CONTEMPORARY LINGUISTIC PHILOSOPHY AND THE NATURE OF ETHICS

by

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Being a Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts, at the University of London.

London, 1959.

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SYNOPSIS

Philosophy had always to deal with the relation of the expression to the expressed, a relation which was explored by analysing our language. In this sense, one can contend that philosophical analysis has always been some form or other of linguistic analysis.

What makes contemporary linguistic analysis radically different from previous philosophy is that besides its greater emphasis on linguistics as the only philosophical method, it has reduced itself to a second-order activity. Unlike first-order activities, it does not deal with the actual making of statements of facts or statements of value. Statements of facts, not facts, statements of values, not values, are the object of this second-order activity.

This reduction in the scope of philosophy in general, when applied to ethics, has had some far-reaching consequences: for the first time in the history of philosophy, moral judgments were declared meaningless by logicians, epistemologists and semanticists. The only moral philosophy still permitted was one which would make no value statements whatsoever. Interpreted in ethical language, this injunction meant that advocacy for any system of morality, an advocacy which has always been

included in the works of the great moral philosphers, had to be banned from ethics.

A new name was coined for this altogether new moral philosophy: Meta-ethics.

In spite of the reduction of its scope, in spite of the injunction dictated by logical positivists, logicians and epitemologists, this new, second-order activity - meta-ethics - could not avoid reverting to the classical approach of ethics: analysis and some form of preaching.

In the following study I shall try to show, by examining three contributions of Urmson, Hare and Toulmin, that meta-ethics or ethics as a second order activity is an ideal which it is very difficult to attain; and if attainable at all it would mean the end of ethics as a branch of philosophy.

Part of my argument will be devoted to showing that the rationality of ethics is conveniently included in the logical description of moral language instead of prescribing it as a moral virtue. Thus, in spite of their theory, there is moral preaching in the writings even of modern linguistic analysts, and its function is to prove that ethical discourse is, or should be, a rational activity.

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CHAPTER I

The Subject Matter of Ethics

1. The philosopher and the preacher.

Moral preaching is easily differentiated from moral philosophy. Moral preaching is usually concerned with one and only one moral code and its application. It can call to its help casuistry which, in its turn, will work out - more or less dogmatically the detailed application of the general principles of the code. Both casuists and preachers are very important for its defence inside the community, because they ensure that it will remain a living code. Yet, this internal defence is not enough. Something more is needed, if the community does not want its moral traditions to be superseded by alien mores.

In order to defend the code against external attacks, any specific morality generally needs a philosophical justification. Whether religious, philosophical or scientific, the grounds of any system of morals are usually formulated in a language which abounds in abstract generalisations. Most of the primitive religions and moralities were backed by detailed cosmogonical theories about the origin of the Earth. If later on, moral philosophers did not reveal in their writings any explicit

interest in any specific morality, this was mainly due to the rather highly abstract and philosophical arguments needed for disproving the philosophical or scientific grounds of the contending morality. For instance, if nowadays a philosopher intends to reject the Nazi Morality, he need not start from the detailed analysis of the S.S. code of behaviour, he can begin and even end with the rejection of the Race theory of Rosenberg. Our philosopher need not even mention the race theory of the theoretician of Nazism; by propounding forcibly another scientific or philosophical theory, his rejection of Nazi theory will be implicit.

It is irrelevant at this stage to determine which comes first - the morality or the moral philosophy - it suffices to say that all the great moral philosophies are the work of great philosophers. In writing their Ethics, these great philosophers were not only concerned with the moral application of their more general philosophical theory, but first and foremost with the defence and vindication of one system of morality against its rivals or against sceptical critics.

Plato, for instance, advocated the possibility of moral knowledge in opposition to mere moral conventions, and was concerned, in The Republic and The Laws, with a specific way of life and the basic moral principles behind it.

Basically, he drew his main arguments from his Theory of Ideas, and this fact was enough to make his criterion of the 'Good' as objective and as rational as it could be. Conventional morality was, according to Plato, only the second-stage level of reactions to social institutions; the first stage being the lowest, viz. the instinctive level, at which the organism reacts unreflectively to various situations. It is only at the third stage that, instead of routine obedience to the conventions of the social group, arises true morality having as its characteristic knowledge of the Form of the Good.

In fact, Plato, far from being only a formulator of the Summum Bonum, is also a devoted preacher of his way of life:

> "Platonists are the missionaries of the life of idealistic endeavour, and convert to the service of their cause, whatever existing institutions can be utilised in spreading their new gospel."[1]

More recently, Bentham, in his Principles of Morals and Legislation, advocates the principle of Utility or the greatest happiness principle, as against all other ultimate criteria or morality. Criticising the principle of Asceticism

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1. R.C. Lodge: Plato's Theory of Ethics. (Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd., 1928) p.

he writes:

> "The principle of Utility is capable of being consistently pursued; and it is but tautology to say that the more consistently it is pursued, the better it must ever be for human-kind. The principle of ascetiaism never was, nor even can be, consistently pursued by any living creature. Let but one tenth part of the inhabitants of this Earth pursue it consistently and in a day's time they will have turned it into a hell."[1]

Already however in Bentham's Principles, we can witness the first development of the analytical method, which later on will be characteristic of Ethics in the XXth century. Take, for example, the following passage, where Bentham analyses various systems concerning the standard of right and wrong and contrives to reduce them all to the principle of Sympathy and Antipathy:

> "We have one philosopher, who says, there is no harm in the world but telling a lie: and that if, for example, you were to murder your own father, this would only be a particular way of saying, he was not your father. Of course, when this philosopher sees anything that he does not like, he says, it is a particular way of telling a lie. It is saying,that the act ought to be done or may be done, when in truth, it ought not to be done."[2]

We see that Bentham, after analysing certain ratiocinations about supreme ethical principles and indicating the possible reactions of commonsense against them, rejects the possibility of reducing murder to lying: and he can be taken to mean: murder is murder and lying is lying.

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1. Principles of Morals and Legislation. 1st ed. 1785. (Oxford, 1907), p.13.

2. Op.cit. p.18, note

The preceding passage of 'analytical Ethics' is surely a forerunner of a method which, since the beginning of the XXth century, has been associated with the author of Principia Ethica: G.E. Moore. In his book, Moore's main argument centres round what he considers to be the fundamental question of Ethics: "What is Good".

His method was later on to be developed by the Logical Positivists - although he was never one of them; it was to lead to a certain restriction in the scope of Philosophy in general and of Ethics in particular. Although Moore believed that Ethics must give an answer to the question "What is Good", this did not prevent him from including in its subject-matter the investigation of intrinsic values:

> "I have now completed such remarks as seemed most necessary to be made concerning intrinsic values. It is obvious that for the proper answering of this, the fundamental question of Ethics, there remains a field of investigation as wide and as difficult, as was assigned to Practical Ethics in my last chapter. There is as much to be said concerning what results are intrinsically good, and in what degrees, as concerning what results it is possible for us to bring about: both questions demand, and will repay, an equally patient study."[1]

Moore was not alone in his approach to moral philosophy. Prichard, Ross and Ewing, all advanced the view that Ethics was not only a branch of Philosophy but also an attempt to introduce

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1. Principia Ethica, Cambridge, at the University Press, 1951, p.222, par.134.

coherence into our ethical beliefs. Yet, ~~due to~~ on account of certain philosophical developments in spheres entirely different from Ethics, in Metaphysics, Epistemology and Logic, a supposedly new conception of Ethics, arose in the early Thirties: an Ethics entirely divorced from any system of morality.

2. The Philosopher as a Policeman.

At the beginning of the Century, Philosophy was dominated by two great philosophers: Moore and Russell. To us it seems strange to hear that these brilliant users of the analytical method were interested "in the problems of Universals, in the nature of Ethical judgments, in the problem of a priori knowledge in the problem of induction, and in the problem of the External World."[1] This strangeness is due to our associating analytic philosophy with Logical Positivism in its linguistic form.

Moore, after considering the three tasks of Ethics, viz., To answer the following questions: (a) What particular things are good? (b) What sort of things are good? and (c) How is good to be defined?[2] analyses them in the light of three beliefs which he held in his general philosophical approach:

1. He accepted the concept of a priori knowledge of the external world, e.g. in his system synthetic a priori judgments

1. M.E.White: Towards Reunion in Philosophy, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1956), p.9.
2. Op.cit.pp.1-6.

were possible.

2. He believed in "the existence of attributes and of physical objects"[1] and

3. He believed in the division of attributes into two categories: natural and non-natural.

Later on we shall see that these basic principles were attacked by various schools of thought, which are usually grouped under one name: Logical Positivism. For the moment I want to emphasise how the "Ideal Morality" expounded by Moore depended for its defence against "materialistic tendencies" on these philosophical principles.

Moore was well aware that "absolute Idealism" based on the systems of Spinoza, Kant and Hegel, could not sustain the onslaught of modern developments in Logic and Epistemology brought about by the tremendous success of Science. He wanted to give a formulation of morality which would include what was valid in Utilitarianism, but would exclude what was fallacious in it ("The only thing desirable is pleasure"). In fact Moore was himself a sort of Utilitarian and was described by others as an "ideal Utilitarian".

Utilitarianism was obviously an outcome of the latest developments of the new sciences of Psychology, Sociology and Political Science. Moore felt that in case extreme Utilitarianism was successful, it would be very difficult to avoid the fatal conclusion - that in fact, Ethics is

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1. Morton White op.cit. Page 27.

nothing but a chapter of one of these new social sciences. But, says Moore, "The peculiarity of Ethics is not that it investigates assertions about human conduct, but that it investigates assertions about that property of things which is denoted by the term 'good', and the converse property denoted by the term 'bad'."[1]

The aphorism quoted on the front page of the Principia, taken from Bishop Butler, viz. "Everything is what it is, and not another thing", symbolises Moore's whole outlook and defence of Ethics as an autonomous discipline.

If Ethics is to remain Ethics in spite of the attempts of the Naturalist school of Bentham and Mill, then the basic logical and epistemological arguments used by metaphysicians - exponents of a "spiritual Idealistic morality", have to be replaced by more up-to-date arguments, i.e. scientifically grounded ones. Thus Moore concludes his chapter on Metaphysical Ethics that

> "the most important source of the supposition that Metaphysics is relevant to Ethics seems to be the assumption that "good" must denote some real property of things - an assumption which is mainly due to two erroneous doctrines, the first logical the second epistemological."[2]

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1. Op.cit. p.36.
2. G.E. Moore: op.cit. p.140. (Author's italics).

When later on Moore's own logical and epistemological assumptions will be found by the logical positivists to be remnants of "platonic ideas and cartesian minds",[1] and will be treated as the product of linguistic confusion, the last defence of idealistic spiritual morality broke down.

When the objectivity of moral judgments could no longer be based on the "existence" of a non-natural quality, and the autonomy of Ethics was no longer the concern of any of the new Logical Positivists, it became more and more difficult in modern Ethical studies to advocate a specific system of morality. The only form of Philosophical Ethics which was tolerated was the one which could fall in line with the general trend common to other departments of philosophy: as A.J. Ayer puts it, Ethics must "try to act as a sort of policeman, seeing that nobody trespasses into metaphysics."[2]

It could well be the case that a philosopher, whose subject is the Theory of Knowledge or Logic, convinced that the study of the Language of Science is the only legitimate philosophical study, would be ready to accept such a limitation for his subject. But for moral philosophers who, up to the present time have considered it as part of their task to advocate and defend a system of morality, it would be a

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1. Morton White: Toward Reunion in Philosophy, p.10
2. A.J.Ayer and others: The Revolution in Philosophy. (Macmillan, 1956), p.79.

difficult task to accept the new line i.e. the defence not of the Moral Code in particular, but the defence of Thinking in general against any metaphysical intrusions.

In fact, moral philosophers were faced with the dilemma: either Ethics without propositions or Ethics as part of the social sciences. e.g. either ethical statements are normative - hence meaningless, in the sense of having no meaning which can be expressed by a proposition - or ethical statements are meaningful - non-normative and their meaning when expressed in propositions correspond to facts studied by the social sciences.

Some of the ethical propositions, those which according to Moore deal with intrinsic value, were considered by him as incapable of proof and he called them 'intuitions'[1]. These intuitions are incapable of proof in an entirely different sense from which all ethical statements are deemed to be incapable of proof by logical positivists. But more of this later.

3. Reduction in Philosophy.

As we said before, this reduction of the subject-matter of Ethics was part of a larger movement of reductionism in philosophy from traditional systems of philosophy to the mere reporting of sense-experience. We shall try, in this section,

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1. MOORE: Ethics. Preface Page X.

to examine some of the general features of this modern trend of philosophical thinking, i.e. of Logical Positivism.

Side by side with the great optimism which accompanied the development of the natural sciences at the end of the XIXth century, there was some pessimism among those philosophers who were trying to work out the implications of this scientific progress. They realised that, if to every intellectual discipline the criterion of utility was to be applied, then they would be forced to draw far-reaching conclusions in Philosophy. They naturally contrasted the relative barrenness of their discussions about the validity of Induction with the very tangible results of inductive thinking in all the domains of Science; the relative futility of their quarrels about the existence or non-existence of Universals or of Meanings on the one hand, with the pragmatic use of universals and meanings by Science for the solution of practical problems. More and more Formal Logic could no longer cope with the "newly formulated requirements of either a deductive or an inductive science."[1]

This trend had either to bring about a Revolution in our philosophical concepts or to lead to stagnation in philosophy. The Logical Positivists returned to Hume for inspiration: witness this passage from his Enquiry Concerning Human

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1. Revolution in Philosophy. Introduction by Gilbert Ryle. (Macmillan & Co ltd. 1956) p.5.

Understanding: "If we take in our hand any volume; of divinity or school of Metaphysics, for instance; let us ask, does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number? No. Commit it then to the flames; for it contains nothing but sophistry and illusion."[1]

DOES IT CONTAIN ANY EXPERIMENTAL REASONING CONCERNING MATTER OF FACT OR EXISTENCE? NO.

Compare the foregoing passage with the following from Rudolf Carnap's Philosophy and Logical Syntax:

> "the non-theoretical character or metaphysics would not be in itself a defect; all arts have this non-theoretical character without thereby losing their high value for personal as well as for social life. The danger lies in the deceptive character of metaphysics; it gives the illusion of knowledge without actually giving any knowledge. This is the reason why we reject it."[2]

There can be no doubt as to the real intention of the new school concerning the task of Philosophy. According to the Logical Positivists, the whole subject of philosophy was in a state of "to be or not to be". They thought it necessary to get rid of all the expendable departments of traditional philosophy. They considered as expendable anything which did not comply with the "principle of yielding true knowledge",

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1. Op.cit. (ed. Selby-Bigge, 1902), p.165.
2. Rudolf Carnap: op.cit. (Kegan Paul, 1935), p.31

which they formulated as the "verification principle": ".....roughly stated, it lays down that the meaning of a statement is determined by the way in which it can be verified, where its being verified consists in its being tested by empirical observations".[1]

Logical Positivists also assumed that only that statement whose meaning can be verified or falsified, can be said to be true or false; and conversely, that only a statement which can be true or false, can be said to be meaningful. According to this principle, all metaphysical writings were called meaningless. The only part of philosophy which was retained as capable of yielding knowledge was the Logic of Science, with the specific function of making scientific statements clear. The result of philosophical analysis was not knowledge but clearer knowledge, philosophy itself not a body of doctrine but an activity.

It needs no argument to prove that the above conclusions as to the function of philosophical enquiry, greatly reduced the problems which, at the beginning of the XXth century were still of great concern to Russell and Moore. Thus Moore's logical and epistemological assumptions were no longer considered as part of "philosophical analysis" proper.

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1. A.J. Ayer: Revolution in Philosophy, p.74.

The Logical Positivists rejected the possibility of synthetic a priori judgments because they considered the division of judgments into synthetic (empirical) and analytic (a priori) as exhaustive; they replaced the problem of the existence of universals (or meaning) by the more pragmatic concept of the "use of the term"; and finally, they rejected the notion of non-natural properties as being utterly meaningless.

Instead of carrying on from where Moore had left off, i.e. from the investigation of the non-natural character of ethical attributes and the philosophical problems arising in connection with evaluation, the new Positivists tried to exclude evaluation from philosophy altogether. They gave the impression that, besides determining what the subject-matter of philosophy ought to be, they were directly concerned in rejecting the ethical principles advocated by Moore and other intuitionists. If Moore's notions of "good" as a non-natural, indefinable quality and his conceptions of ethical principles as synthetic a priori were regarded as no longer acceptable - could it not be the case, they argued, that ethical judgments do not give any objective knowledge at all?

For the first time in the history of philosophy some <u>general conclusions about Ethics</u> were reached by methods

which had nothing to do directly with moral philosophy. Unlike Moore and his predecessors who were concerned with the vindication of one kind of moral system against others, Logical Positivism found itself rejecting Moore's ethical principles without anything offering instead. Yet their pragmatic instinct forbade them to reject ethical statements as being valueless, as well as meaningless. They declared it had never been their intention to put into question the seriousness both of ethics and aesthetics; on the contrary, they considered them very valuable in both personal and social life.[1] Their consolation prize for Ethics and Aesthetics came in the form of two new interpretations of the meaning of value-statements - emotive meaning and commands in a misleading grammatical form.

Let us now examine these newest contributions to the language of value.

4. The command and the emotive theory in Ethics.

In spite of the 'seriousness' and 'importance' attributed by Carnap and Ayer to value-judgments, their philosophical principles prevented them from tolerating any system of morality

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1. Carnap, op.cit. p.31.

which was epistemologically and logically in contradiction with their own views. To repeat what I suggested earlier: Moore had rejected the "metaphysical" assumptions of the XIXth century absolutists, and had grounded his ethical principles on what he regarded as the true logical and epistemological axioms. But when the Logical Positivists rejected wholesale all the "metaphysical" assumptions of Moore and the Intuitionists, they were left with a theory of Ethics, based wholly on negative assumptions.

Rudolf Carnap, leader of the Vienna Circle, in his book Philosophy and Logical Syntax clearly stated the position of the Logical Positivists with regard to Ethics, and other value-language. Believing that only the propositions of mathematics and empirical science have sense, and that all other propositions are without sense, he proceeded to analyse the currently-made moral propositions. He found that although some of them were senseless-because unverifiable-, yet others did have some meaning, for instance those which were "deducible from psychological propositions about the character and the emotional reactions of the person"[1] expressing them.

Accordingly, he divided Ethics into two parts: the

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1. R. Carnap, op.cit. p.25.

first being

> "psychological and sociological investigations about the actions of human beings, especially regarding the origin of these actions from feelings and volitions and their effects upon other people"; Ethics in this sense is an empirical, scientific investigation; it belongs to empirical science rather than to philosophy".

