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ETHICS AND THE AWARENESS OF COMPLEX INDIVIDUALS:
REFLECTIONS ON ADOLF EICHMANN AND OSKAR SCHINDLER

A THESIS
The Honors Program
College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Distinction "All College Honors"
and the Degree Bachelor of Arts
In the Department of Philosophy

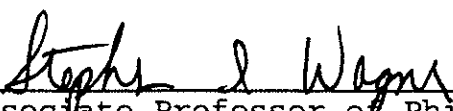
by
Glen Tautges
January 25, 1996

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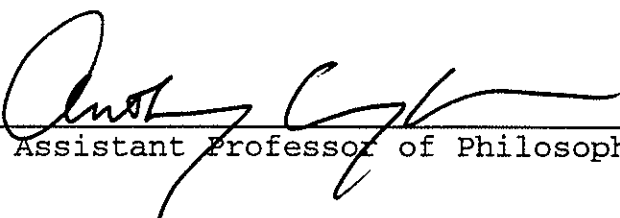
Ethics and the Awareness of Complex Individuals:
Reflections on Adolf Eichmann and Oskar Schindler

by
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Associate Professor of Philosophy



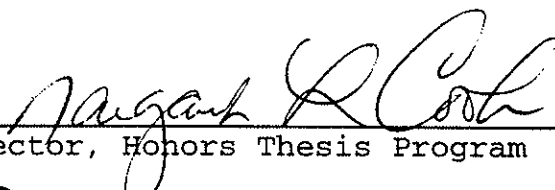
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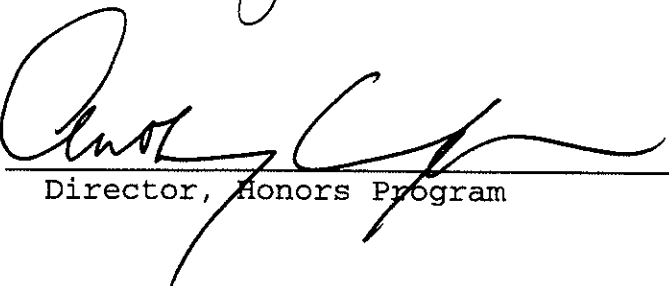
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Introduction

There is a Talmudic verse which says, "He who saves a single life saves the world entire" (Keneally 368), and (despite being written long before gender sensitive language) this verse has a lot to tell us about living well, about doing ethics. It reminds us of the incredible value of every particular human being. And in a way, the person who saves a life really does save a world. Each of us stands at the center of a miniature world of consciousness-- a realm of complex thoughts, feelings, memories, relationships, and commitments. Saving a person saves one of these worlds.

However, of the two major types of ethics prevalent in modern ethical thought, only one type truly seems to recognize the wisdom of these words. The first of these forms of ethics, and the most dominant, can trace its roots back to the Enlightenment and thinkers like Kant and Hobbes. The theories in this group vary substantially, but they all point to a single foundation of ethics like duty, promotion of happiness, or a social contract. They see these abstractions as the core of ethics, even more fundamental than real people. This is why the term "reductionist" fits these approaches to ethics. Values other than the one core may not be disregarded, but they are subsumed under this one value. For example, Utilitarians say that the moral value

of things like justice and love for one's family lie in the way these things contribute to happiness: justice and love are not morally valuable independent of considerations of happiness. In addition, reductionists usually promote following a given set of rules or a decision-making procedure (which is based on the one foundation they claim to have isolated) as the cornerstone of ethics.

Moreover, all of the major theories in this category claim that, when making moral considerations, we must look at our situation from an impartial standpoint. As Seyla Benhabib puts it in her essay "The Generalized and the Concrete Other," "In this tradition, the moral self is viewed as a disembedded and disembodied being" (273). Because (in our modern world) our actions often affect people quite distant and very different from us, these theorists claim that we must strip the personal from our moral considerations and focus on what all human beings have in common, so as to include everyone in our ethical deliberation. They see the question, "What do we owe just anyone?" as the primary ethical question. Things like personal relationships, private commitments, personal history, and many of the other things that make us unique individuals are given minimal consideration (if they aren't ignored completely).

Now, this tendency is conceptually distinct from the movement toward reduction, but the two do tend to go

together. Someone could conceivably come up with a reductive theory that claims that everything can be reduced to something very personal like friendship or personal loyalty; however, because focusing only on the characteristics that all human beings share (e.g., rationality or the desire for happiness) makes reducing ethics to one foundational value so much easier, the reductive theories that have dominated ethical thought for so long all demand that we also remain impartial and impersonal when we deliberate moral issues.¹

The second type of ethics is much older and can be traced back to the ancient Greeks--especially Aristotle. Instead of trying to isolate one foundation of all moral value, this kind of ethics--often called Aristotelian ethics, virtue ethics, or the ethics of character--allows for many different and often conflicting sources of value. In virtue ethics, the focus is not on decision making. Instead, leading a good life lies in cultivating the ability to see clearly the ethically salient details of specific situations and in building one's character in such a way that one tends almost automatically to react to particular circumstances in an ethically sound manner. Furthermore, virtue ethics also tends to stress the need to focus on real, concrete individuals in order to understand a situation and act well. Whether someone is close to us or very distant and different, virtue ethics says that we must

understand who that person really is to treat them well.²

What I have to say is much more in line with the second type of ethics than with the first. I intend to lay out the details of a moral attitude (i.e., a way of looking at ourselves, other people, and the world around us, along with a set of tendencies and capacities) that can help us understand the situations in which we must act and enable us to be the type of people who (somewhat) naturally tend to act in an ethically sound manner. Moreover (and probably most importantly), this attitude will help us remember the real people whom moral principles are supposed to protect. We will better understand our situation by better understanding the concrete individuals that act in it. And, through our better understanding of situations and the people who make them up and through our inclination toward acting righteously, we will become better people.

More specifically, this moral attitude includes a powerful emotional and intellectual awareness that all human beings are unique, complex centers of consciousness, and not simply objects with which we interact. The person with this attitude also feels a powerful reverence for each concrete individual and a sense of awe in the face of the intricate beauty of human consciousness, in addition to a strong sense of community with other human beings. Furthermore, to be truly valuable, the attitude must become a habitual outlook

that we carry into every human interaction.

When we approach life with this attitude, we will be less inclined to oversimplify situations and more likely to recognize morally salient details. Furthermore, this attitude can very well make us more caring and sympathetic toward others. It can also help us better recognize when a situation demands ethical considerations, more effectively and justly deal with people who commit evil, and control our own unethical desires. Moreover, the great appreciation of other human beings can motivate us to do the right thing even when we do not consciously consider the moral implications of a situation and when principles just do not have the power to convince us to act (e.g., when we must face great danger in order to act ethically). And finally, this moral attitude can safeguard us from getting caught up in idealism and fanatically following abstract principles at the expense of real people.

In the following pages, I will try to explain how this moral attitude can inspire these tendencies and capacities, and I will make some arguments for the importance of being this type of person. Then, in order to show the importance of exhibiting the kinds of tendencies inspired by this moral attitude, we will examine the lives of two men who played very different roles in the Nazi Holocaust. The first of these, Adolf Eichmann, was a man who claimed to live by

principles (Kantian ones as a matter of fact) but who still played an important role in the systematic murder of millions. Oskar Schindler, on the other hand, was a man of few principles whose love of human beings inspired him to save more than a thousand Jewish people, jeopardizing his own life many times in the process.

At this point it is probably quite apparent that, unlike reductive theorists, I am not going to try to find any foundation of all value or lay out rules for actions. In fact, the search for one foundation of value that seems to obsess reductive theorists appears to be a futile one. Edmund Pincoffs writes about the problems with this obsession in his book, Quandaries and Virtues: Against Reductivism in Ethics:

One of the drives behind [reductive] theories is the desire to make sense of ethics--to discover what is at the core so it all makes sense. The world is confusing enough; they want something that isn't. But, it is very possible that there is no core, only plural and conflicting cores that won't make complete sense. (67-68)

Or, to put it in Anthony Cunningham's words, "[J]ust as scientists must be careful about imposing an artificial simplicity on the physical world in their quest to explain it via theory, so too must philosophers exercise caution with respect to the moral realm" ("Living Right" 79).

Despite hundreds of years of debate, people still have not been able to agree on one foundation of ethics; people still recognize a variety of values. Thus, since it seems likely that no single foundation of value exists, we would be wise to follow Aristotle's advice and seek "exactness in each area to the extent that the nature of the subject allows . . ." (Nicomachean Ethics I, 3, 1094b24-25).

However, I am not trying to prove that the values reductive theorist claim as foundational are not real values. Considering whether something is fair or how it can help or harm people can often guide us to a good decision. Putting complete faith in the guidance of one of these reductive theories, however, can lead to big problems. There is something very disturbing about attempting to subsume things we value--such as beauty, love, and courage--under one foundational value like justice or happiness. Making justice subservient to happiness or vice versa is also problematic. For example, if we seek justice only as a means to making people happy, we seem to miss the whole point of justice. And, if we do not love for the sake of the beloved but rather for happiness or justice, we are not really loving at all. So, it seems that the search for one foundation of value is a futile one, and if philosophers ever do agree on one, they will be missing the true value of many things.

Moreover, the fact that this explication will not offer

a list of rules for action should not be interpreted to mean that these kinds of guides have no value at all. None of us have perfectly ethical characters. As we have grown up, we have learned hundreds of moral rules ranging from "murder is wrong" to "always say thank you." These rules can be useful guideposts if we do not become slaves to them. And, our accurate understanding of our situation and our tendency toward moral action will help us know when a rule ceases to apply and an exception must be made. Martha Nussbaum discusses this concept in her essay "Non-Relative Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach":

Like rules in medicine and in navigation, ethical rules should be held open to modification in the light of new circumstances; and the good agent must therefore cultivate the ability to perceive and correctly describe his or her situation finely and truly, including in this perceptual grasp even those features of the situation that are not covered under the existing rule. (44)

Because we will know how to apply rules better and know when to make exceptions, this attitude can make us more truly just and benevolent than appealing to one foundation of value and blindly following rules. Furthermore, if we have this moral attitude, we may often know the right choice without appealing to rules at all. Finally, this attitude could offer an excellent complement to other virtues such as

patience, courage, loyalty, honesty, and tolerance--thus helping us in our pursuit of a life rich in a variety of valuable things.

Another difference from reductive theories that will soon become apparent (if it isn't clear already) is that I am not offering a knock-down proof of the moral importance of this attitude and the things to which it leads. I will make arguments, give convincing examples, and describe real people whose lives reveal the importance of this moral attitude; however, these are not formal proofs. The reason for this is that search for an indisputable proof of an ethical theory is as misguided as the search for a foundational value. Ethics seems to be a subject far too complex to allow for a conclusive proof of any ethical theory--value seems to be beyond the grasp of logic. CS Lewis discusses this in his work The Abolition of Man:

The Innovator [the person trying to ground ethics using nothing but rational arguments from value-free premisses] is trying to get a conclusion in the imperative mood out of premisses in the indicative mood: and though he continues trying to all eternity he cannot succeed, for the thing is impossible. (43-44)

Despite this, reductive theorists do claim to offer conclusive proofs of their theories; however, all of these

attempts to ground value with some foolproof argument fail either because the proof simply does not work or because the vision of ethics that we end up with is too narrow to include all of what human beings value--or, most likely, for both of these reasons. Many authors offer critiques of ethical projects (such as the work of Mill and Kant) that have tried to ground ethics rationally and of the very concept of trying to ground ethics in this way: Elizabeth Anscombe in "Modern Moral Philosophy," CS Lewis in The Abolition of Man (as the above quotation shows), Alasdair MacIntyre in After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory, Edmund L. Pincoffs in Quandaries and Virtues: Against Reductivism in Ethics, and many more. Also, Bernard Williams offers a very detailed discussion of the futility of any attempt to discover one ultimate rational foundation for ethics in Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy.

Because, as Lewis so eloquently put it, we cannot "get a conclusion in the imperative mood out of premisses in the indicative mood" (43-44), my project must be an ethics for people who care about ethics--for people who want to be better people. If a person does not feel some sort of obligation to act ethically, we have no starting point from which to argue. Ethical egoists do make arguments that certain actions that seem to correspond with what is commonly accepted as moral can serve one's self interest; thus, a person who cares only about their own happiness may

occasionally be convinced to act in ways that accidentally help others. This, however, is not the full ethical life most people, including myself, believe is necessary and right. Arguments for the importance of developing this moral attitude will only appeal to those who have at least a slight concern for the well-being of others. This is not an ethics that is going to motivate a chronic criminal who has no concern for others or a selfish but law-abiding citizen.

In Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy, Bernard Williams discusses how moral arguments only appeal to people with some general concern for others:

However vague it may initially be, we have a conception of the ethical that understandably relates to us and our actions the demands, needs, claims, desires, and, generally, the lives of other people, and it is helpful to preserve this conception. . . . (12)

Anyone who does not agree about basic ethical tenets, such as the fact that other people's needs deserve our concern, simply cannot be reasoned with. Elizabeth Anscombe discusses this notion in her ground-breaking essay, "Modern Moral Philosophy":

[I]f someone really thinks, in advance [emphasis hers], that it is open to question whether such an action as procuring the judicial execution of the

innocent should be quite excluded from consideration--I do not want to argue with him; he shows a corrupt mind. (17)

Edmund Pincoffs also expresses this idea in Quandaries and Virtues: Against Reductivism in Ethics, when he says that the person who doesn't believe that "'that is dishonest' [for example] is a count against his actions . . . is ineligible to discuss moral beliefs" (147).

To put it simply, moral arguments that are not ultimately based on people's general moral notions make some logical mistake or ignore part of the complex plurality of value. When we are honest about what we can rationally prove, we realize that ethical arguments can only convince those who have some inclination toward morality to start with. Now, skeptical readers may want to accuse me of preaching to the saved, but really, who else is going to listen? Furthermore, people who want to lead good lives are not necessarily good at doing so. They may simply cave in to temptation, make poor moral choices, or not have a clear picture of what a truly ethical life would be like. This is meant to be a guide for all of us who want to live well but still need help in doing so. As for those who just do not care about others at all, my ideas (like any ethical theory) can do little--except maybe help those of us who do care to deal with them better.

Chapter 1: The Nature of the Attitude

The first step toward developing the moral attitude I am advocating is recognizing ourselves as complex centers of consciousness. If we take a moment to reflect upon ourselves, we can begin to see this great complexity. We have thousands of thoughts each day, and we are filled with a wide variety of complex emotions and drives. We have memory of a long personal history in which we have experienced much and have formed complicated relationships with other people. We regret some of our past yet fondly remember other parts; we have great hopes for the future yet still fear it. Philosophers can debate whether this experience of ourselves is evidence of some sort of immaterial mind or the product of incredible biological complexity, but the experience stays fundamentally the same regardless of which side of the debate is correct. We may seldom be fully aware of the vastness and complexity of the world inside of us, but if we take but a moment to reflect upon workings of our consciousness, we cannot help but see a realm of vast complexity. We are beings with innumerable thoughts and feelings, and each of us sits at the center of an intricate web of experiences and relationships.

Moreover, when we take a close look at ourselves we also realize that there is much about ourselves that we do

not (and may never) know. No amount of self-examination can reveal all of the unrecognized inclinations, subconscious motives, and hidden potentialities that lie inside us. From observing our own actions and feelings, we may be able to infer things about the parts of our personalities that we are not directly aware of; however, in a way, part of who we are will always remain somewhat alien to us. We could, for example, reflect on our relationships with our parents for years and still not totally understand even our feelings for them, let alone the relationship's myriad of other subtleties. We can place a label on these feelings, but no word can encompass even the complexity of this one emotional bond. No matter what word we use to describe our feelings--be it love, caring, resentment, or even hatred--we probably feel some sort of intricate combination of the simple feelings we have names for, a combination so complex that it may very well be somewhat self-contradictory. Put simply, our complexity goes beyond even our own comprehension. We can never even know ourselves completely.

This great network of feelings, thoughts, subconscious drives, experiences, and relationships makes the vantage point from which each of us looks out at the world distinct. Furthermore, no one can ever step inside of our skin and see with our eyes. They can never feel our emotions, think our thoughts, or have our memories. They may be able to make inferences and observations about what experiencing our

consciousness is like, but they cannot have our experience. In short, our human consciousness is an intricate and complex world--related to--but certainly distinct from all else.

Ethically speaking, however, realizing that we are incredibly complex, that we defy even our own understanding, and that we are completely unique is only a step toward the much more important second step of realizing that in other people lies the same sort of unique complexity. Now, philosophical skeptics may question whether other people have the same complex minds as they do, but as Bernard Williams says in his Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy, denying the existence of other minds requires stepping outside of what is normally considered sane (24). Furthermore, the existence of other minds is an ethical given. If we are going to talk about right and wrong at all, we must believe that other people are conscious beings, not figments of our imagination. In a solipsistic world, there is no need for any concern for others because there simply are no others.

