

SOME ASPECTS OF ETHICAL PHILOSOPHY OF RICHARD M. HARE

*Thesis submitted for award of Ph.D. Degree
under the supervision of Dr. P. Roy at the
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P R E F A T O R Y N O T E

This work took unusually longer time to be completed as I remain outside the magic circle of the academics. Yet, as good luck would have it, the project is over, and the dissertation is now submitted for evaluation.

In course of drafting the dissertation I have been sustained emotionally and otherwise by various persons and friends, I owe a great deal to them, and do hereby gratefully acknowledge my indebtedness to them.

I have been admiring R.M. Hare as a moral philosopher ever since my Post-Graduate days. But my admiration has always been of a sort of critical estimation of the important work that Hare has done in Ethics.

I decided to take up a couple of problems that emerge from Hare's position as a moral philosopher. I have taken, for example, his position in relation to Naturalism, his thesis and version of universalizability, his views about the levels of moral thinking, etc. I do not propose to give a detailed account of Hare's moral philosophy, but I have tried to outline his development as a moral thinker through three of his basic works, The Language of Morals, Freedom and Reason, and Moral Thinking. I must confess that I learnt a lot from Hare's critics, but all the while I have endeavoured to be fair and honest to the best of my humble capabilities. As an outcome of my study of Hare's moral

(II)

philosophy I developed a certain inclination towards viewing the issue between facts and values, and it is with this idea that I have devoted myself to look at the matter from my own point of view.

Phillipa Foot has been one of the early critics of Hare, and appropriately I suppose, I have one Section on examining her ideas about Hare's position. Hare's greatest contribution, at least so it seems to me, has been to have given a new slant to the problem of universalizability. I have discussed the issue in two chapters. One dealing with Kant's notion of universalizability and the other dealing with Mackie's attack on the thesis. There abounds many other problems in Hare's writings, but those mentioned above have been enough for being my cups of tea.

I should like to put on record my gratefulness to my Supervisor for his kindness and courtesy. It is but for him that I could complete the project while living and working in a non-academic domain.

I owe much to my wife, Rama, and my son, Tunkai, for bearing with my moods approvingly. My parents would be happier if I succeed in my venture, and that should be for me a matter of great satisfaction.

(III)

I have been luckier to have genial association and encouragement of Dr Ladli Roy and his wife, Mrs Rama Roy. And Miss Gouri Sen has been of immense help and saved many a trouble by her timely advice. Ever since I embarked on the project Dr Ratnabali Roy has been keenly interested in my work. I owe her much by way of friendship and warmth of goodwill.

The members of the academic staff have been cooperative. I thank them all sincerely.


(Gitansu Kar)

Abbreviations

LM The Language of Morals

FR Freedom and Reason

MT Moral Thinking

C O N T E N T E

	Page
1. Chapter - I	
The Development of Hare's Moral Philosophy from The Language of Morals to Moral Thinking	1-20
2. Chapter - II	
Hare on Moral Reasoning	21-30
3. Chapter - III	
A critique of Hare's Position: Phillipa Foot: Moral and Empirical Criteria	31-47
4. Chapter - IV	
Moral Universalisation : Kant and Hare	48-57
5. Chapter - V	
Universalizability : Hare And J. L. Mackie	58-63
6. Chapter - VI	
Hare's Critique of Naturalism	64-78
7. Chapter - VII	
Hare on the levels of Moral Thinking	79-89
8. Chapter - VIII	
The Concept of Choice : Sartre-Hare View	90-106
9. Chapter - IX	
Concluding Reflections: Facts and Obligations	107-13
10. Notes and References	132-13
11. Bibliography	139-14

CHAPTER I

THE DEVELOPMENT OF HARE'S MORAL PHILOSOPHY FROM THE LANGUAGE OF MORALS TO MORAL THINKING

It must be true that few living philosophers have attracted critical comment than he. For a generation, analytical moral philosophers in Britain and America have tended to formulate their own opinions, by action and reaction, in relation to his. In response to all this, the development of Hare's philosophy has been not so much a story of change or accretion, as of definition and defence. To have defined a single position with as much clarity, adhered to it with as much consistency, and defended it against all comers with as much skill and agility as Hare has done, seems to me a remarkable achievement by any standards. I shall in the sequel try to convey some impression of that achievement.

When Hare came into moral philosophy emotivism was in the ascendance. He adopted its central tenet that moral language is at bottom non-descriptive in meaning. Stevenson, emotivism's most painstaking exponent, said that he derived it from observation of ethical discussions in daily life and Hare likewise looked to the way ordinary people talk about what they ought to do as the source and test of his moral philosophy. Two features of ordinary moral discourse interested him, as they had interested the emotivists,

namely the connection moral judgements have respectively with the actions they are normally intended to direct and the reasons that are normally given for them. But Hare was dissatisfied with the emotivists' account of these connections. Those who subscribed to a psychological theory of meaning explicitly confused the reasons given for moral judgements with the causes of subsequent activity; and those (e.g. A.J. Ayer and Rudolf Carnap) who assented to the verificationist theory of meaning eliminated, rather than explained, the need for reasons by likening moral judgements to ejaculations or imperatives. Hare saw the basic mistake of emotivism as that of identifying the meaning of moral language with its perlocutionary, rather than its illocutionary, force. He set himself to provide a more adequate account of how moral judgements are connected with actions and reasons by working out 'a rationalist kind of nondescriptivism.

2. Hare's explanation of the connection between moral judgements and actions is briefly as follows: Moral judgements in their central and typical uses are prescriptive, and if a judgement is prescriptive, then, in assenting to it with understanding and sincerity, we necessarily be assenting also to an entailed imperative (LM 171-2).

This is what he meant by prescriptivity. Critics have raised two kinds of objection which immediately come to mind. One

is simply that moral language sometimes has descriptive meaning (cf. any descriptivist). In a community, for instance, where there was general agreement that people are good in so far as they tell the truth, etc. one could, in appropriate circumstances, predict that somebody would tell the truth simply by saying that he was a good man--and that whether one approved oneself of truth-telling or not. Hare (IM 111-26) concedes as much from the first, but insists that the prescriptive, or evaluative, meaning of words like 'good' is logically primary in that it remains constant and can be used to change whatever descriptive meanings such words may have acquired.

The other objection calls attention to the wide variety of uses to which moral language may be put--advising, exhorting, imploring, commending, condemning, deploring, resolving, confessing, undertaking, etc. Hare's critics think it implausible to suppose that, in every single instance of all these different uses, there must be an entailed imperative. If Wittgenstein was correct in his opinion that the boundaries of our concepts cannot be strictly circumscribed, there must be some truth in this, but he himself recognized that, in order to avoid philosophical confusion, it is sometimes necessary to draw the boundaries of language more tightly than they are drawn in ordinary use. If that is allowed, Hare is entitled--in the absence of compelling evidence to the contrary--to maintain, as he does, that all the uses listed

above are, in 'typical and central' cases, species of the genus prescribing. In normal circumstances, it would indeed sound unnatural to say, 'I advise you to do X but don't do it', 'I deplore doing X but do it', etc.

Hare's explanation of the connection between moral judgements and reasons is briefly as follows: in offering any such statement of non moral fact as a reason for a moral judgement we are implying a universal moral principle (FR 21 ff). For example, if we give as our reason why X ought to be done the fact that X is the fulfilment of a promise, we thereby imply that all acts which fulfil promises ought *ceteris paribus* to be done. From the ordinary meaning of 'reason', it undoubtedly follows that a reason must be adhered to consistently. But, according to Hare, there is more to a moral reason than that. From the ordinary meaning of 'moral' it follows that a moral reason must not contain any reference to a particular individual. That is what he means by universalizability. The fact, for example, that she is the particular individual Mary Smith cannot be a moral reason why John Smith ought to help his mother, however consistently he is required to do so, but the fact that John's relationship to Mary Smith is an instance of the relationship between an agent and the person who gave him birth and brought him up could conceivably be a moral reason why he ought to help Mary Smith.

Here again, two criticisms that have been levelled at Hare on this score, come quickly to mind.

One is that he has imported a moral principle-viz. that we ought to be impartial in our moral judgements-into what is supposed to be a logical analysis of the meaning of moral language. But this criticism is groundless. Hare (FR 30) is quite clearly pointing out the indisputable fact that we would not normally take someone's being a particular individual called Mary Smith (or whatever)- in the absence of any description in more general terms-as a moral reason why anyone ought to help that individual. The other criticism is that Hare has overlooked the particularity of some of the situation in which moral judgements have to be made. It is maintained-to take familiar examples --- that if we were in the shoes of Sartre's famous pupil who was torn between looking after his mother or going off to war, or in those of Melville's Captain Vere who had to decide whether or not to condemn Billy Budd to death, we might well make a judgement which we did not want to see universalized but which no one could deny was a moral one. I think Hare (FR 38-9) disposes of this criticism successfully by differentiating the distinction between 'universal' and 'particular' from between 'general' and 'specific'. He points out that a moral reason for action in a given situation could conceivably be so specific that it would not only be improbable, but even false, that any other actual situation instantiated it; and yet that reason could be universalizable in a hypothetical

sense-it would apply to any other relevantly similar situation, if such there were.

Bringing together these two defining characteristics, prescriptivity and universalizability, Hare (FR 123) arrives at the following elucidation of the kind of question which ordinary people are asking when, in a sense that would normally be called moral, they wonder what ought to be done. Any acceptable answer to this question will have to be such that they are prepared to act in accordance with it (prescriptivity) in all similar circumstances whoever occupies the different roles in the situation (universalizability). Universalizability requires us to go 'the round of all the affected parties ... giving equal weight to the interests of all ...', and prescriptivity, to ask ourselves, 'how much (as I imagine myself in the place of each man in turn) do I want to have this, or to avoid that?', where 'this' and 'that' refer to what is involved in acting accordingly. Through this exercise of imagination we are able to weigh the cumulative satisfaction of affected parties if we perform any given action, as against their cumulative satisfaction if we performed any of the conceivable alternative actions. These remarks bring out the other three 'necessary ingredients' (FR 92-3, 97) in moral thinking, which are according to Hare an exercise of imagination, an appeal to interest or inclination, and an investigation of relevant and available matters of fact. In so far as universalizability calls for a consideration of all affected parties, and prescriptivity, of what each wants, we can see why Hare claims that his

analysis of moral thinking provides 'a formal foundation of utilitarianism' (FR 123). He is not, so to speak, proposing utilitarianism as a version of the moral language game, which ordinary people should take up, but simply clarifying the rules which he takes to be implicit in the game which, in his opinion, they are already playing-presumably, in order to help them to play it more effectively.

In addition to the criticisms of prescriptivity and universalizability which I have already mentioned, at least two others have been brought to bear upon Hare's account of moral thinking. One accuses him of assuming falsely that all satisfactions are of the same kind. Is it not clear that the satisfaction to be found, for example, in affectionate family relationships is different from that to be gained by the indulgence of animal appetites; or, that to be felt in doing what one sincerely believes to be one's duty, from that which material prosperity may bring? If the answer is affirmative, how can all these satisfactions be accumulated and weighed against one another? In effect, Hare's (IT 179) reply is twofold. One thing he says is that, despite such differences, it is possible to prefer a given amount of any kind of satisfaction to a given amount of any other kind. Having gone the round of all the affected parties the only question we have to answer is : how much do we prefer - i.e., how ready are we to prescribe - the cumulative satisfaction of the preferences

of certain people to those of others having placed ourselves imaginatively in all their shoes? The criticism we are considering can be pressed most forcefully when the satisfaction concerned is that to be found in doing what one believes to be one's duty. Can this be weighed against any other kind of satisfaction? Suppose a doctor, who believes it morally wrong to perform abortions has to decide whether or not to perform one for a woman who is worried because her standard of living will decline if she has a child. In going the round of the affected parties, is the doctor supposed to throw the satisfaction which he finds in refraining from doing what he believes to be morally wrong into the scales along with that which the woman finds in being relieved from materialistic anxiety, as if they were the same kind of commodity? To say he is, so the criticism goes, is to require him to ignore the significance of moral consideration in the very act of trying to make a moral decision--and surely that is an incoherent, if not a self-contradictory, requirement. Here's reply, if I understand him correctly, is that it is this criticism itself which is incoherent or self-contradictory. For a method of deciding what ought to be done, which proceeds on the assumption that what ought to be done is already known, is, to say the least, self-stultifying. On the face of it this reply may appear to ignore the fact that we often have to make moral judgements in situations where our minds are already made up about the rightness or wrongness of certain courses of action. Here can only make his defence at this point effective

by invoking a distinction between what he calls 'critical' and 'intuitive' moral thinking, and to this distinction we shall return in a moment or two.

The other criticism I have in mind is that Hare's elucidation of moral thinking shows him to be himself a naturalist or descriptivist. According to someone like Mrs. Foot, who is indisputably a naturalist or descriptivist, to say that an act X ought to be done means, or implies, that it will satisfy certain wants (i.e. desires). If therefore we (i) understand the logic of the moral concepts (i.e. what 'ought' means) and (ii) assent to the statement that X will satisfy the said wants, we must (logically) deduce that X ought to be done. Well, is not Hare in the same case? Does he not say, in effect, that if we (i) understand the logic of the moral concepts and (ii) assent to the statement that, of all conceivable acts in the given situation, X is the one that will maximize satisfactions among the affected parties, then we cannot (logically) refrain from saying that X ought to be done? As I read him, Hare (MT 218-26) defends himself against this criticism by calling attention to what he considers a crucial difference. On Mrs Foot's account of moral thinking, to work out what will satisfy desires that all men have is to arrive at a description; but on his own account of the matter, to work out what will maximize the satisfaction of preferences among the affected parties is—since to prefer something is to be willing to prescribe it—to arrive at a cumulative prescription. That being so,

the moral judgement at which we arrive by this route is neither descriptive (in the sense that its meaning determines its truth-conditions) nor naturalistic (in the sense that it is derived from a statement of fact).

3. According to Hare (IM 56-78), we are each one free to make our own decisions of principle. We can propose any non-moral statement of fact as a possible reason for a moral judgement. All we have to do, in order to determine whether or not we can accept it as an actual reason, is to test whether or not we are prepared to accept the implications of prescribing and universalizing it consistently. Some critics have objected that this makes a mockery of moral reasoning. Consistent prescribing and universalizing is not enough; madmen and criminals could conceivably conform to these criteria and come out preferring the fulfilment of their own crazy or wicked intentions rather than the avoidance of the suffering which the latter will cause. Thus Hare is accused of leaving us free in morality, not only to make up our own minds, but also our own evidence; to decide for ourselves not only what ought, or ought not, to be done, but also what constitutes a sufficient reason why. And this, it is said, is not rationality but the denial of it. What then do such critics think Hare has left out of account? There are at least five answers to that. I will say briefly what they are and how Hare defends himself against each of them in turn.