And the second part, the "philosophy of moral values or moral norms" - normative ethics, which he considered to be "not an investigation of facts, but a pretended investigation of what is good and what is evil, what it is right to do and what it is wrong to do."[1] Whereas the propositions of the first part of ethics were meaningful, had factual content, and were empirically verifiable or falsifiable, for example "If a person kills anybody he will have feelings of remorse"; the propositions of normative ethics had no theoretical or scientific sense, for example "Killing is evil".[2] The latter is a pseudo-proposition, belonging to the realm of metaphysics.[3]

Such a value-statement as "killing is evil" is nothing else than a command in a misleading grammatical form.[4]

> "It is neither true nor false, it does not assert anything, it can neither be proved or disproved, Ethical and aesthetic propositions, and with them all other metaphysical propositions about the nature of Reality, have to be rejected because they deceive the unwary: they merely give"

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1. R.Carnap, op.cit. p.23
2. p.25.
3. p.26
4. p.24.

the illusion of knowledge "without actually giving any knowledge."[1] Ethics, Aesthetics and Metaphysics had done their work - Logical Positivists had now clearly showed that the Emperor had no clothes.

Carnap had published his book in 1935. One year later, came A.J. Ayer's famous book Language, Truth and Logic. Here Carnap's Critique of Ethics was continued along the same line of logical analysis, but was worked out more fully and brought to its logical conclusion.

Carnap had divided ethical propositions into empirical ones having an ascertainable meaning, and ethical value-statements having no meaning at all. Ayer divides them into four classes:

> "There are, first of all, propositions which express definitions of ethical terms, or judgments about the legitimacy or possibility of certain definitions. Secondly, there are propositions describing the phenomena of moral experience, and their causes. Thirdly, there are exhortations to moral virtue. And, lastly, there are actual ethical judgments."[2]

He asserts that it is only the first class which "can be said to constitute ethical philosophy". The second class belongs to psychology or sociology (as with Carnap). The third class "are not propositions at all, but ejaculations or commands which are designed to provoke the reader to

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1. p.31

2. A.J.Ayer: op.cit. (Victor Gollantz, Ltd.1946) p.150.

action of a certain sort." (This is but a slightly different formulation for Carnap's "...a value statement is nothing else than a command in a misleading grammatical form.")

As to the fourth and last class of ethical propositions, Ayer admits he does not know how to classify them; at all events, he is convinced that "they do not belong to ethical philosophy." For,he argues "A strictly philosophical treatise on ethics should therefore make no ethical pronouncements."[1] We shall have the opportunity later on to comment on this value-judgment about what Ayer considers to be the legitimate subject for a treatise on Ethics. Here it suffices only to draw attention to the fact that on his own theory, such a value-judgment as the above can amount to no more than a mere ejaculation or exhortation.

The new theory of Ethics propounded by Logical Positivists like Carnap and Ayer was, in Ayer's own words "radically subjectivist". Yet it differed in "a very important respect from the orthodox subjectivist theory. For the orthodox subjectivist does not deny, as we do, that the sentences of a moralizer express genuine propositions". "All he denies is that they express propositions of a unique non-empirical character. ~~His own view is that they express~~

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1. A.J.Ayer, op.cit. p.151.

~~propositions of a unique non-empirical character~~. His own view is that they express propositions about the speaker's feelings. If this were so, ethical judgments clearly would be capable of being true or false"....[1]) which concludes Ayer (like Carnap), is not the case.

To sum up the findings of Carnap and Ayer about the wholly negative meaning of ethical judgments:

1. Ethical sentences do not express genuine propositions.
2. " " cannot be true or false.
3. " " are not objectively verifiable.
4. " " are not assertions about the speaker's feelings
5. " " are merely expressions or the evincing of feelings.
6. " " are meaningless or have no factual meaning.

5. What is Meta-Ethics?

Ayer's prnnouncement that "a philosophical treatise on Ethics should not make any ethical pronouncement" can be taken as a definition of Meta-Ethics. But the definition itself is so narrow that it precludes any substantial contribution to the subject. Another definition of Meta-Ethics would be "the logical analysis of the language of morals", and the equation of Ethics with a second-order activity. This means

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1. A.J.Ayer: op.cit. p.161-162.

that Ethics is no longer to be engaged in valuation but in the analysis of sentences expressing valuations. In other words, if up to now Ethics was concerned with the formulations of norms and the study of facts in relation to these norms, from now on it was to limit itself to the study of the logic of value-terms.

A linguistic analysis of ethics must not necessarily be a meta-ethical study, but a meta-ethical analysis must necessarily be (at least partly), linguistic--because of its second-order character. I said that it must be <u>partly</u> linguistic because I shall try to show in my thesis that it is almost impossible to write a book on ethics or meta-ethics and comply with the general rule of logical positivism about maintaining absolute neutrality towards value questions.

A problem does not cease to be a problem, even if called 'pseudo-problem'. A more pragmatic approach would have helped the Logical Positivists to avoid committing the fallacy of which they often accused others, viz. the fallacy of deriving "an ought from an is". Ayer's argument could be put briefly as follows:

"The sentences of the moralizers <u>are</u> meaningless; therefore, one must not in any circumstances put any value statement in any book on philosophical ethics." And the question to be asked is: even if such candidates for the job of writing

absolutely neutral meta-ethical treatises were to be found - could they avoid expressing some "meaningless valuations"? The accusation that ethical neutralism is in fact the same thing as ethical relativism appears partly justified.

6. Ethical relativity.

It is worth while to study the ambiguity of some moral terms which are at the origin of the confusion reigning in the determination of the subject matter of ethics. These include:

a) The objective or subjective nature of moral standards.

b) Moral objectivity and subjectivity.

c) Moral relativism and ethical relativity.

a). The Objective Nature of Moral Standards.

We can divide all those who uphold the principle of the objectivity of the moral standard into three groups:

1) Those, like Moore, who would have moral properties both objective and intrinsic.

2) Those like Sidgwick, who content themselves with the fact that for standard to be objective, it is enough for it to be valid for all minds. The problem of the independent existence of this standard without any relation to the human mind is irrelevant, according to this group.

3) Those like Hume or Westermarck, who, while denying the

objective origin of moral standards, and insisting on their subjective origin (emotions, feelings, in a word originating from man), still maintain that these standards are valid for all.

Before examining one by one all these three conceptions of the validity of moral principles, it may be worthwhile to devote a few lines to the philosophical and current-usage connotations of the two concepts: objective and subjective.

I shall start with the subjective. We have for this work two main connotations: 1) epistemological, anything having its origin from the human mind is subjective. With the development of psychology, this implies only a direction for the investigation to be carried out. For example, instead of carrying out the investigation of the origin of moral ideals in the structure of society, some philosophers try to find this same origin in the unconscious. 2) Evaluative, in the sense of irrational or imaginary, or, as Mr. W. Kneale puts it:

> "It is remarkable that we have to-day a number of philosophers who call themselves subjectivists in moral philosophy. For, although the name 'subjectivist' is by no means new, philosophers have reserved it hitherto for their opponents, and usually for imaginary opponents at that".[1]

Needless to say, that the evaluative meaning ofsubjective

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1. William Kneale: "Objectivity in Morals" in Readings in Ethical Theory ed. W. Sellars and John Hoopers (New York, Appleton Century Crafts, Inc. 1952) p. 681.

is relative to the criteria of what is usually considered as valid-epistemologically speaking. If a philosopher bases his theory of knowledge wholly on the assumption that all valid knowledge must be grounded on intrinsic properties actually existing independently of the human mind, (whatever that may mean), then obviously anything which is not similarly grounded will be evaluated as subjective.

Accordingly, Ayer's radical subjectivism in ethics (see p.10), can be summed up in the following manner: Normative moral statements do not yield any knowledge, they are not part of rational speech describing any reality inside or outside the human mind: they are subjective in the evaluative sense, they are bad. On the other hand, the 'orthodox subjectivist' as Ayer calls him, 'does not use 'subjective' in the evaluative sense, but only in the epistemological one, meaning by that that his only dispute with the 'objectivist' is not about the validity of normative moral statements but only about their origin.

1) Intrinsic properties.

Moore's notion of the good as an intrinsic property is quite a complex one:

> "Suppose you take a particular patch of colour which is yellow. We can, I think, say with certainty that any patch exactly like that one, would be yellow, even if it existed in a Universe in which causal laws were quite different from what they are in this one. We can say that any such patch must be yellow, quite

> unconditionally, whatever the circumstances, and whatever the causal laws. And it is in a sense similar to this, in respect to the fact that it is neither empirical nor causal, that I mean the 'must' to be understood, when I say that if a kind of value is to be 'intrinsic', then, supposing a given thing possesses it in a certain degree, anything like that thing must possess it exactly in the same degree." and he adds "To say, of 'beauty' or 'goodness' that they are 'intrinsic' is only, therefore, to say that this thing which is obviously true of 'yellowness' and 'blueness' and 'redness' is true of them".[1]

Moore is quite outspoken in the above passage about his conception of the nature of the objectivity of moral statements. Valid reasons in morals must refer to "the kind of necessity, which we assert to hold, for instance, when we say that whatever is a right angled triangle must be a triangle, or whatever is yellow must be either yellow or blue,"[2]

2) Those who hold the view that the validity of moral principles does not imply the existence of 'goodness' or 'rightness' without relation to any mind whatsoever, understand the notion of objectivity in a much looser way, We shall see in chapter 4, how S.E. Toulmin, while rejecting the theory of 'goodness' as an intrinsic, non-natural, simple property, still maintains that it is not a 'subjective relation' or a matter of personal taste and feeling.

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1. The Philosophy of G.E.Moore Northwestern University Press, 1942. ed. Schilpp, Evanston, p.268-269.
2. " " " " " p.271-272.

3) Westermarck, on the other hand, rejects the intuitionist's approach and insists on the subjective origin of moral principles, but he maintains that they are none the less binding and hence valid.

> "Can we help sympathising with our friends? Are these facts necessary or less powerful in their consequences because they fall within the subjective sphere of our experience? So also why should the moral law command less obedience because it forms part of ourselves".[1]

Westermarck who calls himself a 'relativist' in ethics is really what Ayer calls an 'orthodox subjectivist'.

It may sound paradoxical to have classified Moore, Toulmin and Westermarck, under one category 'objectivists', simply because all of them maintain that moral principles can be valid. But if we bear in mind the meaning of 'subjective' as a value-term, then we find ourselves only affirming that Moore, Toulmin and Westermarck are united in attributing the value-word 'objective' to moral principles. Epistemologically they could hardly differ more.

b. Moral Objectivity and subjectivity.

All those who are united in their view about the validity of moral judgments, though differing about the origin and nature of this validity, use the term 'objective' in yet another sense (apart from the epistemological sense).

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1. Ethical Relativity (Kegan Paul, 1932), p.59.

Mr. W. Kneale writes that a moral property or attitude is objective if it is in accordance with the will of an "impartially sympathetic spectator".[1]

This is certainly what we mean when we ask our interlocutor to give us an 'objective judgment' on the situation. Broadly speaking, we mean by 'objective judgment' an impartial one. Hence a good Jury is an objective one (among other things). It does not matter if the members of the Jury are objectivists in the sense of Moore or in the sense of Sidgwick, or subjectivists in the sense of Westermarck, all of them believe, that given the evidence they can arrive at a valid judgment. As for 'radical subjectivists' à la Ayer, to them, impartiality or objectivity are just more meaningless emotive terms. On the other hand, when a Jury is called 'subjective' then this is one of the worst accusations that can be hurled against its members. What is meant is that they have not tried to raise themselves above their own personal feelings and emotions, and that, on the contrary, they have been swayed by their emotions or what is even worse, by their personal interests.

In the above quotation Mr. W. Kneale insists that the spectator, to be called objective, must be impartial as well as sympathetic. This last quality leads us to a further

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1. loc.cit. p.693.

overtone in the meaning of the moral terms 'objective and subjective'. This overtone determines that justice or objectivity cannot be bare objectivity or bare subjectivity. Justice is attained through examining the objective facts plus imagining yourself in the place of the person being judged. This last proviso is warranted, in view of the dangers of 'bare objectivity' which may well lead to inhuman aloofness and indifference.

What is the relation between the objectivity of moral principles and objectivity as a moral virtue? As I said at the beginning of this section, it would be quite consistent for a person who holds that moral principles are valid or objective, to demand from someone else to be morally objective. His belief in the possibility of valid judgments justifies his demand of others to formulate such valid reasons.

The moral virtue of objectivity cannot be appealed to by a person who, being a 'radical subjectivist', does not believe in the validity of moral judgments. This is why 'radical subjectivism', after having reduced ethics to meta-ethics, and the moral philosopher to an analyst of the language of morals, is sometimes accused of being conducive to moral anarchy and political tyranny in a word, to moral relativism.

c. Moral relativism and ethical relativity

Relativism in moral principles is generally considered to be an extreme and cynical form of moral subjectivism which reduces all forms of moral judgments to subjective relations such as 'pleasing', 'amazing', 'incredible', 'enjoyable', 'gratifying'. As such, it is a value word though it is sometimes confused with whatever opposes 'absolutism'. Absolutism in morals is an extreme form of objectivism, which holds that moral principles are fixed and unchanging in time and space. Moore's 'intrinsic goodness' is the nearest approach to such an absolute. Those, who without reducing moral principles to mere exhortations, yet hold the view that they change, viz. that moral principles are different for different countries and for different historical periods, are not moral relativists. They are champions of ethical relativity as against ethical absolutism. Unfortunately, all these ethical terms such as relativism, relativity, absolutism, objectivity, objectivism, subjectivity, subjectivism, validity, when used in a moral context their non-moral meaning is usually blurred by the evaluative meaning. Every 'subjective' theory is considered to be the alternative to another 'objective' theory. Every argument adduced in favour of the former is considered as an argument

against the latter. But in practice we know that this is not the case. An epistemologically subjective doctrine of ethics does not consider it nonsensical to ask questions about the validity of ethical judgments. Only radical subjectivism does. In doing so, all this terminology which is essentially an epistemological terminology, usually merges into an evaluative terminology.

The criterion of this evaluation is at the start an epistemological criterion: Moral statements are meaningless, incapable of being true or false and hence there is no criterion to test their validity. Is it surprising that such a theory should be construed as a negative backing of moral relativism? Philosophy as a conceptual enquiry of the nature of moral principles is transformed into and confused with, an evaluative enquiry: moral valuation. This transformation and confusion is facilitated by the use of highly ambiguous terms such as objective, subjective relations etc. etc. To be subjective in your judgment is always morally bad whatever your philosophy, except of course in the case of the radical subjectivist who considers the statement 'always morally bad' to be meaningless. Whether he wants it or not, the radical subjectivist is a moral relativist.

7 Is meta-ethics at all possible?

As we have shown in the preceding section, a philosophical conceptual enquiry, is easily transformed into and confused with, an evaluative enquiry when it uses highly ambiguous terms. The study of the possibility or the lack of possibility of normative ethics as a branch of philosophy is in the end equated with the study of the justification of subjectivism and relativism in morals. Where will a meta-ethical study lead to? Will it be confined to its statement of purpose i.e. to deal solely with the legitimacy or possibility of the definitions of ethical terms? (see page 23 for quotation from Ayer). Can a moral philosopher restrain himself and not become involved through study of the logic of value words in evaluative statements?

It is my intention to show that it is very hard for meta-ethical philosophers to do in practice what they proclaim in theory. They do not confine their task to that of the policeman who is guarding philosophy against the intrusion of metaphysics. They are aware that, dangerous as metaphysics may be for philosophy, yet even more dangerous for society, are subjectivism, relativism and irrationalism in morals. Apparently the anti-metaphysical philosophical policeman by becoming philosophically indifferent to the problems of morals has once more given an opportunity

for the moral philosopher to fulfil his traditional task: to defend and advocate the rationality, objectivity and meaningfulness of moral principles.

CHAPTER 2

ETHICS AS THE LOGIC OF VALUE-WORDS

"Most questions and propositions of the philosophers result from the fact that we do not understand the logic of our language... and so it is not to be wondered at that the deepest problems are really no problems"

Wittgenstein: 4.003 — Tractacus Logico-Philosophicus

1. The Logic of grading labels

As we pointed out in the preceding chapter according to logical positivists, the only philosophical work which can justify itself and yet avoid being meaningless, would be the study of the logic of ethical terms and of value terms in general. If, with the help of linguistin analysis, we can conduct such a study with as little personal involvment as possible, we may perhaps attain that neutral attitude which seems indispensable if we do not want our study to become a moral crusade which writers of meta-ethics tr~~ies~~ at all cost to avoid.

We shall be concerned, in this chapter, with J.O. Urmson's well-known article "On Grading", first published in Mind 1950. This article is generally regarded as a serious attempt along the meta-ethical lines prescribed by logical positivism, to prove that certain problems of classical Moral Philosophy are not real problems at all, but merely pseudo-problems. For instance, one such problem which had caused "philosophical perplexity" both before and after Moore, had been the relation between the empirical and normative elements usually found in current moral arguments.

Moore had given a name to the fallacy, pointed out by Hume, of trying to deduce an 'ought' from an 'is'; he had called it the Naturalistic Fallacy. The Logical Positivists thought it sprang from a logical misuse of language. A.J.Ayer explained their position when he said that "In fact, it came to little more than the development of the perfectly respectable logical point that normative statements are not derivable from descriptive statements or as Hume put it, that you cannot deduce an 'ought' from an 'is'. Laying down a standard is not reporting a fact: but it is none the worse for that."[1]

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1. The Revolution in Philosophy, p. 78.

"Laying down a standard is not reporting a fact" could also be taken as Urmson's motto in his article "On Grading". He puts it thus:

> "At some stage we must say firmly (why not now?) that to describe is to describe, to grade is to grade, and to express one's feelings is to express one's feelings, and that none of these is reducible to either of the others; nor can any of them be reduced to, defined in terms of, anything else."[1]

Ayer's "laying down the standard" is here replaced by "grading", and his "reporting a fact" is replaced by "describing" But both sayings express the same views about the irreducibility of value-words to descriptive words.

Urmson then discusses the various paraphrases of terms like 'good' and 'bad' when used in a moral context. He finds that those who equate it with 'conducive to pleasure' or with 'I approve of it', or those who define it as a non-natural quality which must be intuited in order to be known--all miss the most important characteristic of "good', though each stresses one of its important, but secondary characteristics:

> "But all these three views, naturalism, intuitionism and the emotive theory have seized on some points of importance (so, we shall see later, have ordinary subjectivism and utilitarianism). Naturalism rightly emphasizes the close connection between the grading label and the set of natural characters which justify its use; intuitionism rightly emphasizes that this close connection is not identity of meaning and insists on the different logical character of grading labels and natural description. Both rightly stress the objective character of grading. The emotive theory, agreeing with intuitionism about the fault of naturalism, rightly stresses that the intuitionist cure of suggesting that grading labels are a special kind of non-natural descriptive adjective will not

1. "On Grading" reprinted in Logical Language, Second series, ed. A.Flew, (Oxford, Basil Blackmell, 1953) p.171.

do."[1]

We cannot, Urmson claims, understand what is the most important characteristic of moral terms such as 'good', 'bad', etc. except by understanding the non-moral uses of such terms. In their non-moral uses 'good' and 'bad' behave exactly as other grading-labels, the only difference being their greater generality, i.e. the generality of the criteria for their employment. If we compare the criteria of an 'Extra Fancy' apple with the criteria of a 'good' apple, we find that while the former are clearly fixed by the Ministry of Agriculture, the latter are much vaguer. Moreover, 'good' is used as a grading-label for a great variety of things, (good apples, good guns, good films, etc.) which increases the lack of precision of the criteria for its use.

