitude in a whole prison that the practice of agape by a few inmates can bring¹⁹.

4 Samaritan Ethics and Systems Science

4.1 Agape, Virtue and History

In contrast to the mechanistic approach that has been associated with utilitarianism, systems science can supply a suitable methodology to incorporate Samaritan ethics and implement it in society. Systems science is focused on life, both natural and cultural, and since life is continuously threatened by death, it does not allow us to assume the naïve perspective of the utilitarian's "pretty much perfect world". On the contrary, it views living systems as being in a constant struggle against their demise. If we use a formal description of living systems such as proposed by Ashby²⁰, then we can represent this in terms of a system striving to maintain equilibrium in the face of continuous threats from its environment. Ashby's law stipulates that the realisation of this equilibrium depends on the regulatory capacity of the system (which he measured in terms of "variety"). The greater the regulatory variety, the greater the stability of the system is, and thus its viability. If the system does not have the requisite regulatory capacity, then someone must supply it to attain equilibrium. Likewise, in our unjust and turbulent world, Samaritan ethics provides the stability that draws society towards virtue and away from corruption. Stability increases to the extent to which Samaritan ethics is accepted and practised by people.

Although both natural life and cultural life are linked together, there is an important difference between them. Both forms of life, natural and cultural, must struggle against disturbances that drive them out their state of equilibrium. We may call this surviving. Yet, just as a ship that sails in a storm must not only remain afloat (survive) but also navigate towards its destination, so cultural life should transcend mere survival and journey on an historical route towards a virtuous society²¹. Given the injustices of the world, if we seek a virtuous society,

¹⁸ 1969, p. 269n.

¹⁹ Gordon, 1970; ten Boom, 1971.

²⁰ 1976.

²¹ Ortega y Gasset, 1987; Unamuno, 2005; de Raadt, 2000.

then the route must be traced by an ethic that produces stability as well as an historical thrust forward. Ethics is therefore not only essential for survival but also necessary for cultural realisation. What role should systems science play in this? Prior to answering this question, we must establish an adequate methodological framework to examine this role.

4.2 The Humanist Framework

The relationship between ethics and science has not always been cordial²². Bellah²³ has traced the conflict to the separation made by Aristotle between intellectual and moral virtues and later by Kant between pure reason and practical reason. During the Renaissance and the Reformation, there was a school of humanists who built a bridge for ethics to reach science. In particular, we have in mind the work of scholars such as Erasmus²⁴ and Melanchthon²⁵ in Northern Europe and Luis Vives and Fray Luis de León in Spain²⁶ and the continental universities such as Geneva, Leiden and Heidelberg that sprang out of the Reformation. These humanists sought to uphold the dignity of mankind. Given the deplorable state to which Europe had sank at the time, they used the new learning to reform society and its various institutions including the church and the universities. With the help of the classical languages and history, they discovered in the scriptures and ancient literature a message that aimed not only at redeeming humanity, but also at civilising it by educating it. They promoted science in order to pull people out of their misery and offer them a dignified and cultured life. They regarded this not as a luxury for the privileged, but as a vision to be fulfilled by every man and woman in order for a community to be viable. Since civilisation also required relief from disease and hunger, study of the natural sciences followed the humanities. Both remained closely linked²⁷ in a notion of philosophy in its etymological sense: the search for wisdom to serve humanity. These humanist ideals remained present and influenced the path of science until the rise of modernism. They inspired some of the greatest scholars, including Melanchthon himself, “the teacher of Germany”, Boerhaave, “the teacher of all Europe”²⁸, and Linnaeus, “the prince of the botanists”²⁹. In The Netherlands, they were seminal in the establishment of Dutch universities for over three hundred years, starting in Leiden in 1575 and stretching to Amsterdam in 1880, when the Free University was founded. Nearer to our own times, they strongly influenced two of Spain’s greatest philosophers, Unamuno³⁰ and Ortega y Gasset³¹ and the Dutch philosopher Dooyeweerd³².

Sadly, the Kantian split between pure and practical reason³³, which has characterised modernism, has ultimately led to the decline of the humanities from the agenda of university teaching and research³⁴. Since modernism emphasises pure reason and undervalues practical reason, it gives prominence to the natural sciences, which it associates with the former. The humanities thus become the poor sister in academia. This in turn has led many modern scientists — including systems scientists — to regard natural phenomena as “hard” and cultural matters as “soft” or “fuzzy”. Soft systems methodology³⁵ for example, is thus

²² de Unamuno, 1989.

²³ 2000.

²⁴ 1993, 2004, 2005.

²⁵ 1999; Maag, 1999.

²⁶ Lopez and García, 1996.