One is that he has omitted any reference to human wants. The main contention on which this criticism rests is that an agent is given a reason for action, if and only if he is shown that it is the way to something he wants of many wants—so the argument goes—it makes sense to ask why they are wanted; but of some — e.g. those for freedom from boredom, loneliness, physical injury, etc. — it does not. Reasons why we ought, or ought not, to do something are said to be only logically compelling in so far as they are grounded in these ultimate wants. Hare's (1963b;115-34) reply to this kind of criticism—if I grasp it correctly—is as follows. Things are wanted, or thought good, because they have what have been called 'desirability characterizations'. Two senses can be given to this expression. A desirability characterization may be (i) something about an object (e.g. the fact that it tastes sweet) which makes one desire it, or (ii) something about it (e.g. its being said to be pleasant) which implies that the speaker desires it. Equivocation on these two senses leads to the fallacious conclusion that because there are only some words which are desirability characterizations in sense (ii) there must be only some things that can be the subjects of desirability characterizations in sense (i).

A second thing Hare is sometimes accused of overlooking is human needs. Is there better reason to think that moral judgments are logically grounded in needs than in wants? Needs are certainly different from wants. It makes good sense to say that we want — though not that we need — something for its own sake:

the question 'What do you want it for?' can be dismissed with 'Not for anything. I just want it'; but what would we make of somebody who told us that he needed something but make of somebody who told us that he needed something but did not need it for anything? Can it then be argued against Hare that, just as we have reason to do what our doctor tells us because it will fulfil our need for health, so we have good reason to abide by moral judgements in so far as they will fulfil our need for 'human flourishing'? Once again, Hare's defence turns on a distinction between what is true of words and of things respectively. In certain contexts it would be odd for me to say that I needed something but did not think it good. The word 'good' is logically tied to the word 'need' in such cases. But from them it does not follow that 'good' is logically tied to certain things that are generally thought to be needs.

A third thing Hare is criticized for leaving out of account is the true end—that is, nature or function (telos)—of man. Most fundamentally, this Neo-aristotelian attack rests on the contention that the evaluative terms we use in making moral judgements are, in their primary meaning, attributive rather than predicative. In other words, what is meant by, for example, a good character, a right action, a way we ought to live, etc. cannot be understood until we know what human agents are, or are for — just as the meaning of 'a good knife' would not be clear to anyone who did not know that a knife is an instrument for cutting. One obvious

reply to this criticism is that language-users are by no means as agreed about what people are for as about what knives are for. However, the criticism may still be presented simply in terms of beliefs about the nature and function of man. Moral judgement, it is said implies beliefs of three kinds : namely about (i) man as he happens to be, (ii) man as he would be if he realized his telos, and (iii) what must be done, if any given agent is to move from what he is (Cf. (i) to what he could be (Cf. (ii)). Moral judgements are beliefs of the third kind, but their significance is parasitic upon beliefs of second kind. If people cease to have any beliefs about man's true nature and function, the bottom drops out of their morality.

In reply, Hare says that this criticism confuses what people can do with what they ought to do. Some beliefs about man's true nature of function - e.g. that it is rational or social-seem compatible with the view that it can be fulfilled in acts which most people would regard as evil no less than in ones they would consider good. Such beliefs are therefore of little use morally. But other teleological beliefs - most obviously religious or political ones-do evidently imply that whatever fulfils their concept of man's true end must be good and not evil. A Christian, for example, would maintain that whatever fulfils man's true end of glorifying God and enjoying him forever must be morally good; just as a Marxist would that whatever helps to bring about the dictatorship of the proletariat must. Hare is entitled to reply,

as in effect he does (H 1957:106-11), that all this proves is that these teleological beliefs, though they may look flatly constative, are in reality also commissive, in their illocutionary force.

Some Neo-aristotelians recommend us to stop thinking about the precise nature of man's telos and to concentrate simply on the fact that the cardinal virtues of justice, prudence, self-control, and courage are necessary conditions of success in 'any large-scale, worth enterprise'. Against this manoeuvre two objections seem self-evident as hardly to need stating. One is that it reduces morality to mere expediency. The other, that it begs the question at issue by its use of the word 'worthy'. In any teleological morality one's beliefs about the particular nature of man's telos necessarily determine what is right or wrong; and so it is self-defeating for any Neo-aristotelian to think that we can bypass the question of what this telos is.

A fourth thing Hare is accused of overlooking is public norms. By the latter are meant generally accepted judgements of what ought, or ought not, to be done in certain kinds of situations. Those who advance this criticism think of rationality as essentially social (which, 1960:24). They contend that a reason for a moral judgement cannot be grounded solely in an individual's decisions of principle, because that would leave unanswered the question as to why he had made these decisions. This reason why-if it is to

be intelligible-will have to refer to some generally agreed 'desirability characterizations' which show it to be, so to speak, decision-worthy. In support of this line^{of} criticism, Wittgenstein's (1974b: Part I, 242) famous dictum - that if language is to be a means of communication there must be not only agreement in definitions, but also in judgements - is widely quoted. In morality, an act is sometimes said to be obligatory because it is courageous, honest, generous, etc. Such expressions are descriptive, but they also encapsulate public approval of acts which conform to the description. As such, it may be so (Norman 1971:67), they are contrary to Hare's opinion-logically more fundamental in moral judgement than purely evaluative words such as 'good', 'right', 'ought'. The meaning of the latter is taken to be parasitic on these descriptive-evaluative words. Even if such criticism implies that the need for 'desirability characterizations' continues to infinity, these critics do not demur (Norman, 1971:65).

Hare (MT 70) in self-defence warns against being misled by Wittgenstein's dictum. He insists that wo people can both use words like 'right' in the same sense and yet disagree fundamentally on what properties of actions make them right. It is, he thinks, a mistake to suppose that words have to have commonly agreed criteria of application before they can be used for communication. Anyone who thinks not is advised to test the point with 'Don't do it', the meaning of which is clearly known prior to any inkling of what-or even what kind of-action is prohibited thereby. It is

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worth noting that Wittgenstein himself evidently did not regard his quoted remark as applying to the words 'beautiful' or 'ugly' - a consideration which suggests that he may not have thought of it as applying to moral terms such as 'right', etc. either.

The fifth thing Hare is accused of overlooking is institutional facts. The fact that A promised to do X is said to be an institutional one, whereas the fact that A said 'I promise to do X' is merely a brute fact. Institutional facts do not exist outside the systems of constitutive rules which create new forms of behaviour - e.g. checkmating in chess. The rules for the use of 'to promise' are such that 'A promised to do X' implies 'A ought to do X'. This implication makes promising an institutional fact. Therefore we would appear to have here a reason, which is factual, for a judgement that is plainly moral, apart from any intervening decision of principle. Hare (MT 10-20) does not dispute the linguistic facts on which this argument is based - namely, that in ordinary use, 'A promised to do X' entails 'A ought to do X' - but he contends that no conclusions of moral substance can be deduced from exclusively linguistic premisses. In other words, it would still make sense for someone to ask whether what has been promised ought to be done. Such a questioner would not be asking what implications the word (promise) normally has in our language, but whether or not the institution of promising is morally acceptable. And the answer we would give to this question would in the final analysis depend, not on some rule about the use of words, but on

some decision of principle about what ought, or ought not, to be done in circumstances of the relevant kind. Hare is here insisting once again on the point which is fundamental to his prescriptivism, namely that moral language may always be used in an evaluative sense in order to revise any descriptive meaning it may have acquired.

4. Hare (FR 12) draws a comparison between his elucidation of moral thinking and Popper's of scientific. Just as Popper said that, in science, empirically falsifiable predictions are deduced from universal hypotheses in conjunction with certain initial conditions, so Hare is saying that, in morals, deductions about what ought to be done are derived from universal principles in conjunction with imagined situations. In order to know which moral principles to adopt - just as *mutatis mutandis* which scientific hypotheses - we must abide by the logic of the discourse concerned and the relevant and available facts which our investigation brings to light. In each case we are free to draw up the major premiss, be it hypothesis or principle, but for the rest our freedom is a 'freedom to reason' (MT 6-7) in the light of logic and the facts.

Again like Popper, Hare, has been criticized for failing to recognize the part played by received opinion in the kind of thinking he is intent upon analysing. We do not work out the answer to every moral - any than to every scientific-question from scratch. We set the question within a context of accepted conclusion and read off the answer from that thereby treating the question as a 'puzzle' rather than a 'problem'. True though that may be, Hare

would claim - as would Popper-that his philosophy brings to light the possibility of revisionary critical thinking in the field which he is concerned to elucidate. We always can go back and start again from scratch. Rationality-freedom to think and think again in accordance with logic and the facts-both constrains and liberates. To accommodate this two fold conception of rationality within his 'rationalist kind of non-descriptivism', Hare in his most recent writings, like many a philosopher before him, distinguishes two 'levels' of moral thinking from each other. He calls them the 'intuitive' and the 'critical' respectively. On the former level, we think in accordance with the hitherto deliverances of logic and the facts; on the latter, we undertake revisionary exposure to them.

The utilitarian confidence that all moral questions can be answered through felicific calculation has come in for fierce criticism recently. Conviction and conflict are said to characterize the ordinary man's moral thinking and experience much more radically than calculation. Hare wonders if much of this criticism is not over-dramatized, but he is ready to concede that ordinary people may well not be any happier than Miss Anscombe with the idea that the judicial execution of the innocent could conceivably be justified on grounds of utilitarian expediency. To find room for such truth as there may be in these anti-utilitarian criticisms, he (MT 44-5) draws his distinction between the moral thinking of 'proles' and 'archangels'. 'Archangels' are completely rational,

omniscient, and free from partiality; they have therefore a perfect command of logic and the facts. In consequence, according to Hare, they always get the correct answers to moral questions and this is more surprising-the same ones to boot (MT 46). 'Proles' are the very opposite of archangels. Their only hope of thinking in accordance with logic and the facts is to go by what others have told them. These two classes of moral thinker are not such that one must be either the one or the other. Each of us is part archangel, part prole. In so far as we rely in our moral thinking upon received opinion, we are on the intuitive level. In so far as we re-examine it as fully as our capacity allows in the light of logic and the facts, we are on the critical level. Our convictions on the intuitive level serve us well enough in most of life's ordinary situations. But where they conflict, where we are uncertain whether or not they apply in a given situation, where we wonder whether they are worth passing on to our children, critical thinking comes to our aid (H 1976a:124). Both levels of thinking are therefore required by the exigencies of daily life.

Hare (MT 46) accords 'epistemological priority' to critical thinking. It alone has complete overridingness (MT 24, 53-62). Intuitive moral thinking has only a derived overridingness, in so far as the convictions which guide it have 'acceptance utility' (MT 50ff)- i.e. in so far as their general acceptance is calculated to achieve the fulfilment of principles which have been adopted at the critical level. Hare's opinion that all who think with complete

clarity and honesty at the critical level will arrive at the same moral judgements is evidently grounded, in the last analysis, on a matter of putative empirical fact. What he (MF 170-82) calls 'pure fanaticism' he regards as a logical, but not an empirical, possibility. It is logically conceivable that someone could in complete accordance with logic and the facts arrive at conclusions which were justifiable by utilitarian reasoning provided he was a fanatic with incredibly strong and eccentric desires; he could end up thinking, for example, that all Jews ought to be exterminated, or even adhering to such up-market versions of fanaticism as that a doctor ought to prolong the lives of his patients as long as possible, however great might be the consequent suffering that they had to endure. But Hare (MF 182) is quite sure that such cases 'are not going to occur' in real life.

5. Hare is still at the centre of critical attention, defending the twin foundations of his universal prescriptivism, namely that 'the freedom which we have as moral thinkers is a freedom to reason' (MF 6-7) and that 'we remain free to prefer what we prefer' (MF 225).

CHAPTER II

HARE ON MORAL REASONING:

Let us begin by considering the question : Are there any rules governing what is to count as a moral reason? So far I have mentioned two sorts of answer which might be given. That given by Hare says : there are no rules; you yourself decide what sort of considerations are relevant. That given by Mrs. Foot says: the rules are extremely strict ones; the individual has no choice at all as to what is to count as relevant to a moral judgement. Now it seems to me that any account which forces us to say either of these things must be incorrect. But before I put forward my own positive theory, I should like to consider the accounts of Hare and Mrs. Foot in greater detail and try to show what is wrong with them. In this way I can at least protect myself against the charge of knocking down men of straw. I shall begin with Hare's theory.

In both of his books Hare tells us that the purpose of his philosophy is to defend the 'rationality of morals' or to show that morality is 'a rational activity'. Consequently his account allots a place of central importance to the notion of a reason. At the beginning of *Freedom and Reason* for example, he tells us that 'both naturalism and my own view ... hold that judgements about particular things are made for reasons'¹, and later he goes so far

as to say that "ought" judgements, strictly speaking, would be misused if the demand for reasons or grounds were thought of as out of place'².

This, I think, would meet with fairly general approval among contemporary philosophers. But some would take strong exception to what he says about the nature of moral reasons. His account is implicit in one short passage in *The Language of Morals*, where we are told that:

There are two factors which may be involved in the making of any decision to do something ... They correspond to the major and minor premisses of the Aristotelian practical syllogism. The major premiss is a principle of conduct; the minor premiss is a statement, more or less full, of what we should in fact be doing if we did one or the other of the alternatives open to us. Thus if I decide not to say something because it is false, I am acting on a principle, 'Never (or never under certain conditions) say what is false', and I must know that this, which I am wondering whether to say, is false'³.

Here Hare is presenting us with a certain picture of the typical moral argument or process of moral deliberation. We are invited to construe it on the model of a syllogism, subject to the normal rules of deductive inference. Thus to take Hare's own example, an argument designed to show that one ought not to make some particular statement (X), might proceed as follows:

One ought never to say what is false

X is false

therefore, One ought not to say X.

The conclusion of the argument states a moral judgement which the agent makes, or a decision which he has reached; the premisses provide his justification for it.

Now I want to make two points about the theory which Hare offers in this passage, which seem to me to cast serious doubts on its plausibility.

In the first place, we may note that, while in the particular example which Hare chooses the minor premiss is one which most people would regard as relevant to the conclusion, this need not be so. Whatever we offered as a minor premiss, a valid syllogism could be produced by introducing the appropriate major premiss. Consider, for example, the following argument:

One ought always to hit one's brother-in-law on

Tuesdays

Today is Tuesday

therefore, you ought to hit your brother-in-law.

Now I do not think that the day of the week would normally be regarded as a relevant reason for engaging in hostilities towards one's relations. But there is no doubt that on Hare's account it

could quite easily be so. For the major premiss of the above argument ensures its relevance. And the same would go for any reason which we cared to offer.

This is not to say that Hare is completely blind to these consequences of his theory. In the last chapter of *Freedom and Reason*, where he is considering the question of racial conflict, he does point out that on his principles someone may offer as justifying the ill-treatment of other races reasons which many of us would be loth to regard as relevant, e.g. physical characteristics such as the colour of a man's skin or the shape of his nose. (This is so because the argument, 'All people with certain physical characteristics ought to be ill-treated; this man has those characteristics; therefore, this man ought to be ill-treated', is valid.) Hare interprets this as showing that his account of moral justification is not committed to any particular moral standpoint. And this, of course, is true. What Hare does not seem to realise is that, if we accept his account, then there is no consideration, no matter how irrelevant it might seem to be, which could not be regarded as a moral reason. Neutrality is bought at the price of vacuity.