As for the logical behaviour of grading-labels, we can learn about it by investigating the relation between the criteria for the application of a grading-label and the grading-label itself. As we saw earlier, he rejects the theory about the identity of meaning between the criteria A,B,C and the grading label X. He equally rejects the intuitionist interpretation of a synthetic relationship between the property called 'X' and the criteria A,B,C.

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1. Op.cit. pp.170-171.

He admits that since Naturalism is discarded and since Subjectivism cannot explain how we can objectively decide whether a statement of the form "This is X" is true or false, intuitionism might seem to be the only explanation.[1]

The other, better explanation, is supplied by Urmson himself. He holds that the relation between 'X' and the criteria A,B,C is neither analytic (Naturalism), nor synthetic (Intuitionism): it is another kind of relation altogether. Its nearest analogy is the relation between a rule and making a choice according to this rule. Using a grading-label is like giving your authority for an action.

2 Grading and Classification

Nowhere in his article does Urmson consider the possibility of classifying 'grading' as one of the methods of logical division. He is aware of the fact that many readers will in fact compare grading with scientific classification, and he wants to reject outright the relevancy of such a comparison. The only sketchy reason he gives for such a difference between grading and classification is when he writes: ".... but the difference lies in the purpose of the grader, not in its external form".[2]

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1. cf. op.cit. p.169.
2. op.cit. p.161.

We are left completely in the dark about this 'difference in purpose and not in external form'. After all, Urmson is dealing with the logic of value words, and his main point is that they can be assimilated to grading words (though usually vaguer). Then he proceeds to show that grading words do not describe, though they bear a special relation to other descriptive words which are part of the criteria for grading. The point we would like to clarify is the following: Does this difference, pointed out by Urmson, between grading and classification, viz., the difference in the purpose of the grader warrant a fundamental difference between the logic of grading terms and the logic of class names? Or to put it more clearly, does this difference in the respective purposes of grader and classifier, determines the non-descriptive character of grading labels?

3 The Purpose of Grading.

Urmson writes "Grading and the application of grading labels are common activities. Inspector of goods, tea tasters and the like (and examiners) do it professionally; we all need for the ordinary purpose of life"[1] What are those ordinary purposesof life for which we need , do grading and use grade labels? Grading is needed by men in the pursuit of their social and economic ends. Things

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1. p.160.

like economic goods, though of the same category, present similarities as well as differences. Cotton, for instance, is one kind of textile plant. Any crop of cotton is more similar to another crop of cotton than to any crop of flax. Yet when we come to the utilisation of cotton in the textile industry, we find that we need to differentiate between what are called the different 'qualities' of cotton. This differentiation (whose object is the production of different qualities of textiles), has many implications: technical implications for the farmer, for the research workers in experimental stations, for officials of the Ministry of agriculture of the country concerned, financial implications for the farmer, for the exporter, for the importer and last but not least for both the factory owner and the consumer of the textile product . The efficient work of these different categories of economic and social workers, would be impossible without the process of grading. Ultimately the purpose of grading is to make useful inferences from one implication of the division of the whole cotton crop to another implication. Grading like any other logical division is an integral part of our cognitive process.

For the purpose of grading cotton some of the qualities of the crop are chosen and the division is done according to their presence or absence in the items to be graded.

In cotton these qualities usually include: length of fibre, silkiness, colour. Let us call these qualities A,B,C, and the different grades: very good, good and fair. Urmson is of the opinion, that when we say: This cotton is good, we are not describing. In other words he contends that 'good' cannot be equated with A,B,C, or that the latter is not the definition of 'good'. Could we not say about these qualities which form the criteria for grading what G.R.G. Mure says about classification? "Primarily the economic observer classifies things as things. He classifies them, that is to say in sophisticated language, taking as the intension of the class those qualities which he finds he can with fair safety treat as the defining properties of a thing, as a group of qualities whose coincidence in a new instance will pretty certainly enable recognition of that thing."[1] Urmson would not deny that the presence of A,B,C in a sample of cotton will help us recognise what grade it is, but he refuses to accept A,B,C as the definition of the grade.

In classification too, class characteristics cannot exhaustively or completely define a class name - yet this does not prevent the latter from being used descriptively: "To classify things at all, the economic observer is compelled to select some of their properties as definitory and treat others a relatively accidental"[2] In some cases,

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1. Retreat from Truth (Basil Blackwell) pp.24-25.
2. Op.cit. page 26.

"he can perfectly well, and often must, classify things in respect of a single quality, or a single relation in which they stand"[1]. So we might have one class characteristic, say C, determining a class name, say N.

In the case of grading, Urmson asks the following question: (supposing we have a grade X and A,B,C, as the acknowledged criteria for its application -) Is X "just an abbreviation for A,B,C,?" or will "the relation of 'super' to its criteria be the same as 'Bramleys' to its criteria""?[2] His answer is obviously negative because he says in another passage that the statement: 'Anything which is A,B,C is X' is not analytic.[3] Yet, 'anything which is C is N' in the case of classification, is analytic according to Urmson.

It is well known that principles of classifications such as 'anything which is C is N' have to be changed from time to time when new discoveries make the old classification obsolete. Urmson takes the view that at any time 'anything which is A,B,C is X' can become obsolete because there is always the possibility of somebody disagreeing

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(1) Op.cit. Page. 26

(2) Logic & Language Second Series Page 169.

(3) " " " " Page 171.

with our decision to make 'A,B,C' the criteria for the application of the grade X. Does not this argument presuppose that the grader's decision is wholly determined by a subjective scale of merit? If two persons agree that 'A,B,C' are the properties of say T and one of them grades it as 'good' and othe other as 'fairly good', their disagreement is either about the purpose of the grading (e.g. for export or the home market), or about their respective scale of preference. In both cases, the disagreement occurs only in marginal cases of grading: standard cases of grading assume a common purpose and an objective scale of evaluation.

4. The purpose of classification. There are many varieties of classification. The same objects can be classified in different ways according to the different purposes of the classification. Men are classified according to race, nationality, culture, economic function, intelligence, religion etc. For each of these classifications different characteristics are chosen as a basis for the division. These basic characteristics bear always a special relation to the purpose of the classification. There are plenty of alternatives in classifying the objects of the physical world. Gone are the days when the Greek view about classification was the prevalent one. This antiquted view looked upon the world as a hierarchy of classes

which needed only to be discovered. To-day, though few people would accept such an extremist view as that of Karl Britton that: "The facts of the world do not in themselves seem to determine any classification at all: the world seems to be differentiated only by some human volition, instinct, plan";(1) yet there is a general consensus of opinion that classification depends to a certain extent on our interests and our purposes. "Indeed the classification system scientists employ changes as time goes on, and the way in which it does so shows what their ideal is".(2)

From the above it is quite clear that scientific classification is far from being purposeless (in the sense of not depending on the purpose of the classifier). It is irrevelant to enter into a discussion as to what is more important in a scientific classification - the given data or the purpose of the classifier - what is relevant is that the principle of any classification is a function of the aim and interest of the classifier.

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(1) K. Britton: Communication (1939) page 181.

(2) S.E. Toulmin: Philosophy of Science, 1953, page 53.

5. Is there any difference between the purpose of the grader and the purpose of the classifier? Logically, class names are empirical concepts which are used to describe, in spite of their depending not only on empirical, objective data but also on the purpose of the classifier. Urmson does not consider grading terms or labels as descriptive, and he gives as reason for this difference between class names and grading label the purpose of the grader. Could it be the case that he is relating a logical difference to an assumed psychological difference between the purpose of the grader and that of the classifier?

The Concise Oxford Dictionary gives the following definition of 'grade' verb: "arrange in grades, class, sort: degree in rank, proficiency, quality, value, class of persons or things alike". From this we understand that one of the meanings of 'to grade' is to classify according to value. Perhaps Urmson has in mind only this particular meaning of 'grading' i.e. 'to classify according to value'. This possibility is even confirmed by the postcript No. (1) on page 185 "I am not wedded to the words 'grade' and 'criterion'. I use 'grade' rather than 'evaluate', for example, largely because 'evaluate' tends to be associated with a special kind of theory".(1) In spite of this possibility that Urmson

(1) Op.cit. Page 185.

might have always in mind 'Grading' in a very narrow sense of the word: 'classify according to value' we must remember that the purpose of his article is to have a new, fresh, undogmatic approach to the logical function of value words. The advantage of reducing value words to grading labels lies in avoiding the emotive overtones of value words as such. Nevertheless, all this hypothetical advantage of 'neutralising' the study of the logic of value words would be lost if grading is understood too narrowly.

6. The narrow sense of grading: Urmson maintains that grading is not to be confused with scientific classification. According to him the difference lies in the purpose of the grader. Having shown that the classifier was at least equally directed by his subject matter as by his purpose, we were led to ask if the difference between the grader's purpose and the classifier's did not lie in that grading is classifying in respect of value. (See Oxford Dictionary: to grade and grade). We rejected this interpretation as too easy and even eventually wrong.

Urmson avoids this circularity (of explaining value in terms of grading according to value) by concentrating on a marginal use of grading terms. He does not take

the usual paradigm case where everyone gives to grading terms: the descriptive sense of usual class names.

Performatory meaning. In two passages in his article 'On Grading', Urmson gives the impression that there is a great analogy between the use of grading words in the indicative tense and what he describes as Austin's performatory sentences :"Also since philosophers are wedded to the expectation that indicative sentences will all be used for describing things, it will be as well to remind tham of other non-descriptive (and non-emotive) uses of indicative sentences - Austin's performatory sentences for example."(1)

Writing about the distinction which many philosophers are now examining between the English present perfect tense (I sit, I run) and the present continuous tense (I am sitting, I am running), Urmson says: "To say or write, 'I approve', however, is not to describe anything at all - it can be described but is not itself a case of describing. In the case above it is something like giving your authority for an action."(2)

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(1) Op.cit. Page 171.

(2) Op.cit. Pages 173-174.

Thus contends Urmson in the non-descriptive sense of grading (or of using grading labels) the user is really giving his authority for his use of the grading label in accordance with the accepted criteria. This non-descriptive meaning of grading label is certainly not what every user of grading labels has in mind. It may be the case that in certain cases of grading it <u>should be the case that</u> every user of a grading word <u>should</u> be conscious and responsible for his use and <u>should</u> check up the criteria for grading.

"One moral of this is quite obvious ... grading is something which you cannot in full sense do without understanding what you are doing"(1) and he goes on to compare the ignorant or apprentice grader with the person "who merely echoes conventional moral judgments" and who according to him "Is not really making moral judgments".(2) All this reminds us of the old controversy about the nature of the 'will' of the 'good', about real will and real good. Real and conscious grading presupposes according to Urmson a)full knowledge of the purpose of the grading and b) knowledge of the reasons for our choice of the selected criteria.

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(1) Op.cit. Page 161.

(2) Op.cit. Page 161.

We are not 'really grading' if we simply use grading terms i.e. simply sort objects according to grade. This is conventional grading which implies ignorance of the purpose of the grading and ignorance of the relation of the criteria to the grading label.

7 The Subjective Element in Grading.

One of the reasons why Urmson thinks grading labels' is not descriptive but rather like involving one's prestige and one's authority is the part played by subjective factors in the determination of the criteria of grading. In grading apples as well as any other item for public consumption, great care is taken in order to assess the individual taste and fancy of as many sectors of the population as possible. A criterion ABC for eating apples may change much more easily and more quickly than the class characteristics of different brands of apples. Experts in grading must be expert in the assessment of the scale of preference (sometimes mostly subjective) of the consumers. Grading in the sense of 'expert grading' presupposes, besides description, a great deal of authority-giving and prestige-backing of experts.

8 Is there any similar narrow sense in classification?

This narrow or marginal sense of grading is not

peculiar to grading alone. There are cases in classification where the emphasis is on the classifier rather than on the material to be classified:

> "Since classification is a mental ordering more or less related to the independent structure of things, we should expect some classifications to emphasise the classifier, and thus to be relatively artificial, superficial, and adapted to his limited purpose or taste; while others will stress the subject matter, being more natural, structural, and adapted to the character of the materials." (1)

This shift in the emphasis from the subject matter to the classifier can be due to various reasons. If we classify books only according to their size, this is one case of superficial classification where the stress is far more on the relative convenience of the classifier than on the subject matter of the books. On the other hand there might be cases where it is no lack of desire on the part of the classifier to ge deeply into the nature of the subject matter but rather the great difficulties in applying class-labels descriptively which is the reason for the shifting of the emphasis from the subject matter to the classifier. Bertrand Russell gives the following example in his book Human Knowledge(2): "Chimpanzees are not apes, but in the

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(1) H.A. Larrabee : Reliable Knowledge, 1945. Page 242. Houghton & Mifflin & Co.

(2) B. Russell: Human Knowledge, Page 442. Allen & Unwin.

course of evolution there must have been animals which were intermediate between apes and men." In such cases B. Russell is of the opinion that class concepts are not used descriptively:

> "Every empirical concept is certainly applicable to some objects, and certainly inapplicable to others, but in between there is a region of doubtful objects. In regard to such objects classificatory statements may be more or less true or may be so near the middle of the doubtful region that it is futile to consider them either true or false."

In classification as well as in grading there are plenty of doubtful situations. By using class names we do not describe but rather emphasise the classifier's point of view, purpose together with his authority and his prestige.

9 Grading of men and of men's actions.

We can grade men in many ways: we can grade them according to their intelligence, according to their reflexes, their knowledge of specific subjects, or, more generally their manners, their adaptability to certain social situations and their fittingness for certain professions or manual jobs. In all these varieties of grading, certain aspects of men's behaviour are actually graded for a specific purpose: to be accepted in a profession, to obtain a driving

licence or, in the case of children, in order to be accepted in a grammar school etc.

In all these gradings, some empirical characteristics among a great many are chosen as the criteria for grading. Even these criteria themselves are graded and given varying coefficients. It is generally accepted that these tests (that is how these gradings are called), can never exhaustively test the specified aspect of men's behaviour which it is their object to test. Not all the criteria chosen are identically revelatory of the standard in question. For instance in a driving test, the examiner will give higher marks for caution than for mere dexterity, for resolution than for politeness etc.

Thus, there is a double process of grading: the criteria which are chosen for grading men in relation to some aspect of their behaviour are themselves graded according to their relative importance in revealing the purpose of the grading itself.

Psychologists and sociologists often contend that it is difficult to <u>assess exactly one isolated</u> aspect of men's behaviour. The choice of the criteria is always to a certain degree arbitrary, and we often do not know beforehand what will make a certain

candidate a good driver. There is the well known danger of candidates preparing themselves for specific questions, (the criteria chosen for the test). Some who pass the test may never become really gooddrivers, while others who fail even twice and thrice are actually, or potentially, better drivers than those 'crammers'. It is for these reasons that it is very difficult to 'grade men's capacities'.

What is the object of grading men morally? How are we to formulate the purpose of our grading when we are dealing with moral agents? Sometimes we classify candidates for high posts in the judiciary according to their moral qualities; but this is surely not what we mean by 'moral grading' as equivalent to moral judgment. What Urmson means by moral terms such as 'good' and 'bad' functioning as grading terms, is, that whenever we use 'good' and 'bad' in making judgments about agents or actions, <u>we are grading</u>.

If we try to formulate the purpose of our grading whenever we pronounce moral judgments of the form "X" is 'good' or "X" is 'bad', we shall find that unless we opt for Utilitarianism, e.g. for the formulation of the purpose in empirical terms, we shall find ourselves unable to ascertain empirically the purpose of

our evaluation. And yet, we do, according to Urmson, choose as criteria for moral judgments only empirical characteristics.

While in grading men according to ordinary capacities or abilities the purpose, though ascertainable with difficulty, can be empirically verifiable: good driving can always be described with so many details that the description can be considered as an exhaustive definition of 'good' driving. A good driver is a person who is a member of the class of good drivers. The classification is determined according to a certain accepted standard. This standard has never been the subject of a long and protracted controversy between those who contend that a good driver can only be intuitively recognised, and those who affirm that a good driver is recognised by a test.

10 Moral arguments for rejecting the analogy of grading.

Unlike ordinary grading, moral evaluation is not only done by comparing men to other men but also in relation to an ideal standard: in the case of the driving test the examined is compared with the examiner; in moral evaluation the person or the action is compared with the ideal. In determining the criteria by which we can 'grade' men's behaviour morally, we find that the purpose in its relation

to the criteria and the relative grading of these criteria among themselves can never be dogmatically fixed. There is a certain vagueness, indeterminateness in all moral evaluations so that any comparison with grading is very far fetched.

In general, it is argued that men's abilities are not easily measured or graded and if we do grade them, it is urged that it should be done for limited purposes and not for such aims which may influence their future without the possibility of revision. This is the case with the eleven plus examination. This rejection of the grading of man is based on the assumption that it is possible for a 'bad' man to change, whereas a 'bad apple' can only change for the worse. If the grading of man's abilities is considered sometimes as contrary to man's nature, then certainly moral evaluation of men's actions and character should not be compared to grading of any kind.

11 Conclusion.

Urmson's thesis that ethical terms such as 'good' and 'bad' behave, logically speaking, like grading terms, i.e. that they are not descriptive, is based only on 'doubtful grading situations'. Such doubtful

situations occur also in classification, when the emphasis on the classifier's purpose is greater than on the subject matter. Those few exceptions of non-descriptive uses of class names have never impaired their logical status. In non-doubtful situations, both class names and grading labels are used descriptively. Thus the analogy with grading either proves that 'good' and 'bad' are descriptive or, if the analogy is with doubtful grading situations, that they are akin to performatory expressions such as 'I approve', 'I do', 'I know'. Besides in one of its meanings, grading is a value word. If this is the meaning Urmson has in mind, then the analogy is void.

In addition to all the logical difficulties met with in examining Urmson's contention that 'good' and 'bad' in a moral context behave like grading words - we have raised moral objections to such an interpretation of these value words. Moral as well as non-moral aspects of men's behaviour are not easily graded. This can be attributed to man's nature which is capable of change and to the interdependence of the various aspects of his behaviour. These characteristics of human behaviour are assumed in any account of man's moral behaviour.