²⁷ Israel, 1995.

²⁸ Knoeff, 2002; Lindeboom (1968).

²⁹ Frängsmyr, 1983; Goerke, 1973).

³⁰ 1986, 2005.

³¹ 1987, 1995.

³² 1958.

³³ Kant, 1920.

³⁴ Engell and Dangerfield, 1998; Tapp, 1997.

³⁵ Checkland, 1981.

presented as “a rigorous methodology to deal with non-rigorous situations”. However, this is a poor definition of rigour and an application of an incompatible way of thinking to the realm of the humanities. The appellation “soft” does not reflect a trait of the humanities, but the poor humanist educational grounding of many modern scientists.

4.3 Humanist Systems Science

The next step is to incorporate this humanist tradition into a systems methodology that not only will integrate the humanities with the natural sciences but also offer a method of implementing it in both natural and cultural systems. Multi-modal systems methodology is a humanist approach to systems science, which focuses especially on normative thought and the theory of design. It combines the idea of an overarching multi-dimensional philosophy, already proposed by such humanists as Melanchthon³⁶ and Dooyeweerd³⁷, with systems science. While the multi-dimensional nature of living systems was initially presented in the pioneering work of von Bertalanffy³⁸ it was soon abandoned and considered no further. Multi-modal systems methodology restores the humanities to their rightful place among the sciences and integrates them with the natural sciences to supply a common scientific framework and language for all disciplines. It promotes general systems theory without dismissing the specialised knowledge of each discipline. Its objective is to understand the interrelationship between all living systems, natural and cultural, and do what is necessary to sustain them.

³⁶ 1999; Frank, 1995.

³⁷ 1958.

³⁸ 1971.

The methodology is based on two basic assumptions. Firstly, it maintains that all thought, even the most theoretical, is not autonomous, but since it is part of our humanity, it depends on personal beliefs³⁹. Secondly, the purpose of all thought ought ultimately to be normative: to know how to live well and realize our full humanity. Due to its systemic focus on life, it directs its study to the reciprocal and simultaneous links that form the substance of natural and cultural life rather than aspiring to a mechanical and causal understanding of the world. Instead of analysing in a fragmented manner the elements that constitute life, this methodology explores its links in the diverse living systems and the modalities in which they operate (e.g. economic, aesthetic, credal, and social). The sustenance of life in its many manifestations, but especially civilised human life, is the central theme of this methodology, which studies them along two inter-linked dimensions as shown in Figure 2. The vertical dimension is modal⁴⁰; it represents the various aspects that are studied by the specialised sciences and encompasses both culture and nature. Within culture are found three domains; each domain is comprised by

³⁹ Ortega y Gasset, 1987.

⁴⁰ Dooyeweerd, 1958.

a number of modalities, represented by the parallelograms in the figure. The moral (character) domain has three modalities: ethical, aesthetic and juridical; the civic domain also has three modalities: operational, economic and social. The intellectual domain has four modalities: epistemic, informatory, historical and credal. Likewise, nature has two domains, each with its own modalities. The vital domain has two modalities, psychic and biotic and the material domain has six: regulatory, physical, kinetic, spatial, numeric and logical. The domains and modalities are linked by two sets of arrows; the first set is determinative and runs upwards and the second set is normative — indicating our responsibility — and runs downwards.

