

CHAPTER - VI

MORALITY OF MORAL OBLIGATION

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1. Different Meaning of 'Morality'

In the last chapter we discussed the essential nature of 'moral obligation'; there we concentrated more on the concept of obligation than on its 'morality'. Accordingly we found that it is essentially of the nature of 'demand'. In the present chapter we shall consider 'morality' of moral obligation. The question before us is-what are the characteristics of moral obligation which constitute its morality? or in other words, what is the distinction between moral and non-moral obligations? This question is not limited to the concept of moral obligation only. It is a more general question pertaining to the subject matter of Ethics as such. But here we shall confine it to the concept of moral obligation only.

At the outset it will be fruitful to distinguish, with Frankena, between three meanings of morality. Firstly, morality is conceived as what Bishop Butler called the moral institution of life. Frankena holds this view of morality and says, "This is how I have been using morality and propose to go on using it.¹ In this sense morality is a social enterprise; it is social in its origins, sanctions and functions.

1. Frankena, W.K. : *Ethics* p.5. See the whole of Ch. I also see Monro, D.H. : *Empiricism and Ethics*, p.141 for various meanings of 'moral'.

It is an instrument of society as a whole and makes demands on the individuals forming the society. As such a social institution morality is to be contrasted with prudence as Frankena rightly points out. Secondly, moral also means morally good or right and is opposed to immoral or unethical. In this sense morality would mean moral goodness or rightness. Lastly, when we speak of moral problem, moral judgement, moral argument etc. we are using moral in a still different sense. Here, moral means pertaining to morality, and is opposed to non-moral or non-ethical. In this sense, morality refers to the nature or character of what is said to be moral, as distinct from non-moral.

It is evident that morality which we are about to consider is to be taken in the last sense, since we are contrasting it, not to immorality, but to non-morality. We have, therefore, to keep aside, other two meanings of morality, namely, moral goodness or rightness and moral institution of life, and consider the morality of moral obligation as a distinctive feature of moral as opposed to non-moral obligation.

Warnock² discusses four possible marks of morality or moral view, namely, its psychological penumbra of guilt, its acutal importance in the individual's conduct of his life; its universalisability, and its general content or topics, such as-happiness, interest etc. He points out the inadequacy of the first three marks and gives central importance to the fourth, around which they can be woven. As for the content of morals he says, "what is in issue is the good or harm, well-being or otherwise of human beings"³.

It is true that moral obligation has well-being 'or' good of human beings as its content, Moreover, morality' has certain formal characteristics and may be that morality is more clearly expressed in them. Kant, for example, takes a formal view of morality. Of course, to emphasize either form or content exclusively, will be one-sided. Morality has both its specific form as well as its specific content. Monro⁴ has devoted the whole of the third part of his book to

2. Warnock, G.J. : *Contemporary Moral Philosophy*, Ch. V.

3. *Ibid* p. 67.

4. Monro, D.H. : *Empiricism and Ethics*, Part-III, Chs. 12-17.

the discussion of the question, What is Morality? He divides the thinkers on this problem into two groups-one defining morality by 'form' and the other, by 'content'. We shall only briefly refer to his views in this regard, whenever necessary.

2. Content of 'Morality'

Considering first the content of Morality, we see that it is generally stated in terms of pleasure, interests, happiness, well-being etc. We have seen above that Warnock considers well-being of human beings to be central to morality. Mrs. Foot⁵ also holds the same view and emphasizes content. The content is also conceived in terms of social harmony as Nowell-Smith⁶ does when he contends that the major point of moral principles is to promote social harmony. On the whole it may be said that the concept of the good, represents the content of morality. So far as moral obligation is concerned, this means that obligation is moral when it has the good as its content. Different moral theories present different views of the good, and consequently, of the content of morality. Those who emphasize content as being central to morality, emphasize, in fact, the concept of the good and derive right and duty or obligation from it. As Schlick says, for us it is clear that there must be no insuperable opposition between an ethics as theory of pleasure and as theory of moral obligation, or as we may put it between the theory of good or pleasure and the theory of duty, but the latter will be grounded by and deduced from the former.⁷

In connection with content, however, we have to make a subtle distinction between content and ideal. This distinction is really one between satisfaction of desire or interest, and pursuit of ideal. Warnock has presumed this distinction in asking the question-May it not be the case that a man's conduct is guided principally, or even invariably, not by consideration of the interests of people in general, or even of his own, but rather by the pursuit of some ideal or system of ideal?⁸ This point is very significant for a comprehensive theory on morality.

5. Mrs. Foot, Phillippa : *Moral Arguments*, Mind 1958.

6. *Ethics*, p. 229.

7. Schlick, op. cit. p. 84.

8. Warnock op. cit. pp. 49-50.

The content approach to morality does not seem to be quite satisfactory primarily for two reasons; firstly, it is one-sided and excludes completely the formal characteristics of morality which may be even more important than content. Secondly, the content which is said to be generally of the nature of well-being can not be strictly said to be specific only to morality; it is common to social and political (including legal) obligations as well. In fact all the social institutions aim at bringing about well-being of individuals. Moreover, if, content is distinguished from ideal as done above, then the possibility of its being central to morality becomes still more remote. This does not mean, however, that content is no consideration whatsoever. It only means that we have to look for morality more in its formal characteristics on which it depends predominantly, if not exclusively.