Other unique complex centers of consciousness are not only beyond our complete comprehension because they are extremely intricate and harbor many subconscious drives and inclinations but also because we cannot have direct access to them. We can make inferences about the consciousness of another as they can about us, but these must always remain

exactly that--inferences. We can never know whether a word used by another person means exactly what we think it means; we cannot be certain that actions performed by others mean precisely the same as they would if performed by us. When people try to explain their inner thoughts to us directly, we can never know for sure that they are being totally truthful or giving us all the details we need for complete understanding. Further, even if we trust a person enough to be quite sure that we are getting an honest and thorough attempt at an explanation, we still only know a verbal description, which can never really be like a look through that person's eyes. To put it briefly, in order to take the second step in this ethical development, we must realize that other people are unique complex centers of consciousness even more incomprehensible to us than we are to ourselves.

By itself, this simple intellectual recognition about the nature of human beings may be morally useful (as I will discuss later); however, if our recognition blossoms into a certain intense attitude toward people we can gain even more ethically. So, the third major step in developing this moral attitude requires making the leap from intellectual recognition to a powerful mental and emotional attitude. This first part of this attitude involves an acute awareness that each person (ourselves included) is a complex and unique center of consciousness that we can never totally

understand. This awareness differs from the recognition that precedes it in much the same way as a painter's acute awareness of color differs from the way just anyone can consciously strive to notice the colors in a certain environment. Painters are often so in tune to color that the colors around them sort of jump out at them; whereas, a person who is consciously trying to recognize color combinations must actively study their surroundings much more than a painter (and will probably still notice less than the painter).

Then, with this awareness, we can develop a powerful emotional and mental appreciation of the greatness of human consciousness. The inaccessible complexity and completely unique nature of particular individuals should stir in us a great respect and awe, a passionate reverence for this intricate and rare beauty. Having this awareness means having a sense of wonder and appreciation of great value in the face of something incredibly beautiful and completely unique, much like an art lover might feel standing in the Sistine Chapel. With this awareness, we would value the beautiful complexity of other people as we prize the complexity of a major character in a great work of literature. When we begin to explore and understand the complex nuances of a character in a book or film, we tend to sympathize with the character and appreciate how unique and valuable a person like that character would be (often even

if the character has evil tendencies like the protagonist in Clint Eastwood's Unforgiven). Surely, a complex, unique human being is something that is valuable enough to be worthy of this kind of deep appreciation.

The second part of this attitude (a second awareness, in fact) has to do less with the awareness that others are totally unique and insurmountably complex--and thus immeasurably valuable--than with how we share these characteristics with them. We are aware that other people look out at the universe from the center of their own web of relationships and experiences as we do, and even though our outlooks are all unique, we are still aware of how we all share the fate of being forever bound to our single perspective. None of us can ever step outside of our own consciousness and see the world through another's eyes. And, much as Albert Camus says we are inspired to care about and love other human beings because of our realization that they, like ourselves, are isolated human minds struggling futilely against an indifferent universe, the awareness that other people, like us, are isolated in their consciousness can inspire a sense of relation to all human beings and lead us to care more about them.³ An acute awareness that others share the loneliness of this fate can make us more inclined to care about them and to form bridges across the gap of isolation through affective bonds. We relate and reach out because we share the same situation.

Now, usually, most of us probably are not aware of these things; in fact, we most likely tend toward oversimplification, even when interacting with many of the people we know best. However, being temporarily aware of someone's awe-inspiring complexity and of our shared fate of isolation is not all that difficult. Some of us may have already experienced something quite similar in a personal conversation with a close friend. And if not, we could probably experience something like this dual awareness during an intimate discussion if we force ourselves to focus on the fact that we are speaking to a unique being with an incredibly complex consciousness, of which we can never have anything even close to total knowledge. In these kinds of moments, we see our friends in a different light because we are aware that there are millions of unseen thoughts, memories, and feelings thriving inside of them--a whole world to which we can never have direct access. We are awestruck by the vastness we know lies behind the eyes we are looking into. Knowing that we can never look at the world through those eyes may reenforce how separate and different we are from that friend, but this feeling of separation is accompanied by the sense of relation we get from the knowledge that our friend also struggles with conflicting desires, dreams about the future, suffers disappointments, fights fears, seeks self-understanding, searches for companionship, and entertains thousands of

thoughts and feelings each day--all in a realm of consciousness to which only he or she has direct access. Further, the intimacy of the situation and of our relationship with this friend makes it rather easy to go beyond recognizing these things: they strike us both emotionally and mentally. We are powerfully aware of their unique complexity and of our shared fate.

However, if we are aware of the complexity of others and of our shared fate only occasionally, we do not really have the attitude. If we must force ourselves to see others in all their complexity, it is very likely all we have is more of a recognition than a powerful awareness. We are more like the person who decides to pay attention to color than the painter who is in tune with it. And, even if we can focus on the complexity of humanity enough to have this dual awareness for extended (but still temporary periods of time), it really can only help us during these rare moments. To be truly ethically valuable, we must carry this outlook into all of our human interactions: it must become an integral part of our character. It must become an ingrained habit.⁴

The full moral attitude is a habitual way of looking at the world. This habit is much more than being extremely interested in the complexity of others for a while. The person with this moral attitude is more like a great artist who is in tune with color and form, while the person with the

temporary interest is like someone who happens to be "into" color for a while and decides to tinker with some watercolors. Because of the almost overwhelming complexity of all the people around us, we may be inclined to notice only the complexity of a select few people to whom we are close, or we may only pay attention to complexity when it suits us. Tinkering is easier than making art. But like all habits and skills, the more we engage in this double awareness, the better at it we will become.

In fact, we may find quite a bit of inherent motivation to build a temporary awareness into the habitual attitude in the awareness itself. When we open ourselves up to human beings in all their complexity, we open ourselves up to a whole new level of possible interaction and a new realm of people. Much like artists who can find the most typical scene quite interesting because they are so aware of things like color and form, we may discover many intriguing things about the people because of our new openness. We will see the people around us more like fully developed literary character and less like objects or flat characters. In a way, becoming aware of the complexity of humanity and then turning away from it would be like enjoying an enthralling novel filled with highly developed characters and then deciding not to read more books. Reacting to a great book in this way is conceivable, but we would normally ask people why they did not plan to read more. In the same way,

something would probably have to cause us to turn away after seeing the complexity of others and becoming aware of our shared fate. Once we gain an intrinsic appreciation for the complex humanity of one person, maybe even in ourselves, we are very likely to appreciate it no matter who is complex and what exactly that complexity is like. Like the great musician who naturally appreciates good music no matter who is playing it, we will appreciate complex humanity, whether it is our own, that of someone we are close to, or that of someone we have just met. In fact, if we become aware of our own unique complexity, we will not have to make the leap from recognizing the complexity of others to being aware of it. Instead, we will simply learn to appreciate in others what we are aware of in ourselves. And, once we begin to have this awareness of others, we will tend to develop the full moral attitude, much like how someone who reads a few great books tends to continue reading.

Moreover, the awareness of how others are trapped in their own perspective like us can also become habitual quite naturally. Knowing that we share this fate helps alleviate our feelings of loneliness. And, because remembering that others struggle with the same sort of isolation makes us feel better about our fate in this way, we are very likely to hang onto this awareness as much as we can.

There are, however, many factors that may tempt us to ignore the great depth of other human beings and our common

fate: our demanding schedules, our inclination to ignore the needs of others in order to serve ourselves, the psychological difficulty of dealing with people on this increased level of complexity, and many more. Thus, in order to inculcate this habit into our personalities fully, we must also consciously force ourselves to approach all human beings in this way until it becomes second nature and (ideally) takes little or no effort. This is no easy task, but if we are the kind of people who care about ethics--the kind of people who struggle to overcome all kinds of bad habits--having this moral attitude is one habit we need to develop. For those of us who want to do the right thing, this habitual attitude can help a great deal (as I will show). Cultivating this moral attitude may not be easy, but it is crucial to living well.

Chapter 2: The Benefits of the Attitude.

As we discussed in chapter one, becoming aware that each person with whom we interact is a complex center of consciousness like ourselves helps us remember that we are staring into a sea of complexities and possibilities when we look at another person. And, once we become extremely aware of the complexity of other human beings, our conclusions about them, even of those we know the best, are always accompanied by the realization that our understanding is not definitive and that there is much we don't know.

Furthermore, we have to see that even direct access to another person's conscious thoughts, feelings, and memories would not give us a complete understanding of that person. We would still remain ignorant of many subconscious complexities--as we remain ignorant of these complexities in ourselves. In short, when we consistently see others as inaccessibly complex and unique personalities, we must also remember our ignorance of those personalities.

Appreciating our lack of complete understanding prevents us from acting as if we possess perfect knowledge of others. If we don't see people in this way, we can easily assume we have someone completely figured out as soon as we can concoct a rational explanation that person's behavior. Even when we see only a tiny fraction of a

person's behavior, we are often quick to judge and slap a label on that person. In fact, this is when we are probably most likely to label other people and offer quick judgments because they do seem simple when we have so little information about them. We often formulate an explanation of a person's actions or a summary of someone's character based on our very restricted understanding and then act as if our hypothesis is an absolute truth.

However, if we are constantly aware of the unique complexity of others and of our own ignorance, we are more likely to act prudently according to what seems most likely to be true. Complete understanding of other human beings is an impossible aim, yet admitting this fact will definitely help us gain a better understanding than deluding ourselves into thinking we have anyone figured out. When we remember our ignorance, we will know that when we make a quick and simple judgement, we often make an incorrect judgement. We will truly understand that real people don't fit perfectly into intellectual generalizations and explanations. In short, the appreciation of our ignorance protects us from the dangers of hasty judgment and oversimplification.

At this point, it is important to note that this chapter discusses how certain parts of this habitual moral attitude foster different morally valuable personal tendencies and capacities. Moreover, it is theoretically possible for a person to acquire some of these morally

valuable traits by developing only the part of the attitude that is directly relevant or even by having merely an intellectual recognition of the complexity of others. For example, some people could be alert to their ignorance of others because they have formed the habit of intellectually recognizing the unique complexity of every person. This does not, however, nullify the importance of developing this attitude as a whole. First of all, the person who develops both the kinds of awareness (and intellectually recognizes the facts that make this possible) is more inclined to develop the habit of seeing people in this way than the person who only intellectually recognizes the unique and complex nature of others. A powerful emotional reaction like the acute awareness of the complexity and valuable uniqueness that is part one of this moral attitude is much more likely to become habitual than anything purely intellectual. The sense of relation we gain from the second part of the attitude also makes us care more about others, so we are more likely to work at forming a habit that can help us treat them well. Furthermore, only by developing the whole habitual attitude can we improve ourselves in all the ways discussed in this chapter.

A second (closely related) major advantage of developing this moral attitude is that, because we are acutely aware of the great intricacy of others and of our own lack of understanding, we will always remain constantly

alert to evidence that could improve our understanding. Our awareness of the great complexity of others does not just protect us from quickly making a false assumption (by reminding us of our ignorance). It also helps us be more sensitive to important details about others. We aren't just protected from coming to foolish conclusions; we are also put on course to make the best possible judgments about others and decisions about how to act. Granted, being aware of the complexity of others and remembering our ignorance will not automatically cause us to strive to learn more about other people. However, knowing that there is something we need to know about a subject is the first step in learning more. And, because we care about ethics and other people and because understanding others is necessary for living a good life (as I will show shortly), we should want to learn all we can about individual people.⁵ Being aware that other people are far too complex for their actions to be quickly explained may not automatically increase our knowledge, but it surely can help us stick to our quest for better understanding.

As we touched on in the introduction, this increased understanding of the people with whom we interact is a crucial part of understanding whatever circumstances we find ourselves in. As Seyla Benhabib says in her essay, "The Generalized and the Concrete Other," "Moral situations . . . can only be individuated if they are evaluated in light of

our knowledge of the history of the agents involved in them" (285). And, just about every supporter of the ethics of character--from Aristotle to Martha Nussbaum--would agree that this better understanding of moral situations is key to both good judgement and right action.⁶

Now, supporters of the reductive, impersonal theories I discussed in the introduction may question the importance of gaining a better understanding. Some may say that making the right moral decision requires only enough information to determine which moral rules or guidelines apply. (Granted, some theorists--especially utilitarians--might admit that increased understanding helps us to determine what would actually cause the greatest happiness or satisfy the relevant moral guides; however, even these exceptions wouldn't assign as much importance to moral details as a supporter of virtue ethics.) For a reductive theorist, breaking a rule is wrong, and the specific circumstances and people involved are of minimal importance. Moreover, these impartial moral theories certainly will not emphasize the importance of learning about someone's personal history, relational ties, hopes, dreams, fears; they will not stress trying to understand the specific perspective of the other. In her essay "The Generalized and the Concrete Other," Seyla Benhabib talks about how these sort of theories ignore all that truly makes people who they are, how they ignore the

personal:

[When working within these general, impersonal theories] the autonomous self is disembodied and disembodied; moral impartiality is learning to recognize the claims of the other who is just like oneself; fairness is public justice; a public system of rights and duties is [for these theorists] the best way to arbitrate conflict, to distribute rewards and to establish claims. (278-79)

For supporters of these general, reductive theories, making the right choice is a matter of considering which rule applies to the given situation, a situation populated only with people stripped of all that is not needed to determine how to apply rules.

Contrary to what reductive ethical theory may dictate, however, these specific details are of great importance. Ethical decision making and judging others are very complex matters. Each ethical situation involves at least one complex human being (the person making the decision) along with thousands of other factors--from specifics about the people involved to the political climate of the country they live in to the physical environment. In order to make the correct ethical choice, we must try to comprehend this complexity the best we can. A person making moral choices and judgments who ignores details like a person's personal

history or the intricacies of the social system that gives context to the situation is like a scientist ignoring possible variables in a scientific study or a sculptor failing to pay attention to the texture of the stone to be sculpted. Granted, there are terrible crimes and obvious moral situations where considering the personal will not lead us to judge or act unlike reductive theories say we should; however, even in these cases, the person who considers people in all their complexity will better understand the people involved and the roles they played-- and this understanding can play a crucial role in dealing with the person we have judged ethically or knowing exactly how to go about acting on the decision we have made.

Furthermore, the greater understanding of others inspired by our recognition of our ignorance also tends to increase our empathy for others. Most of us are naturally more concerned with what happens to the people we know than with the fate of total strangers somewhere on the other side of the globe. This just seems to be our nature. And, in a way, recognizing the complexity of others can widen the pool of people we know. Because we will not settle with a quick oversimplification of anyone and will strive to understand as much of people's complex characters as possible, we will be more inclined to have a better understanding of a greater number of people than someone who is satisfied seeing other

people simply as "grocery clerk," "classmate," "co-worker," or "person on the street." And, as the number of people we know as particular and unique individuals increases, so does the number of people for whom we naturally tend to be concerned.

In addition, knowledge of particular individuals can strengthen our moral imagination, which in turn should make us even more concerned for the welfare of others. By moral imagination, I mean the ability to see ourselves in the position of another--the ability to imagine ourselves suffering the same fate as someone with whom we are interacting.⁷ If we understand someone well enough to get a feel for what it would be like to be facing the same particular situation as them, we are much more likely to care about that person's well being. And, the specific details we learn about others through our awareness of them as complex individuals can help give us a more vivid picture of what their situation is like. When we see someone suffer, for example, we feel compelled to help them because we are powerfully conscious of what it would be like to suffer in the same way. This care for others is much like the way we begin to care about characters in a novel once we know enough about them to imagine ourselves in their positions. Moreover, we are much more inclined to imagine ourselves in the other's shoes in the first place if we see other people as particular subjects rather than seeing them

as objects upon which we act (as we may often do).

In addition to being valuable in and of itself, this increase in sympathy and caring is also important because it can increase our drive to further habituate the moral attitude we are discussing. To start, our initial desire to act morally (a prerequisite for embarking on the project here outlined) motivates us to try to learn about particular individuals when we first recognize our ignorance. This desire to act morally is also fed by the sense of relation and care we get from our awareness that we share with all other people a sort of isolation in our own consciousness. Then, as we learn more about others, we tend to care even more; and because we care about people more, we are further inclined to work at inculcating the moral attitude that helps us better understand people and treat them well. So, as this attitude becomes more habitual, and our concern for others increases, our motivation to continue developing this moral habit builds. Modest care leads to increased understanding; this understanding, in turn, leads to greater care, which prompts even greater understanding. And, this cycle of habituation continues pushing us toward full possession of the moral attitude.⁸

Moreover, not only does an increased understanding of others help us make the right decision when we know we are faced with a moral choice, but our increased moral insight makes us better able to realize when we are being confronted

with a situation that requires some moral action on our part. If we are more aware of the intricacies of the people around us, we will be more inclined to notice when our action or lack of action is harming others in some way. Most of us probably harm other people in little ways all the time without even realizing what we are doing; however, with an enhanced moral sensitivity and increased alertness to the signs and cues that help us better understand, we will be more inclined to notice the effects of our actions on others. We will be less likely to wound others with subtle racist, sexist, or just plain hurtful remarks and actions.

