

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS:

FACTS AND OBLIGATIONS

That there is a logical distinction between statement of fact and value, so that from a statement that something is the case no conclusion can be drawn about what ought to be done, has become axiomatic in a good deal of recent writing about ethics¹. R.M. Hare has formulated the principle as "No imperative conclusion can be validly drawn from a set of premisses which does not contain at least one imperative". In order not to beg the disputed question of whether an "ought" proposition is best interpreted as an imperative, I prefer to put it more generally and to say that no conclusion as to what ought or ought not to be done can be validly inferred from a set of premisses which does not at least contain one term which states, indicates or implies that actions of a certain kind ought or ought not to be done. Nevertheless others have pointed out that statements of fact are often adduced as reasons from which duties can be inferred². My purpose in this part of discourse will be to examine some kinds of instance in which it appears that an obligation is being deduced from statements of fact, to try to see whether the factual premisses are indeed purely factual, and what is the force of the "ought" in the conclusion.

As a formal point, it seems unquestionable that no conclusion containing an "ought" can be strictly deduced from premisses which only state facts. This must surely be so, since deductive logic is concerned with getting pints out of pint pots, and nothing more can appear in the conclusion than can be extracted from the premisses taken together. Yet in much moral argument or persuasion, this principle does not seem to be held. Hume, indeed, in a well-known passage often taken as the locus classicus in these discussions, says that such a principle if recognized would "subvert all the vulgar systems of morality". "In every system of morality which I have hitherto met with I have always remarked that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary way of reasoning, and establishes the being of a God or makes observations concerning human affairs; when all of a sudden I am surprised to find, that instead of the usual copulations of propositions, is and is not, I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an ought or ought not. This change is imperceptible, but is, however, of the last consequence. For as this ought, or ought not, express some new relation or affirmation, 'tis necessary that it should be observed and explained; and at the same time that a reason should be given, for what seems altogether inconceivable, how this new relation can be a deduction from others, which are entirely different from it"³.

Hume is surely right in saying that there is a logical jump here. But is he right in saying that the change from propositions not connected with an "ought" to one so connected is "imperceptible"? No doubt in popular moral argument and preaching it often goes unperceived, but it may be possible to see how the transition is made. For in actual moral discussion, these transitions are continually being made; as indeed they are in Hume's own discussion of how morality works in social practice, where he shows ideas of obligation being extracted from factual premisses, through inducing people to see how they can take an interest in what is to the general interest⁴.

I shall now consider some of the ways in which statement of obligation is connected with statements of fact, in order to see both what its force is, and what is the nature of the transition.

"The state of the roads being what it is, if you want to catch the 10.30 p.m. train you ought to leave now".

This is a hypothetical imperative; the apodosis states what, according to reasonable expectations, is likely to be a necessary, if not sufficient, condition for fulfilling a desire indicated by the protasis. Can the statement be rephrased so as to cut out "ought"? If it were rephrased as "If you do not leave now, you will not catch the train", it would become a simple predication, and it might be falsified if the train were late.

The force of the "ought" is to say amongst other things that one should not bank on trains being late. If you are to be able to do what you want to do, knowing the facts about the roads and according to all reasonable expectations of when the train is likely to arrive, you ought to leave now. The "ought" here has the force of warning you that you would be flying in the face of reasonable expectations of success if you did not do this. The recommendation is only made on the assumption that you have in fact got a certain desire or purpose. It points out that if you are wanting to achieve your purpose, and if you are prepared to behave reasonable, you are committed to taking certain steps. As Kant put it in writing about hypothetical imperatives. "Who wills the end, wills also (so far as reason decides his conduct) the means in his power which are indispensably necessary thereto"⁵. The operative words here are "so far as reason decides his conduct". Hence the "ought", and why even in a hypothetical imperative one cannot say that an "ought" follows simply from statements on fact. It might appear so; as when I say, "I want to catch the 10.30 train; it is close on 10 O'clock and will take me half an hour to get to the station, so I ought to leave now". In so far as "I ought to leave now" gives information about means to my end ("my leaving now will give me time to catch the train") it is implied by the indicative premisses. The "ought" adds the force of a recommendation I am making to myself as to what I had

