practical solutions proposed and implemented by well-meaning, as well as antagonistic authorities aggravated rather than resolved the problems at issue. Blacks were forced to become more capable than in the past in the area of constructive input in institutional processes, without tutelage in the inner workings of these processes. The problem involved being able to define how institutional wrongs could be addressed, and developing the capacity to effect needed changes in relevant institutional structures, in addition to that of identifying what was wrong in current institutional operations.

1. **The Bias**

Thus, the action-reflection models presented in this paper reflect a bias toward constructive change, as does the action-training movement to which they are related. Action is initiated and motivated by the actor’s perception of a problem requiring clarification and reconstruction of relevant portions of the social world. The models seek to lay bare the societal, cultural, and normative valuation issues and processes that are involved in defining, evaluating, and acting to change a social situation.

2. **Action-Reflection Axes**

Secondly, commitment, praxis and creativity are the axes upon which the action-reflection proposed turns. The writer was reminded of the importance of commitment by a student who preceded the directive question designed to initiate empirical analysis (“What’s happening here?”) with two other questions: (1) What is wrong in this situation? and (2) Why is it wrong? In reflecting on this student’s process in ethical problem solving, the writer became aware that the models on which the proposed question was based presupposed perception and
preliminary identification of a problem to be addressed. On the basis of this realization, the problem identification step was added to the levels of reality-reflective activities matrix. The commitments involved in the initial intuition, and developed through implementation of the reflective activities identified in the models, are the primary motivational and evaluative factors in the process.

It is important to understand that commitment is not simply a neutral term in this contest. While it may carry a number of meanings and a variety of content for different actors, the models proposed were developed to serve as tools for those described by James Cone and Paulo Freire (1974; 1970) as “the oppressed of the land.” The descriptive qualities and functions of the models do not deter the fact that the models are not likely to have been developed apart from the need implied in the motivation identified above.

Practice is both the ground and the aim of the process described in the models. It is resident in the actor’s ongoing involvement in the situation in relationship to other persons and institutions. It is also evoked by the valuations, policy, and strategy developed through the reflections undertaken in the process. The writer will give further, and more concrete, attention to this dimension in future treatments of the proposed action-reflection approach.

Creativity is required by the emphasis on change, and is potentially elicited by implicit model-building and imaginal elements in the process. More effort has been invested in this area in recent uses of the model in teaching and in action-training consultation. Recent sources in human relations training and industrial design have also been helpful in identifying elements and opening up possibilities for cultivating creativity in ethical decision making and action (Lippitt, 1973; Papanek, 1973).
Criteria

Structurally, comprehensiveness, coherence, and effectiveness serve as criteria of the reflection and action evoked. The reflective activities identified are not only descriptively accurate, they are also normatively prescribed as necessary to full engagement with the ethical and practical issues involved in responding to a situation. The models seek to elicit conscious attention, in whatever order, to the activities identified in order to achieve a full expression of ethically interpreted action in concrete situations. Failure to implement the full range of these activities, with respect to either valuation or action, means that the analysis or action in question lacks comprehensiveness; i.e., its ethical aspects are insufficiently accounted for.

The term coherence has a familiar ring to those schooled in the moral law tradition of Edgar Sheffield Brightman and Walter Muelder. It addresses itself to the problem of contingency, which seems to exclude action from the domain of ethics as a science. In opposition to this tradition, coherence, as a criterion of ethical reflection and action, insists that ethical commitments and concrete actions express a unity that can be rationally articulated. Such a unity cannot be identified, let alone addressed, as long as the present practice of excluding action from scientific ethics continues. The problem may be overstated, but those of us concerned with action do not find much help in a good deal of the ethical literature produced, or in the attention given this matter in much of the available literature on ethics. One may consider the logical law that persons “ought to will to be free from self-contradiction and to be consistent in … [their] intentions” (Muelder, 1966:51), an inadequate expression of the integrity involved in concrete human existence as a “living whole,” but it must be the foundation for any action ethics, worthy of the name, and the condition for evaluation of ethical theory as well as ethical practice.
Effectiveness, as a criterion of the reflective and strategic activities undertaken, refers to the efficacy of the valuations and action developed in practically addressing the situation. The models seek to elicit the most practical outcome possible. However, it must be remembered that effectiveness, defined in this way, cannot be the sole criterion of action ethics. There are times when value considerations cannot be sacrificed in the interest of achieving minimal, and frequently inimical, practical ends. In these cases, action takes the form of witness and pressure, rather than constructive social engineering.

4. Interdependence of Rationality and “Moral Passion”

Finally, it must be noted that the models describe a rational process for the exercise of ethical responsibility in concrete situations. Rationality is underscored by the statement on coherence, and by the ways in which the models fulfill Myrdal’s (1944; italics added) conditions for social engineering to “become a rational discipline under full scientific control.” The focus of the models is on accountability for the valuations implied in action, and for the action implied in valuation. Responsibility, therefore, cuts both ways, which means that theoretical and practical ethicists have more to gain from communication with each other than the present level of exchange between them suggests.