Furthermore, not all moral situations that are easily overlooked are of minor importance. Some very important moral situations are easy to overlook if we aren't watchful enough. In his article "Character and Ethical Theory," Joel Kupperman comments on how people can commit an evil simply because they don't realize that they are doing something wrong:

It is easily assumed that people who behave immorally have thought about their conduct and decided badly, or through weakness of will have not acted on what had been a correct decision; but there is much to suggest that such people in many cases do not think at all about what they are doing, simply taking it not to be problematic.

(117)

We may want to be good, but if we don't understand what is required of us, we cannot do the right thing.

For example, if we are meeting with a friend or acquaintance during what happens to be a crucially difficult or painful time for that person and we are not observant enough, we can overlook signals that could tell us that our friend needs help or do things (which under normal circumstances wouldn't be problematic) that can cause great suffering. The needs we overlook could be confined to that one meeting, as in the case of a friend who really needs our encouragement at a vital point in life--maybe even at time when our friend is on the brink of committing some reckless act such as committing suicide or of giving up all hope in ever fulfilling a lifelong dream. Or, we could overlook someone's needs over a long period of time, like the father who fails to see his son's need to hear his father say that he loves him. But, whatever the case, only by being sensitive to subtle signals people send us and the signs they exhibit can we know how much they need our help. Only by seeing these kinds of hidden suffering, can we ever hope to fulfill our duty as a friend or family member.

Another advantage of the increased understanding that results from interacting with people as complex centers of consciousness is the way it can improve our insight into evil personalities. When we are confronted with people who commit great evil, we are tempted to label them as maniacs

or monsters; however, if we remain constantly aware that each human being is a complex and unique center of consciousness, we cannot forget that evildoers cannot be explained this simplistically. And, if we remain open to learning more about these kinds of people, we will be more likely to understand the experiences, choices, and drives that helped make them who they are. Not only will this understanding give us some insight into the nature of evil, but it will also better prepare us to deal with those who commit evil and possibly to find ways to thwart their evil efforts or inspire reform.

Furthermore, refraining from dismissing evildoers as nonhuman monsters safeguards us from stooping to their level when administering punishment. If we dehumanize criminals and see them only as monsters, we could easily let our anger and disgust with what they do take control of us. Then, instead of being likely to administer justice and protect innocent people from any further evil at their hands, we may be inclined toward committing acts of cruelty and sadism in order to take our revenge. If we are the type of people, however, who have the moral sensitivity to recognize the humanity buried in the complex consciousness of evildoers (even when the person commits act so evil that they seem more monster and human), we will be less inclined toward revenge and more likely to pursue justice. Since we still see criminals as people, we are bound to treat them as such.

If we are not aware of the complexity of these evildoers and can see them simply as a kind of monster, we will be less likely to administer justice because a monster does not have the rights of a person.

Being aware that evildoers are also unique complex centers of consciousness like ourselves (granted rather deranged centers) has one more advantage: it forces us to admit that these criminals are not fundamentally different from ourselves. Sure we may have many differences, but even the most terrible killer is still a human being. And, acknowledging this fact forces us to recognize our own potential for evil. Not fooling ourselves into thinking that those who commit terrible evil are somehow completely different from ourselves helps us be more aware of our own potential for evil. If we gain some understanding of evildoers, we may find that the drives and experiences behind their actions are only different from our own in degree, rather than kind. With a better understanding of evil, we will be more aware of the destructive drives and emotions inside of ourselves, and thus we should be more able to control these tendencies. Seeing the depths to which a human being can stoop puts us on guard and helps us avoid following this same path. We learn about goodness through a better understanding of evil.

With this heightened moral vision, we can be more aware of ethically salient details, recognize situations that call

for ethical action more readily, deal with evildoers more effectively and fairly, and control our own evil tendencies better. In short, when we have inculcated this awareness of the unique and incomprehensible complexity of human beings into our characters, we will have the moral sensitivity necessary for living well.

In addition to the increased moral sensitivity we get from this moral attitude, we gain several other beneficial moral tendencies from the great respect and awe instilled in us by the intricate beauty of each complex center of consciousness. The sense of wonder and appreciation of great value that we feel when we interact with any human being can be an invaluable moral guide.

The first moral advantage of inculcating this part of the moral attitude is that it will be there as a guide in every interaction we have with other people. This goes beyond the increased ability to realize when a situation demands moral action that our awareness of others as complex centers of consciousness gives us. Not only will this help us make the correct choice when we consciously consider moral concerns, but it will also guide us when we are not thinking of morality at all. Even if we don't realize that a situation has moral relevance, we will be motivated to act with respect toward the people with whom we are interacting because of the great value we place on them. As Joel Kupperman explains in his article, "Character and Ethical

Theory," immoral action is often the result of failing to consider the moral implications of a choice (117). Caring about people in this concrete way helps insulate us from this kind of mistake. What is more, being the kind of people who see other human beings as extremely valuable will also make us more inclined not to consider many immoral choices as options. As Bernard Williams says in his Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy, "An effective way for actions to be ruled out is that they never come into thought at all, and this is often the best way" (185). If we really care about other people, inflicting great suffering on others in order to get what we want just is not a choice we will consider. If we have this attitude toward others, we can act in the best interest of those whom we value so greatly without thinking of a single moral principle.

Furthermore, a deep-rooted passion like this is much more likely to drive us to action than any principle or belief. Often, moral action requires great risk and sacrifice. Risking one's life or turning away from personal benefit for the sake of something like Mill's greatest happiness principle or Kant's categorical imperative is much less in line with what most of us experience as normal human nature than doing these things for something we value and love. CS Lewis speaks about how emotional sentiments offer more powerful motivation than intellectual principles in The Abolition of Man:

In battle it is not syllogisms that will keep the reluctant nerves and muscles to their post in the third hour of the bombardment. The crudest sentimentalism . . . about a flag or a country or a regiment will be of more use. (34)

If this simple sentiment can motivate a soldier at war, our powerful passion for real people can certainly push us to action in the heat of the battle for what is right and good. When we can look our reason for acting in the eye, we may find strength and conviction we did not know we possessed.

In addition, this love of particular individuals also safeguards us against the dangers of fanatically following a principle or set of principles--dangers that are especially serious when those principles are based more on propaganda than on fact. Any student of history could go on for hours about the problems caused or fueled by fanatic adherence to principles. In fact, the list of atrocities committed for religious and nationalistic principles alone is staggering. And just mentioning the principle of ethnic purity brings to mind the kinds of horrors committed in Nazi Germany and recently in Bosnia. As Alasdair MacIntyre puts it in his book After Virtue, "When men and women identify what are in fact their partial and particular causes too easily and too completely with the cause of some universal principle, they usually behave worse than they would otherwise do" (206). When we are willing to do anything for a principle, we just

might.

Our passion for the concrete individuals, however, can act as a reminder to us if we are tempted down the path of fanaticism. We will be more likely to remember that--when we are about to harm someone--we are facing a living human being with a long history, many relationships, and a unique perspective on the world. Before we can hurt someone in a frenzy of zeal for some principle, we will see them in their awe-inspiring complexity and be forced back to sanity by our appreciation of their particular being. Just imagine all the deaths that could have been prevented if all the otherwise normal Germans who allowed themselves to be swept up in Nazi propaganda would have seen the Jewish people as real people like themselves and would have been motivated to righteous action (instead of criminal compliance) by their passion for concrete persons.

Yet, these kinds of destructive principles are not the only ones of which we must be leery. Moral principles themselves can lead to problems if we lose sight of the fact that these ideals are meant to help us treat real people better. A deep appreciation of human value, however, can protect us from this danger. People who strive to follow some set of moral rules but fail to appreciate truly the value of concrete individuals will not know when an exception to a given principle needs to be made. The famous Kantian maxim that one should never lie for any reason is a

perfect example of this. Let us say, to use a case when we obviously should make an exception to this rule, my brother comes to the door of my apartment in a panic and says that a man with an ax is trying to kill him. My brother then rushes past me and hides in my bedroom closet. As I am still standing in the hallway, the man with the ax comes running up the stairs and angrily demands that I tell him if I have seen a man about six feet tall with blond hair come by (this is a fair description of my brother). Now, according to Kant's absolute rule, I should tell the man that I did see someone, and when he asks where my brother went, I would have to tell the truth again and say that my brother is in my bedroom closet. But clearly, this is not what every fraternal and moral inclination in me says to do. Because I know that an exception to the general guide that tells me not to lie must be made, I tell the man with the ax that I saw a man run down the hall and climb down the fire escape. I do not really consider telling him the truth, because I love my brother and know that my brother's life is much more important than refraining from telling a lie. People without a powerful sense of human value could see rules as ends in themselves and seek only to follow these guides perfectly, instead of seeing principles as guidelines that they need to apply to specific situations in order to treat real people well. Our great respect for each particular center of consciousness, however, reminds us that

any moral principle to which we appeal for guidance is just that--a guide. We will never forget that the guide is only good as long as it helps us choose how to best treat real people.

Chapter 3: Problems and Solutions

Now, there are several objections to developing this particular moral attitude that may come to mind at this point; however, all of them can be effectively answered, so none of them nullify the importance of this attitude. The first of these, and probably the one most easily dealt with, has to do with language. If we are trying to acknowledge the great complexity of other people and refrain from making generalizations, we may run into problems finding fitting words with which to describe people. This is especially a problem when it comes to the use of nouns. To call someone a Caucasian, an African American, a felon, a lawyer, or countless other terms is to focus in on one aspect of that person's complex existence while ignoring the rest of that person. Former Harvard psychology professor Gordon W. Allport discusses this very problem in part of his book The Nature of Prejudice:

To state the matter technically, a noun abstracts from a concrete reality some one feature and assembles different concrete realities only with respect to this one feature. The very act of classifying forces us to overlook all other features, many of which might offer a sounder

basis than the rubric we select. (178)

To speak, we need to generalize and abstract, usually ignoring a large part of a person's existence.

Sadly, there is no way to avoid this sort of generalization completely. Language simply cannot sum up the great complexity of the human consciousness. What we can do, and what this moral attitude helps us do, however, is remember that when we name a person with a noun, the person goes far beyond the description of that word. A person who happens to be teacher is more than what the term denotes: an Asian American is more than just Asian or American. Moreover, we can also be more careful about the words we use to describe people. It is this problem with abstraction that is behind the recent movement toward more sensitive terminology. For example, it is more sensitive to call people with disabilities "people with disabilities," instead of "disabled people," because the former description puts the emphasis on the fact that they are people, rather than on their disability. Now, being this conscious of the language we use may not be easy. In fact, I've struggled with this problem throughout this work. This sort of sensitivity is, however, very important because, as supporters of more sensitive language say, the language we use fuels many of our prejudices. If we use a word like handicapped, for example, to describe a person and do not

see the person that exists beyond what our word describes, we are quite likely to treat that person unfairly. We see only their handicap and so treat them like a disability rather than a person; we see only what they cannot do and overlook all they can. The words we use to communicate can cause us to oversimplify others, but if we are careful about how we use our language, the limits of language do not have to limit our awareness of complex human beings.

A second possible problem with developing the moral attitude is that, when faced with the ultimately incomprehensible complexity of others, some of us may become frustrated and give up trying to understand at all. This sense of futility could be further compounded by the knowledge that, even if we could totally understand the people involved in a situation, we would still have many other details to consider, such as economic and political factors. If, however, we can accept that trying to live well is a lifelong endeavor that we never finish, our moral efforts are much less likely to lead to frustration. There is no quick answer to living well; it is something we must always work on, just as we work on personal relationships (for example). A good marriage is not the result of finding the solution, and neither is living well. All this complexity can be overwhelming if we think ethics is something we are going to get right once and for all, but if we remember that all of us will always be imperfect when it

comes to living the good life, the fact that we can't know everything is not so bad. In fact, knowing moral perfection is impossible because of the inaccessibility of other minds can relieve the burden of trying to be totally righteous. We will always have room to improve, but we don't have to be dragged down by our imperfection.

Another possible criticism is that, if cultivated to an extreme, this attitude could be psychologically overwhelming. If we were constantly concentrating both on the unique and valuable complexity of every person whom we contact and on our similar situation, we would have no energy left to think of anything else. Walking through a crowd of people would drive us crazy. It would be impossible to get anything done because we would always be overwhelmed by the complex centers of consciousness around us.

However, living well does not call for this kind of extremism. First of all, we need not be overwhelmed by the voice of the other at every moment in our lives. Granted, there will probably be times in many of our lives, times when someone around us is in great need, when we must pay full attention to the complexity of the other. For most of our lives, however, our awareness of others can remain more in the background. We need to remain aware of the complexity of others and of how we are all isolated in our consciousness, but it need not overwhelm us. In the same

way that a painter can still have a life beyond art, we can still live our lives. Artists may not pay conscious attention to every color around them; however, they can see subtleties most of us would not notice, and they are constantly on alert for interesting combinations or shades. In a similar fashion, we may often be aware of the complexity of others and of our shared fate on an almost unconscious level, but when others are in need, our awareness will become more powerful. When important details present themselves, we will be open to noticing them; when we need to imagine ourselves in someone else's shoes, we will be able; when we begin to lose sight of the people behind principles, we will regain it; and when we need the courage to risk everything for real people, we will find it. The power of our awareness will be dictated by the situation in which we find ourselves.

Moreover, this attitude is only one virtuous character trait among many. This is no core of morality, no replacement for other virtues. Even if we have this powerful awareness of the complexity, uniqueness, and value of people, we still need to recognize that there are other ethical tendencies we need and other valuable things we should recognize. We must still recognize that things like our psychological well-being, leading a productive life, and the necessity of meeting our family's and our own basic needs are still crucial to living a good life. We must also

not forget the value of things like animals and the environment as a whole. Sometimes we may have to turn part of our attention away from the complex, unique centers of consciousness around us in order to pay attention to other valuable things.

What is more, each of us is a valuable human being, too. We cannot be aware of the great value of complex centers of consciousness without recognizing our own value as one such center, so when our awareness of others threatens to destroy our own self, we will know we need focus on ourselves and look away from others for a bit. In order to be any good to others, we need to take care of ourselves.

Despite how much we may want one, however, there is no general rule to tell us how aware we need to be. Our level of awareness must be determined by the specific situation in which we find ourselves. We will have to rely on the moral sensitivity and vision inspired by the attitude for help in finding just the right degree of alertness, much as Aristotle says we need the sensitivity to understand our situation fully in order to know the appropriate or virtuous emotional reaction. Our awareness will help us know when we need to focus and when we need to relax as we more fully habituate the moral attitude. Like a jockey who learns by riding just when to push a horse and just when to rein it in, we will get better at balancing this moral attitude with

other important things by living with the attitude. As with many skills, being good at approaching others with this moral attitude comes from living with it.

Moreover, the fact that cultivating this attitude toward other people does not entail denying all other sources of value also helps to defend the moral attitude from the criticism that it isn't broad enough. Being aware of the value of other people without seeing the importance of other valuable things such as great art, animals, or entire ecosystems can be extremely detrimental to living well. If we are willing to sacrifice entire ecosystems for the lives of a couple of people, we may not be able to call ourselves good people.

However, being aware of the complexity and unique nature of other people, along with appreciating their great value, does not require ignoring the value of other living things. A deep awareness of our relation to other people does not rule out feeling connected to the natural world. To be truly ethical people, we probably will have to cultivate a great appreciation of and sense of community with other forms of life, but this is separate from (although probably related to) our appreciation of the value of other human beings and sense of shared fate. The attitude described in chapter one starts from recognizing how others are complex centers of consciousness like ourselves. Nonhuman living things are different from us in

many ways that other people are not. We need to value nonhuman living things and balance this appreciation with our appreciation of the value of human beings; however, these are separate attitudes formed in distinct ways. Moreover, the same can be said for the recognition of the value of certain nonliving things such as great works of art. Simply put, this attitude toward other people cannot be criticized for being too narrow because, in the best case, it is one attitude among others.

Furthermore, this attitude toward other people can also be important in protecting things such as nature and great works of art. If we take a moment to consider all of the natural and artistic wonders destroyed during times when human beings were trying to destroy each other, we cannot help but see how treating other people better can protect things like nature and art. Only when we are less concerned with out-competing and conquering each other can we treat the beautiful and natural wonders of the world we live in better.