better do, on the assumption that I am adopting a prudential attitude. If I am not adopting such an attitude, I might say, "But all the same I am going to stay another five minutes". So even the prudential "ought" in a hypothetical imperative is not, I think, entailed by indicative premisses; it can be overridden by a moral "ought" as when, for instance, in spite of the fact that I want to catch the train I decide I ought to wait because I have promised to meet someone.

In a categorical imperative, as Kant also pointed out, the "ought" does not state that a certain means-end commitment is reasonable within a presumed purpose. Kant said it enunciated a universal law; we may prefer to say a "principle", in order to avoid the implications of command suggested by the word "law", as by the word "imperative". But whether we call it law, principle, recommendation or prescription, a statement such as "All men ought to tell the truth" is not a dubious general statement of fact, such as "Everyone tells the truth", or "All men are liars", and those who break it do not invalidate the general principle (if it is valid). Since categorical imperatives (if there be such) are never held to be derived from factual premisses, they raise no problems relevant to this discussion (though, of course, they raise plenty of others).

One reaction to the sharp distinction between statements of facts and moral expressions has been to deny that the latter

are assertions at all, and to interpret them as expressions of attitude, joined with an injunction (conveyed by the word "ought") used to get others to share our attitude. So "You ought to tell the truth" becomes "I approver of telling the truth : do so, too"⁶. But this way of putting it has come in for a good deal of criticism on the score that it reduces the function of ethical language either to the propagandist one of trying to influence people's attitudes and/or to the dictatorial one of commanding them to agree with us; and neither of these does justice to the possibility of moral argument or rational persuasion⁷. And in moral arguments, people put forward facts as considerations which may cause their opponents to change their views; as also in making one's own decisions, one may be influenced by having a fact formerly unnoticed brought to one's attention. Does this go to show that there is, as Hume remarked, a transition from facts to "ought", as Hume showed in his practice of actual moral argument? Is there a kind of inference which is not strict deduction, but which allows for this transition?

Mr. Stuart Hampshire⁸ holds that it is wrong to draw "the inference from the fact that moral or practical judgments cannot be logically derived from statements of fact, that they cannot be based on or established exclusively by reference to beliefs about matters of fact". Hence, he says, moral judgments are discussable; the only kind of rational discourse is not strict deduction, but there may be another "loose kind of

inference", by which we pass to moral decisions. There may, indeed; but I am not happy about saying that these judgements can be "established exclusively" by reference to beliefs about matters of fact, unless we are seeing facts not just as what is the case, but in the light of some guiding attitude of fairness or sympathy. Otherwise, why should a consideration such as "You ought not to hit him because he is smaller than you" carry any appeal?

Professor Toulmin in the The Place of Reason in Ethics also says that factual statements may be "good reasons" for moral judgements, and calls the process by which we pass from facts to values "evaluative inference". The transition is made by invoking a formulation of what he says is "The function of ethics", a general principle such as those elsewhere called "rules of inference"⁹. That is to say, the inference can be drawn because, whether explicitly or not, this principle is being used; it states that the function of ethics is "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". So a moral judgment could be derived from factual statements if it could be said that "this action would be likely to promote the maximum harmony of interests". This is reminiscent of Benthamite utilitarianism, and raised the same difficulty: how do I pass from saying this action would promote the maximum harmony of interests to saying I ought to do the action, unless

I make some judgment (like the major premiss of the practical syllogism) to the effect that to promote a harmony of interests is good ("good" here meaning "desirable", or "a worth aim" - either would be an evaluative expression). Toulmin thinks this is provided for by introducing his view of "the function of ethics" as a rule of inference. But this view of the function of ethics is not uncontroversial; it might be possible to argue that some interests should be eliminated rather than promoted or harmonized, and that ethics are in fact sometimes used to do just this. To call this view a "rule of inference" suggests it is less controversial than it is.