In the second place, I want to draw attention to some of the differences between what Hare accepts as constituting a moral reason, and what we should normally accept. We have seen that he regards moral arguments as processes of syllogistic inference to

a moral conclusion, with the premisses providing our reasons for accepting the conclusion. So it is at least clear that he is committed to the view that a statement corresponding to one of his minor premisses could not alone fully justify a moral judgment. (It might, of course, be the only reason given, but this could only be because a major premiss had been assumed, as in the case of an enthymeme). Hare would not, for instance, accept that to point out that a statement was untrue, could ever be a sufficient reason for asserting that someone ought not to make it. And it seems to me that this conflicts with our ordinary use of the word 'reason'.

To see this, let us consider what might be regarded as a paradigm case of someone making a judgment for a reason. Suppose a woman has to make a choice between telling her husband, who has an incurable disease, the truth about his condition, or deceiving him into thinking that he is suffering from a trivial complaint. (It is this problem with which one of the characters in Tennessee Williams's *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* is faced.) And suppose, to take the most straightforward case, that she discusses the matter with her family beforehand, and decides that since her husband would prefer to be told the truth, however terrible, she ought not to deceive him. What are we to say about such a case?

Well, two things are clear. (a) The decision is a moral one, based on purely moral considerations. Questions of self-interest are irrelevant. (b) The wife's reasons are the ones which

she gives. This is not to deny that after studying the case a Freudian analyst might come to the conclusion that her real reason was, say, an unconscious hate of her husband, and the reasons given are mere rationalisations. But such a case would necessarily be an exceptional one (which ex hypothesis this is not). All the reasons we give could not be rationalisations, for the notion of a rationalisation is parasitic upon that of a genuine reason.

Now it seems to me that we should naturally express the wife's reasoning in the above example, as follows:

My husband would wish me to tell him the truth
 so I ought to tell him the truth.

But it is Hare's contention that this way of expressing it is misleading and that in order to rectify this it is necessary to introduce the major premiss, 'one ought always to do what one's husband wishes', and thus bring out the syllogistic form of the argument. It will then be valid 'by the ordinary rules of logic'⁴. The difficulty here is that, while it is possible to turn any non-deductive argument into a syllogism by introducing a major premiss, to do this with moral arguments, or with practical arguments generally, is unilluminating, since the major premiss will often turn out to be one which no one would accept.

To see why Hare's account is unilluminating, let us consider what he would say about the case which I have just mentioned. His contention is that the wife's reasoning requires a major premiss if

it is to provide a full justification of her decision. That is to say, her argument should really be represented as:

One ought always to do what one's husband wishes

My husband wishes me not to deceive him

therefore, I ought not to deceive him.

The difficulty here is that she would probably deny that she was applying any such major premiss. Indeed it is unlikely (though not impossible) that she would want to commit herself to any general statement about what one ought to do in situations where one's husband's wishes are involved. Nor will it do to say (as Hare does in *The Language of Morals*⁵) that such a general statement would be only a provisional principle to be modified in the light of experience. Most wives would not feel themselves bound to abide by their husband's wishes if (i) to do so would be harmful to him, or (ii) if he were not compos mentis, or (iii) if they were legally separated, or (iv) if he wished them to share their time with his mistress. But it is obvious that these examples do not even begin to exhaust the range of possible exceptions. Nor would any list of examples, however long. It is just possible to think of circumstances in which obeying one's husband's wishes would precipitate China into revolution. But could it be said that a principle which allows for this possibility is more accurate than one which doesn't? Or is there some comprehensive formula which

would cover all these evils? Perhaps, but it would be likely to turn out principle into a trivial tautology like 'One ought to obey one's husband's wishes, except where to do so would be wrong'.

Nevertheless, I do not think that it will do merely to say that Hare's premiss is superfluous. For we should then be open to the objection that indeed people do say things like 'One ought not to tell lies' or 'One ought to consider one's husband's wishes'. Clearly there is something wrong with an account which holds that 'One ought to tell the truth' is more accurately formulated as 'speak the truth in general, but there are certain classes of cases in which this principle does not hold'⁶. 'One ought to tell the truth' is not just a vague generalisation like 'All Frenchmen wear berets', which needs to be qualified by lists of exceptions before it even begins to sound plausible. But if Hare's account is wrong, then what is required is not to banish such moral judgements from the realm of significant discourse, but to give an account of them which will enable us to grasp their function there.

Let us return to the first point which I made about Hare's theory. I said earlier that one of the reasons why Hare thinks that any reason might be regarded as relevant to a moral judgement is that he thinks that it is always possible to introduce some general statement of the form 'One ought to do x' which will ensure its relevance. Now I suggest that there is some truth in this contention. Statements like 'One ought to tell the truth' or 'One ought to consider one's husband's wishes' do show the relevance

for the reasons we give for moral judgements, only not because, as Hare thinks, they form part of syllogisms which entail these judgements, but because they help to establish the moral context, the framework, within which the reasons are given. Perhaps I can clarify this. Suppose that^{we} people are arguing about whether to report a relative to the police for some fairly minor criminal offence, and that during the argument the one says, 'One ought not to conceal the truth'. Now the purpose of this remark will be to give the other an insight the range of considerations which he regards as relevant to the case, to give him some idea of the moral attitude that he is adopting. To this the other might reply, 'Well yes, but blood's thicker than water, you know'. And again this remark would help to show the range of considerations which he is willing to accept, although here there is less temptation to construe what he says as the major premiss in a syllogism. The first man's remark emphasises the importance of honesty and integrity, and insists that these are the important considerations regardless of who is involved. The second man insists that the demands of the family cannot just be ignored. In both cases what they say does not restrict them to giving any particular reason for the moral judgements they make (as it would if Hare's account were correct), but it does restrict them to giving reasons within a certain range. We should be surprised to hear the second man say, 'So we'll turn him in; after all, you can't go round telling lies to protect scoundrels'⁷.

Now obviously Hare's theory will only be plausible if statements of the form 'One ought always to do so-and-so' can have any content whatsoever and still remain intelligible. For if this were not so, he would be forced to admit that the reasons we give cannot have just any content, for there would be certain reasons which could not be incorporated into a valid syllogism. Hare never considers this possibility because he concentrates on syllogisms whose major premisses could function in ordinary discourse, e.g. statements like 'One ought to tell the truth', etc. True he sometimes uses phrases like 'One ought to do x', but these only help the deception. For we tend to think that the variable contained in them could have any value, and this is just what is in question.⁸

CHAPTER III

A CRITIQUE OF HARE'S POSITION; PHILLIPA FOOT : MORAL AND EMPIRICAL CRITERIA

As we have seen, Hare holds a theory according to which there are no limits to what can count as a moral reason, and so far I have tried merely to indicate some of the difficulties into which this leads him. Now, in her articles Mrs. Foot is concerned both to show how Hare's account is wrong and to provide an alternative theory, and it is to this positive theory that I shall now turn my attention, for it seems to be, if anything, less plausible than Hare's own.

I want to begin by asking why it is that Mrs. Foot finds it necessary to advance the sort of theory which we find in 'Moral Arguments', 'Moral Beliefs', and 'Goodness and Choice'. We might be inclined to say that it is simply because she is looking for an alternative to the theory which she had already attacked in her earlier article, 'When is a Principle a Moral Principle?' But while this would be correct as far as it goes, it would be unilluminating, for it neglects many of the deeper issues in the debate between Hare and Mrs. Foot. I suggest that the real answer is to be found at the beginning of 'Moral Arguments', where Mrs. Foot is considering the problem of moral deadlock which I indicate in the Introduction to this essay¹. As we have seen, this arises because in morals we seem to be

continually faced with disputes where agreement cannot be reached, and yet in which the opinions of both parties are equally well-founded. Yet the same does not seem to be true of most other types of disagreement. It is characteristic of, for instance, scientific and empirical disputes that they are always in principle capable of being resolved². If x and y disagree over whether there is a car in the garage, then there is one way in which they can decide the matter once and for all, namely by going and looking. If a and b disagree over the temperature on the Air Ministry roof, then there are recognised ways of finding out who is right. In both cases it would be absurd to say that their ^{are} views/equally well founded if they failed to reach agreement. Yet in the sphere of morality the same does not seem always to apply. And this causes difficulties for those for whom the paradigm cases of a dispute is an empirical one. Mrs. Foot sums up the problem well when she says, 'How "X" is good can be a well-founded moral judgement, when "X is bad" can be equally well-founded it is not easy to see'³.

Now, one way of solving this problem is simply to deny that it exists, that is to deny that such a state of affairs is conceivable. And this is in effect what Mrs. Foot does. The reason why empirical disputes are never of the above kind is that there is general agreement about the criteria for deciding them. It is always possible to support an empirical statement

with reasons which are both conclusive and whose truth is not disputed by either party. The purpose of Mrs. Foot's later articles is to show that the same is true of moral judgements. That is, she wishes to show that 'it is laid down that some things do, and some things do not, count in favour of a moral conclusion'⁴.

And indeed, if she can establish such a thesis, then the consequences for moral philosophy will be twofold. For not only will she have effectively disposed of Hare's account of moral reasons, but she will also have provided a procedure for settling any ethical dispute. She need only show that there are certain reasons, whose truth is a necessary and sufficient justification of any moral judgement, and she can kill two birds with one stone. We must now see how she intends to accomplish this feat.

In 'Moral Arguments' she begins by considering the word 'rude', which, while perhaps not a paradigm case of a moral term, does at least seem to fall into the class of what Hare would call 'evaluative' terms (or which moral terms are said to form a sub-class). 'It is', she says, 'obvious that there is something else to be said about the word "rude" besides the fact that it expresses fairly mild condemnation; it can only be used where certain descriptions apply'⁵. In the next sentence we are told what the descriptions in question are. A piece of behaviour is rude if and only if it 'causes offence by indicating lack of

respect', and whether it does so or not is a purely factual matter⁶. So there are necessary and sufficient conditions of rudeness, and while of course a man may always refuse to discuss 'points of etiquette', once he does agree to do so, he is committed to accepting these as reasons.

Now this is important, for if the range of reasons which we can give for an evaluative judgement is limited in this sort of way, then Mrs. Foot sees no good reason why it should not be limited in the case of moral judgements. We can, she argues, at the very least admit the possibility of this, and it therefore becomes reasonable.

to enquire whether moral terms do lose their meaning when divorced from the pleasure principle, or from some other set of criteria, as the word 'true' loses its meaning when the criterion of offensiveness is dropped⁷.

What then are this limited set of reasons which alone have any relevance in the justification of our moral decisions and judgements? Well, in 'Moral Beliefs' Mrs. Foot tells us that something can only count as a moral reason if it 'can be shown to be such that it is necessarily connected with what a man wants'. True, other philosophers of the same school have expressed this point in many different ways. Instead of 'What

a man wants' Miss Anscombe refers to 'human flourishing'⁸, and Mrs. Foot herself sometimes prefers to talk of 'human good and harm'⁹. But the diversity is more apparent than real. For just as a plant flourishes only when its needs are satisfied, so a man is held to flourish only when his needs are satisfied. Again, if we are to make some sense of Mrs. Foot's doctrines then 'human good' must be whatever satisfies a man's wants, and by the same token, 'human harm' whatever prevents their satisfaction. Whatever Foot, Anscombe, etc., mean by these various phrases, it is clear that for them it constitutes the point of morality and must therefore provide the sole justification for our moral beliefs.

Now, *prima facie* this would seem to be a most implausible theory. In particular it seems absurd to suggest that the only justification for the virtues of courage, justice, etc., lies in the fact that we need them in our dealings with others, or that only by being just and courageous can a man survive. If justice is only some obscure kind of self-preservation, why do we admire the just man? Is not he, as much as the unjust man, merely looking after himself, only better?

Worse still Mrs. Foot's theory might well be regarded as a proposal to do away with moral language altogether by reducing it to a variety of straightforward practical language. And indeed, many Philosophers of Mrs. Foot's persuasion have

openly acknowledged this as their intention. Thus, for instance, in 'Modern Moral Philosophy' Miss Anscombe offers the thesis that 'the concepts of obligation and duty ... and of what is morally right and wrong, and of the moral sense of "ought", ought to be jettisoned, if this is psychologically possible'.¹⁰ Again, G.H. Von Wright, in *The Varieties of Goodness*, has argued that 'the so-called moral sense of "good" is a derivative or secondary sense, which must be explained in terms of the non-moral uses of the words'¹¹ and indeed Mrs. Foot herself raise doubts about whether it makes sense to speak of a moral use of the word 'good'.¹²

Yet we are inclined to say that any attempt to reduce the moral uses of 'good' to a variety of its non-moral uses is bound to end up by misrepresenting the former, for it will necessarily ignore important differences between the two types of judgement in which they occur. I shall try to show that this is what Mrs. Foot's theory in fact does.

Despite its appearance of paradox, Mrs. Foot makes no attempt to support her thesis about moral reasons with any sort of proof in the accepted sense of the word. That it is possible that there are reasons which constitute a necessary and sufficient condition for any moral judgement, she does indeed try to establish. That this is so, and that these reasons must be of the kind she says, is never proved and Mrs. Foot does not try to

prove it. She does, however, offer what Mill might call 'considerations ... capable of determining the intellect either to give or withhold its assent to the doctrine'¹³, and I now want to consider two of these.

The theory that the only considerations relevant to moral judgements are ones connected with 'good and harm' is often thought to be so self-evidently true that it require no proof¹⁴. Of course, appeals to self-evidence are generally a rather fruitless method of philosophical argument, but Mrs. Foot's own appeal is of more interest than most, for it points to some of the confusion underlying her theory. She says:

I do not know what could be meant by saying that it was someone's duty to do something, unless there was an attempt to show why it mattered if this sort of thing was not done. How can questions such as 'What does it matter?', 'What harm does it do?', 'What advantage is there in ...?', 'Why is it important?' be set aside here?¹⁵

I suggest that there is a radical confusion in this passage, which becomes apparent if we consider the following example:

Suppose I say to my young son John, 'You know, you ought to be more obedient', and am challenged by Mrs. Foot to give reasons for this assertion. There are two senses in which the reasons which I give might be said to show why John's obedience is important:

1. In one sense my reasons must show this, for in this sense to admit that it was not important ('did not matter', 'had no point') would be to admit the triviality of my remark. And no one can regard his own moral judgements as trivial, for a man's morality is those sorts of things which he regards as important in his life. 'You ought to do this, but it doesn't really matter whether you do it or not', is a piece of nonsense.

2. In the second sense of 'important', what Mrs. Foot says seems to me to be quite incorrect. We see what this sense is, if we consider the role which the word has in sentence like the following:

- (a) It is important to clean the machine before use.
- (b) Important. Light blue touch-paper and retire immediately.
- (c) It is important to keep on friendly terms with the boss.