Chapter 4: Adolf Eichmann

At this point, specific examples will probably serve best to improve our understanding of the advantages of having the moral attitude we have been discussing. In particular, exploring the actions and characters of two men who played very different roles in the horrors of the Nazi Holocaust--Adolf Eichmann and Oskar Schindler--should give us some very helpful insight. I would like to make it clear, however, that I am not claiming that Eichmann participated in great evil while Schindler performed heroically righteous feats simply because Eichmann lacked this attitude and Schindler had it. Eichmann, however, did clearly lack the tendencies of character that this moral attitude inspires--such as moral sensitivity, moral imagination, and a great respect for concrete individuals (and so obviously the attitude itself)--and the virtual absence of these traits does go a long way to explain why he acted the way he did. On the other hand, Schindler's character in many ways resembles that of a person who has this moral attitude, and we know that Schindler saved the lives of approximately thirteen hundred people during the Holocaust (Keneally 362). Maybe Schindler did not have exactly the attitude here supported and more than likely he did not build up this moral habit through the developmental process explained in chapter one; however, his attitude

toward people very closely approximates the habitual attitude we are exploring. Looking at these two extreme examples can give us a more vivid picture of the kind of person someone with this moral attitude would be and show us the dangers of lacking--and the value of having--the kinds of moral tendencies and capacities explained in chapter two.⁹ And, once we see how important tending to act in these ways is both to others and to ourselves, we will clearly see how crucial it is to develop the habitual attitude that can help us act in such ways.

Let us turn to Eichmann first, starting with a description of his role in the systematic murder that was the Nazi Holocaust. It should be noted that this description and the following discussion of Eichmann will rely heavily on Hannah Arendt's reflections in Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil. Arendt offers a detailed and fascinating description of Eichmann through her reflections on his trial and the information presented there. I will try to express as much of that detail as time and space considerations allow.

Now, an exhaustive explanation of Eichmann's exact position in the Nazi government would be extremely complicated and unnecessary for our exploration of his character. But to put it simply, he was in charge of a small subsection of the Gestapo assigned to Jewish affairs.

Hannah Arendt comments on his role in her account of his trial:

Technically and organizationally, Eichmann's position was not very high; his post turned out to be such an important one only because the Jewish question, for purely ideological reasons, acquired a greater importance with every day and week and month of the war. . . . (70)

At first, his duties had to do primarily with emigration, but as the Nazis' treatment of the Jewish people changed, Eichmann became more of a coordinator of deportations. And eventually, his office was in charge of moving the Jewish people from their homes to the concentration camps. He coordinated the paperwork needed to take away almost everything these people had--from their money to their citizenship--and he arranged transportation to the camps. In fact, it was Eichmann who designed the assembly line process for completing the necessary paperwork (Arendt 45-46). This process was originally developed to process Jewish people for emigration from Nazi territory, but we can see the same techniques being used later when the destination was a concentration camp rather than the border.

However, Eichmann's office was by no means the only one involved in this genocide. As the war went on and the Nazis increased their efforts to exterminate the Jewish people, more and more offices played roles in these processes.

Eventually, almost the entire Nazi government and military structure was involved in genocide (Arendt 159).

Moreover, Eichmann's exact role in the Holocaust is unclear and has often been debated. Some say he was the mastermind behind the Final Solution (Arendt 210), while others say he worked to save Jewish people from the gas chambers whenever he could (Arendt 94).¹⁰ It seems likely that the truth lies somewhere between these two extremes. Whatever his exact role was, an Israeli court found proof enough to convict him of war crimes in 1961 and execute him for his role in the Holocaust.

Now, it is important to note that Eichmann was neither an insane killer nor a sadistic monster. He cannot be so easily explained. As Arendt says, "Half a dozen psychiatrists . . . certified him as 'normal' . . ." (25). One psychiatrist even commented that "his whole psychological outlook, his attitude toward his wife and children, mother and father, brothers, sisters, and friends, was 'not only normal but most desirable' . . ." (Arendt 25-26). He seemed to have been healthy enough that, given different circumstances, he might have lived out his life as a hard working salesman, accountant, manager, or government worker.¹¹

Charges of sadism are also quite unwarranted. It may be easier to dismiss him as some kind of monster; however, "[t]he trouble with Eichmann [is] precisely that so many

were like him, and that the many were neither perverted nor sadistic, that they were, and still are, terribly and terrifyingly normal" (Arendt 276). In her book, Arendt says that "everybody [at the trial] could see that this man was not a 'monster' . . ." (54). Eichmann was no sociopath who loved killing; he was "a mass murderer who had never killed (and who in this particular instance probably did not even have the guts to kill)" (Arendt 215). Moreover, Eichmann was not a hateful anti-Semitic either. In fact, Eichmann himself even said that he did not harbor any ill will toward the Jewish people and that he was even quite fond of people who were Jewish (Arendt 30). He even had Jewish relatives and a Jewish mistress for a while (Arendt 29-30).

Despite his sanity and lack of extreme malicious intent, however, Eichmann consciously played an important role in the murder of millions. We cannot help but ask why he did what he did, and part of the answer seems to lie in how he lacked certain beneficial tendencies and capacities, while possessing several harmful tendencies to an extreme. The remainder of this chapter will explore these issues, but it is important to remember that, rather than being a definitive list of all of Eichmann's moral shortcomings and a complete explanation of his behavior, this discussion is meant primarily as an account of how Eichmann lacked the advantageous moral tendencies (and had certain flaws) discussed in chapter two and of how, in part, this lack

explains his actions. In fact, a complete explanation of his behavior is impossible because, like every complex center of consciousness, Eichmann was so complicated that he did not even understand himself completely. Moreover, because of the length and purpose of this chapter, my account of Eichmann cannot even be as rich in detail as Arendt's account of him in Eichmann in Jerusalem (which is almost three hundred pages long).

A crucial step toward understanding Eichmann is realizing that he was virtually possessed with doing well in his career, with looking good in the eyes of society, with being a success. Possibly one of the more accurate ways to describe this man would be as an ambitious and efficient bureaucrat. He seems to have resigned himself to whatever new directive his superiors handed down, and then he did everything he could to fulfill his duty. Arendt says that "[t]here were two things he could do well, better than others: he could organize and he could negotiate" (45). These talents helped Eichmann do his job well; he was like the model employee who gives 110 percent--his company just happened to be in the business of genocide. In fact, during his lengthy imprisonment and trial in Jerusalem, Eichmann often talked about his career in Nazi Germany and how his desire for promotion was constantly frustrated (Arendt 287).

This drive for promotion, however, does not seem to have been a quest for money and power. Eichmann apparently

believed that excelling in his career was what would make him a good person, that occupational and social success determined people's worth. Success was a moral good, maybe even the primary moral good, for Eichmann. He did not simply want to do well in his career, or just feel he deserved promotion; he felt a moral obligation to succeed. Hannah Arendt says that "[e]xcept for an extraordinary diligence in looking out for his personal advancement, he [Eichmann] had no motives at all" (287). Now, while saying this diligence was his only motive may be an oversimplification (caused by taking this quote out of context), this dedication surely made him a very effective cog in the Nazi killing machine. Arendt further describes Eichmann's obsession elsewhere in her book:

What he fervently believed in up to the end was success, the chief standard of 'good society' as he knew it. Typical was his last word on the subject of Hitler. . . . Hitler, he said, 'may have been wrong all down the line, but one thing is beyond dispute: the man was able to work his way up from lance corporal in the German Army to Führer of a people of almost eighty million. . . . His success alone proved to me that I should subordinate myself to this man.' (126)

And, subordinate himself is what Eichmann did. Indeed, Eichmann's negotiating and paper-pushing made it possible

for bulldozers to push much more than paper.

Just being a workaholic and being overly concerned with social standing, however, surely could not make him an infamous Nazi war criminal. These characteristics could be used to describe thousands, maybe even millions, of people in the United States today. Even placing an ethical importance on doing well in one's career is not, by itself, something that is necessarily going to lead to evil. Arendt agrees that "this diligence in itself was in no way criminal; he [Eichmann] certainly would never have murdered his superior in order to inherit his post" (287). There must be something more behind Eichmann's behavior.

And, indeed there is. Eichmann lacked certain moral characteristics that could have placed a check on what he was willing to do for his career. First of all, he was missing the ability to recognize when he was grossly oversimplifying a situation. Unlike the person who has inculcated the moral attitude I am defending, Eichmann could easily see people as objects and overlook that they were real people with real feelings, real relationships, real histories, and real lives--and people who suffered real pain and died real deaths. To Eichmann, the Jews were like a product that had to be shipped and processed. Of course, Eichmann probably could intellectually recognize that people were dying and he was helping send them to their deaths, but from the way he acted, it seems that he never really

realized this on a deeper level--he never knew it in his gut.

But, how could Eichmann fail to recognize something so powerfully shocking? First of all, anything that even resembled morally sensitivity seemed to be lacking in Eichmann. He seems to have seen only what concerned him and his career (and, as I will explain later, certain ideals related to his career), and, for the most part, he remained blind to everything else. As Arendt says, "[h]e merely, to put the matter colloquially, never realized what he was doing" (287). "It was sheer thoughtlessness--something by no means identical with stupidity--that predisposed him to become one of the greatest criminals of that period [World War II]," she continues (287-88). Decisions for Eichmann were easy: he did what was best for his career or served some related ideal in which he believed. His vision was too narrow to see the other factors that should have figured into his decisions--millions of living and breathing factors.

Now, the knowledge that Eichmann lacked moral sensitivity and vision prompts us to question how he could be so incredibly blind. Obviously, part of the answer is that he lacked certain characteristics that encourage moral sensitivity (such an acute awareness of the unique complexity of concrete individuals); however, this deficiency is not the whole answer.

Another piece of the puzzle is that Eichmann tended toward a certain method of oversimplifying his situation. Eichmann would latch onto particular ways of describing a situation, descriptions that (he claimed) gave him a "sense of elation" (Arendt 53). . . These catch phrases, or "winged words" as he called them (Arendt 105), would define his concept of his circumstances. In fact, whenever the judges at Eichmann's trial "tried to appeal to his conscience, they were met with 'elation,' and they were outraged as well as disconcerted when they learned that the accused had at his disposal a different elating cliché for each period of his life and each of his activities" (Arendt 53). Eichmann could see a situation in terms of a well-put oversimplification and not be bothered by any troublesome moral details.

Moreover, these catch phrases did not have to form a logically consistent system for Eichmann. He seemed to have no problem clinging to one description of a situation while relishing a completely contradictory phrase for another set of circumstances:

In his mind, there was no contradiction between "I will jump into my grave laughing,"¹² appropriate for the end of the war, and "I shall gladly hang myself in public as a warning example for all anti-Semites on this earth," which . . . under [the] vastly different circumstances [of his

trial], fulfilled exactly the same function of giving him a lift. (Arendt 53-54)

Eichmann saw the world through his "winged words," and nothing--not even self-contradiction--could shatter the lenses through which he looked.

Furthermore, not only did these catch phrases shape Eichmann's view of each situation, but they also always accompanied his memory of that experience; thus, not only was Eichmann not bothered by his choices while he was making them, but he also did not have to struggle with his conscience after he made his decisions. These clichés and Eichmann's obsession with succeeding in his career gave him a type of selective memory. Hannah Arendt observes that "Eichmann's memory functioned only in respect to things that had had a direct bearing upon his career" (62). She adds, "Apart from . . . minor triumphs [in his career], Eichmann remembered only moods and the catch phrases he made up to go with them . . ." (62). Granted, once again saying that he only remembered things related to his career may be a bit too absolute; however, Eichmann's attraction to catch phrases, along with these clichés' invulnerability to logical attack and his selective memory, clearly helped Eichmann to design the world in which he lived. The tremendous power of this method of self-deception should become resoundingly clear when we look at Arendt's account of his execution:

He began by stating emphatically that he was a Gottgläubiger, to express in common Nazi fashion that he was no Christian and did not believe in life after death. He then proceeded: "After a short while, gentlemen, we shall all meet again. Such is the fate of all men. Long live Germany, long live Argentina, long live Austria. I shall not forget them." In the face of death, he had found the cliché used in funeral oratory. Under the gallows, his memory played him the last trick; he was "elated" and he forgot that this was his own funeral. (252)

Eichmann built a sort of fortress that protected him from reality, and that fortress stood until his death.

This process of self-deception may seem quite incredible, but the fact of the matter is that much of Germany was engaging in similar deceit. Hannah Arendt describes how, to some extent, Eichmann's self-deception sprung from this large scale fraud:

Eichmann needed only to recall the past in order to feel assured that he was not lying and that he was not deceiving himself, for he and the world he lived in had once been in perfect harmony. And that German society of eighty million people had been shielded against reality and factuality by

exactly the same means, the same self-deception, lies, and stupidity that had now become ingrained in Eichmann's mentality. These lies changed from year to year, and they frequently contradicted each other; moreover, they were not necessarily the same for the various branches of the Party hierarchy or the people at large. But the practice of self-deception had become . . . common, almost a moral prerequisite for survival (52)

That the Germany society as a whole was altered by this process of deception in this way helps to explain Eichmann's actions further. Hannah Arendt says:

His [Eichmann's] conscience was indeed set at rest when he saw the zeal and eagerness with which "good society" everywhere reacted as he did. He did not need to "close his ears to the voice of conscience," as the judgment [at his trial] has it, not because he had none, but because his conscience spoke with a "respectable voice," with the voice of respectable society around him. (126)

His conscience didn't tell him his actions were evil because the society he valued so much told him his choices were acceptable (or even desirable).

But Eichmann's lack of understanding did not stop here. His almost complete lack of moral imagination and real

sympathy for others further restricted an already narrow field of moral vision. Eichmann was unable even to see the world from his own perspective, so it is not at all surprising that he seemed to be incapable of mentally placing himself in another's situation and imagining how he would feel facing those same circumstances. Eichmann only seemed able to see his own problems (particularly with his career), and while in prison in Jerusalem, he even talked about these social struggles "in the tone of someone who was sure of finding 'normal, human' sympathy for a hard-luck story" (Arendt 50). Arendt specifically points out his lack of moral imagination:

It was precisely this lack of imagination which enabled him to sit for months on end facing a German Jew who was conducting the police interrogation, pouring out his heart to the man and explaining again and again how it was that he reached only the rank of lieutenant colonel in the S.S. and that it had not been his fault that he was not promoted. (287)

Eichmann was so incapable of imaginatively stepping out of his limited perspective that he could not realize that he was expecting a man who probably had lost many loved ones in the Holocaust to feel bad about a Nazi's inability to move up in the corrupt government that murdered millions of people.

Undoubtedly, a man with this total lack of moral imagination could not have true sympathy and care for others. He did not even understand who other people really were. Other human beings existed for Eichmann only to the extent to which they played a role in the narrow world in which he lived. Granted, he could be repulsed by acts of brutality. For example, Eichmann talks of how he became "physically weak" after witnessing a group of people being loaded into a van used as a portable gas chamber, hearing their cries, and watching their bodies being dumped in a ditch (Arendt 87).¹³ This reaction, however, seems to be largely the reaction of a man very prone to squeamishness, the type of reaction a person might experience watching a doctor perform surgery. Eichmann himself even mentioned how he could not handle seeing blood or a "gaping wound" (Arendt 87). This kind of reaction does not require anything like true compassion. Unlike a real awareness of human suffering, physical aversion to the sight of affliction can be ended simply by looking away--which is exactly what Eichmann did.

To say, however, that Eichmann's aversion to these killings was exactly like the squeamishness someone might feel viewing a medical operation or watching a butcher cut up raw liver would be unfair. If we can trust Eichmann's portrayal of this situation at his trial, Eichmann was quite disturbed by what he saw. Eichmann said the situation was

very unsettling to him, and he told of how he spent hours traveling in his car afterward without saying a word to his driver (Arendt 88). So it seems that, at least to some degree, Eichmann did experience the kind of revulsion that we would expect of any good person witnessing such horrors: he felt something like a moral disgust. But, he was so committed to dutifully working toward success in his career that he put aside these feelings (which could have made him a much better person had he let them develop and acted on them) and went on with his job. His reaction was just not powerful enough to inspire him to forsake his role in the system responsible for such atrocities.

Whatever the degree of reaction he had, Eichmann surely did not have a truly compassionate reaction. True compassion would have stimulated more ethical action. He may have been felt some sort of pity, a pity like one might feel watching a melodrama, but really caring and being sympathetic toward others requires some sort of understanding of who those people really are and what it would be like to be in their situation. Yes, Eichmann could be disturbed by the sight of suffering and maybe even felt something like a vague sense of pity; however, being truly aware of real people suffering horrible agony seemed beyond his capability. If Eichmann would have had a powerful sense of compassion and the moral imagination inspired by the moral attitude, he would have found it much more difficult

to turn away and continue idealistically and dutifully performing his function in the Nazi machine.

Eichmann lacked the moral sensitivity, moral imagination, and empathy to see clearly the world (a world full of real people) in which he lived; instead, he lived in a simplistically narrow reality, which was defined by his obsession with his career (and the related ideals), his selective memory, and the often contradictory catch phrases he embraced. This being the case, it is no wonder he seemed virtually untroubled by playing a key role in genocide. There seems to be a problem, however, with the very idea of Eichmann deliberating over moral issues. Eichmann's world was just far too narrow to allow for any true dilemmas. He did not seem to see conflict between his career quest and what he was doing to people because these people really did not exist for Eichmann except to the extent that they played a role in his career world. To borrow Arendt's words once again, "[H]e was surrounded by the most reliable of all safeguards against the words and the presence of others, and hence against reality as such" (49). Eichmann was not only incapable of making good moral decisions, but he also could not recognize when a moral decision needed to be made. He just did not see his actions as morally problematic.