Urmson does not try to examine what the purpose of moral grading is. Had he done so, he would have arrived at the conclusion that not all the controversy between him and the intuitionists and naturalists can be solved simply by solving the problem of the relation between criteria and grading labels. He might as well say that the problem of the purpose of moral grading is of no interest; and if he does, he is evading one of the main problems of ethics.

CHAPTER 3

THE LOGIC OF MORAL ARGUMENT

1. The language of Morals.

While Urmson's "On Grading" was concerned with the study of the logic of Value words in general and only touched upon ethical words, this is not the case with R.M. Hare's The Language of Morals (1952). "Ethics, as I conceive it, is the logical study of the language of morals"[1] and obviously enough, Hare does not limit himself to moral terms only. His meta-ethical enquiry ranges over whatever can be included in the study of the logic of moral discourse: The validity of prescriptive inference, imperatives and their status in logic, the language of moral value and of moral obligation.

The main theses of The Language of Morals can be summarized as follows:

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1. R.M. Hare The Language of Morals 1952, Page V Preface. Oxford ,At the Clarendon Press.

1) The language of morals has a specific function to fulfil namely, to commend, to help us in our choice of courses of action. These courses of action are not only the result of an evaluative inference, but also the surest guide to the 'real moral principles' which any person holds. "If we were to ask of a person 'what are his moral principles?' the way in which we could be most sure of a true answer would be by studying what he DID"(2) Thus, already at the beginning of his book, Hare takes the view that, unlike other theoretical disciplines, Ethics is a practical discipline. The central problem, according to him, is ~~how~~ the teaching and the learning of morals: "Since one of the most important uses of moral language is in moral teaching, the relevance of this discussion to Ethics will be obvious." (3)

2) The language of commending is only one sub-class of prescriptive language, whose other sub-class is the Language of 'imperatives'. In his book, Hare does not study Prescriptive language as such; he

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(1) R.M. Hare, The Language of Morals, 1952. Page V Preface.

(2) Op.cit. Page 1.

(3) Op.cit. Page 2.

studies it only through its sub-classes: imperatives and moral language. On the whole, prescriptive language is compared, but not reduced to, descriptive language. Hare will try to show that prescriptive language is not less meaningful than descriptive language and that, like it, prescriptive language exhibits the same logical entailments and inferences, besides requiring special logical rules of its own.

3) Broadly speaking, he takes a similar view of the relation between moral commending terms and the criteria for their use, as Urmson in his article "On Grading". Commending terms have a double meaning - an evaluative meaning which is primary, and a descriptive meaning which is secondary to the evaluative meaning. The more fixed and accepted the standard (criteria) is, the more information is conveyed (the more descriptiveness in the meaning of the commending term). "But it must not be thought that the evaluative force of the word varies at all exactly in inverse proportion to the descriptive. The two vary independently...."(1) Nevertheless the logical function of value words is solely determined by their evaluative meaning.

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(1) Op.cit. Page 122.

4. And this brings us to one of Hare's most interesting points which he expresses as follows: "for to make a value judgment is to make a decision of principle."(1) This is according to Hare the generalisation which connects logicially the first part of the book, the logic of prescriptive language, with the second part, the logic of value language. Whether this supposed principle of consistency is a feature of value language or should be we shall see later. One point is sure, he is definitely of the opinion that 'without principles most kinds of teaching are impossible.....and in particular, when we learn to do something, what we learn is always a principle".(2) This is obviously, to say the least, to take principles and learning in a very wide meaning.

While not openly taking side in the polemic between intuitionists and emotivists, Hare does not hide where his sympathy lies. Basically he accepts Urmson's rejection of naturalism. We can even reformulate the latter's saying as follows: "to describe is to describe, to commend is to commend, and to express one's feelings is to express one's feelings" simply by replacing 'grading' by 'commending'.

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(1) Op.cit. Page 70.

(2) Op.cit. Page 60.

2. The problem of choice and the function of prescriptive language.

Urmson in his analogy of grading with choosing intended to show the special kind of relation between the criteria and the grading label -- relation which he thought to be very similar to that existing between the rule of choice and choosing.[1] In grading as in choosing we are not asserting anything new about the object, but rather doing something.

Hare accepts this approach to the logical function of value words which function is mainly determined by their non descriptive meaning. He does not limit himself still to the logical function of value words, he asserts that with their practical function is mainly to guide choices. From the linguistic analysis of ethical language we learn that the function of the singular imperative is to guide particular choices and that of commending (universal prescriptive) is to guide choices in general.[2]

> "Ethics, unlike theoretical disciplines which are meant to answer questions such as 'what is', is a practical discipline which answers questions of 'what shall I do type'. Ethics as a special branch of Logic, owes its existence to the function of moral judgments as a guide in answering questions of the form 'what shall I do'"[3]

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1. Logic & Language, 2nd series. page 172-173.
2. Op.cit. p.129
3. Op.cit. p.172

I do not think that there is any objection in stressing the importance of choice in all practical problems. What is objectionable is how Hare overlooks the study of the function of choice itself.

In the development of the thesis of the intimate relation between value language and choice-guiding, Hare introduces into his analysis, several new categories, or to be more correct, adopts several new terms (new in the context of ethical studies). These terms are: choosing, teaching standards, commending, consistent. In a sense one could say that Hare adopts these terms as primitive: "To adopt a term as primitive is to introduce it into a system without defining it....."[1] Hare takes it for granted that, from the linguistic or logical poimt of view, nobody would question his introduction of these 'primitive terms', since they are so familiar, nobody would contest the propriety of their use. Again, we can quote Nelson Goodman on the same page of the same book "a familiar term in familiar contexts - as for example 'triangle' in a system of plane geometry - may need little explanation"[2] Hare takes for granted that the use of such 'familiar' terms such as choosing, teaching-standards, commending, consistent in the 'familiar' context of morals,

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1. Nelson Goodman Structure of Appearance, Harvard University Press 1951. Page 56.
2. Op.cit. p.56.

is amply justified and would not need any further explanation. But surely, if these words are familiar in the 'language of morals' then they are part and parcel of the discipline called 'Ethics as the logical study of the language of morals'. Instead of ~~such an expectation~~ what we might expect, we are presented with a detailed linguistic analysis of 'old familiar terms' such as 'good', 'ought','right', 'principles' in terms of unexplained and unanalysed familiar terms such as 'commend' 'consistent', 'teaching'.

Choices are not only guided by commending statements. The Agent's knowledge determines whether prescriptive or descriptive statements are the best suited for guiding choices. If I have an average knowledge about cars and I want to buy one, I would not be guided by prescriptive discourse. I should like to know about the cars before deciding. After knowing what is the case about the cars in question, the result of my deliberation, can take the form of "X is the best car". Then comes the choice: "Let me buy X ". It is difficult to ascertain in such a case what has guided my choice: the examination of the empirical characteristics of the cars in relation to my purpose, or the value judgment which has ensued from this examination? Why not include the value judgments in the choice itself? Usually writers on ethics treat the problem

of choice in conjunction with moral responsibility and moral freedom. Unfortunately, there is not a single word in the whole book about these important moral categories. We shall deal later on with his deterministic attitude about the 'choice of principles'. "No doubt we have the sort of principles we have because we are the sort of people we are".[1]

It is difficult to understand why Hare 'chooses' to say that whenever we design an instrument or write a book we 'choose' to do so. Let us follow his argument point by point, this will help us detect a major contradiction in his logical analysis of value language:

1. To make a value judgment is to commend.
2. To commend is to guide choices.
3. To make a value judgment is to make a decision of principles.
4. Moral principles are not the result of choice.
5. Principles of choosing are closely similar in purpose to value judgments.
6. Principles of choosing are not the result of choice.
7. We always choose according to the same principles.
8. According to that special rule of prescriptive inference, a prescriptive conclusion can only be deduced if at least oneof the premises is a value judgment or a decision of principle.
9. Given a fact, a moral situation and a person withthis sort of determined principle, his conclusions can be always predicted.
10. Hence there is no possibility of choice. [2]

1, "Universalisability" P.A.S. 1954/1955 Vol.LV Page 303.
2, op.cit p 32-70-134

3. Moral discourse and Moral teaching.

In chapter one I suggested that, up to the end of the XIXth century, it was usual with moral philosophers that together with the philosophical treatment of the subject matter of Ethics was always included a general advocacy for a system of values. On the other hand we have found that the 'ideal' of the Moral philosopher (under the influence of the general trend of reductionism in the scope of philosophy) was to be as neutral as possible about any systems of values. This is in general, the new trend which is commonly called: Meta-ethics of which "The language of Morals" is a typical instance. Yet, it is rather unusual in a book which one expects to be a kind of Logical textbook to read certain passages which clearly indicate that the author ha s no intention whatsoever of limiting himself to the subject matter he has fixed for himself.

Nobody can deny that moral arguments are used in all kinds of circumstances: The arguments I use for or against giving support to a worthy institution such as the Royal Society for the Blind may be partly or even wholly moral arguments; the reasons given by my neighnour to support or not to support the movement against the colour bar may be moral reasons; the parent who is ~~a~~ giving his daughter a lesson in morals is also using moral arguments. Are we

justified in reducing all moral arguments to one type of argument used in the teaching of standards? "Now since it is the purpose of the word 'good' and other value words to be used for teaching standards, their logic is in accord with this purpose"[1] Hare does not say "it is one of the purposes of value words" but "the purpose of...." So, on the other hand we witness a use of 'choosing' in the widest sense, and on the other, the use of value language for the narrowest purpose. What is the reason for Hare's adoption of such a narrow purpose for the use of value words? The clue to this can be found in the last paragraph of chapter 9 "Moral principles or moral standards are first established: then they get too rigid..... The remedy in fact, for moral stagnation and decay is to learn to use our value-language for the purpose for which it is designed; and this involves not merely a lesson in talking, but a lesson in doing that "which we commend; for unless we are prepared to do this we are doing no more than paying lip-service to a conventional standard"[2] One can interpret these two passages in two possible ways: The first is based on the assumption that in the same way as some knowledge of Logic and scientific method is necessary to the scientist, similarly some knowledge

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1. Op.cit. p.134
2. Op.cit. p.150

of the logic of moral language is necessary to the social scientist and social worker. This interpretation accords with the following passage: "Thus in a world in which the problems of conduct become every day more complex and tormenting, there is a great need for an understanding of the language in which these problems are posed and answered."[1]

The second interpretation is rather more literal: to interpret literally the passage from page 150 about moral decay and stagnation and to have Hare saying (paraphrasing him) "Moral improvement is realised only through learning to use value language, meaning by use, not only talking, but acting accordingly."[2] It is true that Hare does not use such expressions as moral improvement but then it must be granted that one cannot understand 'moral stagnation and decay' and their remedy except in terms of moral improvement or progress which the opposite of stagnation and decay. Is it not the case, that in speaking of moral progress one must have a certain general standard in order to judge particular standards? But this can hardly be in accordance with what Hare has to say about the choice of moral principles

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1. Op.cit. p.1
2. Op.cit. p.150

"You are making our choice between first order principles (~~general standard my italics~~) a matter of mere inclination". "This objection leaves me quite unmoved. No doubt we have the sort of principles we have because we are the sort of people that we are" [1] Hare does not mean by that, that any person has some principles according to his nature and whether he wants them or not they are his. On the contrary he is explicit on the point that unless a young man decided his own and accepts a standard or set of principles, this young man is not morally adult.[2] But on the other hand, Hare is very categorical about the choice of moral principles - there are no ultimate principles for our guidance in choosing moral principles. And the question to be asked is "how could we recognise moral stagnation in its distinction from moral progress" Could it be recognised only through our learning to use our value language? Obviously, Hare cannot answer yes because on page 72 of his ~~L.O.~~ 'The Language of Morals' we read the following: "But their sons the second generation, as they grow up, find that conditions have changed (e.g. through a protracted war or an industrial revolution) and that the principles in which they have been brought up are no longer adequate". Adequate in relation to what? To the changed conditions or to the sort of people

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1. P.A.S. 1954-55 Vol.LV Page 303. Universalisability

2. Cf. The Language of Morals 77-78.

they are? Moreover, adequate seems to be a value term and Hare should certainly analyse the criteria of 'adequate' 'stagnant' etc. From the above passage, we learn, that adequate must be understood in relation to economic and social conditions and that ultimate principles might well be social principles. Are we going back to the same discussion between the intuitionists and the utilitarians in spite of the fact that "Naturalism in ethics, like the attempts to square the circle and 'justify induction', will constantly recur so long as there are people who have not understood "from the fallacy involved"[2] etc. etc., and the fallacy is that of supposing that one can deduce a value judgment from a set of premises which do not contain value terms. Hare is of the opinion, that not only will people avoid such fallacies if they learn how to use value words, but also that the path to moral progress is open before them. So the philosopher who investigates the logic of the language of morals can be also a teacher of moral standards. The philosopher-preacher is replaced by the philosopher teacher. But what does he teach?

Hare is not interested in what is taught so long as teaching has as its object the teaching of principles which

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1. Op.cit. p.72.
2. Op.cit. p.92.

include what he calls the objectivist approach which stresses the importance of traditions in moral teaching, and the subjectivist approach which stresses the importance of deciding for oneself what kind of principles to choose.[1]

4. Consistency as a moral virtue or as a fundamental logical rule of value language. In a prescriptive inference when a prescriptive term appears in the conclusion it must appear in at least one of the premises.

This rule of logic which is according to Hare of paramount importance for the understanding of the language of Moralsis compared by him with the notion of 'looser form of entailment' advocated by S.E. Toulmin in his book "The place of Reason in Ethics". Both theories are advanced in order to counteract the despair among some philosophers about morals as a rational activity.[2] "It is the purpose of this book to show that their despair was premature". Before going into a detailed discussion about the logical arguments brought by Hare in support of his theory, I would like to dwell on an argument brought by him. This passage throws light on the discussion from another angle, and hints that it may be the case that Hare himself is drawing a certain conclusion, which directly contradicts his own logical rule'. Here is the passage:

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1. Op.cit. p.77
2. Op.cit. p.45

> This makes it apparent that if we talk about the second kind of principle as being loose, we are being seriously misleading. Looseness in conduct is generally reckoned as a bad thing, and it would be dangerous if philosophers were to put about the idea that principles of conduct are loose; for the ordinary person cannot be expected to distinguish readily in what sense they are being called loose. He will naturally take it that they are like the first kind of principle and that because they are loose he need not trouble to observe them always."[1]

Besides the fact that this way of putting forward the ideas of Toulmin is certainly far from being correct, this is certainly a moral argument in favour of a logical rule of language. And we wonder whether by applying this kind of value judgment as reason for accepting Hare's law of prescriptive inference, does not make the law a prescriptive law rather than a logical rule? It may be argued that this 'moral reason' is not fundamental but is brought by Hare only as a complementary reason and therefore does not affect the objective character of the 'logical rule'. Yet it is worthwhile to bear all this in mind, because it is my intention to show that this moral reason is the essential motive for Hare's adoption of such "a harsh logical relation"[2] as entailment to describe the logical nature of prescriptive inference (See Toulmin's review of Hare's book in "Philosophy".)

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1. Op.cit. page 52.
2. Philosophy 1954. "Review of Language of Morals" by S.E. Toulmin.

All this discussion, bears a certain analogy with the problem of the Rational Will, the real will and the different points of view about this subject by various philosophers like Bosanquet and Hobhouse. Whereas the philosophers of the idealist school such as Bosanquet argued from the Metaphysical and value point of view and however lofty was their way of grounding our notions of political obligation, it was clear that Hobhouse and all those who opposed such a theory of the rational - the only real will - had the upper hand in all this controversy. What is more curious is the fact that Hobhouse even returned the same arguments used by the idealists against their own thesis: he showed that such a metaphysical theory, however well intentioned its authors, is bound to become an instrument in the hand of those who want to justify all kinds of government based on the intuition by the few, or even by one alone, of the real nature of the rational will. In fact Hobhouse used in his famous book entitled The Metaphysical theory of the State two kinds of arguments: one kind of logical empirical character showed that in reality there is nothing to warrant the existence of a rational will, and the second kind - of a moral nature showed the bad consequences of such a theory.

Here the situation is reversed and in another subject: Ethics instead of political philosophy. The moral philosopher

brings moral arguments in order to remove the despair about morals as a rational activity.

5. Morals as a rational activity

Both Hare and Toulmin, (see in chapter four) are rushing to the defence of morals as a rational activity.. Whose argument are they opposing? As we have seen in our first chapter, the basic arguments of the logical positivists against the traditional section of philosophy called normative ethics, were not against the rationality of morals as such, but rather against the meaningfulness of ethical statements. It is true, that by stressing the point of meaninglessness of ethical statements because of their being (not expressing) expressions of emotions, and their consequent inability to be true or false, it is stressed, that these sentences have no meaning which is expressed by propositions. Further on, it is pointed by the reductionist (in philosophy) or perhaps it is left to others to draw these conclusions, that the only rational disciplines we know about are those investigating relations of logical inference between analytic propositions or between synthetic propositions; the only rationality we do not doubt about is that of mathematics and logic on one hand and that of scientific method on the other. So it is right that morals have been excluded from the domain of rational disciplines, by the reductionist school, but only after it has been

excluded from the domain of meaningful propositions which can be true or false. Carnap and Ayer do not arrive at the conclusion that moral judgments are to be assimilated to commands in a misleading form, because they think that commands unlike assertions have no logical or rational structure and there is no entailment between commands, but because commands like moral judgments do not assert anything and therefore cannot be true or false. After all, the last attack about the lack of entailment between commands could ~~have~~ have been never taken seriously and has nothing to do with the meaningfulness of commands. The application of the law, its interpretation in courts of justice since old time, have been without any doubt, a living proof how arguments about commands and law can abound with the best logical lucidity and brilliant reasoning. Yet nobody could use this case, as an argument in order to show that commands and rules increase our knowledge. When we say about somebody, that he has legal knowledge or that he is expert in Company Law, what we mean is not that he has the knowledge an administrator has about running companies, but the knowledge of the law; the law itself is the object of the knowledge. It is true that in order to understand the domain of application of a certain law it may be advisable for the expert to know more about the law itself: its history, its origin in the social or moral code etc etc. in a word the law itself presupposes a certain knowledge or body of assertive

propositions. A new-drafted law about homosexuality can be understood on the background of our knowledge of the feelings of the majority of the population about such a behaviour, a knowledge about the sexual mores and habits, about the demographical ratio between men and women etc. etc.... The law itself although not yielding any new knowledge is going to be applied by judges and its application implies objectivity and integrity which cannot be attained without the greatest amount of rationality.

The logical build-up of the cases of both defenders and prosecutors in any trial follows usually the pattern which Hare tries with so great difficulty to show to be the particularity of prescriptive inference. As general major premise we have the particular law or laws which are relevant to the case, then we have a descriptive minor premise, such as this man did so and so and then the verdict is on the pattern of the major premise a prescriptive statement. Obviously these cases which conform to this pattern are usually very few in number and what is more frequent is not only a deductive inference but also some amount of inductive reasoning which may be necessary in order to modify the law and bring it more into contact with life. This is also what happens in the moral law.