In contexts like these, we do show how something is important by giving reasons which link it with 'human good and harm' or with the advantage which it is likely to bring. But I do not think that this is the sense in which it is normally used in moral contexts. Indeed, one is inclined to say that if I do try to show how a judgement is important in this sense, then this is an indication that the judgement is not a moral one. For instance, if, in the above example, I were to answer Mrs. Foot

by saying, 'If John isn't obedient then he'll soon find out why he ought to be', or 'Because he's beginning to get on my nerves', this would surely be a sign that moral issues were not involved. A reason which was necessarily connected with what a man wants, far from being a paradigm case of a moral reason, as Mrs. Foot thinks, would serve to change the whole character of the discussion. And this is even more obvious if we take her own example of justice. For it is clear that if someone were to recommend justice on the ground that 'You really can't get along without it', we should hesitate to call this a moral belief at all.

Mrs. Foot is, of course, right to say that it must always be possible to support a practical judgement with reasons in terms of 'good and harm' or 'advantage'.

For it is reasons of this sort which give what we say its meaning. When I say, 'You ought to water that plant', this would be incomprehensible unless it were understood that plants die without water. But if I am asked to support a moral judgement in this way, then I am at a loss to know what is wanted. As Rush Rhees asks, 'What more could I tell you?'¹⁶

Now it seems to me that it is only because she conflates these two senses of 'important' that Mrs. Foot's theory has any plausibility. If we do not notice the confusion, we seem to be faced with a dilemma. For while we naturally regard our moral

judgements as anything but trivial, and would never admit that they do not really matter, we feel reservations about accepting Mrs. Foot's theory. Yet the passage which I have been considering gives the impression that the only alternatives are (a) to give reasons which will show the point of a pointless belief, or (b) to accept that her account of moral reasons is correct. The difficulty only disappears when we realise that Mrs. Foot's seemingly impossible task rests on a straightforward confusion of two senses of 'having a point'. In one sense morality is necessarily pointless. In the other it can never be.

I want now to turn my attention to another line of argument which is sometimes used in support of the sort of theory under consideration. It is to be found in Geach's article 'Good and Evil', but Mrs. Foot provides perhaps the most convincing exposition in her 'Goodness and Choice'. Since it seems to pinpoint the fundamental fallacies in the whole approach, I shall briefly summarise the argument before attempting to criticise it. Mrs. Foot's aim is to show that the criteria of goodness of an object are 'always determined and not a matter for decision'¹⁷, and she thinks that this can be done in the following way.

She begins by drawing attention to a class of words which, when preceded by 'good' yield criteria of goodness. The

reason why this is so, is that these words (generally referred to as 'functional' words) 'name of object in respect of its function'¹⁸. For example, the function of a knife is to cut. So it will be a minimum qualification of something being a good knife that it cuts well. If asked why a particular knife is a good one, my reasons must at least refer to the fact that it performs its function well. But, it is argued, we can generalise this point to include words which are not functional in any normal sense of the word. For example, it would be straining language to say that a farmer, a horse rider, a book, or a father had a function, yet there is still a limited range of reasons which can be given for commending any one of these. A man can only be a good farmer 'because of his farming, while what counts as good farming must be, e.g., maintaining crops and herds in healthy condition'¹⁹. Again, 'the minimum condition of good riding is an ability to control a horse'²⁰, a good book must 'interest us profoundly'²¹, and a good father is one who 'looks after his children as best he can'²².

Now what conclusions can be drawn from all this? Well, Hare had argued that there are no limitations to what can count as a moral reason. Mrs. Foot, by sheer proliferation of examples, seeks to show that this is not true of any of the uses of 'good' outside morals. The conclusion drawn is that if Hare's account were correct with regard to the characteristically moral uses of the term, then these would 'seem to be different from all

others cases in which we talk of a good such-and-such²³ .

Part of the difficulty in criticising this argument is that it is not quite clear what is supposed to be so dubious about this²⁴ . After all, we expect the moral uses of words to differ from their non-moral uses. It would be rather surprising if they did not. But I want to ignore this point. What I want to suggest is that Mrs. Foot has not even established her thesis in the case of the non-moral uses of 'good'. Nor do I think that any such thesis can be established.

Let us see why it is that there are certain cases where the reasons we can give for commending an object are limited. It seems to me that this is because the object in question has a characteristic purpose or point. The generally accepted point of farming is, as Mrs. Foot says, the maintaining of crops and herds in healthy condition. So the minimum qualification for being a good farmer is that one's crops and herds do not die. But it follows from this that if there were disagreement over the point of farming, or if its points were different, then we could no longer necessarily offer this as a reason for saying that someone was a good farmer. If I ask why Jones is a good sewage-farmer, I hardly expect to hear that herds thrive on his land.

Now this is important, for it means that there can be established criteria by which to settle disagreements, only where an object or activity has some undisputed point. And this does not seem to be the case even outside morality, as becomes apparent when we turn to what Mrs. Foot says about works of art on pp. 52-3 of 'Goodness and Choice'.

'We cannot', she says, 'consider the criteria of goodness in books and picture without noticing the part which literature and art play in civilisation such as ours'. Now this, of course, is true, for it is the part which something plays in a civilisation which determines what the criteria are. But the reason why Mrs. Foot's argument seems so strange is that, while we cannot imagine any dispute about the purpose of a knife, it is obvious that disputes about the point of works of art do constantly occur.

For example, when Brecht's play *Mann ist Mann* was first staged in Germany, many critics objected to the performance of Peter Lorre on the grounds that it was wooden, unemotional and monotonous. Yet Brecht in his reply to Lorre's critics made it clear that he regarded these qualities as virtues²⁵,

How could such a situation arise? The answer seems to be that both had different conceptions of the point of the theatre.

According to the traditional concept of the theatre in Germany, the actor tried to make the audience experience the feelings and emotions of the character whom he was playing. He 'lived his part'. But, for Brecht, the theatre had a different purpose. It was intended to appeal less to the spectator's feelings than to his reason .

Because of this, Brecht and his critics reached different conclusions. By traditional standards, Lorre had given a mediocre performance. Yet for Brecht, Lorre's acting was good precisely because it was wooden and unemotional.

Now, surely examples like these show the futility of attempting to base any sort of aesthetic criticism on the alleged purpose of a work of art. Mrs. Foot's thesis is, no doubt, and illuminating one when restricted to activities which do have a clear-cut, non-controversial point; it is particularly illuminating when applied to games, where the whole activity is directed towards some agreed end, such as scoring a goal or winning a trick. But it would be wrong to assume that even all non-moral activities were of this sort.

But now, what are we to say about morality itself? Do all our moral decisions have some common, undisputed point, such that we can say with certainty what reasons will count as relevant to any moral judgement, as Mrs. Foot thinks?

It seems to me that it is here that the theory under consideration really breaks down. For it is surely quite implausible to suggest any one point for all moral action. True there are a host of candidates for this role : 'human good and harm', 'what all men want', 'human flourishing', as well as such traditional stand-bys as 'happiness', 'pleasure', and 'self-interest'. But the majority of these suffer from being either too narrow, like 'pleasure', or too vague, like 'human flourishing'. Now part of the value of Mrs. Foot's work is that she tries to say in precise terms what is involved in conceptions like these. The arguments in 'Moral Beliefs' make it quite clear that for her, human flourishing or human good consists at least in freedom from physical injury. This is why she thinks it possible to impose strict limits on what is to count as a moral reason. If I wish to give a reason why someone ought to do x, I can do so by showing that x leads to something which he wants. And what all men want it to escape injury. So to say that some action will lead to injury is to give a reason for not doing it. It may not always be a conclusive reason, but at least it is always a reason.

The question is, then, whether the fact that some action will lead to injury is always a reason for avoiding that action. I think that it is not. We have no difficulty in imagining the kind of person for whom questions about the possible injury resulting from a proposed course of action are quite irrelevant

to whether they ought to do it or not. The Jehovah's Witness, refusing to allow a blood transfusion for his dying child, is quite aware of the injuries which may result from his decision. It is just that, for him, such matters have no relevance. Again, consider the following passage from Malcolm's memoir of Wittgenstein:

Moore's health was quite good in 1946-47, but before that he had suffered a stroke and his doctor had advised that he should not become greatly excited nor fatigued. Mrs. Moore enforced this by not allowing Moore to have a philosophical discussion with anyone for longer than one hour and a half. Wittgenstein was extremely vexed by this regulation. He believed that Moore should not be supervised by his wife. He should discuss as long as he liked. If he became excited or tired and had a stroke and died-well, that would be a decent way to die : with his boots on. Wittgenstein felt that ... a human being should do the thing for which he has a talent with all his energy his life long and should never relax his devotion to his job merely in order to prolong his existence .

26

It seems to me that here Malcolm is not portraying a man for whom philosophy was so important that any injury which might result from it would recede into relative insignificance,

but rather someone for whom any personal injury done by his life's work would be quite irrelevant. It was not just that, for Wittgenstein, the possible loss of one's life was not an overriding reason for 'taking it easy', but that, for him, it was not a reason at all. Any appeal to 'human good and harm' would have cut no ice at all with Wittgenstein, for as far as he was concerned 'dying with one's boots on' did not count as harm. In the face of cases like these we must surely conclude that the concept of 'what all men want' is an empty one.

It does not, however, follow that all of Mrs. Foot's argument is equally futile. Certainly her positive thesis is not a convincing one, and I think that any attempt to confine moral reason within the scope of a simple formula would be equally unconvincing. It is my purpose to show that the reasons we give for moral judgements are limited in a quite different way. But it is to her credit that she saw the absurdity in Hare's suggestion that anything can count as a moral reason. Her mistake was to assume that the only alternative was that there must be some simple and strict formula governing what could do so. In the following chapter I shall try to show that there is a third alternative which will allow us to rectify the faults in both theories.

CHAPTER IV

MORAL UNIVERSALISATION : KANT AND HARE

Almost everyone now agrees that moral judgements must, in some sense, be universalisable. And this agreement is typically taken to be an agreement with a central contribution of Kantian ethics. Much that is currently said about moral universalisation, however, would have been strongly rejected by Kant. And so the label 'universalist' does not of itself aid our understanding of Kant's position at all and can easily interfere with such understanding.

R.M. Hare, for example, offers a theory of moral universalisation that is often regarded as Kantian in character. According to Hare, the fundamental principle of Morality is the principle that whatever rule any agent applies to other persons he must also apply, or be willing to have applied, to himself, and conversely. This is, according to Hare, simply the demand that moral judgments must, as a requirement of rationality, be universalisable. This theory is quite clearly formal (i.e. any end or purpose can be a part of morality so long as the agent wills it for everyone including himself), and it does appear initially plausible to say that it enshrines a kind of Kantianism. But this is a misleading impression.

First of all, it is important to see how very strange Hare's view really is. For it is really quite radically subjective

in character. For Hare, the universalisability of a judgment depends solely upon what the agent is willing to accept. He is not claiming that a universalisable moral judgment is one which in fact could obtain as a universal practice. Rather it is one which the agent does will to accept as a universal practice. No matter how evil or unworkable the state of affairs, if the agent is willing that he and everyone else labour under it, then the judgment is moral. The universalisability of a judgment, then, is not determined by any objective state of affairs in the agent's environment, but only by what the agent is or is not willing to put up with. 'The test of the agent's wished for himself qua recipient would justify rules which impose on their recipients unjust or immoral hardships, including racial discrimination and even genocide. If Werner is willing to be exterminated if it is discovered that he is a Jew, then Werner's prescriptive judgment 'Exterminate the Jews' counts as moral. Morality, on this view, becomes essentially a private rather than a public enterprise. As H. L. A. Hart remarks:

To characterise morality ... as primarily a matter of the application to conduct of those ultimate principles which the individual accepts or to which he commits himself for the conduct of his life seems to me an excessively Protestant approach. Important as this aspect or kind of moral judgment is, we need to understand it as a development from the primary phenomenon of the morality of a social group ('Legal and Moral Obligation' in Essays in Moral Philosophy).

Now it must be admitted that Kant's statement of the Categorical Imperative would, if viewed uncritically, incline one to interpret Kant as holding a similar position:

Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law (Foundations, 421 : Beck, 39).

This certainly sounds as though Kant, like Hare, were saying that you act on moral (as opposed to private) grounds so long as you are simply willing that your maxims be universal. However, we should be suspicious of pinning such a view on Kant, for we must remember that his exercise in pure moral philosophy is to discover the nature of fully rational action. And the imposition of genocide by a fanatic hardly seems to correspond with such an Ideal paradigm of rationality - no matter how much the fanatic is willing to suffer the awful consequences of what he does. And indeed, if we proceed a few paragraphs further in the Foundations, we find that Kant's view is considerably more complex than Hare's:

We must be able to will that a maxim of our action become a universal law; this is the canon of the moral estimation of our action generally. Some actions are of such a nature that their maxim cannot even be thought as a universal law of nature

without contradiction In others this internal impossibility is not found though it is still impossible to will that their maxim should be raised to the universality of a Law of nature, because such a will would contradict itself (Foundations, 424; Beck, 41-2).

So Kant is really operating here with two principles of morality. The first, used to derive perfect duties when later employed as a criterion, is that you should act on no maxim which is incapable of being a universal practice. The second, later used as a criterion for imperfect duties, is that certain maxims, even if capable of being universal practices, cannot count as moral if the agent cannot consistently will that they be universal practices. And neither of these principles is subjective. The first speaks, not just of what can be willed (for, as the existence of irrational people surely shows, anything can be willed), but what can be consistently willed. And, as I shall argue later, by 'consistently willable, Kant does not mean merely consistency with whatever contingent desires I, by some personal quirk, just happen to have. Rather he means consistency with the desires that all men necessarily have. This desires he calls essential ends of humanity, and they play a crucial role in Kant's material metaphysics of morals.

Kant's views on moral universalisation, then, are not formal in the sense that Hare's are. But what are his views

then? To see this, we shall need to examine the three pure formulations of the Categorical Imperative. These are all recognisable by the fact that they make no reference to nature or to humanity, but are stated as characteristic of rationality as such. They may all be expressed in the indicative mood, and they should be so expressed to avoid confusion between pure and applied moral philosophy. For my working formulations, I shall use the following:

1. X is a fully rational being if and only if X acts on maxims that are universalisable.
2. X is a fully rational being if and only if X treats rationality, whether in its own being or in that of another, always as an end never as a means only.
3. X is fully rational being if and only if X acts as though he were a law-making member in a universal kingdom of ends.

What I wish to argue in the remainder of this chapter is that formulation (2) is the fundamental formulation of the Categorical Imperative. It, and the doctrine of 'ends in themselves' upon which it rests, are absolutely essential to understanding what Kant means by moral universalisation.

Now the deduction of formulation (1) from the concept of a rational being is easily presented. Kant does not actually give us the argument in the Foundations (except as an enthymeme),

but by adding a premise (b) from the Critique of Pure Reason, we can get the following:

- (a) X is a fully rational being if and only if X acts only according to a conception of law (at Foundations, 412; Beck, 28).
- (b) X is a law only if X is universal (at Critique of Pure Reason, A 2; Kemp Smith, 42).