Furthermore, Eichmann's actions can probably be further explained by his inability to see that one need not be a sadistic monster to commit atrocious acts. He failed to

realize the evil of which both he and his Nazi comrades were capable. Admittedly, this inability alone does not appear to be a major contributor to Eichmann's behavior. It may have, however, further hindered his already tremendously narrow moral vision. Realizing that someone is capable of evil is a crucial step in recognizing the evil that person does--especially if we are that person. The fact that he and those around him were involved in horrendous actions just did not seem to dawn on Eichmann.

What is more, a look at the reactions of the judges at Eichmann's trial can further demonstrate importance of seeing the humanity of evildoers. Eichmann's life clearly shows that doing evil is not simply a matter of being some sort of deranged half-human monster. Here was a man deeply involved in the systematic massacre of millions, and this man was in many respects no different from countless other people who do not commit great evil. The prosecutor, and possibly the judges, at Eichmann's trial seemed to have a hard time with this reality. They seemed unable to comprehend that a person most of us would probably characterize as relatively normal (at least in comparison with our picture of the stereotypical psychopathic killer) could commit such terrible acts. Now, this does not mean that Eichmann's sentence was unjust, but it does imply that the verdict's exact interpretation of Eichmann's actions may have been somewhat inaccurate. If we are going to gain

anything like a true understanding of Eichmann's actions and many of the more horrifying acts of this century (or maybe of all of history for that matter), we need to be able to look at those who commit these acts with great sensitivity. Hannah Arendt says "that it would have been very comforting indeed to believe that Eichmann was a monster," not a normal human being (276). We need to accept that humans can commit acts we tend to attribute only to monsters. Recognizing the normality of Eichmann and many other evildoers may be frightening, but it is necessary to living well.

By this point, it should be no surprise that Eichmann did not prize concrete human beings like someone with the moral attitude I am explaining. And, because he lacked the sense of wonder and appreciation of great value in the face of other human beings, he also lacked the safeguards against committing immoral acts that go with this sense of value. First of all, Eichmann did not have this tendency to treasure real people to push him toward moral action when he did not think in moral terms. This sort of automatic drive toward the ethical (in addition to great moral sensitivity) would have been especially important in the distorted moral context of Nazi Germany. Hannah Arendt explains how the Nazis succeeded in perverting the conception of the ethical:

Since the whole of respectable society had in one way or another succumbed to Hitler, the moral maxims which determine social behavior and the

religious commandments--"Thou shalt not kill!"-- which guide conscience had virtually vanished. Those few who were still able to tell right from wrong went really only by their own judgments, and they did so freely; there were no rules to be abided by, under which the particular cases with which they were confronted could be subsumed. They had to decide each instance as it arose, because no rules existed for the unprecedented.

(295)

Eichmann found himself in a world where the social guides, which normally help steer people toward moral action, helped lead him astray instead. Without an inner voice to remind him of what was truly right, a voice that a great appreciation of human value could have provided, Eichmann's sense of the ethical was bound to be shaped by the social forces around him. As Arendt says, Eichmann "had a conscience, and his conscience functioned in the expected way for about four weeks, whereupon it began to function the other way around" (95). Eichmann's conscience changed with Germany society: when corrupt Nazi ideals replaced the normal values of his country, Eichmann quickly adjusted-- requiring only a few weeks to alter his entire value system. A powerful appreciation of human value could have told Eichmann that what he was doing was just plain wrong-- despite what those that ruled his country said.

Furthermore, given the great risk of acting against the Nazi regime, Eichmann would have needed a strong motivator to give him the courage to struggle against the Nazis, even if he had thought that resisting was the right thing to do. But, because he was not motivated by an appreciation of human value, Eichmann really did not even have the courage to question what was going on around him. For instance, at his trial, Eichmann talked about how, after attending a meeting about the Final Solution with high-ranking Nazi officials, he "'sensed a kind of Pontius Pilate feeling, for [he] felt free of all guilt'" (Arendt 114). Arendt sarcastically adds, "Who was he to judge? Who was he 'to have [his] own thoughts in this matter'? Well, he was neither the first nor the last to be ruined by modesty" (114). Eichmann did not seem to believe that it was his place to question the system; however, faced with the systematic murder of millions, those who truly value each individual human life would make it their place. If Eichmann would have had the courage and motivation inspired by truly valuing concrete human beings, he would have been more likely, not only to question the Nazi system, but also to fight it.

Yet another moral pitfall away from which revering unique individuals could have steered Eichmann is the potentially destructive tendency to subjugate people to principles--the most obviously dangerous of which are anti-

Semitic, racist principles like the ones supported by the Nazis. Without a sense of the great value of each and every particular person, Eichmann was more inclined to believe the Nazi propaganda that told him that certain people were inferior and must be eliminated. Now, Eichmann does not seem to have been a zealous supporter of corrupt Nazi doctrines such as their mission to wipe out the Jewish people, but he accepted them enough not to have a problem with doing his job. These principles may not have driven him, but their terrible nature did not stop him either; he may not have been enthusiastic, but he was certainly not very reluctant. If, however, Eichmann had been powerfully aware of the value of all human beings, he would have been less likely to accept the Nazi belief that certain groups of human beings did not deserve to live and more inclined to be repulsed by the very concept of genocide. If he had entered the time of Nazi rule with a great respect for all human beings, he would have been better insulated against the effects of Nazi brainwashing.

Eichmann's openness to propaganda, however, was probably compounded by his dedication to living his life according to clear principles. In fact, Eichmann actually described himself as an idealist. Hannah Arendt describes what appears to have been Eichmann's concept of idealism:

An "idealist," according to Eichmann's notions, was not merely a man who believed in an "idea" or

someone who did not steal or accept bribes, though these qualifications were indispensable. An "idealist" was a man who lived for his idea . . . and who was prepared to sacrifice for his idea everything and, especially, everybody. . . . The perfect "idealist," like everybody else, had of course his personal feelings and emotions, but he would never permit them to interfere with his actions if they came into conflict with his "idea." (41-42)

Given Eichmann's dedication to living his life according to some ideal, it should come as no surprise that once he began working within the Nazi power structure, he had little problem working toward the Nazi's idealistic goals. These ideals themselves may not have been major motivators for Eichmann, but if working toward some ideal and getting ahead in his career coincided, all the better (so Eichmann apparently thought).

However, Nazi principles were not the most corruptive principles for Eichmann. Rather, principles apparently of much more benign natures truly led Eichmann astray-- principles linked closely with his career. Ironically, one of the ideas Eichmann believed in was Zionism, or at least his interpretation of Zionism. He thought that Germany should find a section of land somewhere far outside of Nazi territory to which the Jewish people could be shipped. He

did not understand the complexities behind Zionism. For Eichmann, Zionism was more or less a matter of finding a place to dump these people. He did not understand that the movement was also about things like reuniting a people. Yet according to Arendt, after reading "Theodor Herzl's Der Judenstaat, the famous Zionist classic" Eichmann considered himself a Zionist for the rest of his life (Arendt 40). This belief fit nicely with his career objectives since, at the beginning of the war, he was in charge of deporting Jewish people. However, while he did believe in establishing a Jewish homeland, Eichmann was so detached from real people that he could not truly comprehend what Zionism actually entailed and seemed unable to apply Zionist principles to real life and real situations. For example, in an attempt to fulfill his ideal, Eichmann made arrangements with a Jewish doctor named Rudolf Kastner for "the 'illegal' departure of a few thousand Jews to Palestine (the trains were in fact guarded by German police) in exchange for 'quiet and order' in the camps from which hundred of thousands were shipped to Auschwitz" (Arendt 42). The agreement helped a few thousand prominent Jews because they "were, in Eichmann's words, 'the best biological material'"; however, in exchange for these few, many more people went to their deaths without a struggle (Arendt 42). Eichmann did not understand that true Zionists sought not just a homeland, but a homeland for real, living people. In

effect, Eichmann convinced his fellow idealist Kastner to help make easier the murder of hundreds of thousands of people. Because Eichmann was so out of touch with real people, his plan for fulfilling his Zionist ideal meant sacrificing the lives of nearly a million people so that a relatively small number of powerful Jewish leaders could live. A person with a sense of the value of concrete human beings just would not be able to make this trade.

What is more, it was not only morally neutral principles that contributed to Eichmann's evil actions. In fact, one principle that is often presented as a crucial moral value played one of the largest roles in Eichmann's corrupt actions: Eichmann's obsession with duty (and the obedience to duty) explains much of his behavior. More specifically, he was corrupted by his obsession with his duties as a Nazi, the duties of his post, the duties of his career. Eichmann proudly exclaimed that he had always "done his duty" as a Nazi official, as if this were something to be proud of (Arendt 92). In fact, Eichmann believed in the ideal of duty so firmly that "he left no doubt that he would have killed his own father if he had received an order to that effect" (Arendt 22). And, when he said this, "he did not mean merely to stress the extent to which he was under orders, and ready to obey them; he also meant to show what an 'idealist' he had always been" (Arendt 42).

Duty was so important to Eichmann that it virtually

dominated his concept of right and wrong. He actually believed that "he would have had a bad conscience only if he had not done what he had been ordered to" do (Arendt 25). Taking part in the murder of millions did not trouble his conscience, but disobeying an order (from leaders that we realize were corrupt) would have haunted him until his death. Hannah Arendt goes on to explain that it was this duty-dominated conscience, rather than any dedication to Nazi principles, that caused Eichmann to pursue the Final Solution uncompromisingly, even during the last year of the war when many Nazi officials (including Himmler himself) were backing away from the Final Solution. Eichmann knew that Hitler wanted the killings to continue, so no matter what other officials said (even ones ranking as high as Himmler), Eichmann felt it his duty to follow Hitler's plan to the bloody end (146-47).

Further, Eichmann's dedication to duty was not merely a result of some sort of blind obedience to Hitler; for Eichmann, duty was definitely a moral value. Doing his job well was not just something he valued: it was his moral duty. For the sake of duty, Eichmann repressed the feelings that could have helped him be a better person and "prepared to sacrifice . . . everything and, especially, everybody . . ." (41-42). In fact, he claimed to live by Kantian principles and was even able to offer a fairly accurate paraphrase of Kant's categorical imperative: "'the principle

of my will must always be such that it can become the principle of general laws'" (Arendt 135-36). Now, Eichmann claimed that when he was ordered to help implement the Final Solution "he had ceased to live according to Kantian principles, that he had known it, and that he had consoled himself with the thought that he no longer 'was master of his own deeds,' that he was unable 'to change anything'" (Arendt 136). Now, first of all, if Kantian principles are this easy to abandon when they are most needed, then there is obviously a problem with thinking that simply dedicating ourselves to these kinds of principles is going to allow us to live an ethical life.

Moreover, principles such as Kant's are open to distortion and misinterpretation. As Arendt sees things, what Eichmann really did was distort the categorical imperative so that it read something like the following: "Act in such a way that the Führer, if he knew your action, would approve it" (Arendt 136). Indeed, Eichmann was so obsessed with not allowing exceptions to his maxims that at his trial he actually expressed remorse over making exceptions for a half-Jewish cousin and a couple who were friends of his favorite uncle (and thus saving these people from being sent to a concentration camp) (Arendt 137). He was so committed to following principles that he regretted the few times when he let his commitments to his family move him; he saw acting on attachments to real people as a

weakness and a failure. Maybe if Eichmann would have let these repressed attachments grow and broaden, maybe if he had possessed more of an appreciation of the value of real people, his dedication to the duties of his post, and to duty itself, would have been moderated or transformed into a duty toward real people. But because Eichmann was so far removed from real people, even his dedication to one of the most famous of all reductive moral theories mutated into a concept of the ethical in which all of morality was based on duty to his superiors.

At this point, the importance of acute moral sensitivity, vivid moral imagination, and clear moral vision should be apparent. As Arendt puts it, "the lesson one could learn [from Eichmann's trial] in Jerusalem" is that "remoteness from reality and . . . thoughtlessness can wreak more havoc than all the evil instincts taken together which, perhaps, are inherent in man . . ." (288). Moreover, Eichmann's life helps clarify that a powerful awareness of the value of each concrete individual is a useful moral guide, a powerful motivator, and a guard against the danger of subjugating people to principles. And, because the moral attitude I am presenting can lead to all of these beneficial moral capacities and tendencies, Eichmann's actions show how advantageous this attitude can be. If Eichmann would have had anything that even resembled this attitude, he may have acted quite differently.

Chapter 5: Oskar Schindler

Now that we have seen the dangers of lacking the moral tendencies and capacities engendered by the moral attitude we are examining, we can turn to Oskar Schindler and see how ethically valuable this moral attitude can be. As I mentioned at the beginning of the previous chapter, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to prove that Schindler developed his attitude toward people in exactly the manner described in chapter one or that he had an attitude precisely like the one I am defending; however, he does seem to have had a similar attitude, and he clearly exhibited the kinds of tendencies that the moral attitude inspires. In fact, it is very likely that these tendencies, to a large degree, inspired Schindler and enabled him to do what he did. In Schindler, we see an attitude much like the one we have been discussing, and there is no denying the great good that Schindler performed. And so, once we recognize the part this attitude and the accompanying moral tendencies played in Schindler's heroics, we will better appreciate the great importance of developing this moral attitude.

For the most part, my description of Schindler is based on Thomas Keneally's book Schindler's List. Keneally gathered evidence from the testimonies of fifty people who survived the Holocaust because of Schindler, from various forms of documentation, and from some of Schindler's own

papers and letters. Furthermore, in an author's note, Keneally clearly says that he made every attempt to portray Schindler as he really was and to sort out exaggerations and fictional stories (9-10). I will also refer to Steven Spielberg's dramatization of Keneally's book; however, any place where this occurs will be clearly announced.

However, before we examine the particular moral tendencies that inspired Schindler (which were the same ones Eichmann lacked), we need an overview of what Schindler did and how he acted during the Nazi reign in Poland and Czechoslovakia. In the fall of 1939, Oskar Schindler came to Cracow, Poland to start a business. To put it bluntly, he was a war profiteer. Schindler had no start-up capital of his own, so with the aid of his accountant and manager Abraham Bankier, he arranged a deal with a group of Jewish investors. By this time, the Nazis had already seized all Jewish bank accounts, but many people had foreseen this and converted their funds into cash and jewels. They could not spend this money, however, because the Nazis would find out that they still had funds. So, Schindler set up a secret exchange: he got cash, and the investors got enamelware from the factory Schindler would start.

All this time, Schindler was cultivating connections within the Nazi power structure. He sent influential people many gifts (usually valuable products that could only be obtained at great cost through the black market), attended

Nazi social functions, and even bribed officials. Schindler used his charismatic personality to make a lot of powerful "friends." And, with these connections, he obtained the war contracts he needed to make his factory a success.

Now, Schindler had a lot to do with the Nazis, and he gave every appearance of being a loyal member of the party; however, as Keneally points out, already in 1939, Schindler had realized that the Nazi party was not leading Europe into any great era. Keneally writes about Schindler's disillusionment:

He [Schindler] would say later that in the period of the German Occupation of Bohemia and Moravia he had seen enough seizure of Jewish and Czech property, and forcible removal of Jews and Czechs from those Sudeten areas considered German, to cure him of any zeal for the New Order. (57)

But despite his distaste for the Nazi party, Schindler's war contracts were soon making him a great deal of money. His dream of becoming a wealthy tycoon was beginning to come true. At first, Schindler employed only Poles in his factory, but throughout Schindler's first year in business, Itzhak Stern, a man who turned out to be a sort of moral catalyst for Schindler, prompted Schindler to employ certain Jewish people (often people who were at risk of being sent to a concentration camp). It wasn't long before Schindler's factory started to be known as a safe

haven (Keneally 72). As of March 20, 1941 (the date the Jewish ghetto was fully established), however, Jewish workers could no longer be paid a wage; instead, Schindler had to pay a fee to the SS headquarters. These rates "were, by a margin, cheaper rates than those which operated on the open labor market. But for Oskar . . . the moral discomfort outweighed the economic advantage" (Keneally 88). Stern (along with a businessman named Roman Ginter), however, convinced Schindler to keep employing Jewish workers and, whenever possible, increase the number he employed. Stern figured that "a Jew who had an economic value in a precocious empire hungry for skilled workers was safe from worse things," and Schindler agreed with his reasoning and began to hire more Jewish workers (Keneally 89). As we see, Schindler was already working to keep people safe from the Nazis.