Mr. Hare in a review of Toulmin's book¹⁰ Philosophical Quarterly, Vol. 1, No. 4, 1951, pp. 372-375 says that Toulmin's "evaluative inference" from fact to value is in effect the old Aristotelian practical syllogism in disguise. In the practical syllogism, the major premiss is a general rule to the effect that such and such actions or objects are good, or desirable, or should be chosen, while the minor premiss states the fact that x is an action or object of this kind, from which follows the conclusion that it ought to be done or chosen. In Toulmin's scheme, the major premiss is replaced by a general rule of inference which says we are entitled to pass from the one factual premiss to the conclusion-the rule in this case being that the function of ethical judgements is to harmonize desires. But this introduces a value judgment; it could be put as a major premiss

stating a general principle, e.g. "We ought to act in the kind of way which will serve to harmonize desires", or even "to find ways of harmonizing desires is what we should use ethics for" (if we are wanting to stick close to the notion of "function", and noting that in fact ethics is not always used in this way). Whether we prefer to call this a major premiss, or a rule of inference of (as Toulmin is now inclined to do) a "warrant" does not alter the fact that a sentence introducing a judgment about values, and not only about facts, has been introduced. By "Value judgment" I understand broadly some expression indicating approval or disapproval, or being used to commend or condemn. Following on this, if action is called for (there may be purely contemplative kinds of valuation where it is not), we can conclude that certain kinds of action would be more appropriate than others and in some cases where action is not optional, this may be of a kind to which we are committed if we make the value judgement at all. Hence the "ought". I look on road accidents as bad things, and therefore I ought to do what I can to avoid them. It would be logical to say "but all the same I do nothing to avoid them", admitting that this is reprehensible on my part since I own road accidents are bad. It would not be logical to say "but all the same I ought not to try to avoid them".

I conclude that formally speaking the logical point must stand, that value judgments or statements about what ought to be done cannot be deduced from purely factual statements. But there

is the question of whether in practice it is always possible to make a sharp distinction between bare factual statements and statements which are valuationally loaded, so that they at least indicate, if not imply, recommendations about what ought or ought not to be done. The notion of "fact" itself is, of course, far from simple. Ideally, it means something which actually is or was the case; in practice we have to make do with statements of fact, which are propositions giving interpretations of what is or was the case. So in practice we have more than bare description. We have interpretation which selects, emphasizes, relates. If this is so to some extent even in describing the facts in a physical situation, it is still more so in describing the facts of social situations, which are the kinds of facts usually adduced as reasons supporting moral judgments or decisions. For facts about social situations, or "social facts" as they are sometimes less accurately called, are not just statements about individuals with certain physical and biological properties. They are statements about people occupying various roles vis-a-vis one another. And a role is relationship of a recognized kind within a given society, with some notion of the kind of conduct appropriate to it build into its description. The difference can be seen by considering a well-known passage in Hume¹¹, which ignores this notion of social relationship. "Let us choose any inanimate object, such as an oak or elm; and let us suppose that, by the dropping of its seed, it produces a sapling below

it, which springing up by degrees, at last overtops and destroys the parent tree : I ask, if in this instance there be wanting any relation, which is discoverable in parricide or ingratitude? Is not the one tree the cause of the other's existence; and the latter the cause of the destruction of the former, in the same manner as when a child murders his parent? 'Tis not sufficient to reply, that a choice or will is wanting. For in the case of parricide a will does not give rise to any different relations, but is only the cause from which the action is deriv'd; and consequently produces the same relations, that in the oak or elm arise from some other principles".