Therefore : X is a fully rational being if and only if X acts according to a conception of universal law.

We seem to have, then, as a fundamental principle of a fully rational being, that it acts only on a conception of universal laws. However, having this principle is not in itself any great asset in our inquiry into pure moral philosophy. For, as it stands, the notion of 'universal law' lacks specification and cannot be brought to bear upon specifically moral issues. For surely we would not want to claim, for example that there is any moral significance in acting on a conception of the law of universal gravitation - though such action certainly satisfies a bare criterion of universalisability.

This difficulty, however, is more apparent than real : For we must remember that we are talking about the universalisability of maxims - principles of human action. But behaving in accordance with the law of universal gravitation has no maxim because such behaviour is not, in any meaningful sense, an

action at all. For it is not within my power to refrain from behaving in accordance with this law. Though my jumping off a building might very well be an action of mine, we should hardly want to say that my falling and hitting the ground was also an action on my part. It is not something I did, but something which happened to me. Thus in spelling out universalisability in any ethically relevant sense (in a sense characterising intentional human actions), we must remember that what must be universalisable is not brute bodily behaviour as such, but the maxims of actions. Universalisability thus cannot be spelled out as simply consistency with actual laws of nature. I act according to these, surely, but not on a conception of them.

Neither can 'universalisable' mean 'logical consistency' in any formal sense. We can know whether a given statement is formally consistent without knowing anything about the content of the statement. This is, after all, the value of formal procedures. They test the logical consistency of statements once the actual terms or content of these statements have been replaced by variables. For example, we know that the statement 'All grinchies are greeps and there is one grinch which is not a greep' is formally inconsistent without knowing anything at all about the meaning and content of the actual statement. For the general scheme 'All Ps are Qs and there is a P which is not a Q' is formally inconsistent, i.e. it is reducible to a contradiction of the form 'P and not P'. But the universalisability

of maxims does indeed depend upon the content of those maxims. Universalisability is supposed to be a rational criterion of conduct, not of statements, and must take account of the ends that the agent is pursuing in action. The maxim 'I shall make a false promise' is, according to Kant, not universalisable. But it obviously is not a formal contradiction, nor can it be reduced to one. What is not universalisable in this maxim is not its logical form, but is rather the end or purpose that the agent is seeking to bring about.

My reason for discussing these points has been to show that universalisability cannot in itself stand as a sufficient condition for rational morality. For, if taken as sufficient, the sphere of morally permissible actions will include those that merely accord with natural causal laws (e.g. 'survival of the fittest') and those which can be given a non-contradictory description (e.g. 'kill the Jews'). Thus the notion of universalisability must, if it is to be of any help at all in determining a characterisation of the moral point of view, be spelled out so as to be explicitly relevant to maxims-principles for the realisation of certain ends, purposes of states of affairs. All maxims are of the form 'To bring about so and so under certain conditions', and we need some principle to tell us the difference between what is rational to bring about and what is irrational to bring about. Moral actions must be universalisable or rationally consistent - but consistent with what?

Here real difficulties begin to present themselves. We must remember that Kant is trying to present his characterisation of the supreme principle of morality as a part of pure moral philosophy. Thus he cannot spell out universalisability in terms of any particular empirical ends or purposes that rational beings just happen to have, e.g. happiness. Rather he seeks a characterisation of the actions of all rational beings, and there is no reason to suppose that all rational beings pursue the same material ends. And even if they did, this would still be a contingent matter and could not form the basis for the a-priori principles of pure moral philosophy. But (and this is a very important 'but') if there were an end actually set by reason itself, then the case would be quite different:

It is necessary law for all rational beings that they should always judge their actions by such maxims as they themselves could will to serve as universal laws? if it is such a law, it must be connected (wholly a priori) with the concept of the will of a rational being as such. But, in order to discover this connection we must, however reluctantly, take a step into metaphysics.

Material ends ... are without exception only relative, for only their relation to a particularly constituted faculty of desire in the subject gives them their worth. And this worth

cannot, therefore, afford any universal principles for all rational beings.

But suppose that there were something the existence of which in itself had absolute worth, something which as an end in itself, could be a ground of definite laws. In it and only in it could lie the ground of a possible categorical imperative, i.e. of a practical law .

CHAPTER V

UNIVERSALIZABILITY : HARE AND J. L. MACKIE

What role can reason play in ethical decision-making?

That has been the central question of ethics since Socrates sought to refute the moral scepticism of the sophists. It is also the connecting thread of Hare's work. His position emerged out of the non-cognitivist theories defended by Ayer and Stevenson. A major objection to these theories was that they could not allow reason a role in determining basic moral positions. While Hare shares with the non-cognitivists the view that moral judgments do not state facts, he has always denied that this view allows no place for reason in ultimate moral decisions. In Freedom and Reason and Moral Thinking he has developed the notion of universalizability to the point at which he feels able to claim that it gives sufficient scope to reason to allow us to reach, in principle, a determinate conclusion.

Although J. L. Mackie wrote his Ethics : Inventing Right and Wrong before Hare had published the fully developed statement of his position as in Moral Thinking, Mackie's discussion of universalizability is still widely regarded as pinpointing the key difficulties in Hare's position. Mackie argued that there is not one single notion of universalizability but three:

- (a) The irrelevance of numerical differences
- (b) Putting oneself in the other person's place
- (c) Taking account of different tastes and rival ideals.

Only the first of these, Mackie claimed, can be said to be part of the meaning of moral terms, or logically implied by our moral concepts. Yet only the third notion of universalizability will suffice to bring us to the conclusion Hare seeks, that universalizability leads us to a form of utilitarianism. Moreover, Mackie continues, even where a notion of universalizability is implicit in our moral concepts, there is a substantive decision involved in limiting one's action to those one is prepared to prescribe universally. Nothing can logically compel us to make this decision.

In Moral Thinking Hare denies that there are different stages of universalization. He says that there is, rather, a progression in the use made of a single property, namely, the property of entailing identical judgments about all cases identical in their universal properties. The difference is significant, for if there are three stages of universalizability as Mackie claims, those whom Hare calls 'fanatics' might claim that there is no reason to go beyond the first two stages. Such fanatics could still claim to hold a universalizable morality. They could with, Mackie's support, say that they accept the full notion of

universalizability implied by our moral concepts, and yet they would, of course, escape the crucial third step of Hare's argument, the one which compels them to treat their ideals as if they counted for no more, than any other ideal held with equal intensity, if, on the other hand, all three 'stages' are merely the progressive development of a single logical property, it would seem that anyone who accepts the first aspect of universalizability must also accept the second and third aspects of it. Then the fanatic would have to choose between rejecting universalizability altogether and accepting all that Hare argues as implicit in the notion.

Hare has consistently maintained that the basis of universalizability is to be found in the meanings of the moral words. But if we ask ourselves whether ordinary people consider that a moral judgment must give equal weight to all ideals, irrespective of their content, the answer would surely go against Hare. To this extent, at least, Mackie is right. Very many ordinary people are not consequentialists. And even those who are, they tend to regard deontological views as properly falling within the sphere of morality. How then can Hare argue that the moral words we ordinarily use require us to disregard the content of the ideals we may hold? And even if somehow Hare could make out this claim, would the result not simply be to show, very clearly, that Mackie was right when he said that to decide to act in accordance with

universalizable judgments is always a substantive decision which reason alone does not compel us to make?

Can Hare defend his position on ideals by appealing to our ordinary understanding of moral language. There is another possibility, namely that, ironically of course, Hare and Mackie are in agreement that moral judgments do not state objective truths. In criticizing the idea that universalizability requires us to give equal weight to all moral ideals, Mackie wrote that it was to believe that the objective validity of one's own ideals provides an overwhelmingly strong reason for taking no account at all of ideals that conflict with them. Mackie is right. Hare's suggestion that all ideals should be treated equally, without regard to their content, is bound to be resisted by all those who claim that their ideals are objectively valid, while other people's ideals are false and mistaken. But Mackie is a moral sceptic, he does not believe that any ideals can be objectively valid. Once we grant such scepticism, what else can an ideal be except a certain type of desire? And why should we treat ideals differently from other desires when we universalize?

Hare also holds that there can be no objectively valid moral ideals. For him, moral judgments are prescriptions. Truth or falsity, in the sense in which it applies to descriptions, is not applicable to prescriptions. Because he rejects the idea

that moral judgments are descriptive, Hare can reject the view that ideals are different from desires because they are true or false. Hare makes this point in his discussion of fanaticism in Moral Thinking. He has in mind a doctor who believes that he should prolong life at all costs, even in a situation in which the inevitable result is merely that the patient endures an additional worth of suffering before dying. Hare can deal with the fanatic by basing his argument on the falsity of descriptivism. That is, the doctor can not say that he knew that he ought not to let the patient die. He could say that if some form of descriptivism were true. Hare is here saying, in effect, that we cannot rely on universalizability alone to all the work of dealing with the fanatic. The doctor's intuitions are disputable. So it is prescriptivism which entails the falsity of descriptivism, and Hare insists on the irrelevance of the content of people's ideals. The upshot of all this is that if some people say that their ideals matter, we should not heed such a claim.

If universalizability is simply a matter of the logic of the concepts we use, there can be no logical barrier against the creation of a new set of concepts which limits the scope for universalizability. Hare admits this possibility in the introductory pages of Moral Thinking. It is Mackie's point that a substantive decision is involved in choosing which set of concepts to accept. The new concepts may form a restricted set of concepts.

If members of a society do not care about the welfare of outsiders, whether of another nationality, race or species, they will easily accept that some appropriately restricted set of concepts captures everything important about the questions asked by the set of concepts Hare has analysed, and leaves out only some unimportant matters with which they do not wish to be bothered. Hare might say that prudential arguments might work against the adoption of a narrowly constrained set of concepts. A restriction on the scope of universalizability seems to involve an inconsistency in a strict logical sense. At whatever point universalizability stops, one can raise the question : 'Why stop there?' Why not also take into account the preferences of others? To stop short of this point can therefore be criticized as a refusal to take into account the relevant fact that other beings also have preferences which are similar to the preferences of those who fall within the scope of the restricted sense of universalizability. The point is that be it a case of group egoism or individual egoism, a restricted notion of universalizability relies on an arbitrary disregard of relevant preferences. And the point Hare scores is that our set of moral concepts must include an unrestricted notion of universalizability.

CHAPTER VI

HARE'S CRITIQUE OF NATURALISM

I

Moore's heirs are of two kinds. There are those who carry on moral philosophy of the same type as Moore's, the so-called intuitionists, such as Prichard and Ross. And to the other kind belong to the critics of intuitionism, Collingwood and Ayer. The latter contrasted between the factual and the emotive. Stevenson suggested the idea of the moral speech-act in saying that the primary function of moral words was to redirect the attitudes of others. Further, he held that for good and for other evaluative expressions no complete definition in descriptive terms can ever be given. He agreed with Moore that good cannot function as the name of a natural, i.e., empirically descriptive property. The facts are logically divorced from the evaluations for Stevenson as much as for Moore.

Hare paid attention to two intimately related topics, the question of criteria which are employed in calling things, acts, or people good or bad, and the question of moral reasoning. The Language of Morals opens with an identification of moral speech-act. Or, Hare specifies the nature of moral language by means of an initial distinction between prescriptive and descriptive language. Prescriptive language is imperatival, in that it

tells us to do this or that. Apart from imperatives in the ordinary sense, there ^{are} properly evaluative expressions. These are also practical, but ⁱⁿ different ways. Ought sentences, if they are genuinely evaluative, entail imperatives addressed to anyone in the relevant situation, and anyone here includes the person who utters the sentence. The criterion of uttering the ought sentence sincerely is that, on the relevant occasion and if the speaker can, he does in fact act in obedience to the imperative entailed by the ought which he utters to himself. Good, by contrast, is used to commend; to call X good is to say that it is the kind of X we should choose if we wanted an X. The criteria which I employ in calling something good are criteria which, if I am engaged in genuine evaluations, I have chosen, and which I endorse by my very use of them. Evaluative expressions and moral rules are thus both expressions of the agent's fundamental choices. The role of choice in Hare's prescriptivism is far clearer and far less objectionable than the role of attitudes or feelings was in emotivism. It does not preclude the use of argument in morals.

Hare has been a pioneer in the logical investigation of imperatives. He pointed out that in imperatival discourse, conclusions can follow from premises in a straightforward way, violating none of the ordinary rules of entailment. Because

and therefore carry their usual meanings, and genuine moral argument is possible. But, so Hare further holds, the meaning of evaluative prescriptive expressions is such that no evaluative or prescriptive conclusion can follow from premises which do not include at least one evaluative or prescriptive premise. Or, Hare reiterates the thesis that no ought follows merely from is. So far as the doctrine of The Language of Morals goes, it seems to follow that the pattern of moral argument is a transition from a moral major premise and a factual minor premise to a moral conclusion. It may also be mentioned that Hare's view of 'entailment' looks back to C. J. Lewis' notion of 'strict implication'. That is, we may add, moral argument is an exercise in modalities. And further, the form of moral argument, as Hare explicates it, corresponds to the logical equivalence known as the laws of exportation and importation.

Now having established the rationality of moral discourse, Hare proceeds to a critique of naturalism. He shows that logical relations such as entailment and inconsistency may hold between propositions in the imperative mood, as well as between those in the indicative mood. Therefore, to say that an argument contains an imperative is not to say that it is irrational or governed by no logical laws. There occurs a version of the argument against naturalism, in the form of a proof that from indicative premises

nothing but an indicative conclusion can be deduced.

Hare's critique of naturalism lies in the second part of The Language of Morals. It dispenses with ontology altogether, i.e., it is not based, as Moore's critique was, on the assumption that good is a name of a simple, non-natural property. Nor does it presuppose the thesis that whatever is simple is unanalyzable, and that to define is to analyse. Good, being simple, was indefinable since it was unanalyzable. Hare's argument has remotely something to do with descriptive definitions of good. But properly speaking it is concerned with the fact that commendation of a thing for having a certain property would become impossible, if descriptivism were true. And, it is worth reminding that, for Hare, naturalism is a species of descriptivism.

Let us now look at Hare's critique. Naturalistic definitions of ethical terms make ethical propositions a merely factual account of what is, but, as Kant long ago insisted, 'what to be' cannot be reduced to 'what is'. The following may be taken as a statement of Hare's critique : If a naturalist defines 'good' as C we have to ask whether he 'ever wishes to commend anything for being C. If he says that he does, we have only to point out to him that his definition makes this impossible'. For to commend it for being C would then be just to say it is C because it is C. 'And clearly he cannot say that he never wishes to commend anything for being C, for to commend things for being C is the whole object of his theory'.