In June of 1942, the Nazis required all the people in the ghetto to get new identity cards. Special blue stickers (Blauscheins) were placed on the cards of all who were judged essential workers (in other words, all those who could contribute to the war effort by doing manual or skilled industrial work). Shortly after this, the Nazis began shipping the people without the blue sticker away in cattle cars. Then, still in that same month, the Nazis stormed into the ghetto for an Aktion which cleared over seven thousand people from the ghetto--some killed on the

spot, most sent away to die in concentration camps (Keneally 134). From a hill overlooking the ghetto, Schindler watched people (who had tried to hide) being dragged out of their homes, beaten, and shot, while columns of other people were marched away. This scene removed any lingering doubt from Schindler's mind about what he must do. As he would later say, "Beyond this day . . . no thinking person could fail to see what would happen. I was now resolved to do everything in my power to defeat the system" (Keneally 133). Schindler knew he must employ as many Jewish people as he could, thus giving them the Blauscheins that could save them from death. So, as the Nazis selected more and more people to be sent to concentration camps in a series of Aktions, Schindler worked to save as many lives as he could by bringing them to work in his factory.

Then, on March 13, 1943, the ghetto was completely cleared in a final, terribly violent Aktion. The beatings were more severe and the killings more numerous, and those that survived were divided into two groups: those judged nonessential were sent to die in concentration camps and the essential workers (including Schindler's employees) were sent to Płaszów, the newly built work camp just outside of Cracow. During the night, when the Nazis tore the ghetto apart looking for people who were hiding, over four thousand were discovered and quickly murdered (Keneally 189). Keneally never found out how Schindler spent this night, but

by the next morning he was even more determined to continue his quest.

Shortly after armed troops marched Schindler's workers from Płaszów to the factory the next morning, Schindler learned that the lucky ones who were not killed or sent to the death camps during the night were far from safe--even for the moment. The commandant of Płaszów, Amon Goeth, ruled the camp with a bloody fist. Under Goeth, Płaszów served both as a work camp and an execution facility. Goeth would kill people or order their deaths for no particular reason. In fact, after a few days, Goeth started a bloody morning routine; each morning, he would get up, go out onto his balcony, and shoot a few prisoners at random.

Moreover, Schindler's workers would often arrive at the factory several hours late because Goeth would detain everyone in the camp at morning roll. Keneally tells of a day when Goeth had every person in one of the barracks flogged because a potato had been found inside this barrack, but this is only one example of the long morning torture through which Goeth put the prisoners (193). Upset by the way this completely shut down his business and, even more so, by the horrible stories his workers told of life inside of Płaszów, Schindler came up with a plan to build his own camp, where he could protect his workers from Goeth's murderous influence. And so, Schindler used his influence and ingenuity (once again) to get permission to build his

own camp. The Nazis, however, made sure Schindler paid the for the construction of the camp entirely (300,000 RM alone) and the cost of running it--including 360,000 dollars worth of black market food to ensure a healthy diet for the workers (Keneally 196, 203). Schindler gladly paid these sums because they allowed him to protect up to twelve hundred people in his new barracks (Keneally 197). Conditions in Schindler's camp were good, and for a while, at least these twelve hundred prisoners were relatively safe. As Keneally puts it, "The tone was one of fragile permanence. There were no dogs. There were no beatings. The soup and the bread were better and more plentiful than in Płaszów . . ." (202).

Furthermore, even though Goeth's camp was a horrible place, Oskar worked to ensure that the Płaszów camp was kept open because the closure of the camp meant that everyone there (and in Schindler's subcamp) would be sent to die in gas chambers or killed on the spot. Schindler used his influence (and bribes) to make sure that the Armaments Inspectorate kept giving Goeth's camp contracts, even though the conditions in the camp, the lack of resources, and the outdated workshops made the camp quite unproductive (Keneally 223). Moreover, at the request of workers inside Płaszów, Schindler smuggled in supplies that they desperately needed to fulfill enough orders to keep the camp running (Keneally 224).

Schindler and his friends couldn't keep Płaszów running forever though. Near the end of the war, the order for the closure of Płaszów came down from Army High Command. The Jewish people in Schindler's camp would have to go back to Płaszów, and ultimately on to the death camps. But Schindler did not give up. While his workers waited in Płaszów, he came up with a plan to relocate his factory and take his workers with him. With the help of his connections in the Nazi command (including some men who were secretly working against the Nazi regime) and a lot of really expensive bribes, Schindler received permission to move his workers to Brinnlitz, near his hometown of Zwittau in Czechoslovakia, and start an arms factory. With all of this in place, all that remained was to convince zealous Goeth to let these people go. Exactly how much money it took to convince Goeth to let Schindler's workers go is unknown, but we can be fairly sure it was no small amount. Eventually, everything was ready and Schindler's famous list was typed up. In the end, Schindler managed to arrange the transfer of eight hundred men and three hundred women to his new factory (Keneally 298-99).

Then, during that final year of the war, Schindler made every effort to be the most unproductive arms factory in the Reich. Keneally writes about how Schindler received a telegram on his thirty-seventh birthday (April 28, 1945) from the armaments assembly saying that his tank shells had

"failed all quality-control tests" (342). When he got this notice, Schindler just laughed and said, "It's the best birthday present I could have got. Because I know now that no poor bastard has been killed by my product" (342).

Schindler's non-production was quite dangerous and made the Armaments Ministry very unhappy with him; however, Schindler managed to keep the Nazis from closing down his factory with excuses, such as claiming he was having start-up difficulties (Keneally 341-42). Amazingly, during all of this, Schindler was able to bring even more people to his Brinnlitz haven. Moreover, there is also evidence that Schindler helped get three thousand women transferred from Auschwitz to various small labor camps, where they stood a good chance of surviving the war (Keneally 349).

Schindler did manage to hold out until the end of the war, and so about thirteen hundred human lives were saved. When the Nazis fell, however, Schindler had to flee because, in the unknowing eyes of the liberating forces, he was still a criminal war profiteer. He reached freedom and was cleared of all charges of war crimes, and eventually, he was honored for his deeds.

Now, it may be tempting to think that Schindler kept trying to keep his factory open for the sake of profit; however, the fact that he did not really produce anything in Brinnlitz and the great risks he took to move his specific group of workers, this seems quite unlikely. Moreover,

although he did have some cash and diamonds left when he fled at the end of the war, the amount was nothing near the millions his factory had made him. He had spent most of his money on things like bribes, black market supplies for his workers, and even gynecological instruments needed for a pregnant woman working in his Cracow factory (Keneally 228). According to Keneally, even before the order to close Płaszów came down, "[t]o some people it . . . seemed that Oskar was spending like a compulsive gambler. Even from the little they knew of him, his prisoners could sense that he would ruin himself for them if that was the price" (225). By the time he moved to Brinnlitz, Schindler "had no manufacturing ambitions left" (Keneally 304). What is more, most of his diamonds were stolen during his flight through Czechoslovakia (Keneally 378), and the remaining cash and diamonds were confiscated by the French (Keneally 387). Schindler ended where he started--broke.

So, knowing that it was not money that moved Schindler, we must wonder what did motivate him to risk his own life and give up his dreams of wealth to save these people. One may be tempted to think it was some sort of powerful sense of moral duty; however, Schindler was no saint or moral crusader (at least not in the stereotypical sense). Schindler was not the type of man to act on abstract moral principles. In fact, Keneally refers to him as a "philosophic innocent" (124). Moreover, he had no history

of similar heroics before the war and does not seem to have continued acting this heroically after the war. As Keneally puts it, Schindler "was fortunate, therefore, that in that short fierce era between 1939 and 1945 he had met people [like Itzhak Stern] who summoned forth his deeper talents" (397). Only for a few short years when faced with one of the greatest horrors in all of history, did Schindler truly excel. "Herr Oskar Schindler" also was not "a virtuous young man in the customary sense" (Keneally 14). Schindler liked to indulge himself with food, drink, and women. In fact, "[h]e kept house with his German mistress and maintained a long affair with his Polish secretary. His wife, Emilie, chose to live most of the time at home in Moravia [mostly because of Schindler's infidelity] . . ." (Keneally 14). (Emilie did, however, occasionally visit Schindler, and eventually she returned to live with him and joined him in his rescue efforts.)

Despite all of this, Schindler still struggled against the evils of the Nazi regime, while many of the Germans around him took part in these crimes. Keneally says that even today, those that knew Schindler personally still are not sure what moved him:

[O]ne of the commonest sentiments of Schindler Jews is still "I don't know why he did it." It can be said to begin with that Oskar was a gambler, was a sentimentalist who loved the

transparency, the simplicity of doing good; that Oskar was by temperament an anarchist who loved to ridicule the system; and that beneath the hearty sensuality lay a capacity to be outraged by human savagery, to react to it and not to be overwhelmed. But none of this, jotted down, added up, explains the doggedness with which, in the autumn of 1944, he prepared a final haven for the graduates of Emalia. (281)

Many, or even all, of these factors may have had some role in inspiring Schindler. Moreover, there are also quite a few other possible explanations for his actions. Fooling the system in the way he did may have helped him regain some sense of power during a time when the Nazis had almost total control of everything, and he may have been driven by a sort of paternal feeling for his workers. According to one woman Schindler saved from Auschwitz, he was both father and mother to the people he saved (Keneally 330). As Keneally points out, however, even though there may be some truth in some or even all of these, no single explanation could sum up the complexity of Oskar Schindler. We cannot realistically hope to understand Schindler fully.

But, what we can do at this point is examine how the positive moral tendencies discussed in chapter two helped motivate him to act as he did and contributed to his ability to accomplish such a miraculous rescue. Once we see how

much these traits had to do with Schindler's moral goodness, we will be even more sure of the importance of developing these tendencies (by cultivating the moral attitude that can engender them).

First of all, Schindler was not a man who fell into the trap of oversimplification and hasty judgement. Because this tendency is more of an ability to avoid a moral flaw than a positive trait, however, it is really not possible to speak of how Schindler exhibited it except by saying that there is no evidence that he was guilty of oversimplifying a morally important situation during the six years that he shined. As further support for the idea that Schindler did not oversimplify his situation, we can also add the observation that he frequently showed that he possessed the opposite of this moral flaw--he was a person acutely aware of minor details--especially when those details could help him keep his workers safe.

In other words, Schindler was a man of great moral sensitivity, vision, and understanding. In fact, it was these characteristics that made him such a successful businessman during the early part of the war. He knew how to read people and seemed to have a powerful awareness of who each person with whom he interacted was. This acute vision helped him to cultivate the contacts that made it possible for him to run his business (and later to save people).

What then seems to have happened to Schindler is that the sensitivity required by his business also made him sensitive to the needs of the people around him, especially the Jewish prisoners who were suffering so much. He did not merely pay attention to bureaucratic details like Eichmann; he was sensitive to concrete details about the real people with whom he interacted. At the beginning of the war, he may have had something like a habitual recognition of the complexity of others or maybe even the beginnings of an awareness. Then, as he witnessed so much terrible suffering, he became aware, not just of those facets of people that could help him make money, but of whole people, and he began truly appreciating others as complex beings. Schindler became the savior of over a thousand people sort of by accident. He did not start out planning to help anyone, but because of his acute sensitivity, he could not help but see how much the people around him needed help and that he had the opportunity and capability to provide some of that aid. Schindler appears to have had the seeds of something like the moral attitude, and he found himself in a situation where they sprouted, grew, and blossomed. He started out fairly sensitive, and then as he did more and more to help people, his sensitivity became even more acute and his appreciation of human value more intense.

It was this moral sensitivity that helped Schindler see opportunities for helping his workers and contributed to his

ability to carry out seemingly impossible rescues, and this appreciation of the value of concrete individuals (at least partially) inspired him to make these efforts. His sharp attention to important details, along with his charismatic personality, quick mind, and knack for persuasion, enabled him to manipulate the Nazis into helping him with his plans. He paid attention to minor details that could help him make good decisions. He knew which people he could trust as allies (such as Colonel Erich Lange and Wachtmeister Bosko), and he had the cunning and keen insight into human nature to manipulate those he could not trust into unknowingly helping him save people.

Probably the most vivid example of one of Schindler's elaborate plans, in which he needed to foresee or deal with every person and detail that could stop him, is how he moved his factory from Cracow to Brinnlitz. Somehow, Schindler was able to convince Nazi officials to commit the resources needed to move all of his factory equipment and eleven hundred people from Poland to Czechoslovakia--all to save the very people the Nazis were trying to exterminate. The move took 250 freight cars for the equipment alone, not to mention the cars for the workers. As Keneally writes, "It was astounding . . . how in a crumbling state, Ostbahn officials could, if properly encouraged, find such a number of rail cars" (304).

This, however, isn't the most amazing part of the move.

When the prisoners were loaded into cars to be moved, the women were not sent on the same train as the men. And, while the men eventually arrived at Brinnlitz after a hard journey, the women were mistakenly unloaded at Auschwitz. After a few weeks, however, with the help of Colonel Lange and a lot of bribes, Schindler was somehow able to convince the Auschwitz officials to release his workers. Moreover, he even managed to get the children in the group out of Auschwitz, despite the fact that they did not exactly look like typical skilled munitions workers. When a powerful official questioned the industrial value of nine-year-old and eleven-year-old children, Schindler quickly responded with a story about how their small fingers polished the inside of forty-five-millimeter shells (320). Schindler knew just the type of excuse the official would accept, and he used it. Because of his quick wit and sensitivity, Schindler was able to rescue the wives, sisters, and mothers of the men waiting back at Brinnlitz. And as Keneally says, "[T]here had never been, and there would not be, any other Auschwitz rescue like this one" (331). Only a man like Schindler could accomplish such a feat.

Furthermore, as this example implies, Schindler's attention to important details did not just allow him to save the lives of thirteen hundred people: it also helped him give these people hope and make their lives worth living. Schindler did not just fulfill his workers' basic

physical needs, such as protection and nourishment: he recognized their emotional and spiritual needs, and then saw that they were met. We've already seen how Schindler made sure his workers were properly fed, sheltered, and protected until the end of the war, but Schindler did not abandon his workers completely when he was forced to leave. Toward the end of the war, Schindler managed to obtain a storage contract for "eighteen trucks loaded with coat, uniform, and underwear fabric, with worsted yarn and wool, as well as with a half a million reels of thread and a range of shoes . . ." (Keneally 374). Keneally says that Schindler, Itzhak Stern, and some other Schindler workers all later said that Schindler "knew the stores would remain with him at the end of the war and that he intended the material to provide a starting stake for his prisoners" (374). And, at the end of the war, Schindler made sure that these supplies (150,000 U.S. dollar's worth) were distributed among his liberated workers (Keneally 374). The Schindler Jews were not forced to wander into their freedom with nothing but the rags of prisoners.

But as I said, Schindler did not just provide for the physical needs of his workers. Keneally frequently writes about how Schindler, for the most part, kept the Nazi soldiers out of the factory itself, giving the workers some time away from fear of immediate death. Moreover, Keneally tells a story of how Schindler understood the deep need to

celebrate the Shabbat that a rabbi has:

On Friday afternoons, in the munitions hall . . . where Levartov operated a lathe, Schindler would say, "You shouldn't be here, Rabbi. You should be preparing for the Shabbat." But when Oskar slipped him a bottle of wine for use in the ceremonies, Levartov knew that the Herr Direktor was not joking. Before dusk on Fridays, the rabbi would be dismissed from his workbench and would go to his barracks. . . . There, under the strings of sourly drying laundry, he would recite Kiddush over a cup of wine among the roof-high tiers of bunks. Under, of course, the shadow of an SS watchtower. (211)

Moreover, this is not the only case of Schindler responding to the needs of one specific worker. We know that he treated his workers as real people and responded to special needs when they arose. For example, he did not hesitate to spend the large sum of money required to purchase a "set of gynecological instruments . . . on the black market when one of the Emalia [Schindler's factory in Cracow] girls got pregnant--pregnancy being, of course, an immediate ticket to Auschwitz" (Keneally 228).

In addition to these examples of how Schindler went beyond providing for his workers' basic needs, Keneally describes how, near the end of the war at Brinnlitz,

Schindler provided for the proper burial of sixteen Jewish prisoners who were discovered dead inside of some abandoned boxcars in the middle of winter. (Schindler took in the hundred or more other prisoners that were barely clinging to life in the cars, nursed them back to health, and protected them until the end of the war.) Keneally tells of the spiritual importance of the burial of these strangers:

It is clear from the way all Brinnlitz prisoners spoke of it that the interment had enormous moral force with the camp. The distorted corpses who were unloaded from the freight cars had seemed less than human. Looking at them, you became frightened for your own precarious humanity. The inhuman thing was beyond feeding, washing, warming. The one way left to restore it--as well as yourself--to humanity was through ritual. (357)

From these examples, it is clear that Schindler had the moral vision to see that to save these people as complex individuals he needed to keep more than just their bodies alive. He fought to save them as complete individuals--not just physical but also mental, emotional, and spiritual beings.

