

FOREWORD

Amihud Gilead defends the dignity of human beings by a novel theory grounded in the singularity of the person. Only the individual person has access to the inner life that constitutes personhood. Choice springs from the mental freedom of the person; it cannot be deduced from a chain of causality by an outside observer. Freedom is the facing of possibilities. The possibility always exists of choosing an alternative that disserves the individual. But by keeping open such possibilities, the individual retains the freedom of choice. No one can make the mistake for me; I am free to choose it for myself!

Gilead's extensive argument on behalf of saving possibilities saves our singularity, our possibilities for freedom. Thus, he makes a fresh contribution to the understanding of multiple personality. The many manifestations of the self in these cases are possibilities that spring from the same self. The singularity of the person underlies the multiplicity of the personalities chosen.

In addition to insights from psychology, Gilead draws upon literary works to build his philosophical case on behalf of the singularity of selfhood. Through the imagination, literature gives access to the intersubjective realm of possibilities. Tolstoy and Proust teach us to trust the stirrings of the heart, which are at the heart of being who we are.

If Gilead locates our sanctity in the sanctuary of the inner realm of subjectivity, he does not condemn us to isolation. Recognition of our singularity brings with it recognition of the singularity of all other human beings. Our singularity has intersubjective significance. This recognition leads to the case against torture as absolutely impermissible. Gilead eloquently argues that any form of torture is a violation of human dignity; therefore, it defeats the benefits to others that supposedly result from it. To violate one human being, no matter how wicked or dangerous that person might be, is to violate humanity.

The moral life, founded on universal respect, a theoretical principle of reason, must be aided by a more personal commitment such as love provides. Gilead argues, "Genuine love can thus increase our chance to be citizen in the kingdom of ends, in a free world." We love the unique possibilities of the beloved. No one else can see what each loved one sees in the other.

Gilead closes his extraordinary explorations by considering God as the unique absolutely unactualizable possibility. God should be understood by human beings, including atheists, as the supreme possibility, which is not actual, "the most ought, the 'oughtest'." This regulative notion of God acts as a reminder that things could always be better.

Gilead's Panenmentalism is a celebration of the liberating insight that the possibilities of our lives as beings of value are inexhaustible. More remains for us to become by exercise of our choice. The person, insists Gilead, is the measure of all values. Among all things, persons are holy.

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