Thompson Sees Moral, Practical Aspects Of Foreign Relations

By EDWIN BURTON

"Man is both greater and less than he imagines himself to be."

That a nation's foreign policy is subject to similar moral constraints was the thesis of the first lecture by Kenneth W. Thompson, vice-president of the Rockefeller Foundation, in the 1965 Rockwell Lecture Series Tuesday night.

The inevitable conflict between morality and practicality was the concern of Thomas Jefferson, according to Thompson, in view of Jefferson's changing views towards French expansion on the European continent.

Isolationism was a natural outgrowth of national security considerations, morality providing a useful grounds for such a policy. By the mid-twentieth century, Thompson reasoned, an internationalist view of foreign policy could be easily reconciled with questions of morality and national security.

"Tempered Idealism"

Thompson cited four basic approaches to foreign policy. Moral absolutism, cynicism, "French rationalism," and "principle tempered by restraint" were cited as the principle approaches to foreign policy.

"Idealism tempered with realism" and "democracy enriched by pragmatism" were the guidelines which best characterized the Anglo-American approach. The evolution of this approach, enlightened by mutual dependence, has brought maturity to Anglo-American policy without loss of principle.

Dimensions Change

"The Changing Dimensions of Politics and Morality" was the subject of Thompson's second lecture in the series. The impact of national life implies

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(Continued from Page 1) a politics of alternatives, he argued.

The starting point of international morality for any individual nation, Thompson maintained, is national interest. When mutual interests abide, nations become allies.

The Rockwell lecturer cited the case of disarmament as a potential source of mutual interest for both Washington and Moscow.

That mutual interest changes and that considerations of national security may be altered preclude the bondage of a successful foreign policy to such principles as moral absolutism, cynicism, and rigid logical consistency.

Principles Embodied

The broader principles of justice, freedom, and order, insofar as they are embodied in every man, are embodied in the conduct of foreign policy.

It is this sense of justice, freedom, and order, the possibility of hope for eventual achievement of a world structured in principle which can be achieved. Decisions are made, Thompson noted, by individual men.

Thus, higher principles, "giving each man his due," come constantly "in tension with practice," even at the highest diplomatic levels.

In this vein, international diplomacy is never simply a study in morality, but instead is a meeting ground between morality and practicality, neither consideration left ignored.

Thompson presents the third lecture in the series entitled "A View From the 21st Century" tonight at 8 pm in the Chapel.