Hare goes on to formulate his notion of the evaluative meaning. It may be the case that descriptivism makes moral judgments impossible, yet it retains some truth. Descriptive terms and phrases constitute what Hare had earlier called the phrastic, and they refer to actual or possible states of affair. In other words, descriptive force or meaning of 'words and phrases is constitutive of the propositional core of moral language. As Hare distinguishes himself from the emotivists, who had desisted moral language of any descriptive force altogether, he shows that the moral language is a rational discourse and obeys the laws of logic. Accordingly, Hare is careful in his attempt to accommodate the truth of descriptivism in his meta-ethics.

Value words or judgments have two points of meaning, descriptive as well as commendatory. There is a good case of reason giving for our use of value terms. Ascription of value terms presuppose criteria. And criteria are description of good-making properties. But Hare's point is that saying that something is good is to make a choice, but it is hardly the case that 'the criteria, or for that matter, description of empirical properties of a thing logically obliges one to choose or decide in favour of that object. This is what descriptivism asserts and Hare refuses to assent to. Now that value terms or judgments have both descriptive and commendatory meanings, what makes them evaluative is that the commendatory meaning has a primacy, the descriptive meaning

has only a criteria logical significant and is secondary in importance to the commendatory.

II

Hare takes up the issue of descriptivism in the Freedom and Reason. He opens the chapter on "Descriptive Meaning" by making the remark that meaning is rule dependent. Words or phrases can be said to have descriptive meaning if they obey the descriptive meaning rule. A rule is the consistency of practice in the use of an expression. To have a rule is to be able to know beforehand what would constitute a misuse of a certain term. Accordingly, a term is said to be descriptive if its proper use is guided by descriptive meaning rule. A mistaken use of a term becomes possible when the corresponding rule is violated, and this results in a false statement. Hare distinguishes referring from describing. For example, the word 'it' refers but does not describe, while colour words like 'blue' or 'red' describes but does not refer. This means that descriptive terms make a special class of words. Now, more importantly, comes the notion of descriptive judgment, and Hare goes on to say that 'A judgment is descriptive if in it the predicate or predicates are descriptive terms and the mood is indicative'.

Hare, further, points to the connexion between descriptive judgments and moral judgements. Both classes of judgments are

universalizable. This does not mean that moral judgments are descriptive, though they do have descriptive meaning. The point is that all judgments that have descriptive meaning are universalizable. Let us see how does it obtain. 'If a person says that a thing is red, he is committed to the view that anything which was like it in the relevant respects would likewise be red'

(FR II). The point is that the descriptive judgment 'This is red' entails 'Everything like this in the relevant respects is red'. To say that something is red is to say that it is of a certain kind, and therefore, anything which is of that same kind is red. Singular descriptive judgments are then universalizable, because one cannot without inconsistency apply a descriptive term to one thing and refuse to apply it to another similar thing (similar in the relevant respects). This would constitute a misuse of the term.

It should be noticed further that in using a descriptive term one uses some universal rule, and Hare contends that the universal rule which is involved in the use of descriptive expressions is a meaning-rule. This now brings us to Hare's thesis that both descriptive judgments and value judgments carry descriptive meaning. Let us take two instances to show the point: (a) If A calls a thing red, then A is committed to calling anything else like it red; (b) If B says that a thing a good X, then B is committed to calling any X like it good. In the first case 'red'

is used in accordance with a meaning-rule. In the second case the reason for saying that any X like it good is a little complicated. This would not be so for a naturalist, for he considers that the rules for ascribing value words are descriptive meaning-rules; and that the rules completely determine the meaning of value-words. In short, for the naturalist, a value-word is just one kind of descriptive expression.

Hare distinguishes between sorts of descriptivism. Moore, he says was descriptivist of the non-natural sort. It is the presence of a non-natural property alone that makes the ascription of value-words permissible. An ordinary naturalist would say that the property present is describable in empirical, i.e., natural, terms, since the property itself is natural or empirical. Having made the distinction. Hare goes on to characterize his own meta-ethical position as Universal Prescriptivism. This characterization is parasitic of a further distinction between a strong and a weak descriptivism (FR 17). Descriptivism is strong if it is held that moral judgments are descriptive i.e., their descriptive meaning exhausts their meaning. Descriptivism is weak if it averred that moral judgments, besides possessing descriptive meaning have prescriptive meaning as well. For Kant a moral judgment would have no descriptive meaning at all. In his meta-ethical position. Hare seeks to harmonise three theses of universalizability, prescriptivity and descriptivity. These are

mutually consistent, that is, they do not contradict one another. Strong descriptivism is consistent with prescriptivity of moral judgments, but not with the weaker form. Again weak descriptivism entails universalizability. That the language of morals is a rational discourse can only be shown if only prescriptivity and universalizability, or for that matter, weak descriptivism can be combined. What is interesting to note is that Hare is seeking to retain what is sound in descriptivism, and adding to it the element of prescriptivity in the case of moral judgments. 'The truth in naturalism is that moral terms do indeed have descriptive meaning. It is not the only element in their meaning, and it is therefore misleading to refer to it, as do the naturalists, as the meaning of a moral term; but in virtue of possessing this descriptive meaning moral judgments are universalizable, and naturalism has the merit of implying this' (FR 21).

With reference to Hare's critique of naturalism it may now be said that the combining of prescriptivity with weak descriptivism ensures the non-deducibility of ought from is. Since descriptive meaning does not exhaust the meaning content of moral terms, the non-descriptive element in their meaning makes a difference in their logical behaviour. Descriptivism, when it is strong, is moral ineffectual, a matter of talking, poor enough to serve as a moral principle. But weak descriptivism, on the contrary, in conjunction with prescriptivity is a synthetic moral principle to live by. Hare has wanted moral

is true that there exists unanimity of people's evaluations, certain descriptive meaning is often tied securely to value-words. And it becomes possible to derive judgments of value from non-evaluative statements. This is what the naturalist is inclined to do. But no one can be logically compelled to accept the evaluation. What one is compelled to accept is what is implied in the descriptive meaning of the word. The naturalist's conceptual apparatus does not really yield any evaluation. His moral argument is simply a repetition of his premise, what is entailed by the description. Hare's point is that no conceptual apparatus is logically compelling with regard to the acceptance of a certain evaluation.

Logic alone does not matter with Hare, rather it is the logical consequences of the logic of moral language that matters heavily. Whether the logical consequences we can accept or not is the question. The naturalist does not undertake the exploration into the case whether the logical consequences are acceptable to us and also can be extended to other people, actual or hypothetical. This is the core of universalizability. There is a difference between 'verbal legislation' and 'moral thought' (FR 195). And Hare's idea is that one cannot get 'content' into moral judgments by verbal legislation alone, as the naturalist seek to do.

How does facts come into moral judgments? Moral prescriptions can be inconsistent with other prescriptions, but not with

statement of facts. If a prescription is not possible, logically, to be combined with prescriptions of other kinds, we cannot accept or assent to them at the same time. It is never the case with regard to statements of fact. The form of the impossibility of combining inconsistent prescriptions, according to Hare, is as follows: for any prescription P it cannot be asserted that P, but even so — non-P. From Hare's position p and not p are different, one is actual, another is hypothetical, a distinction the naturalist does not abide by. Hence Hare would say, 'If I in another situation assent to the imperative "p", then even so, not-p'. The first imperative is but in quotation marks, that means it is not issued at all.

It is non-contradictory, but morally vacuous. We enter imaginatively into a hypothetical situation, and think about it and as it were going really to happen to us. Our desires in both the actual and hypothetical case are not different. "A hypothetical similar situation is similar" (FR 197). And that is why we do not like our desires even in hypothetical situations to be frustrated. The thesis of universalizability requires that we can not disregard the desires of our neighbours. If we do, then either we shall have to contend ourselves with singular prescriptions, or we have to play the role of fanatics. Hare's concept of a fanatic is applicable ^{to} those who would believe that they were going to suffer evils like those which, for their present ends, they were proposing to inflict on others. A Nazi

is a fanatic if he would want to get rid of Jews more than he wants himself to live. Fortunately such people are rare.

The 'issue between naturalism and prescriptivism may now be stated vis-a-vis facts that one might appeal to in support of moral judgments. The naturalist avers that given certain non-moral facts about an action, a moral judgment is entailed. According to prescriptivism 'there are no non-moral facts' (FR 198) such that it could entail a moral judgment. Non-moral facts can there be as part of the ingredients of a moral judgment. There is no denying that the facts of the case should be given since all moral argument is about some particular set of facts, actual or hypothetical. There is then the logical framework provided by the meaning of the words like 'ought'. But more importantly, there has to be the volitional factor, i.e., the readiness to treat the desires of other as if they were one's own. Moral thinking requires us to universalize our volitions. It is by universalizing one's volitions that one retains one's judgments as prescriptive, and prescriptivity cannot be deduced from any statements of fact.

There has been a gradual shift in Hare's position from The Language of Moral through Freedom and Reason to Moral Thinking. He has gradually come to realise that the possible content of a morality is no more narrowly restricted by the logic of moral

language. In his later accounts of what moral judgements mean he includes an interpretation of their universality amounting to a strong substantive requirement of impartiality among all persons. From the bare universality to a strong form of impartiality is Hare's passage.

The bare universality of moral claims is relatively uncontroversial, and might be called part of the meaning of moral terms. If I make a judgment about what I or someone else ought to do, I am committed to the view that anyone else in the same circumstances ought to do the same. The judgment is a consequence of more general principle. But this by itself yields nothing like impartiality in the content of moral judgments, indeed it tells us very little about their content at all. Ethical egoism, for example, meets the condition of bare universality perfectly. And Hare in his discussion of the 'fanatic' recognized that some appalling positions could be embraced as universal prescriptions, in some sense.

We get impartiality only if we give a particular answer to the question, 'What is the attitude I take towards the acts covered by such a universal principle when I judge that they ought (or ought not) to be done? That is, we need an account of what it is to prescribe that they be done, that everyone act in a certain way. Hare's view is that a prescription that something be done is the expression of a desire or preference that it be done. And

a universal prescription expresses a desire that the thing be done in all similar cases in the actual world, and also in all similar hypothetical cases which differ from the actual ones only in the identities of the participants.

CHAPTER VII

HARE ON THE LEVELS OF MORAL THINKING

In the latest stage of his thinking culminating in Moral Thinking Hare has added to his earlier Universal Prescriptivist meta-ethics a particular theory of the separation of levels of moral thinking. The basic idea of Hare's doctrine of 'the separation of levels' is that beside metaethics or metamorals there are two kinds of substantive moral thinking. The first point of his version of the doctrine of the separation of levels is best put by saying that there are or might be two kinds of normative moral thinking : (a) pure uncritical or 'intuitive' moral thinking, in which moral agents use or would use only relatively simple 'prima facie principles' of 'limited specificity' in directing their actions. This is what most of us do in our ordinary moral thinking. These principles are acquired somehow but not by the use of any kind of critical thinking or reflection, (b) pure critical thinking in which moral agents make or would make no use of any such principles of limited specificity in directing their actions, but only of the method of universal prescriptivism, applying it directly to each particular situation. Such thinking would, in effect, be situational ethics plus universalization, and so would issue in principles of unlimited specificity which would not represent prima facie duties in Ross's sense but actual ones.

It should be observed that each of these pure kinds of thinking is a species of one-level moral thinking. And in each of them the requirements of prescriptivity and universalizability is or can be met. Theoretically moral thinking can as a whole take either form. There is no need to have a two level structure, a society of proles and a society of archangels. A human society might use both kinds of moral thinking, one for certain questions, and the other for other questions.

According to Hare human beings are neither proles nor archangels, 'we all share the characteristics of both to limited and varying degrees and at different times'. Therefore our moral thinking need not as a whole, take either of these pure one-level forms. Nor should it. It should not be wholly intuitive or codal, because the principles of limited specificity used as premises in such thinking may conflict, be inadequate to new situations, and be vague or just plain mistaken. Some kind of critical moral thinking is therefore necessary. Indeed, none of our moral thinking should be of the pure intuitive sort. Any intuitive moral thinking we should do be preceded or accompanied by some kind of critical moral thinking, either our own or someone else's. That is, our intuitive moral thinking should be the lower level in a two-level structure of which some kind of critical moral thinking is the upper level; it should be impure in the sense of being critically based and hence not 'uncritical'. Our codal moral

thinking, if any, ought to be a criticized codal thinking.

According to Hare, our human moral thinking does not, as a whole, take the form of pure critical moral thinking. It could do so if we were archangels. But, unlike archangels, we are afflicted with various human weaknesses — ignorance, lack of time, partialities to self and to friends and relatives, etc. We therefore need a code of principles of limited specificity, accompanied by strong moral feelings like compunction, and should, in fact, do codal or intuitive moral thinking most of the time. It follows that our moral thinking as a whole should include both critical moral thinking and intuitive moral thinking and that the intuitive moral thinking should be based on the critical moral thinking.

The idea of a two-level moral theory is no doubt attractive. Several lines of thought lead to the conclusion that there are different levels of moral thinking. A moral theory like utilitarianism is sharply at variance with ordinary moral thought, and so a two-level theory can seem as a way of explaining the divergence. Precepts of common-sense morality may be defended as principles from the point of view of this theory, for people to believe and act upon. Rule-utilitarianism has often been perceived in this way. One may also be led towards a two-level theory by a desire to do justice to the perceived complexity of ordinary moral argument. No storable principle tells the whole story of the moral

claim which it embodies. There is always more to be said about why the acts mentioned are wrong or permissible or required, about which cases are to be recognized as exceptions, and so on. Thus the existence of a level of 'critical thinking' behind commonly accepted principles seems to be indicated by an examination of ordinary moral thought itself, considered in isolation from any moral theory.

It may be the case that a distinction between levels of moral thinking sometimes justifies our continued reliance on ordinary thinking even in case in which the judgments it leads to are wrong. The relation between the two levels could be an instrumental one. Again, according to another line of thinking the two levels may be deemed to be quite continuous with one another; 'critical thinking' being only the completion of less reflective moral thought. In this case, the two levels of thinking never yield conflicting practical judgments. And if at all they do, the judgment given by 'critical thinking' is always the unequivocally correct answer about what to do.

Both of these lines of thought are represented at various points in Hare's work, though it is the latter which is predominant in Moral thinking. His view of the relation between critical and intuitive thinking seems consistently to be one supported by utilitarian rationale. One subject of critical thinking as Hare describes it is the question of what 'intuitive'

principles it would be best for us to employ. But critical thought also, and primarily, yields conclusions about which acts are 'really' right. By determining what is right they define the goal of moral practice, and a set of intuitive principles is justified if trying to act by those principles would maximize our chances of performing acts which are right. Conformity to intuitive principles does not insure that an action is right — at most that it is 'morally rational'. None the less, morally good people will rely on such principles most of the time as principles which are taken seriously and cannot be violated without compunction.