In this connection, it must be pointed out that the rationality referred to above does not function in opposition to the commitment, nor does it deactivate “moral passion” (Gustafson, 1974). Rationality serves to discipline the “moral passion” associated with commitment, just as “moral passion” serves to discipline the rationality of ethical analysis. In ethics, each of these require the other. This is especially true of Christian ethics. In the writer’s opinion, ethicists should not promulgate the notion that rationality is neutral. The question is: how can rationality
serve as a valid instrument of ethical judgement and action? Ethical analysis, apart from articulated commitment, is always a pre-ethical, or, more likely, a post ethical enterprise. This does not mean that ethical analysis, as such, is no part of the ethical enterprise. What it does mean is that, that part of the total enterprise cannot claim to be the total enterprise, nor can it continue to claim, unchallenged, that it is the preferred part. Both analysis and action are incomplete apart from each other.

It may well be that one of the problems seriously affecting the ethical enterprise today is the fact that its professional practitioners are overspecialized. Again, Myrdal (1944; 1042) observes that this condition is also a factor in the tendency of social scientists to avoid practical conclusions:

Practical conclusions must always draw on a much more comprehensive range of insights into many fields than is necessary for good work in most specialties. Many excellent social scientists honestly feel incompetent before the broader practical tasks. [Italics added.]

This observation cannot help but remind informed social ethicists of the definition of social ethics advanced by Walter Muelder (1966), and the accompanying description of the competencies requisite to adequate practice of that discipline. Perhaps, the “competence shock” experienced by many ethicists who have encountered the definition, partially explains the scant attention that has been paid to it. This paper takes very seriously Muelder’s description of social ethics as an interdisciplinary enterprise and consciously raises the question whether this insight has sufficiently penetrated ethical practice.

The writer’s difference with Gustafson (1974), regarding the relationship of action and reflection in ethics, is not in terms of the intent of his analysis, It has to do rather with the content of the analysis. As the foregoing discussion makes clear, the writer does consider it appropriate to insist on rational discipline as an instrument and criterion of action. However, the writer is
firmly convinced that "disinterestedness" and "detachment" are not appropriate rubrics for describing that discipline. Christian ethical analysis seeks to develop an appropriate *ethical* view not a "balanced" view (Myrdal, 1944:1043). Thus, ethicists are accountable both for the valuing that underlies analysis and the implicit and explicit constructive valuations made (action). In this enterprise, objectivity is best defined by Gustafson’s (1974) single statement on self-criticism, rather than by the terms which he more consistently uses for this purpose, "disinterestedness" and "detachment."

Thus, the writer is more impressed with Professor Gustafson’s (1974:57) imaginary "passionate" address to a seminarian antagonist than he is with the arguments advanced to support the terminology used in the essay on "the burden of the ethical":

Mr. Seminarian, the issues of moral life are awesomely visceral and awesomely cerebral...It is worth articulating those things in which you trust, it is worth examining your profound feelings ... Judge those beliefs, judge those feelings and use both in your discernment of what you ought to do ... Trust and belief are two sides of one relationship: to God and to your neighbor ... Faith in God is faith in a God who has made himself known. We can trust him because we have beliefs that disclose him to us ... Christ not only gives us a newness of life on which we can rely, but he is for us the pattern of our reliance and our deeds ... Faith without belief is blind; belief without faith is powerless ... Moral man is both visceral and cerebral; moral action requires both trust and belief. [Italics added.]

**The Potential Contribution of the Models to Modes of Doing Ethics**

In conclusion, two observations need to be made regarding the potential contribution of the action-reflection approach, outlined in this paper, to modes of doing ethics.

First, the mode of doing ethics described by the models adds a procedural approach to extant and developing prescriptive approaches (natural law, or other normative principles, and orientations) and structural approaches (conceptualism, situation ethics, and the moral law tradition of Brightman and Muelder). In this interpretation of modes of doing ethics, prescriptive
approaches emphasize the normative content of ethical judgments, while structural approaches emphasize the nature of the ethical decision-making situation. This paper joins a growing number of approaches (Stotts and Deats, Charles V. Willie, Dieter Hesssel, and others) in seeking to add a third dimension, viz., a description of the means of implementing commitments (prescriptive approach) and ethical choices (structural approach). Advances in the behavioral sciences, and in ethical theory, have made this undertaking more possible now than ever before—and more necessary.

Secondly, the essential roles of (1) a problem-solving analytic (accounting method) and (2) imaginal activity (Model building), not only join two elements in ethics that are frequently separated, but also makes contact with an underdeveloped understanding of ethics as “art” and not merely science. This element recapitulates, in a surprising way, an understanding suggested by Kant (1952:14-18) in his description of the role of the aesthetic in judgment. Kant seems to suggest that moral choices are (validly) made in terms of a “sense of rightness,” which forges a unity between the intellectual and the practical sentiments of the actor.

The point here is not to undercut the emphasis on rationality in the preceding section of the paper, but to indicate a needed focus of this rationality on the “sense of rightness,” which seems to be such a crucial factor in the production of moral giants, from the Old Testament prophets to Gandhi and King in our own century. This factor also has something to say about our educational task, in that it becomes one of educating for artistry as well as scientific discipline. The question of how one educates for artistry is an intriguing one, which is bound to be raised by any serious concern with action as an integral aspect of ethics.