Hume says that what is lacking in the one case and found in the other is a sentiment, and the sentiment is an emotion of approval or disapproval within the breast of the observer. But if the relation of a child to parent is considered as social, and not merely as physical, it becomes a role relation constituted by certain notions of appropriate conduct which are built into its description. These may, of course, vary in different societies, but there will always be some such notion, so that it is possible to speak of "filial" and "unfilial" conduct to designate ways of behaving which are appropriate or inappropriate in the role. Indeed, the history of the terms "natural" and "unnatural" shows how deep-seated is the belief that certain kinds of conduct are part of the normal description of a social relation. The ambiguities in "natural" and "unnatural" may suggest these terms are

better avoided in these discussions (I shall return to this in a later context). Social behaviour is always artificial, in the sense that it is not just instinctive or impulsive. It is informed by expectations about what it is appropriate to do in certain types of situation, and this only seems "natural" where the expectations are so strongly grounded in custom and so widely accepted that they come to seem self-evident¹². So Sir David Ross and the late Professor Prichard used to tell us that it was intuitively self-evident that if X had borrowed money from Y, he had an obligation to repay it, or that if A was the father of B, B had a duty to help A in his old age. But these are role relations where the beliefs about appropriate conduct are so firmly established that what it is right to do gets seen not as a decision, but as part of the facts of the situation. If I suggest that this "self-evidence" is partly the result of established custom, this does not mean that such judgments are merely "socially-conditioned" and so may be arbitrary. They may also be the result of the sense of fairness, sympathy and something like Toulmin's principle of the need to make for harmony of interests, working on custom so as to reinforce or amend it. And these, I suggest, are among our means of criticism and rationality in moral judgments. For fairness and sympathy are attitudes which help us to put ourselves imaginatively into the role of the other people in the situation, and so help us to be more objective about our own role in relation to them. And this is surely one way of trying to be rational. Making fairness, sympathy and a

will to harmony our guides, the facts of the situations in which we have to act can then be seen as constituting good reasons for decisions; but they are not good reasons on their own account, and apart from these guides. Seen under the guides of aggressiveness and selfishness the facts might provide good reasons for different courses of action. So we should still say that it is only possible to pass from descriptions of fact to moral judgments by the help of some guiding evaluation. This may not be explicitly enunciated as a principle; in the case of the morality of role behaviour it may have become part of the accepted notion of what is implied in occupying the role of e.g. a debtor or a parent.

The notion of rule, therefore, I suggest provides a link between the factual descriptions of social situations, and moral decisions about what ought to be done in them. It has, so to speak, a foot in both camps. Where roles have become recurrent and generally recognized forms of relationship within a social way of life, certain norms of behaviour become, as I have suggested, built into their description. So individuals acting in such roles are not all the time thrown back on their own first-hand judgments as to what they ought to do. And however much we may pride ourselves on the individual, personal character of our own moral decisions, or pour scorn on established codes if we like to think of ourselves as "Outsiders", we all in fact depend on what can be taken for granted in role morality to a far greater extent

than we always realize. But that this implies acceptance or rejection of norms, and not bare reading of facts, is shown on the occasions where role morality is challenged (for instance the Victorian notions of what constituted "filial behaviour", especially on the part of daughters), or where there are conflicts of role, and difficult decisions have to be made about priorities. It then becomes evident that role morality, however strongly established, does not just exist as a natural fact outside the minds of individuals, exercising casual pressure on them. It acts as a pressure indeed, but it is the pressure of established tradition, existing in the minds of individuals through their social education, and continually being strengthened or weakened by their sometimes more and sometimes less responsible acceptance or rejection. So when the "facts of the situation" seem to point inescapably to certain obligations, this may be because they are the facts of a social situation, seen as already charged with the norms of roles as established within a social tradition. And these must either be accepted or rejected. When the acceptance is tacit or taken for granted, the norms are likely to be seen simply as part of the facts of the situation¹³. Where they are not taken for granted, a personal decision has to be made to accept or reject them.