Hare sometimes presents the distinction as one between the kinds of moral thinking appropriate to two different kinds of people, parents and 'archangels' on the one hand, and on the other, children and 'proles'. Parents and archangels can engage in critical thinking because they have the opportunity to do so and because of their greater ability : greater knowledge of the relevant facts and greater powers of dispassionate judgment. Having the benefit of these advantages, they can attempt to discover the truth about what is right, and on this basis, choose intuitive principles which are to be implanted into their children or proles. The latter, by contrast, should not attempt to discover the truth but should merely react, in accordance with these implanted principles, to the situations which confront them.

Without denying that there is such a thing as moral education and that parents do have to take decisions, employing what one hopes is their greater wisdom, about how to bring up their children, it must be admitted that there is something quite unattractive about the picture of Hare's two levels. The idea that discovery of truth about what is right is reserved for 'the wise', while most of us most of the time are supposed instead to react instinctively in accordance with implanted principles, is hardly appealing, a part from the fact that the terminology of archangels and proles is not enough illuminating.

What Hare is discussing is not really two separate groups of people but two points of view which the same person may adopt at different times. We are, almost all of us, sometimes 'parents' and sometimes 'children', sometimes 'archangels' and sometimes 'proles'. But does this remove the difficulty? Certainly there is such a thing as moral self-education, and we do sometimes undertake to make ourselves more sensible to certain considerations. Yet it cannot be denied that cases do arise in which there is no time for reflection and one must simply act on the basis of one's immediate reactions. It does not seem that the process of applying and acting on 'intuitive' moral principles is in general simply a matter of responding to 'implanted' motivations. When applied to a single person, Hare's distinction between the intuitive and critical standpoints involves a division of labour in moral thought which is at odds with at least part of our moral experience.

There is a sense in which Hare distinguishes three levels of moral thinking : the metaethical, which is non-substantial , and philosophical, besides the intuitive and the critical. Substantial issues are deliberated on at either the critical or the intuitive level. At the critical level of moral thinking no moral intuitions of substance can be appealed to. It proceeds, he tells us, in accordance with canons established by philosophical logic and thus based on linguistic intuitions only. These canons are the logical apparatus of universal prescriptivism. Moral thinking at the intuitive level fails to conform to the canons of the critical level.

What, then, is Hare's view of the nature of moral thinking at the intuitive level? We acquire, by education, a number of relatively simple general principles. These principles we usually follow unquestionably so long as there is no conflict between them. If we have been well brought up this situation is satisfactory most of the time. But we are powerless to resolve conflicts between principles in a rational manner unless we resort to thinking at the critical level, otherwise we must resort to such irrational procedures as weighing the principles. Further we cannot at the intuitive level rationally examine the principles that we at first uncritically accept, or rationally replace those found to be unacceptable.

There is no definite list, in Hare's opinion, of the relatively general principles which all men do, can, or should

accept. What principles are desirably held is partly determined by the situation in which a person finds himself and the character he has; acts of supererogation are those performed by people who are able and willing to conform to principles to which we do not expect the generality of men to conform. But critical thinking will demonstrate that it is desirable for all ordinary mortals to have some set of relatively general principles and usually to obey them without question.

After having outlined Hare's account of the nature of moral thinking at the intuitive level, we may now ask the following questions : (a) Is the conflict of duties or principles confined to the intuitive level? Hare refers to these phrases on pages 26 and 32 of Moral Thinking. Does he mean that all moral conflicts are conflicts of principle? Keeping promises and truth-telling are two examples of what many people regard as principles. But there are many relatively general moral adages which I and many others accept, though certainly not as principles, for example, the proposition that one should avoid causing inconvenience to other people. That an action would inconvenience somebody is a reason, often, one among many other considerations, that tells against its performance, a reason, but not a sufficient reason in all circumstances. Keeping the promise of taking my children to picnic and taking my friends around may be a case of conflict, but hardly a conflict of principles. As we have mentioned a

little while ago, 'keep promises' is a principle, and one does not stand under any obligation to take friends around. There is no duty, no ready-made principle requiring me so to do. This case does not exemplify such a conflict. Hare appears to include under the term 'principle' a number of very different things.

Many of us use the term for some rules of conduct which we set for ourselves or accept from others, and at times follow them refusing to consider arguments to the contrary. Principles such as these need not be moral. They may be prudential ones, and might be violated in readily conceivable circumstances. There is no single model of conflict as Hare has suggested.

Let us now turn to Hare's main objection to intuitive moral thinking which is not underpinned by critical moral thinking. He speaks scornfully of the attempt to deal with a conflict of duties, or setting it by a judging or weighing process. Judging and weighing have no decision procedure. But there need not be any special objections to judging and weighing in the moral sphere. Just as evidence for fact has to be weighed, so has evidence for value. In prudence we may have to decide in the light of complex facts. Hare's critical moral thinking cannot avoid weighing and judging. If we are to aim at maximum satisfaction of desires or needs, or maximum pleasure, do we not have to weigh the evidence? Does not one have to use one's judgment in trying to decide, by imaginatively putting ourselves in the other person's

place? It seems that the weighing of evidence and judgment are inevitable in all walks of life. So, though it would be desirable to have a better philosophical understanding of it, its presence at the intuitive level does not seem to be a serious objection to the self-sufficiency of that type of thinking, or, if it does invalidate intuitive moral thinking, it invalidates also just about all our thinking outside pure mathematics. Rightly has Urmson called Hare's use of the term 'principle' monolithic.

There is a vast array of actions having moral significance which are frequently performed by ordinary human beings, who are neither saints nor heroes. These actions are neither duties nor obligations, nor involve conformity to principles. As well as acts of moral saintliness and heroism, this class includes many humbler types of action within the reach of all of us. There are various types of action which we might call kind, considerate, chivalrous, charitable, neighbourly decent, or acts of self-denial and self-abnegation. Acts so described are in many circumstances neither duties nor obligations. To fail to do them would not be positively wrong, though perhaps, unneighbourly, unkind, etc., nor are they dictated by principle. Nor are these various terms synonymous with each other and with 'supererogatory'. If we are to do justice to the rich complexity of moral life, we need a much more rich and varied set of concepts than the small set to which Hare confines himself.

In ordinary moral thinking we attempt to determine our duties and obligations with a more complex apparatus than Hare allows. Beyond simple moral principles there are all kinds of considerations of greater and lesser importance and with varying relevance which are ordinarily taken into account. Further, weighing and judgment are indispensable in all assessment of evidence, and relevant factors in matters of fact and questions of prudence as well as in morality. In all these areas it is very difficult to get philosophically clear on the nature of this weighing and judging. But this is no ground for denying either its existence or its indispensability. It seems that Hare does shy away in allowing for whole range of moral life which are not concerned with fulfilment of duty and obligation.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CONCEPT OF CHOICE : SARTRE' - HARE VIEW

In this chapter I propose to analyse the Sartrean statement that the existence is absurd and the consequential concept of choice. The statement is ontological, and the concept pertains to the realm of ethics. The passage from an ontological description of human reality to an ethical theory can be risky, and it has been argued by many that Sartre's philosophy has no ethics. The Sartrean test on moral philosophy is unwritten. The very last sentence in *Being and Nothingness* promised such a publication. Of course, no such book has ever come into existence. But the publication of the *Critique of Dialectical Reason, Volume I*¹ may be looked upon as the fulfilment of Sartre's pledge. Besides Simone de Beauvoir's *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, Francis Jeanson's² full-length study of Sartre's philosophy viewed it as ultimately ethical in import. The position taken in this chapter is that Sartre has an ethics³ and it can be linked to Hare's.

Though the proposed analysis will be of a non existentialist sort, yet for the sake of avoiding misrepresentation it is worth delineating the key terms of Sartrean doctrine used in the paper be explained. Hence a very brief schematic indication of Sartre's designation of human reality follows.

There is for Sartre the basic ontological duality of in-itself and for-itself. Human reality is never pure being-for-itself. The tension between in-itself and for-itself is the means by which Sartre seeks to explain the individual's relation to himself, to his environment, and to other men. The human being is not his own *raison de' tre*, his ground of existence. The chief characteristic of being-for-itself is its activity. It is incapable of being acted on from without, and it consists in and is exhausted by its own intentional, meaning-conferring acts. Human consciousness constitutes itself by contrast with or as other than its physical milieu, its body, its part and indeed everything whatsoever. By its self-detaching activity, it creates, as it were, a hole in being-in-itself and the latter, as the horizon that surrounds this focus of negation becomes a "world". Because consciousness projects being-in-itself against a backdrop of non-being, it inescapably apprehends actuality in the content of possibility — that is, of the alternative possibilities of development of which the actual is susceptible. It also apprehends itself as a bridge between the actual and the possible and as having to determine which of these possibilities is to be realized. The human reality is that by which value arrives in the world. Finally, human consciousness is free because it is forced to think of itself as — and thus is — other than the world and unincorporable into any causal sequences it may discern within the world. The feeling of anguish, Sartre says, is our experience

of this freedom. He rejects totally, as unprovable, ontologically impossible, and unjustifiable because of the potential limitations that it imposes on man's freedom, the suggestion that values exist in any way prior to man himself, or that any particular values are inevitably "imposed" on all men by some alleged essential nature of things. The fact of human freedom means that "... in the bright realm of values, we have no excuse behind us, nor justification before us"⁴. No excuse behind us, because only our own free choice can account for our actions. By "excuses" may be meant all theories which interpret man's behaviour in terms of some natural or supernatural deterministic system, fate, will of God, etc. Our freedom rules out the possibility of a justification before us. Values are valid only because we have chosen them as valuable. We can change our values by our own decision, and there are no principles in the world to which we can turn to know that we have decided rightly. We are not responsible for being in world, but we cannot avoid responsibility for the role which we have chosen to play in the world. There are no acts which are good or bad in themselves.

A person exists authentically or he is in bad faith⁵. Authentic existence is directly related to the being of man, it is a kind of honesty in facing the ambiguous nature of human reality. To exist is to act, hence to exist authentically is to make free decisions. Sartre does not distinguish between freedom

mentation through human action. It is only by that same conscious existence that these situations can be assigned the goals toward which they are to develop. It follows that not only the means used to reach a given goal but the goal but the goal itself and any general principles that may have dictated its selection must be thought of as choices that are subject to no causal influences and no rational controls at all. Such choices are "unjustifiable" because the reasoning that is commonly thought of as providing independent guidance for choice is itself an expression of that choice. Such a choice is not, however, to be conceived as a single mental episode. Rather, it is human action itself considered as doing one thing rather than another from among the multiple possibilities with which human consciousness endow each actual situation. To exist is to act, and to act is to choose. Anguish is brought about on the reflection that there is nothing at all to determine our choices. Freedom to make choices, for Sartre, is part of the definition of man, and making choices entails asserting values. All values depend on freedom⁶.

The two kinds of being, for-itself and in-itself are in a permanent state of disintegration. A synthesis of the two is causa sui impossible. While the being-for-itself does presuppose being-in-itself, the latter, being "opaque", remains radically independent. It is a hopeless undertaking because a genuine logical synthesis is precluded by the negating action of human consciousness which perpetually creates anew the distinctions such a synthesis

is intended to overcome. When confronted by the awareness of the variety, contingency and senselessness of the world, a conscious being feels nausea⁷. Existence is nausea or absurd. The absurd is a confrontation between the individual and his world. It is not the world which is absurd, nor is it man. The absurd is the lack of correspondence between the two. It is an anxious consciousness of the alienation between the individual and the world. Let us now turn to the proposed analysis.

When Sartre calls existence absurd he appears to combine two main contentions. The first is that things have no sufficient reason for being as they are and not otherwise. The second is that things are contingent and not necessary. We can begin by considering the latter. One might be inclined to argue as follows. That the existence of material objects, including people, is contingent, that "Such-and-such an objects exists" is always a contingent truth and not a necessary one, is itself a necessary truth. To wish that it were otherwise is therefore to wish that the denial of a necessary truth could be asserted as true. But the denial of a necessary truth expresses a logical impossibility, and just as we cannot make sense of that which is logically impossible, we cannot make sense of wishing that what is logically impossible should be so. For we cannot say what it is we would be wishing for. This argument, however, contains two important mistakes. The first is that it contains a very crude notion of what it is for an expression to have meaning or to make sense.

we would not understand his lament. We would not know what he had to regret. We could understand what he said, but not what he did. How are we to understand what Sartre does when he laments contingency? What possibilities are closed to him which would otherwise be open? What was the point of writing *La Nause'e* or the relevant parts of *L' Etre et Le ne'ant*?

A reading of *La Nause'e* suggests strongly that the contingency of things is lamentable precisely because they lack sufficient reason for being as they are. That this is so affects things and people differently. Things just are in all their nauseating fullness. They do not point beyond or outside themselves as do the contingent beings of Aquinas' "Third Way". Their being contingent is not a lack for them. Here there is nothing to lament. But with human existence the lack of a sufficient reason for oneself and for things being as they are means an imperfection, a Sartrean rendering of what Heidegger calls "fallenness". We are in a senseless world, of which we ceaselessly and inevitably try to make sense. This is the absurdity both of things and of ourselves. Can we make sense of lamenting the lack of a sufficient reason? Only if we suppose that if the universe were what Leibniz, or Hegel in his more rationalist metaphysical moods, said it was should we have possibilities opened to us which are now denied to us. But on Sartre's own showing if Leibniz or Hegel were right we should cease to be free, Sartre speaks of us as condemned to freedom. Therefore it is right perhaps to lament a state of affairs

which entails our freedom. Yet at the same time Sartre clearly shows that all the possibilities of characteristically human life are bound up with the possession of freedom. So that about the Sartrean lament there is something false. What it is comes out very clearly if we compare the Sartrean picture of human nature in *La Nause'e* with what Simone de Beauvoir says in her memoir about Sartre's life and attitudes at the time when he was writing it. Sartre is there pictured as leading an eager, meaningful life, with many friends and projects⁸. His fictional creature, Antoine Roquentin, has a meaningless, empty existence by contrast, and the power of Sartre's portrayal is in the claim that Roquentin is discovering the reality beneath the surface, the false solidity of social life hiding the metaphysical void. Yet Sartre does not behave as though this were true. His confidence in his own novel reaches far beyond Roquentin's desperate hope that writing a book might rescue him from contingency. What then induced Sartre's bad faith? (For Sartre's own behaviour and its lack of coherence with his professed doctrines is a striking example of bad faith.) At least two reasons can be suggested.