All the above digression is justified only to prove that Hare did not need all his examples about: "Take all the boxes

to the station. This is one box, take this to the station"[1] In order to show us that there must be entailment relations between imperatives or commands. His treatment of the analogy between indicative and imperative is based on a very "shaky" indicative. "You are going to shut the door" coupled with the criterion of 'sincere assent" take us very far from the real nature of the assertive indicative. After all "you are going to shut the door" is not really an assertive proposition about the door but about your future movements or your actual intention. In both cases, their verification is not as simple as the usual assertive: "the door is closed". In "you are..." the assertive is predictive and this is what it has in common with commands. The contradiction implied between "shut the door" and "do not shut the door" is not the same as the disguised imperative "are you going to shut the door or not" pronounced with an intonation of an ultimatum. In the latter the contradiction is about your intended course of action, in the former it is about my intentions. In "You are going to shut the door" can be interpreted in two ways. Either 'are going" is a description of a movement and in this case it has no resemblance whatsoever to any indicative in whatever paraphrased form we put it, or it is a future tense in disguise and in that case the analogy is about the future time of the performance if it is performed. It is interesting in this connection to note that negative

1. Op.cit. p.27.

commands in the hebrew language are always couched in the future "do not smoke' is usually in hebrew 'you shall not smoke' this may be incidentally the origin of the use of "shall and should" in English to express moral obligation.

To return to the standard use of the assertive indicative one can say that its virtues in conveying knowledge, depends in the possibility of using it with the least ambiguous meanings possible.

Had Hare taken as two examples "shut the door" and the "door is shut" and had he tried to show that both assert something in common he would have found the following: that both have among their terms 'door' and 'shut' and that is all. The possibility of decomposing both imperatives and indicatives inti common 'phrastics' and different 'neustics' is based only on an indicative which is only a border case assertive. The border case is either a future tense in disguise or a description of an action or movement. Obviously, the analogy is with the future tense. The absurdity of such an analogy is increased when someone suggests that even the interrogative asserts something because he would suggest the following paraphrasing for "are you going to shut the door?" "you are going to shut the door yes or no."

We can go on and on doing all these acrobatics, transforming assertive into imperative and interrogative into

assertive - via decomposing them into 'phrastics' and 'neustics', yet all these processes will not prove what has no need of proof: to show that imperatives tell one what to do. Had the imperative no function to fulfill, if, when using imperatives, we do not say anything, we would never have ~~never~~ used them. If we dilute the indicative into a semi future tense, and at the same time we dilute the imperative into a form stressing that if the order is obeyed it will result in a future action, then of course we shall "discover" 'striking similarities', between the imperative and the indicative. What is more exaggerated in this analogy, is that instead of taking as criterion for meaningfulness: knowledge e.g. instead of relating the logical nature of the indicative to its epistemological function, Hare wants to view the essential difference between the neustic 'yes' and the neustic 'please' from the angle of the listener and what is involved in assenting to each of them. In the case of the indicative, a sincere assent is equal to a belief that something is the case. In the case of the imperative a sincere assent is equal to doing something. It is rather awkward to base a logical analogy between the imperative and the indicative on the following psychological terms: assent, sincerity, ~~something~~. To judge the indicative through the psychological effects produced on the listener -

is to introduce in the logical study of assertive propositions, elements of purposive explanation: explanation in terms of ends. That is why, Hare, after that sort of semi-psychologistic analysis of assertive propositions arrives happily at the conclusion that imperatives which also include in the meaning conveyed to the listener, in case of sincere assent, an assent to do something, have also the possibility of self contradiction.

This possibility of possessing the property of self contradiction is brought by Hare as the third similarity between indicative and imperative statements. The first two, may we remind the reader, were that similarly to indicatives, imperatives consist in telling someone something, and that they exhibit relation of entailment according to certain logical rules.

6. Is the language of Morals a special kind of prescriptive language?

Ethics as Hare defines it, is a very limited discipline which is mainly concerned with the study of the language of morals as used in moral teaching. We have shown that he evades, in treating the problem of the reduction of the imperatives to indicatives, the central problem of ethics which is the nature of moral knowledge and supposing there is something of the kind, how could we distinguish it from other kinds of knowledge. In chapter 9 'Good in moral

contexts' we look in vain for the characteristics which make a moral context, moral, but of course we cannot find it. Perhaps we are to find the clue to this omission in the fact that the title of the book is not the language of ethics nor the logic of Moral language, but 'the language of morals'. Morals in the plural, means in common usage: moral habits according to the Concise Oxford Dictionary. Apparently, Hare starts from the assumption, that there is in common usage such a thing as a language peculiar to moral habits. This language is not the language of a social science such as psychology or sociology, which treats ~~about~~ moral habits from the descriptive point of view, but treats them from the prescriptive point of view. Is it the case we do not come across any kind of language about morals which is neither prescriptive nor descriptive in the sociological and psychological point of view? Obviously ~~there are~~ we do, and they are the problematic part of all the languages of morals. The questions about the nature of moral context, standards for comparing principles and last but not least questions about moral knowledge, are all lurking behind all the analyses by Hare, of all the language of morals in the very limited sense of teaching moral standards.

This reduction of moral philosophy to the technique how to teach morals rather than what kind of knowledge to teach seems to be a travesty of another great philosophy

which though seemingly reducing all moral principles to an empty formal principle yet tried to deduce all the principal virtues from this formal principle, Kant's categorical imperative. Instead of deriving universalisability and consistency from the reason and will of man and hence to set them as the ideals of all our actions, Hare wants to squeeze all these virtues into the logic of value words and what is more dangerous, to make it irrelevant which ideals we pursue as long as we pursue them consistently and as a matter of principle.

Moral consistency is one of the cardinal virtues in all crusading religious or semi religious organisations. The main item of education is in such an organisation a moral education based on personal example, and all their active members are constantly reminded that unless they show their moral principles through being consistent in their application, they cannot expect others to follow suit. In order to teach morals one must not teach others how to use value language but rather to show them how one can live one's own principles. One of the main reasons why ethics is called a practical science is because ethical principles are taught through practice rather than through theory.

Even if we accept the principle of consistency as essential as a moral virtue, or more exactly that any moral virtue must be consistently applied in order to be a moral virtue, we still

ask ourselves whether Hare was right in 'discovering' that consistency belonged to the logical nature of the language of morals (read moral habits). Ever since men applied in their social life, rules of whatever kind, they have tried to apply them justly, e.g. applying the rule to a particular case only if this is the case of a particular that can be subsumed under the general rule. Yet, to go as far as Hare in saying that in making any value judgment is equivalent to taking a decision of principle,[1] is to reduce all cases (and they are numerous and varied) to the case of the Judge who having no general law or rule to rely on tries to formulate a verdict, which although the first of its kind might become a law. In this case, our judge must be very careful not to sink into the particularity of the case, and to try to grasp the most general aspects of the case, in a word he must m make a decision of principle in the name of the whole community. Truly enough, there must be, many virtuous people who, without being judges in court of law, yet in their moral judgment behave as carefully as our judge, and never pronounce any judgment of value without taking a decision of principle. This is certainly not the case of all people, not even of virtuous people in all their making of judgments. Many people do not think thoroughly before pronouncing a value judgment, many people begin to rationalise about their action e.g. to think morally about them, after they have acted already. They know

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1. Op.cit.page 70.

very well that people will judge them according to the sense of justice and consistency implied in their value judgment and yet many of their acts are not according to these principles in spite of the fact that if asked what rule should be followed in similar circumstances as theirs, they would answer, 'people should act according to such and such principles of consistency etc.etc. Hare's passage which we have quoted on page 76 of this thesis about the 'loose form of entailment' advocated by S.E. Toulmin in his book 'The Place of Reason in Ethics' can be paraphrased through exchanging looseness for consistency in the following manner in order to understand why Hare chose (decision of principle) to say that consistency is the characteristic of value judgment instead of saying 'consistency should be the characteristic of value judgment'. 'This makes it apparent that if we talk about the second kind of principle as being consistent, we are seriously teaching morals. Consistency in conduct is generally reckoned as a good thing, and it would be helpful if philosophers were to put the idea that principles are consistent, and because..... they are consistent they need to observe them always.[1]

This way of considering theprinciple of consistency as

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1. ~~Op.cit. page 32.~~ Cf. Hare, op. cit. p.52.

an Ideal rather than a rule of logic is not only important from the point of view of 'the true logical nature of the language of morals' but also from the moral point of view. It is true that the man who is consistently virtuous and good is more highly praised than the man who is inconsistently good and virtuous. But what about the man who is consistently bad? Obviously we prefer the man who is inconsistently bad, to the first who is consistently wicked. Take a man like Hitler, whom we could not say 'that he did not learn to use value language for the purpose for which it was designed'. He did not know only how to talk but also how to execute what he was commending and who furthermore was convinced that he was working against 'moral stagnation and decay'. And, being the sort of person that he was, he could not help having the sort of principles he had. Hitler, having his principles, acting consistently according to them, using his value language with all the logic which <u>is</u> according to Hare "the language of morals," was acting morally. If we ask whether Hitler's acts were good or bad, Hare's answer should be according to his analysis of value language, that the question is totally irrelevant. The object of his book is to analyse and advocate a method of teaching morals - the only one according to him - without consideration to the place where they are taught or to the nature and quality of these morals.

7. Linguistic philosophy and old problems of ethics.

We have come now to the end of our review of the main ideas of Hare as exemplified in his book on the 'Language of Morals' and in his article in the P.A.S. about 'Universalisability'. We shall leave it to our concluding chapter to draw the necessary conclusions from the study of three typical contributions on Ethics by three philosophers who use the linguistic method, broadly speaking. What we want to stress now is that in spite of the neutralism in the matter of choice of first principles of morals, neutralism which is the essential character of Ethics as a permissible discipline by Logical Positivism, in spite of all the warnings that an Ethical book should not contain any ethical pronouncement, the linguistic method has failed to produce such a book.

Apparently, if one must not write a book on ethics which would contain both an analysis of our moral principles and some measure of advocacy of moral principles as standards and conclusions of the whole analysis---- the moral philosopher is forced to squeeze ~~in~~ into his analysis of the logic of the language of morals, all the moral virtues which he cannot openly advocate, and at the same time to express the wishful thinking, that people can improve their morals by learning how to talk in the

language of value. It seems impossible to attain a greater degree of evasion from the real problems of ethics.

CHAPTER IV

THE AUTONOMY OF THE LOGICAL ARGUMENT

> "Or can we discover, any single reason, applicable to all right actions equally, which is, in every case, the reason why an action is right, when it is right? And can we, similarly, discover any reason which *is* *the* reason why a thing is good, when it is good.....?
>
> (from *Ethics* by G.E. Moore)

1. The Place of Reason in Ethics.

Both Urmson and Hare have tried in their work on Ethics to show how it is still possible within the 'reduced' field of analytical philosophy, to deal with Ethics without committing themselves to any of the "illusory" pursuits of previous Moral philosophers. They tried to avoid, or rather professed to avoid, any preaching in their writings. With Hare, Ethics was no more than "the study of the logic of the language of morals". Though he had a specific rule of logic for prescriptive inference, Hare still maintained that this rule was not concerned with the *form of the entailment* but rather with the content of the

premises. The form was syllogistic, and the criteria for its validity identical with syllogistic forms exemplified in descriptive arguments. Logic had yet another department added to its subject matter: ethics.

Nevertheless, one can contend that both Urmson and Hare would agree that the autonomy of Ethics is preserved in their analyses, by the special logical character of value words. This autonomy has been summed up by them in the motto 'to describe is to describe and to grade and commend is to grade and commend'.

S.E. Toulmin in his book 'The Place of Reason in Ethics' (CAMBRIDGE 1950) does not content himself with such a 'limited autonomy' of Ethics. He also defines Ethics in the partial way that Hare did. For Toulmin, who limits himself to "a literally-true account of our ethical concepts", Ethics should "show us how to distinguish between good ethical reasoning and bad."(1) Obviously, such a distinction between good and bad reasons, should be among the aims of any book on moral philosophy, but surely Toulmin should at least argue conclusively before we could accept his criterion of what makes a good study of Ethics, as the only criterion.

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(1) S.E. Toulmin, "The Place of Reason in Ethics", Cambridge, ~~1950, Page 2.~~ University Press, 1950, Page 2.

As a matter of fact, his criticism of the "Traditional Approaches" which form the whole of Part I of his book, is based entirely on this criterion.

According to Toulmin, the autonomy of the logical nature of the ethical argument is grounded in the fact that the logic of any kind of argument must be judged solely in the light of the analysis of the context and purpose of the activity of which this argument is a part. He defines the function of such an activity as Ethics in the following manner: "To correlate our feelings and behaviour in such a way as to make the fulfilment of everyone's aims and desires as far as possible compatible"[1]

In the process of 'correlating' feelings and behaviour, men face from time to time situations in which they have to choose, and they find themselves before moral judgments such as 'this is good' and 'this is not good'. Toulmin is of the opinion that these two judgments are contradictory and that this contradictoriness cannot be explained by the objective approach. There is a limit according to him, in the similarity between properties (empirical) and values and the dissimilarity between values and subjective relations.[2] "Rightness is not a property; and when I asked the two people which course of action was the right one I was not asking them about a property - what I wanted to know was whether there was any reason for

1. Op.cit. p.137.
2. Op.cit. p.27.

choosing one course of action rather than another.... and provided that they are arguing about our reasons for my doing different things, we are perfectly justified in talking of a genuine contradiction between....."[1]

Taking this possibility of genuine contradiction to be the characteristic of any moral argument, Toulmin considers that the subjective and imperative accounts, in spite of their relative and partial truth, which cannot explain the nature of this contradiction, are "deceptively scientific" and "apparently cynical". Moreover he is certain that by showing the shallowness of the arguments used by both the subjective and imperative accounts, he is helping to restore the confidence of the newcomer who may have a feeling of pessimism, and concludes "that all his moral striving has been in vain"[2] if he accepts at their face value the subjective and imperative doctrines.

Part II of the book is devoted to the study of the nature of reasoning and to the 'autonomy' of every scientific explanation, valid only when applied to a specific 'plane of reality'. The relevance of the logical nature of scientific explanations to the study of 'the place of Reason in ethics' is, that not only has Ethics an independent mode of reasoning,

1. Op.cit. 28
2. Op.cit. 39 & 57

but scientific explanations at different levels have also different and independent modes of reasoning.

Part III of the book is devoted to a detailed analysis of what is generally accepted as valid reasons in moral situations. Broadly speaking, there are two kinds of reasons which Toulmin considers as paradigms of valid moral reasons : 1) by appeal to a commonly accepted rule in the community and 2) by appeal to the principle of the prevention of avoidable suffering, when the case for the application of such rule is ambiguous and uncertain. His view "that ethics is concerned with the harmonious satisfaction of desires and interests"[1] inevitably recalls to mind Hedonistic Utilitarianism.[2]

After reducing the scope of Ethics to the study of the validity of reasons in moral situations, Toulmin brings in the last part of his book (part IV) his attitude to what he calls the 'limits of ethical reasoning'. Under this heading he examines successively the function of philosophical ethics, faith and religion and their answers to what he calls 'limiting questions'. After reading carefully part IV and re-reading part I, I wonder whether Toulmin is aware of the fact that the reader must conclude that all his examination of various 'philosophical moral theories' is of the domain of 'limiting questions'. But more of this later.

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1. Op.cit. p.223.
2. See C.D.Broad's Critical Notice in Mind January 1952,p.94.

2. Validity and Truth

As I pointed out at the beginning of this section, questions of the validity of arguments are quite independent of questions of factual certainty or truth. Thus in her An Introduction to Symbolic Logic, Susanne Langer stresses the difference between "a conceivable state" and an "actual state of affairs". She says that "There is no formal, i.e. structural difference between a proposition that expresses an actual state of affairs in the world and one that expresses merely a conceivable state; no formal distinction between factual and fictional premises. So if we are concerned about the truth of a whole system of the postulates and all that follows from them, we must look to something else than logic for this knowledge."[1]

In short, as Susan Stebbing puts it, "Validity then, is not dependent upon truth."[2]

So the trouble with the theory which says that there is no need to postulate objective (intrinsic or non-intrinsic), or subjective properties, in order to show that moral arguments can be valid - the trouble with these theories is, that once you separate truth from validity, you must fill the place left empty with some other criterion.

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1. Op.cit. (George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1937), p.188.
2. A Modern Elementary Logic, Methuen & Co. 1943, p.

Logical Positivists maintain that the major premise of any moral argument is meaningless, or, at least, non-factual, Any conclusion drawn from such a non-factual premise can be valid as far as only the form of the argument is concerned; but as far as its truth is concerned - the validity of the inference does not add anything new to its truth-content. Toulmin does not use the term Valid and validity in the restricted sense: an argument which exhibits a certain formal logical structure. Sometimes, philosophers use the notion of 'validity' for both valid conclusions and for true conclusions obtained through a valid argument. There is great difference between showing the validity of ethical reasoning and showing the truth - validity of conclusions arrived at by the help of valid reasoning and true premises.

Explaining the origin of the 'fallacy' committed by the 'Objective Approach'. Toulmin writes: "In adopting the objective approach (so as to 'preserve the possibility of contradiction' in ethics) they say in effect: Reasons are not enough. Ethical predicates must correspond to ethical properties and "knowing - what -goodness -is" means recognising the presence of such property. 'The objective doctrine' is, therefore, not just unhelpful to us: it is a positive hindrance, diverting on to arguments about a purely imaginary 'property' the attention which should be paid to the question of ethical reasoning'[1]

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1. Op.cit. 28.

In order to understand why Toulmin considers the Intuitionists' arguments about properties, as 'hindering and diverting' we have to consider his conception of the relation 'truth-validity' and its range of application. His ideas on this are contained in Part Two of his book and particularly in chapter 6. '<u>Reasoning and its uses</u>'.

Toulmin contends that the 'correspondence theory of truth' which may be taken to be the basis of the 'verification principle' is applicable <u>only to descriptions</u>. "Is there any way of explaining why the 'correspondence' criterion of truth should apply only to descriptions? I believe there is," and further on he answers:

> "This gives us our clue. In composing a description, we have to produce an utterance <u>corresponding recognisably to</u> whatever it describes: in verifying a description, we have to confirm that it does <u>correspond to</u> the thing described. The reason why the 'correspondence' criterion of truth applies so aptly to descriptive sentences is, therefore, because with its help we can discover whether they have <u>served their purpose</u>-and, if the rules that it gives for verifying sentences look like rules for giving a description 'in REVERSE', is that at all surprising?"[1]

Thus, after showing 'conclusively' that the correspondence theory is only a 'reversed description', we are to understand

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1. Op.cit. 79.

that the truth-validity dichotomy is only applicable in the case of a descriptive inference, whereas in the case of an evaluative inference, a valid argument is said to include both a valid form of reasoning and a valid, because commonly accepted, major premise.