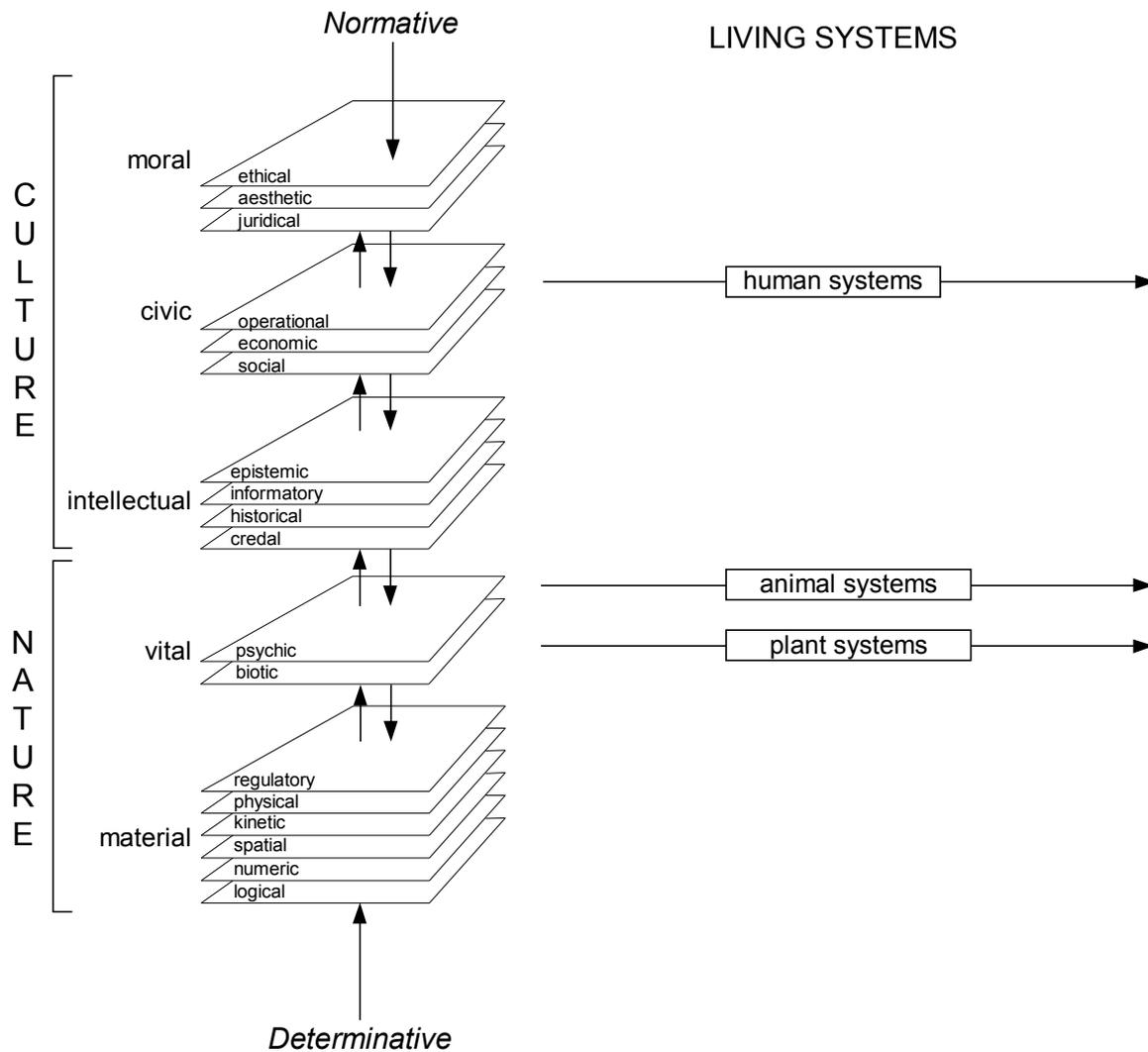


Figure 2: Multi-Modal Systems Framework

The horizontal dimension is systemic and by projecting two of the domains (vital and civic) along horizontal axes, we can identify three types of living systems, plant, animal and human. The other domains support life. Mountains, rivers and seas offer the essential habitat for the natural life. The intellectual and moral domains respectively provide the foundation and the ultimate aim of civilised life as embodied in all social institutions.

5 Ethics and Humanist Systems Science

We must now explain how this framework can help resolve the above-mentioned conflict between science and ethics and spread Samaritan ethics over the diverse activities of society. The determinative and normative links bind culture with nature; determinative links establish nature as the foundation of culture and normative links provide added meaning to nature, as seen, for example, in a beautiful garden or a park. However, these links also bind in the same manner every domain and modality. Within culture and its three domains, determinative links make the intellect the foundation of civilised society and society the foundation of virtue. Conversely, normative links make virtue the purpose of society and virtuous society the purpose of intellectual pursuit. Thus the understanding of these links is of the greatest scientific importance, something that was evident to early humanists such Melanchthon⁴¹ and more recent ones, such as de Unamuno⁴² and Dooyeweerd⁴³.

The place of the civic domain in between the intellectual and moral domain is of great significance. It means that knowledge is not for knowledge sake but for the sake of shaping a civilised society. It also means that virtue cannot be attained, in the Platonic sense, exclusively through the intellectual pursuit of wisdom. It must first be concretised in the life of the community. Conversely, neither can virtue — and therefore ethics — be attained by escaping from society. Since the role of systems science as a conveyor of ethics to society is our concern, we must point to another significant feature that emerges from the framework in Figure 2. If our desire is to intervene in order to attain a more virtuous society, the proper humane way to do this is by expanding the intellectual domain of a society that is teaching in order to enhance understanding and wisdom.