The first is that Sartre is a disappointed rationalist, I do not by saying this point only to Sartre's well-known cartesian tendencies. I mean, rather, that he continuously writes as if he expects something like the Cartesian or the Hegelian view of the world to be true, and is disappointed that it is not. Everything ought to be necessarily as it is, the parts all finite

manifestations of a single rational whole, each with a sufficient reason for being what and as it is, which if we only knew it would provide a rational justification and explanation of a totally satisfying kind. The importance in Sartre's scheme of the human aspiration to the condition of God is only intelligible on this view. This also explains why when Sartre makes conceptual points long familiar from the writings of the British empiricists, he does so with a sense of drama or even melodrama which is notably absent in Locke, Berkeley, and Hume. Or, is this always true? When at the end of Book I of *A Treatise of Human Nature* Hume describes his experience of epistemological vertigo we are very close to the world of *La Nause'e* : "I am confounded with all these questions, and being to fancy myself in the most deplorable condition imaginable, environed with the deepest darkness, and utterly deprived of the use of every member and faculty"⁹. What questions? Questions that make Hume "look upon no opinion even as more probable or likely than another"¹⁰. Why? Hume has argued that we cannot justify inductive arguments. The arguments which Hume uses here amount, as has often been noticed, to pointing out that inductive arguments cannot be justified deductively, that we can find no clear and certain self-authenticating first principle from which to deduce what we need for inductive argument. In other words, the empiricist failure to justify induction rests upon an acceptance of rationalist standards of justification. Hume's empiricism is that of a disappointed rationalist. But at this point Hume turns to the solaces of friendship and backgammon; he invokes nature

and the force of custom and habit. We argue inductively from custom and habit, and no amount of skeptical doubt can prevail against nature. This is the move that is not open to Sartre. For him custom and habit are falsifications, disguises. His discovery that the expectations of metaphysical rationalism are necessarily disappointing leaves him characterizing the world as lacking something. Where he ought to go a stage further back in the argument, and question the whole rationalist use of such terms as "sufficient reason", he retains this language and characterizes the world by saying that the world is such that the rationalist descriptions do not and cannot be applied to it. This is like supposing that when one has shown that animistic forms of description do not apply to trees and rocks, one has adequately characterized trees and rocks. The refutation of primitive religion is no substitute for Botany or Geology; the refutation of metaphysical rationalism is no substitute for an adequate logic and conceptual psychology. But this is not the whole story. There is another and a complicating factor. This is that the shock of the discovery that there are no sufficient reasons, no ultimate justifications (in the sense intended by rationalist metaphysics and also by a certain kind of theology which closely resembles it) is not private to Sartre. The question of ultimate justification for beliefs and standards remains relatively unimportant for most people so long as social forms are stable and social conflict is minimal. When, however, the support of custom and habit, which constitute civilized social life (and are neither the work of nature as Hume thought nor self-

deception as Sartre thinks) is withdrawn as it has been in periods of rapid industrial change, of war, of prison camps and torture, of Nazism and the totalitarian state, people are forced to ask questions about justification which normally just do not arise. Moreover, all their normal responses are put in question by extreme situations. What were socially approved and praised public acts, having familiar utilitarian justifications, become private gestures in a social void. The question, "But what would happen if everybody acted like you?" has no more force when everybody has been acting much worse than you for a very long time. And something like this was the case in a large part of Europe from 1933 until 1945, to go no further afield.

In this situation the psychology of the absurd man, of the man who gestures in the void, becomes crucial. But Sartre's study of this man is defective in an important way. Consider a study of the psychology of the absurd or the extreme situation. Take as even closer to Sartre's preoccupations the central character of Camus' novel *L'Étranger*. He has no normal human emotions or responses. Things happen to him and he performs actions, but all in an emotional vacuum. He neither hopes nor despairs. He is neither interested nor uninterested. He just is. The death of a mother, the wishes of a girl-friend, the chance killing of an unknown person — these are all the kind of events which have normal and standard, though not uniform, responses of various types. What are we to make of someone not characterized by these responses,

someone so radically lacking them that it is not enough to say that he is not sad or repentant? For him these are attributes that he scarcely understands. The words lack meaning for him. Why are we deeply moved by Camus' novel? In part, at least, by the contrast with ordinary human life. The meaning and point of the normal responses are thrown into sharp relief by this picture of a man who lacks them. But it is essential both to the structure of the novel and to our understanding of its central character that he should be abnormal and exceptional. Without this contrast with the normal we should be at a loss and the novel would be deprived of its point. Yet this is the backcloth of normal responses which is lacking in Sartre's philosophical writings, though it is certainly not lacking, at least by implication and sometimes by statement, in his novels after *La Nause'e* and above all in his plays. And thus the absurdity which infects Sartrean man's existence is deprived of its point. But at the same time the vogue of Sartre is easily explained. He provides a picture of human existence which can easily be accepted by many uprooted and displaced people; he offers an explanation of why others do not see themselves like this, when he cites bad faith. Curiously, Sartre in his social philosophy identifies the deceptions of custom and habit with the social life of the bourgeoisie — curiously because the majority of those who recognize the application of Sartre's picture to themselves are rootless members of the bourgeois class. I do not think many French workers are Sartreans.

In Hegel "the unhappy consciousness" belongs to one historical phase, to one psychological type. It is the clue to one sort of man, not to all men. It cannot be the clue to human nature, just because the problems of the unhappy consciousness can be resolved. Equally, when modern psycho-analysis recognize the experience of the absurd of Kierkegaardian dread or Sartrean nausea in their patients, they see these as symptoms of a condition that can be or needs to be cured. But in Sartre we are faced with a description which suggests no alternative but the drastic, conceptually confused, political alternatives of the critique.

To all these the reply might be that what is being underestimated is the extent to which Sartre in fact proves his points. For independent testimony can be adduced to support Sartre in such contentions as that no one else can choose moral principles for me, that in the end I can only stand firm on my choice of principles, and the like. Neither David Hume nor R.M. Hare are usually taken for existentialists, but Sartre leans heavily not only on Hume's thesis that we cannot deduce an "ought" from an "is", but even more upon a view of justification fundamentally similar to that of Hare¹¹. For Hare, when we have specified the consequences of acting upon the sort of principle we have chosen, when we have specified the way of life of which this principle is a part, the justification for principles is at an end. Here we can no longer

argue, we can only decide. But this is apparently Sartre's ethical position also, and even Kierkegaard's. The view is the opposite of Aristotle's that deliberation and choice belong together — for Hare and Sartre alike, where there is no further room for deliberation, choice is in place. This choice is necessarily criterionless.

One reason why a point apparently of cold logic in Hume or in Hare becomes a dramatic point of controversy in Sartre is that Hume and even Hare are able to assume a social context of broad moral agreements and Sartre is not¹². When we know what to choose morally, to be told that our choices have no further justification will not disturb us as it will when we do not know what to choose, and are looking for reasons to turn one way rather than another. But are Hare and Sartre in fact right? Are there criterionless choices and do they underlie moral principles? One could approach this in a number of ways. One would be to ask for instances of choices and to study the relationship of choice to criteria. Here it would perhaps turn out that actual examples of apparently criterionless choices seem always to be special and misleading cases, such as the choice of a numbered ticket from a hat in a raffle, where there must be no criterion for deciding between one ticket and another, because the whole point is that the selection shall be random. And this is to say that the choice is governed by a criterion, namely that each ticket shall have an equal chance of selection. In any case, choice of moral principles does not

appear to be like that. Moreover, it follows from the Sartre-Hare view that a moral principle can (logically) have any content whatsoever. What moral principles one has depends on one's choices, and these, being not restricted by criteria of choice, can be of anything at all. But we are strongly inclined to say that if a man avowedly made it a moral principle that one ought always to walk about with one's hand on one's head we should find what he said is unintelligible. If we discovered that he had a belief that doing this prevented some disease, or gave pleasure to himself or others, or was connected with some other recognisable human good, we should begin to understand. And this suggests strongly that the content of moral principles is not open for us to choose just as we like; we are limited by the character of the concept of a good. But to admit this would involve Sartre in admitting his bete-noire, an objective moral order of some sort.

We can understand in any case an oddity in Sartre's position when we consider the fact that desires appear to play no role in providing criteria of choice. The reason for this is simple. Sartre thinks that desires and emotions themselves are chosen. If I am sad, he argues, it is because I choose to be. He pictures a man in a state of melancholy, who rouses himself to a state of interest and cheerfulness when some one else enters the room. But it does not follow from this, as Sartre supposes, that the man can be sad or cheerful as he chooses. It would be much more natural to say that he can rouse himself from his sadness, if he wants something else badly enough, such as not to show his sadness to

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.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

CHAPTER II

1. Freedom and Reason, p. 21.
2. Ibid., pp. 36-7.
3. The Language of Morals, p. 56.
4. One's reasons for doing something do not even have to be thought out before hand.
5. The Language of Morals, p. 48.
6. Ibid., p. 62.
7. Ibid., p. 51.
8. It is important to note that I am not suggesting that judgments of the form 'One ought to do so' are always decisive factors in establishing what reasons will be relevant in an argument. I think Hare's theory overrates their importance in this respect.

CHAPTER III

1. I am not ignoring borderline dispute. Here the disagreement can be resolved, either by means of further evidence or by some decision about the relevant criteria.
2. 'Moral Arguments', p. 502.
3. Ibid, p. 504.
4. Ibid, p. 507
5. I acknowledge a general debt to the point of view proposed in the article 'On Morality's Having a Point' by Morence and Phillips.

6. 'Moral Arguments', p. 510.
7. 'Moral Beliefs', p. 101.
8. 'Modern Moral Philosophy', p. 18.
9. e.g. 'Moral Arguments', p. 510.
10. 'Modern Moral Philosophy', p. 1.
11. The Varieties of Goodness, p. 1.
12. 'Moral Beliefs', p. 92.
13. Utilitarianism, p. 7.
14. If by 'good and harm', Mrs Foot means 'moral good and harm', then it is a triviality.
15. 'Moral Arguments', p. 510.
16. 'Some Developments in Wittgenstein's View of Ethics", p. 19.
17. 'Moral Arguments', p. 510.
18. 'Goodness and Choice', p. 47.
19. Ibid., p. 49.
20. Ibid., p. 52.
21. Ibid., p. 50.
22. Ibid., p. 50.
23. Ibid.
24. 'Goodness and Choice', p. 47.
25. See Nichomachean Ethics 1, VII, II.
26. Wittgenstein : A Memoir, pp. 67-8.

CHAPTER VIII

1. Sartre, *Critique de la raison dialectique* Vol. I trans. Hazel E. Barnes as *The Problem of Method*, London, 1964.
2. Francis Jeason, *Le Problems morale et la pensee de Sartre* Paris, 1947. Preface by Sartre. There is a discussion on this book in *Existential Philosophers*, edited by Schrader, McGraw Hill, 1967. I gratefully acknowledge my indebtedness to Dr. P. Roy, my Supervisor, for providing me with this reference.
3. (a) Norman N. Greene, *Jean-Paul Sartre, The Existentialist Ethic*, University of Michigan Press, 1960.
- (b) Mary Warnock, *Existentialist Ethics*, London, 1967. Also her
- (c) *Ethics Since 1900*, Chapter Seven.
- (d) Sartre, *A Collection of Essays* ed. Edith Kern, Prentice-Hall, 1962. In a sense, Sartre's analysis never leaves the descriptive level to which alone judgments of truth and falsehood can be applied. It never prescribes "what ought to be". This fact seems to have led to the view that Sartre has no ethics. He regarded ethics as an idealist trickery.
4. Sartre, *Existentialism*, trans. Bernard Frechtman, New York, 1947.
5. Genet, the playwright, is often taken to exist authentically, while the waiter in the *Being and Nothingness*, is an example of bad faith. We have taken *Rocquetin of Nausea* as a presentation of Sartre's ethical ideal, though Greene does not approve it. Others take *Orestes of The Flies* as illustrating his ethical ideal. Probably the best source of Sartre's ethical views are his dramatic

works. The personage of Hoederer in *Dirty Hands* comes, for some writers, closest to being a representation of Sartre's moral out-look.

6. It is the attitude to human freedom and to human choice that the term 'existentialism' serves to mark off.
7. What Camus has described as "Revolt" and the "Absurd" is the same experience described by other thinkers but named differently. Sartre calls it "nausea", Heidegger calls it "dread". For Kierkegaard it is the action of "despair". Nietzsche calls it the life of "freedom", and Jaspers sees it in the solitude/communication of "authentic Existenz". In each case it is the same dialectical experience of the individual related to his world, and it is this way of existing, that is the rallying point of existential thought.
8. It is a kind of ad hominem rebuttal of Sartre's doctrine. So is also his relationship with Simone de Beauvoir.
9. A Treatise of Human Nature, Bk I, Part IV, Section VII, p. 269.
10. Ibid.
11. R.M. Hare, *The Language of Morals*, the chapter on Decisions of Principle. In his *Freedom and Reason*, p. 38, Hare refers in a foot note to Sartre's *Existentialism* and remarks, "Sartre himself is as much of a universalist as I am". Another reference to Sartre occurs on p. 48. *The Language of Morals* has no such reference.

12. In recent years, Sartre has turned more and more toward a kind of dialectical sociology that seems very remote from the individualism of his earlier moral theory. He now professes that the moral autonomy of the individual is qualified by the fact that he lives in an exploitative society. True moral freedom is now projected into a future that will not be realized until the dialectic of alienation has run its course, and of this future, Sartre says, we can know nothing. His present description of existentialism as an "enclave within Marxism" seems to exaggerate the degree to which his fundamental position has changed.

CHAPTER IX

1. For different ways in which moralists such as Hume, Kant, Moore and Prichard have subscribed to this, see R.M. Hare, The Language of Morals, pp. 29-31. Professor Popper, in The Open Society and its Enemies, Vol. I, pp. 52 ff and p. 204, note 5 has a vigorous statement of the distinction.
2. Cf. S.E. Toulmin, The Place of Reason in Ethics, Stuart Hampshire, "Fallacies of Moral Philosophy", Mind, 1949.
3. Treatise on Human Nature, Book III, I, Section I.
4. MacIntyre brings out in detail the contrast between this often quoted passage in Hume and his usual practice in ethical argument. Hampshire thinks that Hume was concerned to bring out that moral arguments are not logically deductive arguments.

5. Metaphysic of Morals, Section 42.
6. Cf. C. L. Stevenson, Ethics and Language, p. 26.
7. W. D. Falk, "Grading and Guiding", Mind, 1953.
8. "Fallacies of Moral Philosophy", Mind, October, 1949.
9. Cf. his The Philosophy of Science, p. 97. Also G. Ryle, The Concept of Mind, p. 121 on "inference ticket".
10. In The Uses of Argument (Cambridge, 1958) Toulmin prefers to speak of rules of argument or "warrants" rather than premisses. The relevant for our present discussion is that the apparent transition from fact to value is only purible because a value-loaded principle has been introduced somewhere.
11. Treatise, III, i. Section 3.
12. Or they may be the standards looked on as obvious in the circles in which the speaker moves.
13. Hare, The Language of Morals, p. 147, remarks how evaluative meaning may be overlooked where standards are stable.
14. Hare, IM p 100 on "functional words".
15. In his inaugural lecture, Political Education, reprinted in Philosophy, Politics and Society, p. 2.
16. See William Faulkner's novel, Intruder in the Dust for the point that no men can cause worse grief than one clinging blindly to the vices of his ancestors.
17. Dorothy Emmet, Function, Purpose and Powers, Ch. III and IV.

18. R.B. Braithwaite in his "An Empiricist looks at Religious Belief" finds the exemplary use of stories to be one of the main characteristics of religious morality.
19. Metaphysic of Morals, Section 32.

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2. 'Universalisability', Aristotelian Society, 55
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