At this point, some people might still be tempted to consider being able to manipulate people the way Schindler did a dangerous ability because it could be used to serve someone's own self-interest or evil intentions. In fact,

Keneally writes of how Schindler felt that Goeth was very good at convincing people to go along with what he wanted. Schindler once said to Stern, "He's got charm. He could come in here now and charm you" (Keneally 173). However, Schindler then adds, "But he's a lunatic" (173). What Schindler knew was that the ability to manipulate people is really a morally neutral trait. Goeth had it, and Schindler had it. Schindler, however, also had great insight into the nature of real people and their needs. He did not just see what served him (at least after the first few months in Cracow); he saw the world around him, and the people in it, without delusions and self-deceptive tricks. Moreover--and more importantly--Schindler cared about others enough and had the moral imagination to make him want to use his skills for people and not selfishly. Goeth, on the other hand, did not seem to care about the pain he caused others and seemed completely unable to put himself in someone else's shoes.

Now, it is admittedly true that when he first came to Cracow, Schindler used his insight selfishly: he wanted to make himself rich. However, his moral imagination and natural concern for others, combined with his ability to notice other people's needs, soon made him see what had to be done and drove him to do it. As we've discussed, there is evidence that these tendencies were not always so powerful in Schindler, that they developed as the Nazi terror expanded, but there is no denying that Schindler's

concern for others and moral imagination were quite strong when, from that hill overlooking the ghetto, he looked on helplessly as the Nazis beat and killed people during the first Aktion (133).

We can see how much Schindler cared for others in an incident that took place at the train depot in Cracow. A train of cattle cars filled with prisoners bound for Mauthausen was waiting at the depot, and the prisoners were dying of heat in the overcrowded, metal cars. Schindler was so moved by the suffering he witnessed that he did not need to convince himself to take the risk of acting. He saw this suffering and could not help but do something. While Goeth and a group of other officers looked on, Schindler pulled out the fire hoses and began to spray water into the cars to cool the prisoners and give them something to drink. Then, when he realized he couldn't reach all the cars, he sent a couple of Ukrainians guards back to his factory to get more hoses. Finally, when the train was about to leave, Schindler gave a noncommissioned officer (NCO) on the train a hamper full of liquor, cigarettes, and fine food, and told him to open the cars and give the prisoners water whenever the train stopped on its journey. Two survivors of this trip later reported that the NCO did exactly as Schindler told him. All of this, Schindler did quite automatically, without thought for his own safety. If Goeth and the other officers had reported this incident, the Gestapo very well

may have sent Schindler to Auschwitz. Luckily, Goeth and the other Nazi officers simply found Schindler's actions amusing (Keneally 265-67).

A large part of this care for others was Schindler's great sense of compassion. Schindler showed compassion often, but a particularly vivid display of this sense of compassion happened one evening in Goeth's wine cellar. As Keneally tells us, Schindler found himself there alone with Goeth's Jewish maid Helen Hirsch, whom Goeth constantly abused, both psychologically and physically. Seeing her pain, Schindler put his arm around her and leaned in to kiss her cheek. Then, feeling her entire body tense, he reassured her, "It's not that sort of a kiss. I'm kissing you out of pity, if you must know" (Keneally 27). Touched, Helen Hirsch broke into tears, and soon Schindler, too, was weeping. He then stayed with her a while longer, continuing to comfort her, telling her to do her best to stay healthy, and promising her he would try to get her out (which we will see he eventually did). In this instance, we can see how powerfully Schindler was moved by the agony of others. His compassion was so great that the powerful German industrialist sat in a dark cellar, crying with this suffering maid.

Furthermore, this situation also reveals Schindler's powerful moral imagination. Schindler could imagine Helen's pain so vividly that he suffered with her. Schindler's

ability to consider the situation and perspective of others becomes even more obvious when we look at how he related to the plight of his workers as a group. Schindler seems to have seen himself and his workers as struggling against the Nazis together. For example, after hearing that an assassination attempt on Hitler's life failed, Schindler said to one of his Jewish office workers, "We'll have to wait a little longer for our freedom" (269). He may have been their savior, but in spirit, he was also one of them. Ironically, he very well could have been in their position literally had the Gestapo convicted him of aiding the Jews.

Now, when we consider this moral sensitivity, care, compassion, and moral imagination, Schindler's unfaithfulness to his wife may seem strangely inexplicable. How could he be so sensitive to the needs of more than a thousand employees and not be able to see that his infidelity was hurting his own wife? Schindler seemed to have a blind spot (or two). The man was not perfect. Keneally offers an explanation for this that we will see in more depth later, but to put it simply, Keneally says that Schindler had a sort of sexual innocence that made sexual fidelity a concept foreign to him. He did not seem to connect sexual intimacy with commitment.

This, however, does not explain how Schindler could overlook how his infidelity hurt his wife Emilie (so much that she could not live with him). She seemed to accept

that her husband was not a sexually faithful man, and she still seemed to love him; however, his infidelity saddened her deeply. Yet, if we remember how Schindler's sensitivity (and the traits that accompanied the sensitivity) grew in Schindler as he faced the great need around him, we can see an explanation that at least partially explains this particular blind spot. Schindler's moral vision and compassion grew out of the great need of those around him; therefore, it is not all that surprising that, before the war and during the first few years of fighting, Schindler was not sensitive enough to Emilie. And, toward the end of the war when Schindler had become more sensitive, we know that Emilie returned to live with him. It seems that by this point Schindler was sensitive and compassionate enough to find some sort of arrangement with which both Emilie and he could live. Granted, Schindler did not give up his sexual encounters with other women (Keneally 337), but something must have changed to make Schindler's lifestyle more bearable for Emilie. Maybe he was more discrete, or maybe she saw their relationship in a new way; however, whatever it was, the couple was able to work together to help the people Schindler had brought to his factory. In short, only after the immense and immediate needs of the Jewish people had inspired greater sensitivity in Schindler did he begin to become truly aware of his wife's less demanding needs.

Furthermore, Schindler's sensitivity seems to have been focused mainly on the people whose suffering inspired him to begin his struggle against the Nazis. While using his keen vision to get ahead in the business world, Schindler was moved by the people he encountered there, so it is not all that strange that his attention remained on these people as long as their great need persisted. Together, all of these factors may go quite far in explaining how someone with as clear of vision as Schindler could have such blind spots; however, Schindler's relationship with his wife will probably always remain somewhat of a mystery, like much else about this extremely complicated man.

The next moral tendency discussed in chapter two was the ability to recognize moral situations, and from the evidence which we have just reviewed, we can see that Schindler knew when he was faced with a moral situation that demanded his attention. Schindler cared deeply about other people, could imagine himself in their place, and was extremely sensitive to the needs of others; and, these tendencies all helped him know when people needed help. He could not deceive himself into thinking that the people being sent away to death camps were simply being relocated; he could not ignore the torture and murder in the ghetto and then in Płaszów; he could not deny that he had the opportunity and ability to save over a thousand people. As we discussed in the chapter about Adolf Eichmann, this sort

of self-deception was quite common among the German people during the Nazi terror, but Schindler's moral vision was too clear to be blurred by propaganda and fear. Even though he came to Cracow to make a fortune as a war profiteer, Schindler soon truly began to see the atrocities being committed around him and could not look away. He had to give up his dream of wealth to do what was right.

In addition to having these beneficial moral tendencies, Schindler was also quite able to deal with those around him who were committing great evil. Now, we have already seen how Schindler's tremendous understanding of other people and his attention to the details of his situation helped him manipulate zealous Nazis like Amon Goeth; however, in order to better understand how Schindler could do this, we need to realize that his recognition of the humanity in people such as Goeth, who may seem to be more of a monster than a man, also helped him to cope with great evil ethically. Granted, the ability to see humanity even in those who commit heinous crimes may very well be a result of Schindler's moral sensitivity and imagination, but even so, it seems to be crucial enough to deserve further examination.

How Schindler's ability to recognize the humanity in evildoers helped him trick these people into helping him can be most clearly seen in his relationship with Goeth, and, more specifically, in how Schindler convinced Goeth to allow

Helen Hirsch to be transferred to Brinnlitz. Because Schindler recognized that a complex network of conflicting motivations drove Goeth, he could see the human desires buried among Goeth's hatred and lust for killing. Keneally says that Schindler knew that "nine-tenths of the Commandant's being lay beyond the normal rational processes of humans," (171) but Schindler was not so horrified by that nine-tenths that he could not try to understand the remaining tenth. And, it was Schindler's understanding of Amon's twisted humanity that allowed him to save Helen Hirsch--a feat even Helen herself thought impossible (Keneally 219). Schindler didn't see Goeth simply as some sort of monster, and so he was able to recognize the rather warped feelings that Goeth had for Helen. And, because Schindler (at least partially) understood the powerful attraction to Helen hidden inside of Goeth's complex personality, Schindler was able to convince Goeth to let Helen be transferred to Brinnlitz.

While playing blackjack with Goeth, Schindler secretly prepared Goeth by questioning him about what would happen to Helen when Płaszów closed down. Then, after he had won 3,700 złoty from Goeth, Schindler told Goeth that he would like to take Helen to Brinnlitz to serve as his maid (an excuse Goeth would accept) and suggested a different sort of bet. Schindler proposed that they bet Helen's fate on one hand of cards: if Goeth won, he would get 7,400 złoty, and

if Schindler won, he got to put Helen's name on the list of prisoners to be transferred to Brinnlitz. Luckily, Schindler won (Keneally 278-80).

The bet was a great risk, but Schindler knew that he could never simply talk Goeth into allowing her to go. Even though Goeth must have known, at least on some level, that Helen would soon die if she did not go with Schindler, Goeth still wanted to keep her as long as possible. Also, true to his twisted feelings for her, Goeth wanted to be the one to kill her when the time came (Keneally 279). As Keneally points out, however, Schindler knew that "[i]f he [Goeth] played cards for her [Helen] and lost, he would be under pressure, as a Viennese sportsman, to give up the pleasure of intimate murder" (279). Without the ability to see the humanity buried in Goeth's complex personality, Schindler probably would not have recognized the feelings Goeth had for Helen and would not have been able to come up with something like the card game that was demented enough to appeal to Goeth.

Recognizing Goeth's humanity, however, does not require liking him. In fact, Schindler passionately despised Goeth. Keneally writes about how "Oskar abominated Goeth as a man who went to the work of murder as calmly as a clerk goes to his office" (171). Schindler, however had the ability to control his disgust and keep his head when forced to deal with Goeth, and this talent allowed Schindler to continue to

recognize important details, such as the twisted human desires in Goeth. According to Keneally, "Oskar had the characteristic salesman's gift of treating men he abhorred as if they were spiritual brothers, and it would deceive the Herr Commandant so completely that Amon would always believe Oskar a friend" (170). Schindler could control his disgust enough to act as if he were Goeth's friend, but even after having a lot to drink, Schindler's amity toward Goeth was only a facade (219). And, it was this control that made it possible for Schindler to manipulate, not only Goeth, but also other men he despised like Franz Bosch (Keneally 344).

Furthermore, this self control, and the ability to recognize the humanity in evildoers that this control made possible, also made Schindler a reliable judge of the crimes he witnessed. Keneally tells of how Schindler kept mental notes in preparation "for another era when he would make a full report . . . to the world" (135). He was not, however, concerned with insuring revenge, but rather justice. Schindler seemed to have the insight to realize that the Nazis were not simply monsters that needed to be exterminated. Many were definitely guilty of horrible crimes and may have deserved execution, but at the core they were still human and deserved a just trial. Schindler knew that the process of judging and sentencing would be long and difficult; he knew that Nazi soldiers could not be judged en masse with powerful officials like Hitler and Himmler. And

so, just before he fled, Schindler addressed both his Jewish workers and their Nazi guards:

The fact that millions among you, your parents, children, and brothers, have been liquidated has been disapproved by thousands of Germans, and even today there are millions of them who do not know the extent of these horrors. . . . If you have to accuse a person, do it in the right place.

Because in the new Europe there will be judges, incorruptible judges, who will listen to you.

(Keneally 370)

Now, we can question how incorruptible the judges at the Nuremberg trials actually were, but whether or not the Nuremberg verdicts were just does not discredit the wisdom of Schindler's words. Schindler had the insight to see the potential for bloody vengeance in the people he had saved and to recognize that the crimes committed and the people who committed them were far too complex to be correctly judged without a long and careful examination by the proper authorities.

Finally, Schindler's ability to see the humanity even in people guilty of terrible evil helped Schindler see his own potential for evil, and this recognition protected him from being lured into taking part in the atrocities around him. Because Schindler could not simply dismiss men like Goeth as inhuman monsters, he was forced to remember that

even Goeth was still a human being. There was no fundamental difference between Schindler and Goeth that would make it impossible for Schindler to deteriorate into a man like Goeth, and Schindler was powerfully aware of this. In fact, Keneally claims that "the reflection can hardly be avoided that Amon was Oskar's dark brother, was the berserk and fanatic executioner Oskar might, by some unhappy reversal of his appetites, have become" (171). Given Schindler's insightfulness, it seems very unlikely that he could not see this relatively obvious comparison. What does seem likely is that Schindler saw this similarity, and it served as a constant reminder of the possibility of being lured in by the Nazis' propaganda and lies.

In fact, this reminder may have helped Schindler avoid developing the Nazi tendency to see people (particularly Jewish people) as completely interchangeable. To the Nazis, a Jew was a Jew; they overlooked all the particular characteristics that make people who they are. A Nazi officer expressed the typical mentality very well after Schindler saved Bankier and some other workers from being sent to a concentration camp. As Schindler walked away with his workers, the officer stopped him and said, "[I]t makes no difference to us, you understand. We don't care whether it's this dozen or that. . . . It's the inconvenience to the list, that's all" (Keneally 125). The inconvenience of added paperwork was the only reason why the Nazis cared if

one person was substituted for another. There were many instances when Schindler was faced with the temptation to stop dealing with people as concrete individuals and to start seeing only interchangeable beings, but he stood strong and kept seeing the particular.

Probably the most vivid example of this is when Schindler saved the three hundred women who were mistakenly sent from Cracow to Auschwitz instead of Brinnlitz. Keneally says that "in his own dealings with the rulers of necropolis Auschwitz, he [Schindler] was offered the old temptation" (319). An officer tried to convince Schindler to take a different group of women because Schindler's workers had been in Auschwitz for several weeks and were no longer in peak labor condition. The Auschwitz official did not want Schindler to "get stuck on . . . particular names" (Keneally 319). But, Schindler insisted on his particular three hundred women. Schindler knew that these were real people, with real fathers, brothers, husbands, and sons waiting for them back at Brinnlitz. He knew that these women were definitely not interchangeable with others, especially to the people who loved them, so Schindler used another excuse about these women having special training in order to save the women he knew, the women for whose return the men at Brinnlitz prayed (Keneally 319-20).

Schindler's constant awareness of particular people, however, did not stem solely from his ability to recognize

the danger of seeing people as interchangeable and expendable like the Nazis. As we touched on earlier, Schindler also had a deep appreciation of the value of each particular being; he seems to have felt something very much like the awe and sense of great value in the face of concrete individuals that we discussed in chapter one. Now, this feeling may not have been extraordinarily powerful when Schindler first came to Cracow, but by the time he witnessed the first Aktion in the ghetto (a pivotal moment for Schindler as we have discussed), he had an intense appreciation for the value of each human being. Keneally tells of how Schindler reacted after watching the Nazis tear through the ghetto:

At last Schindler slipped from his horse, tripped, and found himself on his knees hugging the trunk of a pine tree. The urge to throw up his excellent breakfast was, he sensed, to be suppressed, for he suspected it meant that all his cunning body was doing was making room to digest the horrors of Krakusa Street. (130)

As we see from his reaction to the horrible treatment of the ghetto residents, Schindler valued particular human beings so much that watching the atrocities committed around him made him ill. Sure it is possible that part of this reaction was the same sort of physical reaction Eichmann had, but Schindler's reaction ran much deeper. Schindler

had the understanding of other people and the moral imagination needed to have true compassion, and his reaction was certainly powerful enough to be real compassion. The effect of this scene on Schindler did not fade when he walked away. This scene inspired Schindler "to do everything in [his] power to defeat the system" (Keneally 133). Witnessing suffering did not change how Eichmann lived, but for Schindler, watching this Aktion was a moment of revelation that further motivated him to save as many people as he could.

This powerful sense of the value of human beings seems to have been a crucial force behind Schindler's incredible rescue efforts. First of all, it often drove Schindler to react almost automatically to the people in need around him. Now, this automatic response goes much further than the ability to recognize moral situations that Schindler's moral sensitivity and imagination gave him. In fact, it may be that Schindler often did not have to think in moral terms at all because he reacted to particular people. Granted, Schindler obviously must have known that what he was doing was good; however, there is a lot of evidence that shows that he did not rationally consider how abstract moral principles applied to his situation. He went rather directly from recognizing the needs of others to helping these people. Once he saw people in need (and realized that he could help) Schindler did not have to consider whether

helping these people would serve the greatest happiness, think about what his moral duty might be, or appeal to any other general principles. Schindler had a deeply rooted understanding that people in this sort of great need must be helped, so there was no need to find a principle that required him to save these people. The needs of real people demanded action.

