

If I understand Gamwell's reasoning correctly, he holds that there is a necessary connection between any more or less specific substantive moral prescription, on the one hand, and the most general substantive moral principle, on the other. Given the more or less specific prescription, the most general principle is necessarily implied. This is why the prescription is properly said to be a specific application of the principle, assuming certain more or less specific circumstances. Conversely, if the principle is given, it, in turn, necessarily implies the prescription, although only conditionally, assuming the same circumstances.

Gamwell further holds that there is an analogous necessary connection between the most general formative moral principle, on the one hand, and the most general substantive moral principle, on the other. Given the formative principle, the substantive principle is necessarily implied. For this reason, the substantive principle may be said to provide the moral backing for the formative principle. But, conversely, if the substantive principle is given, it, for its part, necessarily implies the formative principle as an indirect application of itself having the same superlative generality.

Then, so far as politics is concerned, Gamwell argues that the most general moral principles, formative as well as substantive, yield properly political principles of justice when applied to the properly political community, i.e., the state and the ^{constitution and} governance thereof, including the procedures and institutions necessary thereto. Because of the necessary distinction, however, between substantive and formative moral principles, the justice articulated by properly political principles is, as he says, compound. It comprises, on the one hand, the formative principles of justice that alone belong in a properly framed constitution and, on the other, the substantive principles of justice that have no place as constitutional provisions but are properly articulated and applied in statutory enactments under a constitution. Of course, all properly political principles of justice, being general applications of properly moral principles to the state and its ^{constitution and} governance, exhibit the same or analogous necessary connections. Thus, for example, any more or less specific political prescription necessarily implies not only all more general moral principles, but also the most general political principles, formative as well as substantive, even as they, in turn, necessarily imply it, assuming

certain more or less specific circumstances. Conversely, the political principles, for their part, necessarily imply the prescription, even if only conditionally, assuming the same circumstances.

So much for the purely formal structure of Gamwell's reasoning. To understand its material content as well, it is necessary to take account of five of his most fundamental assertions:

1. The most general substantive moral principle is that each person should always act so as to maximize good as such—immediately, by maximizing human good, ^{and also} ~~with~~ respecting creaturely good generally, and, ultimately, by maximizing the good of the whole.

2. The most general formative moral principle is that each person should always act so as to respect every other as equally an actual or potential participant in communicative action and in the discourse integral to it.

3. The most general substantive political principle is that each member of the political community should always act so as to effect, as far as specific circumstances allow, the general emancipation of the human community by maximizing general conditions of empowerment equally available to all.

4. The most general formative political principle thereby necessarily implied is that each member of the political community should always act so as to frame, ratify, and enforce a democratic constitution stipulating the equal formative rights, both private and public, of every member as an actual or potential participant in communicative action and in the properly political discourse integral to government *by* the people.

5. The further implication of the most general substantive political principle is that each member of the political community should always act, under the formative provisions of a democratic constitution, so as to legislate, interpret, and enforce the more specific substantive rights that specific circumstances from time to time require if the general emancipation of the human community is to be effected by maximizing general conditions of empowerment to which all have equal access.

Gamwell's claim is that all of these assertions are true or credible to human existence because they can be critically validated by rational argument based on common human experience. Specifically, he argues, to be human at

all, and thus to live understandingly, is to affirm a basic faith or belief in the ultimate significance of one's own life and actions and of everything else. Implied by this belief is that one's own life and actions, together with all other things, are included in an all-embracing whole that, as both unbegun and unending, is the objective ground in reality^{itself} of their ultimate significance. Conversely, the inclusive purpose of one's own life as well as of everything else is to contribute itself to the whole. Thus by acting so as to maximize the good of all others as one's own good, one acts so as to maximize the good of the whole.

Also implied by being human is that the good of anyone who lives thus understandingly is thereby unique and deserves to be maximized accordingly. To maximize it, then, always means, whatever else it may mean, to respect every other person, equally with oneself, as an actual or potential participant in communicative action. If this means, in the first instance, action involving making or implying various kinds of claims to validity, it also means, and above all, the distinctive kind of action called "discourse" whereby we undertake to critically validate such claims insofar as they become sufficiently problematic to require such validation. Because every human being is also actually or potentially a participant in discourse in this sense, she or he is to be uniquely respected accordingly and therefore has certain formative rights, politically as well as morally—including the private and public rights properly stipulated in a democratic constitution.

By this reasoning, Gamwell critically validates the credibility to human existence of the five assertions fundamental to his position as well as the other, more properly metaphysical assertions that they, in turn, imply. But no less essential to his position is the claim that all these assertions, metaphysical as well as moral and political, are also appropriate to Jesus Christ. Analysis and interpretation of his reasoning in support of this claim, however, must be left to another occasion. Suffice it to say here only that, on his reading, the Great Commandment, consistency with which in all circumstances is the necessary condition of any appropriate Christian belief or action, is simply the formulation in particular religious concepts and symbols of the most general substantive moral principle. To be called to love God with all of one's powers and one's neighbor as oneself is to be called always to act so as to maximize good

as such—immediately, by maximizing human good, all others' as one's own, and, ultimately, by maximizing the good of the whole.

8 November 2004