Let us examine this in more detail. The intellectual domain consists of four modalities, epistemic, informatory, historical and credal (see Figure 2). According to Ortega, the credal modality constitutes the “floor of our lives”⁴⁴. Dooyeweerd⁴⁵ dedicated a third of his opus magnum to argue this same point and to reject Kant’s dichotomy between pure and practical reason. If we follow the determinative arrow that points upwards, we shall find that the credal modality constitutes the foundation of the historical modality, where our creed is transformed and concretised into the many aspects of culture. History provides thus the empirical reality of culture, which are perceived as events in the next modality — the informatory. Finally, these events are comprehended in the epistemic modality where knowledge and science is built. The downwards normative arrows, within the same intellectual domain, provide the purpose of the lower modalities and especially the credal, that is, we should understand not in order to believe, but believe in order to understand⁴⁶.

However, understanding is not an end in itself, for the epistemic modality is the immediate foundation of the social modality. This means that the basis for social structure, especially authority is, in a humanist civilisation, knowledge rather than power. For example, the authority of parents over children is determined by the lesser understanding of the latter, which, as it increases with education, leads also to greater independence and responsibility for self. This partly makes society like a community of students, where the senior students exercise their leadership through teaching the younger and preparing them in turn to become leaders and teachers of the next generation. Above the social modality rests the economic modality, pertaining to the management of resources necessary to sustain work in the operational modality placed over it. For it is through work that a society attains its viability and unfolds historically. The focus of this progress is inspired by the moral domain where we find three modalities. The lower one — juridical — is qualified by justice. A just society by itself cannot

⁴¹ 1999.

⁴² 1989.

⁴³ 1958.

⁴⁴ 1987, p. 14.

⁴⁵ 1958.

⁴⁶ Augustine, 1986.

be a virtuous society if it does not preserve the dignity of humanity, which is inspired by the aesthetic modality. Although we usually associate aesthetics with the arts such as painting and sculpture, these are only expressions of what is a human quality and endows a person with dignity. Even a prisoner serving in jail, should have his human dignity respected. Punishment, therefore, should not destroy the person (this constitutes an argument against the death penalty). Finally, as we have seen, in a turbulent and imperfect world, human justice and dignity cannot be assumed to flow naturally. They must be obtained at a cost through Samaritan ethics operating in the next and highest modality. Samaritan ethics constitutes therefore, the ultimate normative inspiration of culture. It has been so in classical European culture, where agape has been regarded as a divine quality: “God is agape”⁴⁷. Mankind is challenged first to believe it and then to emulate it.

Thus, this chain of normative and determinative links leaping from modality to modality provides the conduit for Samaritan ethics to spread into every domain of culture. It also spreads from there to a responsible sustenance of nature, which gratefully reciprocates by supplying the sustaining foundation for culture to unfold.

5 Systems Science and the Implementation of a Samaritan Ethic in Society

Finally, we must consider how we move from thinking about Samaritan ethics — the methodological framework in Figure 2 — to its practical application in society. Humanists have regarded education as the civilised and humane mean to influence people’s behaviour⁴⁸. Through teaching, he who teaches can open new possibilities for him who learns. Teaching is indeed a form of leadership, perhaps the most desirable. It does not coerce the student according to what he has learnt, but rather confers a responsibility to apply it to his own life and to benefit the community. This contrasts with mechanical approaches to education that are now popular, such as “Outcomes Based Education”⁴⁹, for structuring the curriculum in schools and universities. These place the educational task in the psychic modality⁵⁰, that is, within the vital domain in nature rather than with the intellectual domain of culture. Such an approach to education leads to training for cognition rather than educating for understanding. Animals are capable of psychological cognition, but only humans have intellectual understanding. Outcomes Based Education may be useful to teach people mechanical tasks, but not to form citizens or teach them ethics⁵¹.

Understanding by itself is not sufficient; we also require a method to implement it. Method functions in the informatory modality and provides the tools to gather data about the historical unfolding of a society, as well as to help analyse at the epistemic level the path that this unfolding is taking. Furthermore, it also provides tools to intervene in history in an ethical manner and alter this path if necessary. There are several examples of such method and its application⁵². In addition, SmCube, a specialised software package has been especially developed to assist these procedures (de Raadt, 2001). While this work is being pioneered, a path that leads from the definition of Samaritan ethics to its implementation in society is now gradually opening.

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⁴⁷ de Raadt and de Raadt, 2005.

⁴⁸ Melanchthon, 1999; Ortega y Gasset, 1992.

⁴⁹ Spady, 1994.

⁵⁰ Anderson and Sosniak, 1994.

⁵¹ Berlach, 2004; Donnelly, 2006.

⁵² de Raadt, J. D. R., 2000; de Raadt, V. D., 2002; de Raadt and de Raadt 2004; de Raadt and de Raadt 2005.

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