This seems to be what was happening when Schindler brought new people into the safety of his factory. For example, Schindler brought the parents of a Jewish woman named Regina Perlman into his factory shortly after Regina, who was living "in the city of Cracow on forged South American papers," came to his office and asked for his help (Keneally 204-06). Even though the Perlmans (like many of Schindler's employees) did not really have any metalworking skills, Schindler passed them off as skilled workers and hired them in response to the concrete plea from Regina Perlman. In this case, as in the many like it, Schindler was reacting to the particular needs of real people, not to some sort of abstract moral claim. Schindler did not go out and actively look for people to save; simply reacting to all the particular calls for help kept him busy and his factory full.

Furthermore, being driven by the needs of the real people whom he greatly valued gave Schindler a strength and ability to persist greater than any motivation inspired by a

sense of moral duty. Schindler gave up the wealth that he had wanted so badly at the beginning of the war, and he constantly risked his very life in order to save his workers. If the Gestapo had discovered Schindler's plans to protect his Jewish workers, they more than likely would have executed him immediately or sent him to a concentration camp. In fact, Keneally tells us that Schindler was arrested three separate times, and he narrowly escaped conviction during his final arrest, which, incidentally, happen just as Schindler began his efforts to get his female workers out of Auschwitz (312-16). Yet, Schindler took these risks quite readily because he was driven by an intense reverence for concrete individuals, a reverence not completely unlike the feelings we have for the people we love. And, these sorts of feelings are some of the most powerful motivators we experience. We are naturally more inclined to act on our feelings for the people close to us than we are to act on abstract moral principles. This seems to be why we are amazed when we hear of people risking death for some moral cause, while we expect people to be willing to risk their lives to protect those they love.

At this point, someone might agree that Schindler should be praised for saving the people he did but still claim Schindler could have saved more people if he had been less concerned about who they were. Schindler spent a lot of his money, time, and energy trying to save specific

people such as Helen Hirsch. Moreover, saving particular individuals and refusing to settle for substitutes may have, at times, endangered Schindler's entire effort. For example, if the Auschwitz official would not have believed Schindler's excuse about why he needed to have the specific three hundred women from Płaszów, Schindler could have been arrested during his final efforts to free the women from Auschwitz and eventually convicted of aiding the Jews. And then, his entire rescue effort would have failed.

However, even though it may have been theoretically possible for Schindler to save more people (with less risk) by being unconcerned about who he saved, it does not seem to have been a real possibility. Schindler was driven, to a large degree, by his appreciation of the value of particular people. If he had not focused on real people, Schindler may not have done what he did. He might have lacked the insight and the courage needed to do what was right.

Furthermore, focusing on real people seems to have kept Schindler from being overwhelmed by the incredible number of people who needed help and by the fact that, when he saved one person, the Nazis took someone else in that person's place, as the Nazi soldier explained to Schindler when Schindler saved Bankier and the other men from the cattle cars. Schindler may have wanted to save everyone, but because he knew he could not, he focused on the people he knew. We can clearly see this in Keneally's book when

Schindler declared to Stern that he was going to get everyone out of Płaszów. Then, when Stern questioned the possibility of such a rescue, Schindler responded, "You, anyhow. . . . You" (256). Because he focused on protecting the people he knew, Schindler could continue despite the overwhelming impossibility of saving everyone. Only by working to save real, particular people could Schindler save anyone at all.

Now, it's important to realize that, when Schindler focused on saving those he knew, he was not abandoning some moral principle that commanded him to save everyone. Granted, he did want to save everyone he saw, but this does not mean he was driven by some abstract moral rule. Schindler's desire to save everyone was more of a passionate response to the suffering he saw than the result of any moral command. Keneally looks at this in the midst of the description of how Schindler saved Abraham Bankier and the other men from the cattle cars:

It was fortunate for Abraham that Oskar did not ask himself why it was Bankier's name he called, that he did not pause and consider that Bankier's had only equal value to all the other names loaded aboard the Ostbahn rolling stock. An existentialist might have been defeated by the numbers [of people in need] . . . , stunned by the equal appeal of all the names and voices. But

Schindler was a philosophic innocent. He knew the people he knew. He knew the name of Bankier.

(123-24)

Schindler did not act on anything like a universifiable maxim to respect all equally rational beings; he was driven by the real particular beings all around him.

As the above quotation illustrates, Schindler was not philosophical man. Keneally does not speak of Schindler contemplating his moral duty; moreover, he tells us that Schindler really did not even understand one form of duty--fidelity:

[I]f you wanted to talk to Oskar about fidelity, a look of childlike and authentic bewilderment entered his eyes, as if you were proposing some concept like Relativity which could be understood only if the listener had five hours to sit still and concentrate. Oskar never had five hours and never understood. (83)

Like the duty of fidelity, moral duty and moral principles in general often seemed to be alien concepts to Schindler. Granted, Schindler did have a notion of what was just, but this was more of a deeply ingrained sense of fairness than a complex philosophical principle. For the most part, he was moved by more emotive forces like his passion for real people. For example, "[s]ome friends would in fact come to say that generosity was a disease in Oskar, a frantic thing,

one of his passions" (Keneally 52). In short, Schindler acted on feelings for people, not commitments to principles.

However, this does not mean that Schindler was not reflective, thoughtful, and intelligent. An unreflective Schindler could never have sorted through all the details of his circumstances to understand what his workers really needed and to figure out the best way to trick the Nazis into helping him save these people. Schindler, however, spent his time concentrating on real people in real situations rather than on abstract generalities. He probably had some strong beliefs that could be called principles, but these were deeply ingrained, mental and emotional commitments rather than rationally determined conclusions; Schindler acted on guides more akin to the "Do not torture and kill your family" than "Reason dictates that we must treat everyone as an ends and never a means." Rather than being abstract principles, Schindler's commitments were more of a type of cherished belief or personal commitment so central to who he was that Schindler never really questioned them. Schindler acted on beliefs that were not born in abstraction and logical calculation; he acted on beliefs such as our faith that brutally murdering our parents is wrong. These beliefs were not stances Schindler decided were good (like Eichmann's commitment to Zionism); they were a natural result of his background and his choices in life. No logical argument or

self-deceptive reasoning process could convince Schindler to abandon these deeply ingrained beliefs. For Schindler, what the Nazis were doing was simply unacceptable and the importance of helping the Jewish people was undeniable (at least once Schindler became truly aware of their suffering).

This brings to mind another truth about the moral attitude that Schindler helps reveal. To have the right attitude, we need not be geniuses or calculatingly rational thinkers. Granted, we do need to be quite reflective and be able to think clearly about the complex details of our situation, but living well does not require struggling with complex abstractions. Schindler was a clear thinker and a highly sensitive person, but he was no scholar. Ethics is not just for philosophers. Certainly, we may have to do more reflecting than Schindler about what to do because we are not in situations where what needs to be done is so clear: we are not faced with one overpowering need that calls for our complete attention. On the other hand, Schindler had to make very elaborate plans to accomplish what so clearly needed to be done. However, whether or not we need to be more reflective and clear thinking than Schindler, we know that we need not work through highly theoretical philosophy to be a good person. In fact, many intellectuals may have to struggle against their tendency toward abstraction and categorical thinking to be truly sensitive to the particular complexity of real people.

Moreover, Schindler's great appreciation of the value of particular beings and his general tendency to act on feelings and deeply ingrained beliefs instead of abstract principles (along with his insight into the nature of evil) helped him avoid the danger of subjugating people to principles. Zealous commitment to a set of destructive principles probably lied at the root of many of the horrors committed by the Nazi regime. And, as we saw in our discussion of Eichmann, blind obedience and a frighteningly powerful sense of duty in many Germans helped make it possible for the Nazi party to convince so many people to commit such terrible acts. In fact, Keneally talks about how Goeth "considered himself a philosopher" and already had a great commitment to the Nazi party in 1930 (159-60). As Keneally says, "duty . . . was the SS genius" (368).

Schindler, however, had no such sense of duty, and, because he was not inclined to live by abstract principles in general, he was safeguarded against being convinced of the righteousness of the Nazi principles by propaganda and pressure. As a man who would never put any abstraction ahead of real people, Schindler surely would never harm people for the sake of Hitler's hateful doctrines. Schindler understood that being a good person was not a matter of finding the right principles and systematically applying them to life. Like a doctor Keneally writes about, Schindler knew that ethics was "never a matter of

calculating sums, that ethics was higher and more tortuous than algebra" (177). Because he knew that truly living well required a deep understanding of his situation and a reverence for the particular people involved, Schindler could see through all the propaganda and temptations offered by the Nazis. Schindler would never stumble down the path of evil taken by his "dark brother" Goeth (171).

So, as we have shown, Schindler had something like the moral attitude defended in this thesis, and he had the tendencies and capacities that the moral attitude inspires. Schindler avoided oversimplification, was morally sensitive and had acute moral vision, had a deep concern for others and vivid moral imagination, recognized moral situations, dealt effectively and justly with those who committed great evil and saw everyone's potential for evil, had great courage and an inclination toward automatically treating others well because of his appreciation of human value, and finally, avoided subjugating people to principles. If we consider how these characteristics helped Schindler to help others, we are forced to see the value of developing the moral attitude that can inspire us to act in these ways. Because he was the type of man he was, Schindler created a list that saved more than a thousand people, unlike all of the Nazi lists that led to death. "The list [was] an absolute good. The list [was] life. All around its cramped margins [lied] the gulf" (Keneally 290). A man of

character, not a man of principles, created the list of life. Maybe it's time for us to think of our characters instead of rules and theories.

Granted, Schindler found himself in a situation where something like the moral attitude developed in him quite naturally. For a man who started the war as sensitive as Schindler, ignoring the great need around him would have been difficult. Most of us are not faced with such immediate need, and so the attitude will probably not blossom quite as naturally. With some conscious effort to help encourage it, however, we can cultivate this ethically valuable attitude in ourselves. And, surely this attitude is worth the effort. Living well is far too important to forsake because it is not easy. Schindler has shown us the need to have the right moral attitude.

Conclusion

After telling of people who resisted the Nazis, people not unlike Oskar Schindler, people who risked--and often lost--their lives for others, Hannah Arendt tells us that "the lesson of such stories is simple and within everybody's grasp" (233). "Politically speaking," she says, "it is that under conditions of terror most people will comply but some people will not . . ." (233). "Humanly speaking," Arendt adds, "no more is required, and no more can reasonably be asked, for this planet to remain a place fit for human habitation" (233). If the moral attitude can help us be the type of people who will not comply with evil, shouldn't we cultivate it?

Granted, this attitude alone will not make us good people: we should consider valuable things other than complex human beings, and we need to cultivate a wide range of virtues. Moreover, there may be many difficulties in approaching the world in this way: it will take a great deal of effort to inculcate this habit, and we will need acute sensitivity to manage it. However, despite any difficulties, the moral attitude can complement and strengthen many virtues, and it can be a crucial contributor to our efforts to lead good lives.

Being constantly aware of the complexity of others and of our shared isolation makes us less like Adolf Eichmann

and more like Oskar Schindler. And (as we learn at the end of Spielberg's film Schindler's List), because of Oskar Schindler, six thousand descendants of Schindler Jews are alive today while less than four thousand Jewish people remain in all of Poland. On the other hand, Adolf Eichmann, the morally blind idealist, played a crucial role in the murder of millions. Schindler truly understood that "[h]e [or she] who saves a single life saves the world entire" (Keneally 368). In fact, when Schindler fled at the end of the war, the thirteen hundred lives he saved gave him a ring inscribed with this Talmudic verse (Keneally 368). The moral attitude can remind us that, as Schindler knew, every person supports a complex world of consciousness. And, when we value each life like a "world entire," we will have made a crucial step toward living well. We will be among those who can make our planet "a place fit for human habitation" (Arendt 233).

Notes

¹ At this point, I want to make it clear that, when I refer to reductive theories throughout the rest of this discourse, I am referring to these theories that are both reductive and impersonal. For explanations of some of the major impartial, reductive theories see Thomas Hobbes' Leviathan, Immanuel Kant's Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals, and John Stuart Mill's Utilitarianism. Furthermore, Bernard Williams gives a fairly detailed account of the history of this sort of moral philosophy in his Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy.

² For Aristotle's original virtue ethics, see his Nicomachean Ethics. Also, Timothy Robinson's Aristotle in Outline offers an excellent summary of Aristotle's ethics. Reading Aristotle alone, however, will not give one a full picture of contemporary virtue ethics because many later authors have modified and added to Aristotle's ideas; therefore, to get a better idea of some of the various contemporary interpretations of this sort of ethics see (among other works) Quandaries and Virtues: Against Reductivism in Ethics by Edmund L. Pincoffs, Alasdair MacIntyre's After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory, and The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy and "Non-Relative Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach" by Martha C. Nussbaum.

³ This interpretation of Camus is based on The Plague and "Life is Absurd."

⁴ The concept of becoming a good person by developing certain moral habits is a common idea expressed by supporters of virtue ethics. In fact, Aristotle himself called the moral virtues habits and said that being a good person required developing the right habits (Nicomachean Ethics II, 1).

⁵ This brings up yet another reason to develop the attitude as a whole. If we only recognize the complexity of others (rather than being aware of the complexity of other people and having a powerful appreciation of their value), we may notice our ignorance, but we may very well feel no need to do anything to improve our understanding. If we have the whole attitude, however, we are much more inclined to try to improve our understanding of others.

⁶ Aristotle implies the moral importance of understanding one's situation in Nicomachean Ethics:

We can be afraid, e.g., or be confident, or have appetites, or get angry, or feel pity, in general have pleasure or pain, both too much and too little and in both ways not well; but [having these feelings] at the right times, about the right things, towards the right people, for the right end, and in the right way, is the intermediate and best condition, and this is

proper to virtue. (II, 6, 1106b19-23)

For Aristotle, living well is having the proper reaction to each particular situation, and reacting well requires understanding the situation well. Moreover, Martha Nussbaum says that "the good agent must . . . cultivate the ability to perceive and correctly describe his or her situation finely and truly . . ." (Non-Relative Virtues 44). Another contemporary supporter of virtue ethics, Michael Stocker, says that "one must be morally sensitive, and one must sensitively appreciate a wealth of details and contexts" (Duty and Friendship 60). And still another contemporary philosopher, John Kekes, says "one crucial moral task is to perceive accurately the situation in which one is called upon to act" (10).

⁷ Moral imagination may have various meanings for various authors; however, I am using it in a sense similar to Edmund Pincoffs' use of the phrase in this book Quandaries and Virtues: Against Reductivism in Ethics. Pincoffs discusses how moral imagination tells us why cruelty is wrong:

[I]magination--the capacity to see or understand what it would be like to be the person who is suffering cruelty--is the moral point. It is not that he might suffer cruelty if poetic justice prevails. If he were as immune as Gyges to the machinations of others, still he might be brought

to imagine what it is like to suffer cruelty and then just to see that, given that it is like that, one should not inflict cruelty; one should not be cruel. (64-65)

⁸ This cycle of habituation is yet another reason to develop this moral attitude in its entirety. As with most habits, once we to start developing this attitude, the effects of the habit itself actually help to strengthen the habit.

⁹ These moral tendencies include refraining from oversimplifying people and situations, being morally sensitive, sympathizing with others and being able to put ourselves in their shoes, recognizing moral situations, dealing with evil people wisely and justly while seeing our own potential for evil, and greatly valuing each complex individual so that we naturally tend to treat them well, have a powerful motivation to act morally, and do not subjugate people to principles.

¹⁰ There is actually evidence that once, early in the war, Eichmann did indeed act in such a way that could have prevented some deaths; however, his efforts failed, and only a few weeks later he was already offering Heydrich his ideas on new places to detain--and ultimately murder--prisoners (Arendt 95).

¹¹ Interestingly, before he began working for the

Nazis, Eichmann was a salesman for the Vacuum Oil Company (Arendt 31).

¹² Apparently, during the last days of the war, Eichmann said to his men, "'I will jump into my grave laughing, because the fact that I have the death of five million Jews [or 'enemies of the Reich,' as he always claimed to have said] [brackets Arendt's] on my conscience gives me extraordinary satisfaction'" (Arendt 46).

¹³ Interestingly, this was probably the worst thing Eichmann witnessed first hand. Arendt explains how this is possible:

It was easy to avoid the killing installations, and Höss, with whom he [Eichmann] had a very friendly relationship, spared him the gruesome sights. He never actually attended a mass execution by shooting, he never actually watched the gassing process, or the selection of those fit for work. . . . (89-90)

Because his friends helped shield him and because his job did not often require going to any of the concentration camps, Eichmann never saw most of the atrocities he helped make possible.

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