H.J. Paton in his review of Toulmin's book, sums up this essential feature of the argument as follows:

> "He takes a teleological view of meaning. He insists that words have meaning only in their context and that science is to be understood in relation to the function it performs"[1]

Not only his theory of meaning is teleological but one must add that his theory of reasoning is also teleological.

> "Our success so far at any rate encourages us to hope that although the search for a general, universal answer to the question, 'what is reasoning'? was a mistaken one, we may still find answers applicable to individual modes of reasoning; and in particular that, by looking in the right way at the circumstances and activities in which our ethical utterances play their part, we may come to see how the logical criteria applicable to them are generated"[2]

It may be relevant to ask now the following question: "What is the relation between the validity of an argument and the truth of the conclusion in Toulmin's conception of meaning and reasoning? Does he or does he not accept the dichotomy between truth and validity as expressed by Susanne Langer in the passage quoted on page 97? It is all very well to ground ethical reasoning in the purpose of harmony aimed at

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1. Philosophy 1952, Vol. XXVII. Page 81.
2. Op.cit. page 84.

by the members of a community, but is it safe to justify this grounding in the 'logical autonomy' of Ethics?

3. Is Toulmin's argument circular?

The problem which arose from the general reductionist movement initiated in philosophy by the logical positivists was that Normative ethical principles were either empirical statements of a sociological or psychological nature, or exhortations or commands in a misleading grammatical form.

Anyone whose intention is to reject these logical positivist conclusions about the impossibility of normative ethics' ~~of~~ remaining as a branch of philosophy must prove two separate propositions: a) that there are commonly accepted rules and standards of actions, b) that there are cases in practice which are the occasion for the valid applications of these rules and standards. Toulmin rejects the necessity of proving proposition A about the existence of commonly accepted rules and standards because it is altogether outside the scope of ethics:

"Why ought one to do what is right? There is no room within ethics for such a question[1]" This is similar to the following quotation "there can be no discussion about the proposition 'ethics is ethics', any argument treating 'ethics' as something other than it is must be false..."[2]

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1. Op.cit. page 162.
2. Op.cit. " "

Let us turn for a moment and consider the Toulmin & Hare controversy which has been thoroughly studied by Mr. Kai Nielsen in an article in the Swedish Journal of Philosophy and psychology Theoria 1958.

> "The issue I regard as fundamental in the present context is the issue whether or not these so-called rules of evaluative inference or as I prefer to call them, normative principles are themselves moral principles"[1]

and here is Toulmin's answer:

> "To begin with, in talking about 'a good reason' I am not talking about ethics: we can equally well (and frequently do) talk of 'a valid argument' instead"
>
> or
>
> "We must not, of course assume that X is a good reason, so as to prove that Y is a good deed - and then accept the very same argument as a proof that X is a good reason" (QED) "For this is mere rationalisation; but it is quite in order to try to discover and justify further considerations Z, for deciding both whether we ought to do Y and whether we should accept X as a reason for doing it."[2]

These 'further considerations' Z can be summed up as follows: The function of ethics is to insure the harmonious co-existence of as many individual interests as possible. A particular set 'R' of factual reasons form a valid or good reason for reaching an ethical conclusion 'E', not because it is itself a moral reason but because it falls within the general function of ethics which is according to Nielsen "to harmonise people's actions in such a way as to

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1. Theoria a Swedish Journal of Philosophy and Psychology. Vol.XXIV 1958 P.17. Article by Kai.Nielsen "Good Reasons in Ethics". An examination of the Toulmin-Hare Controversy.

Toulmin

2. Op.cit. p.3-4.

satisfy as many independent desires and interests as are compossible or compatible".[1] Or, as Kai Nielsen puts it later on in the same article:

> "The context we seek to explicate is itself an ought context ... Given this context, given the kind of activity that morality is, these are our criteria of moral reasoning." [2]

All other questions which are outside this ought context defined as the function of ethics (see above), all questions concerning the value of the specific moral reasoning, the validity of its standards and its relation to problems of the truth and validity of scientific empirical statements, all these questions, Toulmin lumps together as 'limiting questions' which are without the ethical context.[3] Thus we see that in modern linguistic philosophy, meaning becomes a value term which Logical Positivists withhold from ethical statements, and which Toulmin (when studying Ethics) withholds from anything which does not belong to an ought context.

It is a pity that the autonomy of Ethical reasoning is achieved at such a high price: the complete separation of ethical inference from all other form of reasoning, and the exclusion of many problems which are certainly of the

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1. Kai Nielsen op.cit. page 22.
2. Op.cit. page 28.
3. cf. Toulmin page 162-163.

greatest importance to the study of the nature of ethics.

Yet the traditional attempts at answering just such questions as "why ought we do what is right?" can still be considered as among the most fruitful contributions to ethical thinking!

4. Genuine Contradiction in moral arguments.

Toulmin holds the view that if he can show that there is logical basis for genuine contradiction in moral arguments without resorting to non-natural simple ethical properties which are assumed by the objectivist - intuitionist, he will have refuted both radical subjectivism and imperativism and affirmed the logical possibility of discerning between valid and non valid reasons in moral arguments.

We have already seen in chapter 1, that there are three categories of moral theories which do postulate the possibility of valid reasons in ethics:

(1) Those of Moore and Ross which postulate the existence of intrinsic ethical properties.

(2) Those like Sidgwick who content themselves with the postulation of the objectivity of moral standards as valid for all minds.

(3) Those which accept the general validity of moral standards but locate their origin in the subject.

For some reason, moral philosophy for Toulmin begins with Moore, neglecting all other variations of objectivism (such as Sidgwick's). In his treatment of the subjective approach he does not differenciate between radical subjectivism à' la Ayer and Stevenson from orthodox subjectivism à la Westermarck. For, as we have shown in the first chapter, Westermarck does not exclude in his book Ethical Relativity the possibility of necessary and valid moral rules, though he denies categorically their rational or objective origin.

Toulmin is well aware that not all disagreements can be classified as contradictions.

> "Suppose that I ask two people in turn 'Which of the boys in this class is the tallest?' 'Which summer sport is the most enjoyable?' and 'Which of these courses of action is the right one?' - questions about a 'property', a 'subjective relation' and a 'value' respectively - and suppose that in each case they disagree, one saying 'N', and the other 'No, not N, but M'. In which cases do they contradict one another?" [1]

His answer is quite clear: in the first and the last questions only do we consider the disagreements as contradictions. Why is there no contradiction in the second case about enjoying summer sport? Because, says Toulmin, "two people may very well enjoy different sports."[2] While

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1. Op.cit. page 26.
2. Op.cit. pages 26-27.

"If I ask which of two courses of action is the right one, there is usually no question of my doing both".[1]

If we examine these two answers, we find that arbitrarily in the case of the summer sport question he assumes that each of two persons is answering for himself. Had he considered the answer as a guide for him, he could equally answer that the two answers are contradictory since there is no question of his engaging in two sports at the same time.

It is quite difficult to follow Toulmin's argument on this question, since he never attempts to define even tentatively what he means by 'contradictory statements'. Does he or does he not accept P.F. Strawson's definition of contradictory statements:

"Contradictory statements, then, have the character of being both logically exclusive and logically exhaustive".[2] Could we say that the two answers to the value question are mutually exclusive and logically exhaustive? Obviously, if the two alternative courses of action are of the form "to do X and not to do X" then we need not wait for the answers in order to know that the courses of action for

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1. Op.cit. page 27.
2. P.F. Strawson: Introduction to Logical Theory, 1952. page 18.

which moral reasons are adduced, are contradictory.

One can, before hearing the reasons for doing this or that, by knowing the situation in which the agent finds himself, decide whether answers such as 'N is right' and 'no, M is right' are contradictory. This aspect of the agent's action following an ethical argument, is one of the difficulties encountered in reducing contradiction between moral judgements to incompatible actions. Toulmin is asking us to pass from a set of statements: 'You should decide <u>that</u> X is right'and 'No, you should decide <u>that</u> Y is right' to another set of judgements: 'You should decide to do X' and 'No, you should decide to do Y', In the first set we are asking the agent to accept our reason for doing X or Y, in the second set we are prompting him to do X or Y. Toulmin himself draws this distinction when he writes: "To show that you ought to choose certain actions is one thing: to make you <u>want to do</u> what you ought to do is another, and not a philosopher's task." (1) See also Morton White's argument about 'Deciding that' and deciding to'.[2]

There is no reason why in our study of evaluative inference we should locate the origin of a genuine contradiction outside the scope of the inference itself: in

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1. TOULMIN, OP.CIT. Page 163 [illegible] 1953.
2. MORTON WHITE, TOWARDS REUNION IN PHILOSOPHY, OP.CIT. P234

action. If we have to do it we should at least begin by showing the logical relation between: 'I know that X is the right action' and 'I decide to do X'.

Stevenson, in an article in Mind Vol.XLVI 1937, writes about this question as follows:

> "We must distinguish between 'disagreement in belief' (typical of sciences) and 'disagreement in interest'. Disagreement in belief occurs when A believes p and B disbelieves it. Disagreement in interest occurs when A has a favourable interest in X when B has an unfavourable one in it, and when neither is content to let the other's interest remain unchanged." [1]

Could we not equally say - assuming for one moment that Stevenson is right - that, if there is a disagreement in interest between A and B about X, then there is 'a genuine contradiction' between them? Or does Toulmin hold that a 'genuine contradiction' can only occur on the level of beliefs? No matter how far we are inclined to agree with him about the autonomy of ethics, yet, in the interest of this same 'autonomy', we cannot but ask: When is a contradiction genuine and when isn't it?. Toulmin's answer may be as follows: "genuiness in contradiction has not the same criteria in science as in ethics". Are we to infer from such a hypothetical answer that the criteria of genuine

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1. Mind. 1937. Vol.XLVI

contradictoriness in ethics is that you cannot do both actions if you have previously asked which of the two is the right one. (op.cit. page 27). Does this physical or material impossibility to do two things at the same time constitute the basis of the conviction of the 'unsophisticated' that ethical disagreement is a genuine contradiction? Could it not be the case, that the contradiction lies more in the result of the intended actions? Many moralists will insist that the disagreement draws its 'genuine contradictoriness' from the motives behind the action. And, if Toulmin's intention is to lump together all motives, results, and the actions themselves in the nature of the ethical disagreement, he will certainly be 'safe' with all the theories of ethics, by being too loose in his approach.

Apparently there is no difference between his 'genuine contradiction' which is apparent to the unsophisticated, and Moore's attitude when he writes: (in his Reply to his critics in The Philosophy of G.E.Moore) [1] "But now what about reasons for thinking that Mr. Stevenson's view is false and my former one true? I can give at least one reason for this, namely that it seems as if whenever one man, using "right" in 'a typically ethical' sense, asserts

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1. The Philosophy of G.E. Moore: Evanston, North Western University Press, 1942. pages 536-547.

that a particular action was right, then, if another, using "right in the same sense, asserts that it was not, they are making assertions which are logically incompatible". The 'unsophisticated' as a term, and 'seems as if' as a term, have the identical function in both Toulmin and Moore: for both of them contend that what Stevenson, philosophically considers to be only a disagreement in interest, entirely different from disagreement in belief - the only genuine contradiction he recognises - is in common usage accepted as a 'logical contradiction'. But while Moore thinks that his argument was inconclusive because it is not certain, (see same passage quoted in preceding page), Toulmin feels quite confident about the logical judgement of the unsophisticated, and draws the following conclusion: "the supporters of both doctrines (subjective and objective) take it for granted that opposed ethical judgements can only be contradictory if they refer to a property of the object concerned".[1] He does not.

5. The Ethical judgement.

We might perhaps get more information about the nature of this 'genuine contradiction' if we study Toulmin's conception of the ethical judgement.

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1. Op.cit. page 42.

In his logical interpretation of meaning and of reasoning, we have found that Toulmin has a teleological view, e.g. that we cannot understand their nature without knowing their function.

"This difference in function between scientific and moral judgement - the one concerned to alter expectations, the other to alter feeling and behaviour"[1] - reminding us on a preceding page that while ethical arguments can change people's dispositions and attitudes, scientific arguments cannot modify the experiences they explain. Let us reserve for a while our assessment of this generalisation and concentrate on the possibility of a 'genuine contradiction' in an ethical argument. The question we ask is: if the function of an ethical judgement is to alter feeling and behaviour, when do two moral judgements contradict each other? When one wants to alter and the other does not want to alter at all?; or when the directions of their respective alterations is opposite?; or simply different? Perhaps the contradiction is not to be found in the proposed alterations, but as Toulmin insists again and again in the reasons for the proposed alterations. "Whenever we come to a moral decision," writes Toulmin, "we pass from the factual reasons (R) to an ethical ~~(E)~~ conclusion (E)"[2] So, if we are

1. Op.cit. page 129.
2. Op.cit. page 3.

to locate the contradiction in the (R) factual reasons there is nothing to worry about, for the nature of contradictory factual statements is well known.

So in our search for a possible localisation and nature of the 'genuine contradiction' in ethical arguments, we have found that Toulmin's assurance (in contradiction to Moore's more cautious approach), cannot be justified except on the basis of a contradiction between factual reasons. "All that two people need (and all that they have) to contradict one another about in the case of Ethical predicates are the reasons for doing this rather than that or the other."[1]

6. The contrast between scientific judgements and ethical judgements.

Following what Professor Paton has called the teleological theory of meaning, Toulmin contrasts the function of scientific and ethical judgements:

> "This difference in function between scientific judgements and moral judgements - the one concerned to alter expectations, the other to alter feelings and behaviour".[2]

Toulmin does not consider the special case of social sciences,

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1. Op.cit. page 28.
2. Op.cit. page 129.

though one is led to suppose that, according to his division, they fall into the category of judgements which alter our expectations. It is assumed that any science which deals with facts alters our expectations and other disciplines which deal with answers to questions of the type 'what shall I do' alter our feelings and behaviour.

Our expectations in social life are influenced by our needs, feelings and behaviour, and these in turn are influenced by our expectations. If a sociologist anticipates some event and if this event is eagerly awaited by people, this anticipation will certainly alter the behaviour of the people concerned. This latter change in behaviour may in its turn make the sociologist alter his anticipation, which will be speeded up by the change of behaviour. All this interaction can be summed up by saying that the social scientist is part of his subject matter. In other subjects, such as History, explanation is hardly possible without evaluation. Of course there is a certain balance to be maintained by the historian between the factual content and the value content; yet however objective the historian is in the narration of facts, he cannot avoid some evaluation implied in his choice of relevant facts:

> "In social matters where difference of opinion is greater and demonstration more difficult, we cling all the more tenaciously to our primary assumptions, so that our assumptions largely mould what we shall accept as facts".[1]

Toulmin's dichotomy of alteration in expectation and alteration in behaviour is not warranted by the study of the method of social sciences. A change in our expectation may lead to a change in our behaviour and vice versa. If the function of ethical and scientific judgements is sometimes identical there must be some identity in their logic.

7. Good Reasons in Ethics.

Had Mill written about 'good reasons' in Ethics, he would have said that any reason which appeals to pleasure and freedom from pain, is a good reason. The only difference between Mill's principle of Utility or Happiness and Toulmin's principle of 'prevention of avoidable suffering' might be one of linguisties, i.e. that it is, in fact, the same principle couched once in the affirmative and once in the negative. Both of them invoke the social life as the supreme context which gives rise to the rules of morality.

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1. Morris Cohen, Reason and Nature, Harcourt Brace & Co., New York, 1931. page 354.

Mill writes:

> "The theory of life in which this theory of morality is grounded...."[1]

and Toulmin writes:

> "The concept of 'duty' in short, is inextricable from the 'mechanics' of social life"[2]

It might be suggested that one of the reasons why Toulmin has adopted the Utilitarian principle in its negative form, is that, on the whole, the XIXth Century was much more optimistic about social progress and the immense possibilities of the applications of science for the benefit of mankind, than the more 'sophisticated' and 'realistic' XXth Century, now we realise that happiness is not a function only of material welfare and that together with the imposition of equality comes another form of inequality.... (See Prof. H.B. Acton's contribution to the Royaumont symposium La Philodophie Analytique face a la Philosophie de la Politique).

Another point of comparison between Toulmin and Mill is the ambiguity of the word 'avoidable' which ambiguity is similar to that of the word 'desirable' as used by Mill:

> "But these supplementary explanations do not affect the theory of life on which this theory of morality is grounded - namely that pleasure and freedom from pain are the only things desirable as ends."[3]

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1. Mill, Utilitarianism, page 6.
2. Toulmin, page 136.
3. Mill, *ib.* page 6.

Is Toulmin meaning by 'avoidable' suffering which should or can be avoided? If his answer is 'should be avoided' and he justifies it on the ground that the whole context is an 'ought' or a moral context, we cannot accept this justification, because, his evaluative inference clearly states that it passes from factual reasons (R) to an ethical (E) conclusion. If, on the other hand, he opts for 'can be avoided', I wonder how he could differenciate ethical reasoning from sociological reasoning. So long as we were examining the lOgical basis of his theory, we could easily grant him the benefit of doubt, but as soon as he descends to the realm of practice, we find that all his moral good reasons are scientific and designed to alter our expectations. If we know what can be avoided, and if we are sure that this is our supreme moral principle, (namely to prevent what suffering can be avoided), then it is quite clear that all our moral judgements can be construed as predicting our feelings and behaviour.[1]

Nor is it the case, that while Mill's Utilitarianism is wholly teleological Toulmin's good reasons are partly deontological and partly teleological. Mill's moral

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1. Cf. R. Carnap: Philosophy and Logical Syntax, pages 22-26.

theory does not exclude the possibility of the moral code. Taking in his book Utilitarianism an example very similar to that of the highway code, Mill writes:

> "To inform a traveller respecting the place of his ultimate destination, is not to forbid the use of landmarks and direction posts on the way." [1]

Moreover, I do think on the whole, Mill is more consistent in his ultimate moral principle than Toulmin, because he does not impose an artifical dichotomy between the moral code and the principle of Utility. The moral code can be justified if it is in harmony with the ultimate principle. Toulmin's moral rules or duties are certainly judged as 'good reasons' because of their having passed long, long ago, the test of being in accordance with the aim of ethical life (harmonious social relations), and conforming to the ultimate principle of morals, the principle of preventing avoidable suffering.

8. Conclusion.

As it may be gathered from the motto of this chapter, Toulmin was wrong in saying that 'classical ethical philosophy' failed mainly because it never asked the only

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1. Op.cit. Utilitarianism, page 22.

relevant question to moral discourse , namely the place of reason in ethics. It would be a safe venture to say that the history of Moral philosophy abounds with successive attempts to discover and advocate reason in our moral life.