When therefore an "ought" follows from statements concerning roles ("X is your son, therefore you ought not to treat him like that" : "Since you are a doctor, you ought to respect

the confidences of your patients"), what is happening is that a person is being referred to value-acceptances which he can be presumed to hold. The force of the "ought" is not merely to make a recommendation (which sounds too tentative), still less to issue a command (which sounds too dictatorial), but to recall a commitment to act in accordance with these value acceptances. This, I think, holds both for the second person, "you ought", and for the first person "I ought". The former "ought" is more likely to invoke as the reasons for a decision accepted norms of role morality, put as facts of a social situation. The latter is more likely to register a decision in which adherence to these is reasserted, or is questioned on account of adherence to some other commitment. In neither case is the "ought" deduced from valuationally neutral statements of fact.

Another range of instances where "ought" statements appear to follow from statements of fact occurs in talking of purposive activities or of things made for a purpose. "If that is a knife you ought to be able to cut with it" differs from "If that creature is a whale, it ought to be a mammal", in that in the latter case the "ought" can be displaced by the purely factual (and timeless) "will be". If the creature proves not to be a mammal, it is no whale, and that is that. But if we cannot cut with this tool, then is it not knife? Perhaps, or perhaps not. It might be an exceedingly blunt knife. Efficiency to fulfil the purpose for which a thing has been made is a matter of degree,

and not an all-or-none affair as when something is or is not a mammal.

When words are defined teleologically, i.e. with reference to the purpose of the thing defined, we do not recognize instances of them by being shown them ostensively, as we might of e.g. red things. We have to be told what they are for¹⁴. A knife is a single-bladed tool to cut with. If you were given some blunt instrument that could never conceivably have cut even butter, you would not want to say it was a bad knife; you would not call it a knife at all. So if one says "That is a knife, so you ought to be able to cut with it", the "ought" conclusion follows from what looks like a factual premiss only because the meaning of "knife" is something with which it ought to be possible to cut (so the conclusion is really analytic). An object like a knife has a functional definition with reference to its purpose, and we may ask how sub-standard in efficiency such an object may be before we begin refusing to accord it the class name. Sometimes reference to a standard is presupposed, and then terms have not only functional but also evaluative meaning. I do not think there is a hard and fast line between the two. In some words the evaluative meaning is part of the definition, as those used in a pejorative or commendatory sense, like "murderer", "late", "statesman", "saint". (Here an "ought" can follow, as in "He arrived late for the lecture, so ought to have got up earlier",

since "late" means "after he ought to have done"). I suggest that evaluative meaning, though not necessarily an evaluative definition, is normally attached to purposive activities and the practitioners of these activities. To be an instance of one of these, one must achieve a certain modicum of effectiveness in carrying out the activity. Otherwise one is not even a bad instance, but a "bogus" or not an instance at all. Take politics as such an activity, accepting for the sake of argument Oakeshott's definition¹⁵ : "the activity of attending to the general arrangements of a set of people whom chance or choice had brought together". If common actions directed to general arrangements produced merely a free-for-all shambles, we should not, I think, consider that they counted as politics. There is an element of "stipulation" here : different people may draw the line in different ways; we need not say there is an "essential nature of politics". But there is a measure of effectiveness in being able to get people to work together, even if only in order to frustrate other people, which a person's activities will have to show if we are to call them "political". If someone is quite incapable of doing this, we should not be prepared to call him a politician, not even a bad politician, but perhaps only a "would-be" politician. Moreover, in considering purposive activities, it is surely reasonable to discuss them not only in terms of what it is to do them, but what it is to do them well, which is why

political science, from Aristotle on, is likely to include recommendations as well as descriptions, and why the recommendations as to what ought to be done appear to be following from the descriptions.