Toulmin's intention of showing that moral decisions are generally backed by rational arguments is in the genuine spirit of most great moral philosophers. His contributions, as well as those of Hare and Urmson, are sure evidence that there are still reasonable things to be said about the 'meaningless' moral statements.

He shows a great insight in real moral problems and even though his moral philosophy turns up to be only a slightly varied utilitarianism, it is stimulating nevertheless.

Yet we feel that we are still left with the question we started with: can we or can we not re-integrate Ethics as a normative science in the realm of respectable philosophical disciplines?

Toulmin's answer is: yes, though we think we are invited to pay too high a price for this re-integration. Toulmin's suggestion, himself a philosopher of science, of the complete logical autonomy of scientific thinking and moral discourse is in itself discouraging. This might be a satisfactory answer from the logician who may

or may not be interested (as the philosopher is or should be), in the discovery of a conceptual scheme of explanation and co-ordination of all our modes of thoughts. Besides, Toulmin contends that his conclusions are the result of a detailed description of our linguistic usage in science, ethics, etc. After all, this new brand of philosophical analysis - I mean linguistic analysis - should at least achieve a minimum of unanimous conclusions which are the characteristics of any descriptive accounts. This method, free as it pretends to be from all the shackles of meta-physical concepts, has not achieved any more unanimity than traditional philosophical methods.

Toulmin's method of quietening our doubts about the validity and meaningfulness of moral judgements is more of a sedative than a true treatment. The problem of bridging the realm of facts and the realm of values is solved by him in the same way as logical positivists solved their problems: it is meaningless to introduce methods of dealing with facts in the study of value, validity in ethical argument is entirely different from validity in scientific argument. Instead of bringing detailed and consistent logical arguments in order to show the possibility of contradiction in ethics, he simply adduces commonsense arguments (how one can do two things at the same time?).[1]

1. Cf. Op.cit. page 27.

One can approach, as it has been done, the problem of the relation between description and evaluation differently though linguistically. For instance, Morton White in his Towards Reunion in philosophy writes:

> "For one thing, one must face the fact that 'is wrong' is just as much a predicate of the English language as 'is on the mat'. No advocate of the view that philosophers ought to watch ordinary usage carefully can deny this. Nor can he maintain that the idiom according to which we describe acts as wrong when we say that they are wrong is 'unnatural'".[1]

Morton White is of the view that those linguistic analysts who cling to the dichotomy description - evaluation do so because they still cling to the existence of natural qualities: "

> "Unfortunately too many philosophers of ordinary language who are bent on the rejection of non-natural qualities admit the existence of natural qualities without seeing that the very language that encourages their own platonism is what encourages Moore's anti-naturalistic ethics."[2]

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1. Morton White, op.cit. page 243.
2. Morton White, op.cit. page 244.

Our conclusion is, that the linguistic analysis of moral arguments shows as much a metaphysical approach as any traditional philosophical analysis. The only difference - and this might be their great weakness - is their adoption as one of their philosophical principles the reductionist principle of logical positivism: whatever does not fit into their conceptual scheme, is relegated to the realm of meaninglessness.

CHAPTER V

LANGUAGE AND THE FUNCTION OF ETHICS

"The study of ethical language has proved an effective safeguard against any genuinely objective treatment of moral conduct. The degree of dull remoteness which can be achieved by discussing the language of a subject instead of the subject itself is remarkable" (from the 'Retreat' from Truth' by G.R.G.Mure)

1) Meta-Ethics as a second-order activity.

We have chosen among the recent meta-ethical writings, three of the most representative philosophers and we tried to examine the difference between them and authors of classical normative ethics. Though we saw the influence of the general trend of reductionism introduced by Logical positivism, we could not detect a total conversion or adhesion to basic ideas.

It is true that in Urmson's "On grading" there was no advocacy of moral virtue, e.g. no value statement was made in this philosophical article, and thus it complied with Ayer's recommendation that "A strictly philosophical treatise on ethics should (therefore) make no ethical pronouncements".(1) On first

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(1) Op. cit. Page 151 (Language, TRUTH AND LOGIC)

appearance it belongs to the first class of ethical propositions (from four classes in all), which "express definitions of ethical terms, or judgments about the legitimacy or possibility of certain definitions." (1) But this is the end with the compliance with Logical positivism: The analogy of the ethical use of 'good' and 'bad' with 'grading' leads Urmson as much away from naturalism as from radical subjectivism. The latter made it impossible to argue questions of value, or, as Ayer put it:

> "This may seem, at first sight, to be a very paradoxical assertion. For we certainly do engage in disputes which are ordinarily regarded as disputes about questions of value. But in all such cases ..... the dispute is not really about a question of value, but about a question of fact." (2)

Urmson rejected outright subjectivism because it could not decide whether statements of the form 'this is good' or 'this is bad' were true or false. It is not very important whether Urmson in his article succeeds or fails in his attempt to prove that one can argue about normative statements, that they are meaningful and can therefore be true or false; the important thing is that he rejects the logical positivist

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(1) Op.cit. Page 150

(2) Op.cit. Page 165

theory that the only meaningful statements are empirical descriptive statements.

In his treatment of conventional and real grading, Urmson hints that understanding what one is doing is essential in any moral statement. By that he means, apparently, that moral grading is (or, as we remarked before, perhaps should be) a rational and conscious activity. This latter conclusion is certainly against the tenet which enjoins ethical philosophers not to make any value judgment. If Urmson's real intention is rendered by 'moral grading is a rational activity' then this can be considered as a value judgement where the function of a value term is fulfilled by the word 'rational'. The latter word when not used in a purely logical, neutral, analysis, is not a descriptive word only, and is similar to the word 'real' when not used in a purely epistemological analysis. 'Rational' means, at all events, 'not foolish or absurd or extreme' (see the Concise Oxford Dictionary page 964). Anyway, we are justified in translating "grading is something which you cannot in a full sense do without understanding what you are doing " into "Good grading is a rational activity" simply because Urmson opposes

it to "conventional moral judgments". This is obviously a value statement.

On the other hand, if Urmson's intention is better rendered by "good grading should be/rational" we need no argument to show that this is a value judgment.

We stated in the first chapter the close connection between Ethical philosophy and the advocacy of a system of morality. We should have added that this advocacy is far from being casuistry: a detailed deductive analysis of the implications in day to day life of our general principles of ethics. Advocacy or moral preaching can be or rather should be of the most general character. It is enough if the rationality of ethics is advocated; this on its own can refute the worst aspects of ethical relativism which rightly or wrongly thrives on those theories which reject the rationality of ethical arguments.

This argument about the rationality of the moral argument is not confined to Urmson. On the contrary, it is brought to a much/more advanced stage by both Hare and Toulmin. Both of them are very much concerned about the lack of rationality which has been attributed to ethics in general.

> "But it is not surprising that the first effect of modern logical researches was to make some

> philosophers despair of morals as a rational activity.....It is the purpose of this book to show that their despair is premature" (1)
>
> "The Newcomer mistakes this for the matter-of-fact proposition 'there are (in fact) no good reasons for ethical judgments' and concludes that all his moral striving has been in vain." (2)

Both these quotations from Hare and Toulmin respectively show quite clearly how concerned they are to write a meta-ethical work, with the purpose of advocating that morals are not 'absurd, foolish or extreme'.

2. Is meta-ethics only a myth?

We have already shown in the previous section how this conception of a second order activity has not been lived up to by Urmson, Hare and Toulmin. In the preceding chapters we have shown in more detail how far they were from the logical positivist conception of philosophical ethics (completely free from any value judgment). One might be ready to concede, provided an example is forthcoming, that a book on philosophical ethics can be written according to a meta-ethical ideal. The trouble is that most

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(1) Hare: The Language of Morals, p.45.

(2) Toulmin: The Place of Reason in Ethics, p.58.

of the so-called meta-ethical works which have been written up to now had to discuss problems of objectivism, subjectivism, rationality, validity, utilitarianism; and it so happens that all these categories are highly loaded with evaluative meaning which makes it impossible for meta-ethics to be morally neutral. Prof. Acton, writing in the collection of papers of the Royamont Symposium, says: "Il est facile de trouver dans les livres de méta-ethique des passages qui donnent à entendre que celle-ci n'est point moralement neutre".(1)

Sometimes one gets the impression that the only really meta-ethical books are those which are written by philosophers who subscribe to the ideas of the radical subjectivists, i.e. who reduce moral utterances to mere exhortations, ejaculations or commands in a misleading form. Yet even Ayer who has held this view in its most extreme form is aware that his readers can get the impression from his using of 'meaningless' as attributed to moral statements, that he regards these statements as not important: "In the first place I am not saying that morals are trivial or unimportant.... For this would itself be a judgment of value." (2)

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(1) Recueil Royaumont Symposium.

(2) A.A.Ayer, Philosophical Essays, ~~Page 245~~, London Macmillian, 1954, Page 245.

On the one hand we are asked not to take 'meaningless' as a value term and to equate it with unimportant, on the other we are repeatedly warned that 'unimportant' as a value word has no meaning. The failure of meta-ethics could be attributed to the sheer impossibility of writing anything of substance on meaningless statements. Why after all should one be interested in a subject unless one is ready to study its use and function? Normative statements are used to advocate morals and unless the philosopher is ready to examine what is preached as well as the preacher's language, his study will be either barren or dull.

If there are no possibilities of classifying, or dividing logically our moral utterances, if every moral statement is sui generis, as it is the case when regarded as mere exhortation, nothing intelligible could be written about them. If meaning is now an ambiguous term, because we can easily confuse emotive meaning with empirical meaning, perhaps the use of the concept of sense or significance would be more adequate and more comprehensive and would encompass both empirical and emotive meaning.

3. The price of restoring rationality to ethics.

We have seen in Chapter One, when we examined the concepts of objectivity and subjectivity and their relation to validity, truth and relativity, that it was rather difficult to ground the rationality of moral argument on such concepts. This ambiguity in the various meanings of objectivity and subjectivity, has led some philosophers to suggest banishing them from the terminology of moral philosophy until they are given clear and distinctive meanings. (1)

When the rationality of moral concepts and judgments is no longer dependent on the objectivity or even the intrinsic objectivity of moral properties - as it was with the intuitionists - efforts were made to ground it in the nature of the moral inference itself. One may argue that this attempt is far from being characteristic of recent meta-ethical writings, that Sidgwick held the view that the objectivity of moral judgments had to be construed as dependent on the validity of moral principles, e.g. principles valid for all minds. Still, there is a fundamental difference between Sidgwick and Hare for instance. Sidgwick tried to find the rationality of the moral mudgment and of moral principles, in the fact that they were generally

(1) Royaumont Symposium 'Rien n'a d'Importance' by R.M. Hare.

accepted. Hare finds the rationality of moral principles in the fact that prescriptive inference (where moral principles appear in the major premise) is formally of the syllogistic type. For Moore, the naturalistic fallacy was the derivation of "goodness is identical with being conducive to pleasure" from "the class of good things is identical with the class of things conducive to pleasure".(1) For Urmson and Hare, the naturalistic fallacy is simply a linguistic confusion: the confusion of description with grading or with commending.

What is perplexing in this linguistic analysis of ethical concepts is that two philosophers who apply it arrive at diametrically opposite conclusions. Linguistic rules do not sanction according to Hare the deduction if an 'ought' from an 'is', while Toulmin sanctions in the name of a 'literally true account of our concepts' (see page 42) the entailment of an ethical conclusion 'E' from a set of factual reasons 'R'.

One of the reasons why linguistic analysis made great progress in philosophical analysis, was the fact that the old terminology of essence and accident,

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(1) Morton White, op.cit. Page 175 - 176

reality and appearance did not help us to solve any of our philosophical problems; on the contrary, it created a series of "pseudo-problems." If on the other hand we renounce this 'antiquated' terminology of metaphysics and begin describing the functioning of real words and observing current usages, we were promised that many of these pseudo-problems would disappear. Can we accept this new version of 'cutting the Gordian knot'? Can we accept such a proof of the rationality of moral discourse based on a supposed description of the facts of linguistic usage?

We have already shown that Hare's 'principle of Universalisability', whose logical consistency, we were told, is peculiar to prescriptive language, was not descriptively discovered but linguistically prescribed.

Toulmin, on the other hand, avoids this pitfall of prescribing instead of describing, by an extreme compartmentalisation of our language and reasoning. To raise problems which are characteristic of scientific discourse in an ethical context is as meaningless as to raise problems characteristic of ethical discourse in a scientific context --- this is what he means by the "independence of different modes of reasoning".

These two derivations of the rationality of ethics from the description of linguistic usage are much more akin to a moral crusade than to scientific discovery. It is useless to give derogatory names such as 'meaningless' and 'pseudo-problems' to the problem of how we derive an 'ought' from an 'is', for the problem does not cease being a problem even if it is called a "pseudo-problem." We can equally say, that unless we can relate the logic of ethics to the logic of science, we cannot be satisfied by Toulmin's assertion: "we do deduce an ethical conclusion from factual reasons" and that is that. From the philosophical point of view it is not meaningless to try to find a common basis - logical or epistemological - between ethical discourse and other forms of discourse.

In an article, "Religion and Morals", published in Faith and Logic edited by Basil Mitchell, Hare makes an attempt to find this common basis.

In his 'Language of Morals', Hare tries to show that even 'commands' have a logic of their own: the logic of prescriptive inference. This logic we remember is syllogistic with an additional special rule: no value word can appear in the conclusion if both premises are factual. In his 'Religion and Morals' he reminds us

that we should not interpret his dichotomy descriptive - prescriptive as final. According to him this distinction was necessary if only as part of any description of linguistic usage. He may have exaggerated it but this only because "it is important to end, not by blurring it as is often done...."[1] What is very important is "to end ... by articulating the relations between these two kinds of thing". Incidentally, it is very interesting to note the obviously prescriptive language used by Hare in explaining the relation between the logic of 'is' and the logic of 'ought': 'important', 'blur'. Such a metaphysical language need not astonish us especially when we are told that Kant's metaphysics "were fimrly based, as they should be, in the facts of our use of words".[2] The descriptive account of our linguistic usage has already discovered in our moral language: harsh entailment, loose entailment, emotive meaning .... and even metaphysics. All this reminds us of the fable: the seven blind men and the elephant.

Anyhow what is more important is that Hare reaches

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(1) Faith & Logic, edited by B. Mitchell, George Allen & Urwin, 1957. p. 190

(2) "Religion & Morals" by R.M. Hare, [illegible].
Op.cit. page 191.

the conclusion that factual statements cannot be made without principles of some sort, and that this principle bears some analogy to the prescriptive element in moral judgments.[1]

It is interesting to compare what Hare has to say about the relation between principles and experience in the following passage and the relation between description and evaluation in the social sciences. (See Chapter 4 on Toulmin's distinction between the function of scientific judgments and the function of ethical judgments)

> "The lesson that is to be learnt from Prof. Young, as from Kant, is, that (as Kant might put it) nothing can become an object (or a fact) for us unless in our thinking we follow certain rules or principles - that the mind plays an active part in cognition, and that therefore the principles which govern its action are part-determinate of what we experience."[2]

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1. cf. op.cit. 190.

2. cf. at page 192.

Here we are back to 'cognition' and perhaps the day is not far off when another 'tabou' of the old terminology will re-appear: e.g. 'conation', and take its part in the philosophical clarification of the concept of action.

This last concept, though of central importance - an importance duly recognised by all the recent linguistic analyses of ethical language - is still very much neglected, and it is only recently that a greater attention is being paid to it.[1]

And finally, a question is bound to be asked about this crusade for 'discovering' rationality in morals: Is the despair of morals as a rational activity, a despair limited to philosophers, or is it fairly common among non-philosophers as well? I do not think that we need to go into a detailed analysis of linguistic usage, in order to answer such a question - yet the answer is crucial for deciding whether this crusade will or will not have any practical results. In many countries, where planning in different spheres of life is rapidly growing, (not to mention those countries where planning is part and parcel of their philosophical conception of the state), people

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1. See G.E. Anscombe: Intention, Basil Blackwell.
Nowell-Smith: Choices, Royaumont Symposium.

fear that this kind of 'planned" 'rationality', might well end by transforming us into some kind of robots, devoid of feeling and freshness in our approach to our neighbours, even up to a point that we would be transformed into mere wheels in a big automotive machine called 'society'. Of course, people also long for more reasonable relations among themselves than are possible now. In a word 'rationality' is a double-edged sword, with good and bad features. It might be retorted that no philosopher who is coming to the defence of the rationality of morals, has in mind such a lifeless 'rationality' as exemplified in the books of George Orwell.

Recent trends in European philosophy such as Existentialism have been clearly advocating that 'real morals' are not rational. Others see in the Existentialism of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty only the heir of a more 'consistent' philosophy of 'irrationalism' and trace its beginnings to Schelling, Schopenhaeur Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. (See "La destruction de la raison": les débuts de l'Irrationalisme moderne, by Georg Lukacs L'Arche Editeur Paris 1958). So it might well be the case that both on the philosophical and the layman's front a battle is fought for or against rationalism in ethics.

6. Some Ambiguities in the use of 'Moral', 'Rational' and 'Conscious'.

We must admit that there might be some misunderstanding here, arising from the different senses in which 'moral' is used. Hare would have it that man's behaviour cannot be called 'moral' unless it is rational. There may be some truth in this contention, because usually rational includes in its meaning 'conscious' and here there is near unanimity: an unconscious agent cannot be morally responsible. Both Urmson and Hare distinguish quite clearly, conventional grading from real conscious grading, and merely conventional, from moral attitudes, towards decisions of principle. The trouble starts with the fact that there are cases of conventional grading, there are cases of conventional attitudes. What, then, are we going to call them?

Sometimes, 'moral' itself as a predicate is used as a value word: We do say, and it has passed into common usage: "He behaves morally" meaning by this "he behaves well or rightly". But to sanction this usage would be to sanction that bad moral behaviour is not 'moral' and hence not to be condemned. We are in the same quandary as with the argument about consistency, which led us to ask

rhetorically whether the consistently bad man is better than the inconsistently good man?

In the same manner that we cannot equate 'moral' with 'good', we cannot equate 'moral' with 'rational'. I would dare to say that we cannot even equate 'moral behaviour' with 'conscious behaviour'. Moral behaviour implies conscious behaviour, but the latter does not imply moral behaviour.

7. Ethics as a practical science

We see therefore that an ideal moral agent should be 'moral', should be 'rational', should be 'conscious'. When a person joins for the first time any closed community such as a communal village, a sect, or a convent, we can clearly observe how he has to adapt himself to this new community by making their moral code his own. Many aspects of his previous behaviour of which he was not conscious become prominent, and he is now asked to be conscious of them. As other

members are expected to behave similarly, or at least to try to do so, this aspect of his behaviour becomes part of the social discussion among the members of the community. If it passes the test of objective discussion that part of their behaviour becomes rationalised.