The loaded meaning becomes an evaluative definition in the case of commendatory or honorific terms like "statesman". A statesman is someone who carries our political activity on a fairly high level if he is to earn the name. We have noted that class membership in the case of terms with evaluative meaning is not assigned in an all-or-none way, but as a matter of degree. So it may be said not only that A is a better statesman than B, but that he is more of a statesman than B (or "more of a politician", or "more of a philosopher".) In some cases when it looks as if an "ought" conclusion follows from factual premisses, this will be because one of the terms in the premisses has an evaluative definition, "Since A is a statesman, the measures he put forward ought not to be ill-conceived". Note that it would also be possible to say that since the measures put forward were ill-conceived, A was no statesman. This becomes analytic. But it is not pointless, if we are considering whether to apply the term "statesman" with its evaluative definition to A or not. And if it is applied, the implication is that a certain standard of wise conduct can be taken for granted.

Role activities purposively undertaken are likely to have evaluative meaning not only in that some modicum of efficiency in the role is presupposed when according the name, but also in that, as we have already seen, the name may be withheld if certain generally acknowledged obligations of the role are not observed. The role of doctor is a clear instance. If a person fails to behave in accordance with the norms of the role beyond a point, people may say that "He is no doctor". It might be said that the operational definition of this point is given by a person being struck off the Medical Register. But this apart, I think it is fair to say that the social fact of the doctor-patient relationship includes certain obligations in its description, and if these are grossly disregarded on either side the name of the role will be considered inappropriate and withheld.

Thus purposively assumed roles may be said to have evaluative meaning. What about ascribed roles, based for instance on natural relations, such as X's role in being the son of Y? It might be said that since such roles are not voluntarily assumed, they cannot be forfeited through inefficiency or misconduct. And indeed Y may say of X, "However he has behaved, he is still my son". But it may be possible nevertheless to distinguish the social from the natural relationship. Y is saying that he still recognizes the obligations of being X's father; it might have been open to him to sever the social, as distinct from the natural relationship, by disinheriting X and considering

himself no longer bound by the obligations of the role of X's father. Hence the social relationship can have an evaluative meaning and the name be withheld in some cases where the natural relationship still holds. And contrariwise, a stranger by blood may be adopted or initiated into the social role of a kinship relationship. So it can be said that the role as a social and not merely a natural relationship has an evaluative aspect, and is only held to obtain where certain standards of expected conduct are at least to some extent observed. This can hold even of persons occupying roles of rivals or enemies vis-a-vis one another. ("How can I go on calling you my enemy when you are deliberately giving me chances to escape?") The test is a standard of socially expected conduct, not necessarily of mutually benevolent conduct¹⁶. Thus, in cases where descriptions of facts are descriptive of social situations in which the relations are role relations, a rigid distinction between descriptive and prescriptive language cannot be maintained. When reasons for moral decisions are given by citing the facts of a situation, the situation may already be seen in terms of certain expectations as to appropriate conduct in it, if the situation consists of people in certain roles vis-a-vis each other, such as father and child, or debtor and creditor. So an agent in deciding what he ought to do, when he considers the facts, must associate or dissociate himself from these general expectations as to appropriate behaviour. And when some one else, as spectator, tries

to describe these role expectations as held by other people, it will be well for him to remember that his own terminology for describing social roles contains terms some of which have evaluative meanings, and also terms like "normal", "harmonious", "integrative", "disintegrative", which carry their own sorts of evaluative estimate with them¹⁷. This need not mean that studies of this kind are not "scientific" and biased by personal preferences. It means that we need to recognize that the subject matter can, it seems, only be described through terms which are to some extent evaluative.

Lastly, I come to an important group of instances in which injunctions about what ought to be done seem to be being derived from what appear as statements of fact, namely many of the injunctions of religious morality. Moore, Popper and others have insisted that even if the facts adduced as reasons are facts of a spiritual or metaphysical kind, they cannot lead to a statement of obligation without the introduction of a premiss containing a distinctively moral judgment. Thus if, as Kant says, religious morality consists in seeing our duties as divine commands, the obligation to obey follows not from the fact that God commands, but only if this is conjoined with the belief that what God commands is right. In many people's minds this is analytically implied, since the idea of God is evaluatively charged with the idea of goodness.