THUS A NEW SITUATION IS CREATED FOR OUR NEW MEMBER. Had he been only a visitor, all this situation would not have arisen, though all the elements of the situation are still present: his usual behaviour and the behaviour of the members of the community. So we could tentatively say that there are two kinds of situations: one in which the moral agent is not involved, and the second in which the moral agent <u>is</u> involved. In this particular context we could say that the one in which the person is involved is a moral situation, while the other is not.

Every human being gets himself involved willingly or unwillingly, in a great number of situations. Whether he is conscious of it or not, he is expected to behave in a certain way. If it is a situation where no human beings are involved, man can master it, if, and only if, he remains aloof in his experiments. and his observations: the meaning of the situation is given. In case of a human situation, the given meaning is not enough, man has to introduce-prescriptively - a purposive explanation: the moral meaning.

When we say 'the meaning of the situation is given it must be understood that the mind is passive. In no circumstances, is a meaning of anything given without some order-making done by the mind. Yet the amount and nature of the involvement required in order to understand a factual situation is considerably less than in the case of the understanding of moral situations.

In the process of GIVING A MEANING to a moral situation man uses his emotions, his reason, and his intuition. This explains the origin of the theories of Emotivism, Rationalism, and Intuitionism. That is why it is so difficult to disentangle the empirical from the emotive and the intuitive from the

rational significance of a statement forming part of a whole situation.

8. What makes a situation moral?

Could we not say that in any situation which involves an agent in an action, we could find all the elements of what we called 'giving a moral meaning to a situation?' It is this question which has led authors like Hare to define ethical behaviour as consistent, rational behaviour according to principles. Even so we found that this definition could be applied even to the action of digging a hole with an auger.

Obviously most of the moral philosophers who do not discard the question "what makes a situation moral" as meaningless, have to resort to some form of utilitarianism in their trying to answer it: usually they regard moral rules as social rules. For Hare there are moral rules and systems in a society of ants as well as in a society of men; the only difference being: "That is what makes human beings, whose moral systems change, different from ants, whose moral system does not".(1) Incidentally, Hare uses 'moral' in the sense of any rule, not necessarily rational, which is valid or accepted in any community,

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(1) Hare, op.cit. page 74.

not necessarily human. Would he say that the principle of Universalisability is applicable to ants as well?

9. What is a Moral Situation ?

If the simplest single fact of ethical investigation is neither the moral term or notion nor the moral statement or judgment but the moral situation, we shall have to make a thorough investigation of the meaning and nature of 'the moral situation'. Where and when an agent is faced with different and alternative course of action, dictated by different moral principles, we have a moral situation. An alternative definition may be: "A moral situation is an irreducible unit of moral experience". One cannot claim that we do not use moral terms and statements except in moral situations - far from it. But what we do claim is that these terms and statements have no meaning except in relation to a past, present, or future moral situation. We do not exclude the possibility of fruitful enquiry into the nature of moral categories like 'right', 'wrong', 'good', 'bad', etc., or into the nature of moral statements or into the nature of moral principles, the problem of choice, of decision, of action, of ends and means, of freedom, responsibility, free will. All these enquiries can

yield positive results, but not out of context, and the context common to all of them is the moral situation. If this simple unit of moral experience is not acknowledged as such we simply run the risk of unwillingly transforming ethics into a barren study.

a) Situation and conflict.

As a preliminary step we have to study the relation between the moral situation and moral conflict. We often use the term 'conflict' to denote a situation. Yet it would be safer to reserve the term 'conflict' to describe a clash of principles. As such, this is an abstraction, because there are no principles in actual life which are not someone's principles. When we speak of conflicting principles, we sometimes have in mind two protagomists, each defending a different principle; yet such a picture is only schematic for the sake of explicating the force of arguments used in favour of such and such principles. After 'hearing' the arguments for and against, we must return to the actual situation in order to ascertain whether it warrants the explicit reasoning. We often notice

that the arguments are too theoretical e.g. that the situation rejects as it were such an abstract application of principles. But one thing is certain, there is hardly a moral situation without a moral conflict.

It might be contended that, if we limit the use of moral situation only to situations where there is moral conflict, it would be as arbitrary as the distinction between 'real grading' and the mechanical grading of the ignorant grader. Others may add that what is at conflict are not two clashing principles, but a principle against a passion or any other violent emotive behaviour. A man who has no conflicts who behaves in an exemplary way, provided he is conscious, is behaving rightly. This proviso - provided he is conscious - is an indication that a moral situation is at least the result of a conflict between an active principle and another latent or potential principle or passion, which are ever overcome by the active virtue.

Nevertheless, I think that we must agree with Toulmin when he says: "The most interesting practical questions, however, always arise in those situations in which one set of facts drives us one way, and

another pulls us in the opposite direction".[1]

b) Situation and Context.

A context is, technically speaking,"what precedes and follows a word, or a passage of discourse". Sometimes it is loosely used to refer to the same notion as a 'situation'. We often hear people say "The context being different, how can you judge his acts?". In this sense it seems that context is loosely used as the equivalent of 'background', 'circumstances'. In the moral situation we include everything relevant, not only "what precedes and follows". On the contrary, the 'situation's is more akin by nature to the word or the sentence. We can, broadly speaking, say that a situation has a context,meaning that which precedes the moral situation and which follows it.

Context and contextual implication as used by P. Nowell Smith in his book "Ethics", is definitely not equivalent to situation - yet I would say that his notion of contextual implication may be a useful element in investigating the meaning of 'a moral situation'. For Nowell Smith is concerned with "this

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(1) Toulmin, op.cit., page 146.

Rule (which) is of the greatest importance in Ethics was that of bridging the gap between decisions, ought sentences, injunctions and sentences used to give advice on the one hand and the statements of fact that constitute the reasons for these on the other".(1) This bridging of the gap cannot be done if we limit ourselves to the study of moral terms and moral judgments.

c) Situation and Facts.

In his book "The Language of Morals" Hare writes:

> "Pritchard in effect argues that the goodness of a situation (which both he and those he is attacking regard as a fact about the situation) does not by itself constitute a reason why we ought to try to bring that situation into being."

If we try to unriddle the muddle resulting from such a loose use of terms, e.g. fact and situation, we find that Hare is using 'fact' as meaning a property which is truly attributed to a situation. In other words, if we say "This situation is good", the statement can be true or false, and if we say that"goodness is a fact about the situation" we are affirming the truth of the statement "This situation is good". When later Hare says "to bring that situation into being" he means

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(1) P.H. Nowell Smith: Ethics 1954 Penguin Books, Page 82.

'to create a new fact', to bring about an empirically verifiable result.

Situation is often used in the same sense as fact, in the sense of empirically verifiable events. When I say "These descriptions are not factual", I mean "These descriptions are false, or don't apply or are misapplied". When I say "He is not telling the truth - the situation was as follows", I mean by situation not only a fact or group of facts, but also the true or adequate description of these facts.

d) The Meaning of a Situation.

The term 'situation' when used in describing a moral situation has its origin in everyday usage of the term, used for describing the position of an object in space, or in space and time. When you know the situation (or position) of the house you are looking for, you know how to get there. Even if you have never been there before, you may, by studying the map of the area, get a fair idea of its whereabouts: whether it is in a poor or in a wealthy neighbourhood, in a densely or thinly populated area, in a business centre or in a garden-district. That means that by knowing the situation of an object,

you can know something about the object itself. The description may be vaguely-worded, e.g. "his house is in the northern part of the town" or it may be very precise, e.g. "his house is in Harlow New Town". The latter enables me to know not only how far from London he lives, but much else besides (for instance I can imagine the architecture of the house, its building materials, etc.).

In our usage of the term 'situation' in describing moral facts, we find again the same range, of varying from extreme vagueness to precision. We speak of vague situations and of concrete ones, of fluid situations and of clear-cut ones.

e) Boundaries of a Situation.

The meaning of a moral situation depends on its boundaries. It is a known fact that many a situation becomes meaningless if taken in a much wider context than it is usually taken. If, for instance, I face a moral problem today, my problem will no longer appear as such to me, if its 'coordinates' are not just one individual and his social circle, but mankind and the world. It may, of course, be objected that a larger framework should not, in principle at least,

let us forget the individual; yet one cannot deny that it is the scale of the framework, the nature of the boundaries, which determine the 'meaning' of a moral situation and its implications.

I mean by 'the boundaries of a moral situation": firstly, its limitation in time, and secondly, the number of factors relevant to it. The boundaries depend on a number of external and internal conditions and when these are analysed, and we have tentatively fixed its real and (or) imagined limits, we have, in fact, arrived at a "working hypothesis"; the latter will enable us to find the solution of the moral conflict.

f) Situation and the Principle of Relevancy.

Ethical reasoning is a highly complex process. Before the moral agent proceeds to act he must ascertain what the relevant facts are. Some of these facts need not be taken into account, because, they are, so to say, 'here', they are given, the agent is however vaguely conscious of them. Other facts have to be gone into much more carefully: The agent has to deal here with a number of unknown quantities. He is looking for a solution (S). He

expects S to bring about a good result (R). Soon he becomes aware that alongside R he may also get R_1, R_2, R_3, results which may prove undesirable. He must therefore take into account more facts, facts which had not seemed 'relevant' at the beginning. If at the beginning, he had only considered a and b as the relevant facts, he must now include c, d, and e as well. It is only when he is quite sure that none of the relevant facts have been overlooked by him, that he may take the last step: to try the solution of his moral problem.

One of the reasons for calling ethics a practical science is the relation between the principle of ethical relevancy and human motives, aims, purposes and above all actions. How often do we meet with 'deep' analytical minds who, by sheer accumulation of relevant 'facts', transform their situation into an 'impasse' a blind-alley from which there seems no escape.

It may well be that in the striving for a working hypothesis, some wild suppositions about what the relevant facts are, have first to be made, but will be later discarded. We may, for instance, try for a moment to forget one of the first principles involved in a conflict, assume it to be irrelevant, and then try to imagine what possible result would follow. Such a

process of imaginative isolation, of imagining 'Isolates', is nothing else but the process of abstraction. In moral reasoning the principle of relevancy, fundamental in fixing the boundaries of a situation, is a highly abstract procedure.

10. Moral Meaning and purpose.

The various facts and combinations of facts in a given situation, are all functions of the purpose or purposes of the agent or agents involved in it.

As such, the notion of purpose is of central importance in the analysis of a moral situation. In a narrow sense, the meaning of a moral situation is frequently equated with the purpose of the agent. But in addition to human motives and purposes, such a situation also includes various sorts of empirical facts. Therefore in explaining a situation, we must use both causal and purposive explanations. The referential meaning of a situation may, from the moral point of view, be simply meaningless, if the facts are such that no purposive action or no statement of purpose by the agents is possible.

Even if etymologically the meaning of 'meaning' is intention or purpose, it would be very rash to equate 'moral meaning' with purpose. Such an interpretation would lead us directly to a morality which explains every action in terms of purpose, and justifies all means by the ends

pursued. If a situation gets its moral meaning only in the broad framework of the end to be achieved, it would result in the meaninglessness of any action done out of the sense of duty alone -- which is not the case. A moral situation can still have meaning if the deliberation results in an action undertaken from a sense of duty.

In such a case, 'acting according to duty' becomes itself a purpose, an ideal, but then duty in this sense is very different from rules; yet, as in all ethical problems, it is dangerous to make generalisations based on analogies. A 'rule' in an underground army fighting against oppression can be as morally important as any moral duty, while the same rule in the army of a country free from any danger of attack might be considered a necessary evil or even pointless. The task of the moral philosophers, among others, is to try to explain these continuous transitions from non-moral situations to moral situations and vice versa, from moral situations to non-moral situations. Such statements as "the Congress party of India has lost its sense of mission" can be interpreted empirically: the Congress party has no longer any concrete, definite aim to attain and thus has no sense of mission. It may interpret morally and the meaning would be: "Unless the Congress Party finds a mission to fulfil "the situation will deteriorate". In order to do this,

some of the old rules and some of the old purposes have to be replaced. New rules, new aims must be introduced, but since many old rules and many old aims are still valid, the new ones must be introduced in such a way as to be consistent with the old ones. Hence, the element of rationality needed in transforming the meaningless situation into a meaningful one. On the other hand, if the new sense of mission is mainly rationally determined, there might be the danger, that the newly formulated situation might not be conducive to action: hence the need for emotively loaded sense of mission.

In the life of an individual as well of societies, there are ups and downs in their dedication to a purpose. In pursuit of their aims men (whether in success or in failure) alter the nature not only of these same aims but also their own nature. These alterations in the agents involved as well as in the purposes, determine a change in the meaning of the situation. Yet during that process of change, there occur periods during which situations are either meaningless (no sense of dedication at all) or with a vague meaning. In such periods, some of the moral principles are reinforced, re-assessed or abandoned: moral judgments and moral terms loose the standard meaning they had in virtue

of being used to explain the original situation.

Problems of language during periods of conflict between old and new generations become very prominent: words like Zionist, pioneer, idealist and even statements meaningful for the old generation, become meaningless for the young. In Israel nowadays, the new generation which has grown up after the creation of the State, has no use for all the highly emotive language which was prevalent in the fifty years before the creation of the State. Such a language was fitted for the 'young generation' of the period between 1920 and 1950. The ideal of a national home where Jews could build an autonomous society, culturally, economically and politically was enough to give meaning to hundreds of thousands of lives. What was an IDEAL then is NOW a FACT. Part of the 'given' now is the 'ideal' of the past. The young generation in its efforts to get involved in the new situation will discard old words and old cliches, and will concentrate on newly formulated principles which are relevant to their aims.

It would be wrong to conclude that the essence of the problem (the conflict between the old and the new generations) is a problem of language. It would be naïve to think that be ceasing to use the 'old' terminology we could solve the conflict. The solution will be found if, and only if, on

the practical plane, the young generation will get involved in the new situation and will give it whatever meaning they care to give it. This new meaning will be a function of the newly created facts and the newly formulated ideals.

The great merit of linguistic analysis is, that by greatly emphasising the function of language in explaining different meanings of conflicting situations it helps us solve paradoxes and riddles. Yet the solution of paradoxes and riddles, important as it is, is not by itself the solution of a specific conflict, nothing in this respect can take the place of new and original thinking, followed up by an involvment in the conflict. This involvment, as we have said before, is made after taking into consideration whatever is relevant in the factual situation and then making one or several value judgments, which give the situation its moral meaning.

If we take as another example the policy of Apartheid in South Africa we can easily detect in the same factual situation a number of 'moral situations'. The number of moral situations is not a function of different moral principles only. For a christian missionary, the boundaries of the situation is certainly not the white population in S.A. and their immediate interests. For the S.African nationalist, Father Huddleston's preachings are oblivious

of what really 'matters' in S.A. For an African leader the meaning of the situation is altogether different from the first two. If we accept Hare's view that the principle one has is dependent on the sort of person one is, viz. that the moral principles of the Christian preacher, the S.A. Nationalist and the African leader are all equal and worthy of respect. It is true that in his contribution before the Aritotelian Society: 'Universalisability' we are given to understand that not all maxims or principles of conduct are of the U type (universalisable). For instance, a patriot who does not agree that other people owe similar duties to their countries, has not a patriotism of the U type.[1] Until now the impression was that universalisability was the property of all moral principles whether good or bad, but now it seems as if universalisability is more of a value word than a factual characteristic of moral language. Patriotism is usually understood not to be of the U type, if U type means to agree and act accordingly that other people owe similar duties to their countries. There might be a minority of 'patriots' in the world whose 'patriotism' is of the U type but then they would be called 'universalists'. Patriotism plus universalisability equal Universalism.

Instead of arguing about the meaning of patriotism it is much more fruitful to explore the meaning of moral situations where such relations between individuals and countries arise. The discussion can be on the following points:

(a) Whether the relevant facts included in the situation are identical.

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(1) P.A.S. 1954-55 "Universalisability" by Hare, p.99.

(b) Whether the principles are the same but the relevant facts are not.

(c) How far the various individual items of the situation are effected by the variations in the boundaries and in the aims; how far words and statements have different meanings according to the different combinations of relevant facts and general aims.

It is sometimes pointed out as an argument in favour of the impossibility or arguing about questions of value, that very often such discussions end with two or more highly subjective beliefs, easily compared with judgments of personal tastes. Value statements when made by a sincere person are not highly respected because they are subjective and personal, but rather because they are the result of a great number of other beliefs which, together, form a system of a more or less coherent meaning. These systems of beliefs cannot be brought into any discussion about one single statement implying one principle only, because this would be a very tedious discussion, difficult though not impossible. One could even venture the view that when a discussion ends on a note of two opposed value judgments, this could be sometimes the beginning of the real discussion. It might be because mankind has been accustomed to witness such situations ending with a solution where force is used, that

it considers it impossible to solve them otherwise. The memory of the wars of religion, the present ideological warfare, are all here to remind us that IT IS A FACT THAT BEYOND A CERTAIN POINT YOU CANNOT DISCUSS MATTERS OF PRINCIPLE. Yet, when the two opposing camps, living as they are in the shadow of a world holocaust, threatening to destroy all mankind, and hence all the meaning of life, consider the facts of the situation, i.e. the inevitability of the use of violence for solving ideological conflict in a new light, then a new situation is created where new facts are taken into consideration and a new 'ought' is introduced: world ideological differences ought never to be solved by violence. This is soon followed by another 'ought': people <u>ought</u> always to discuss rationally problems of principle even when they seem irreconcilable.

Many people believe that we are living in a very decisive and dangerous transition period. If this is true, it would not be surprising that such a great emphasis is laid on the analysis of moral situations in terms of linguistics. New situations are being created by the development of technology and science, and in the active part taken by more and more peoples in the determination of the fate of mankind. Such new situations, with their different meanings make meaningless certain aspects of the

old situations; and linguistic analysis is very helpful in this context. If philosophy will limit itself to a descriptive analysis of linguistic usage as a matter of principle, and in order to remain neutral in the struggle between the old and the new, its function - to make value statements and shape the meaning of the new situation - will be fulfilled by others. Sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists, poets, novelists, religious preachers, all will combine in order to give meaning to the new situation. Unlike philosophers or rather moral philosophers, these poets, novelists and others, would not be inhibited from advocating a morality, since they would not be bound by logical positivist principles of meaningfulness.

It might be that philosophers are loth to take part in a discussion about matters of principle out of respect for the function of philosophy, (perhaps something to do with the pursuit of the Absolute), they prefer to remain 'au dessus de la mêlée'. Thus we are to understand that Russell's involvment in the anti-nuclear campaign and Prof. Ayer's involvment in the anti-apartheid campaign are not done by them as philosophers but as private citizens. So while great scientists such as Einstein express the belief that there might be a common thread

between his highly abstract scientific and mathematical theories, his love of music and his philosophical pantheism, we are led to believe that with philosophers, and just with philosophers, it should be otherwise.

Instead of a living philosophy we are offered a philosophy as remote from life as possible, a philosophical prophylactic against the deceptiveness of ambitious theories of value is offered instead of bold tentatives to give meaning to our life.