Sometimes a religious injunction containing an "ought" is related to statements of fact as the conditions on which certain aspirations can be fulfilled. Here the logic is that of the means-end "ought" hypothetical imperatives. If one is committed to a certain purpose, certain necessary means ought to be taken. Sometimes, however, the fact cited as a reason for an "ought" looks like neither a fact of command, nor a condition within the context of an end to be achieved. The facts are adduced as direct reasons for obligations to certain ways of behaving. In general, I think that this is because the facts are looked on not as valuationally neutral, but either as evoking gratitude or as somehow exemplary. "Because Christ so loved us, we ought also to love one another" - the obligation is not only an obligation to gratitude, but the facts are held out as exemplary of a way of life which, if accepted, brings commitment to certain ways of behaviour¹⁸. A moral judgment is implied in accepting the facts as exemplary, and therefore a moral conclusion can be drawn about the kind of behaviour which follows accordingly. But the moral judgment which accepts the facts as exemplars need not depend on comparing them with an already accepted moral ideal which they can be taken to illustrate (as Kant held, when he said that the Holy One of the Gospels must first be compared with our ideal of moral perfection before we can recognize Him as such)¹⁹. In so far as religious morality can give new moral vision, it may be by producing exemplars for ways of behaving which, while appealing to existing moral judgments, can yet also show a better kind of morality.

(This is the a fortiori technique of the Gospel parables).

So in some of the cases in religious morality where facts are held to entail obligations, this happens because the facts are seen as exemplars within a way of life to which the person is committed. There are, however, also forms of religious morality where the kinds of facts adduced as reasons for behaviour are not exemplary but are said to be facts about the nature of the world, and it is said that anyone leading a moral life should conform to these. This holds of the long tradition which presents morality as in some way "living according to nature", where the notion of "natural law", is used in a moral as well as a physical sense, setting out the most general principles according to which human beings should behave if they are to fulfil their "nature" as human beings. Here we find a combination of the descriptive prescriptive notions of law, and the notion of "nature" as standing not only for the totality of things that exist in rerum natura, but also carrying evaluative meaning according to which the "nature" of a thing is to be a good instance of its type. And so too, with the notion of "human". From one point of view we might say that all the ways in which people can live and behave can be called "human" in a perfectly proper sense, and we can count nothing human as alien to us. But from another point of view, the notion of "human", as that of "natural", may be used with evaluative meaning. This way of speaking may, however, bring out

something important for morality. It may be a way of saying that morality does not only depend on personal decisions as to how one ought to live, but can also be a matter of the discovery of principles according to which it is possible for people to live together in ways which lead to an increasing capacity for moral growth and development, and that this capacity is weakened in ways of living which disregard these principles. In the European tradition of natural law, one such principle has gained some form of belief in the unity of humanity, according to which obligations are recognized to any human beings as such and not only to members of special groups; and another has been the principle of pacta sunt servanda, making for the possibility of mutual trust. When such ways of behaving are described as more "natural" or more "human" than others, I think what is happening is that human beings are being looked on not just as members of the biological species homo sapiens, but as having a social role in the universe. So "natural" and "human" now become role concepts, and as such have a normative element built into them. Thus the "dignity" of the human being" may be invoked, calling attention to a man's obligation to live according to the norms of this social role, and to the obligation on others to respect his right to do so. And it may be when they fail to do so that the evaluative meanings of the terms "human" and "natural" get invoked.

We have obviously travelled a long way here from mere statements of fact. The facts of nature or of the order of the universe with which it is said that the moral life should conform, are either principles of moral development or valuationally-charged descriptions of what is thought of as the human role. We cannot therefore, read our duties off the facts, for a moral decision depends on willingness to take the responsibility of accepting or rejecting certain values. We must accept the logical rule that no obligation is deducible from mere matters of fact. But facts are seldom "mere" when they are facts of social situations. They become facts of social situations because they are seen within the context of ways in which people live together, and the common values these involve. And anyone who responsibly accepts such a way of living accepts it's commitments.