3. Formal Characteristics of 'Morality'

We may now, discuss the formal characteristics of moral obligation which determine its morality. The most patent and unanimously accepted fact about moral obligation is its authority. It is expressed in the peculiarly compelling force of moral ought. What Butler says about the authority of conscience is significant as it is equally applicable to that of moral obligation. Authority here means moral authority and not psychological power. Had the sense of obligation been psychological power sufficient for effecting the required acts, the ought itself would have vanished, since, in that case, moral behaviour would have become second nature with the agents. It is in this context that the view, that the concept of moral obligation implies a conflict between obligations and desires becomes significant. So far as the source of the authority of moral obligation is concerned, a very common view is that morality can be quite appropriately defined in terms of universalizability or generalizability, Kant is, perhaps, the first systematic exponent of this view. The first formulation of his categorical imperative enunciates this universalization principle-as-"Act only on that maxim whereby thou canst at the same time will that it should become a universal law"⁹. Singer¹⁰ distinguishes between Kant's Categorical Imperative and what

9. Kant : *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals* (Tr. Abbott), p. 38.

10. Singer, M.G. *Generalization in Ethics*.

he calls the generalization argument. He states the differences as follows: The Categorical Imperative involves a reference to willing and to the maxim of action, while the generalization argument refers to the consequences, and its canon may be expressed as "the consequences of every one's acting in a certain way must not be undesirable."¹¹

Duncan-Jones also seems to subscribe to the universalization principle when he says, "what is required is that when a person judges morally, he shall be committing himself in respect of all situations which resemble his present situation in certain features what would sometimes be described as the morally relevant features"¹² Hare is known for holding this view. He himself describes his view as universal prescriptivism "a combination, that is to say, of universalism (the view that moral judgements are universalizable) and prescriptivism (the view that they are, at any rate, typically, prescriptive)"¹³. It is universalizability, according to him, which distinguishes moral imperatives from other, what he calls singular imperatives.

Monro¹⁴ has very thoroughly discussed universalization - its nature, kinds and application. He gives two sentence-forms for right and good as -

- (1) If it is (right) for X it is (right) for anyone else in the same relevant circumstances.
- (2) If A is (good) anything else like A in the relevant respect is (good)¹⁵.

According to him, however, the general thesis that universalizability is a purely formal, logical requirement of morality, is mistaken and rests on a confusion.

The principle of universalization however, cannot be said, to be the sole and complete characterization of morality. A principle or rule cannot be said to be moral simply because it is universal. It is true that moral principles are universalizable and there is a good ground for saying that "universalizability" is

11. Singer, M.G. *Generalization in Ethics*.

12. Duncan-Jones : *Aristotelian Society Sup.* Vol. XXVI. 1952, ii.iv.

13. *Freedom and Reason*, p.16.

14. Monro, op. cit. Chs. 13-15.

15. *Ibid.* p. 147.

a defining characteristic of morality. But as Monro points out, "... morality (which is a quite complex phenomenon known through experience) has other defining characteristics as well. In particular, we regard our moral principles as over-riding any others that conflict with them"¹⁶. That is morality consists in being over-riding. Ladd¹⁷ also, while considering Duncan-Jones's view, rejects universalizability as unsatisfactory for defining morality.

Universalizability cannot, yet, be completely done away with, as it implies objectivity of moral judgements. It may, therefore, be conveniently held that, universalizability is one of the defining formal characteristics of morality.

We saw, that Monro considers over-ridingness as the mark of morality. Ladd has also considered this problem elaborately. According to him, the two important criteria of morality are—"First, that moral judgements prescribe for conduct, and second, that they claim some superiority and legitimacy which is binding upon people in general and not just upon the person making the judgement"¹⁸ of these, we have already considered the prescriptive theory in the last chapter and saw that moral judgements express demands for conduct. With this modification, we accept Ladd's view that legitimacy and superiority are the two basic criteria of morality from which all other significant formal characteristics follow; superiority here is the equivalent of what Monro calls over-riding.¹⁹

We said in the beginning that moral obligation possesses a kind of special authority. As Durkheim puts it, "...moral rules are invested with a special authority by virtue of which they are obeyed simply because they command."²⁰ Now, discarding the authoritarian element in the notion of special moral authority, Ladd contends that "the two distinctive elements of this special moral authority are its presumed superiority and legitimacy. By superiority, is meant that the

16. Ibid. p. 206

17. Ladd, F. : *The Structure of a Moral Code*. pp. 78-80. See also Swann, J.H. *Analysis of Morals*, pp. 38-40.

18. Ibid, p. 80

19. Monro, op. cit. Ch. 17.

20. Durkheim, E. *Sociology and Philosophy*, pp. 35-36.

moral obligatoriness of an act is thought to be a consideration which is more overwhelming (or over-riding) and demanding upon us than any other consideration against doing the act. Moreover, this demand for superiority must be thought to be legitimate.

Ladd²¹ considers further these properties of superiority and legitimacy. As for superiority he says that it consists of the autonomy of morality and its priority. The autonomy of morality means firstly, that the obligatoriness of an act is a sufficient reason for doing it. In other words, a moral demand is sufficient unto itself. Secondly it means that, morality cannot be justified non-morally, that is moral consideration is ultimate. Thus, as Ladd says, "The autonomous character of moral prescriptions, therefore, may be summarized in terms of their sufficiency and ultimacy²².

One point which he makes in this connection is very significant from our point of view. According to him, the categorical character of moral prescriptions does not entail that they cannot be prescriptions with respect to an end or goal to be sought. The significance of this point for a theory emphasizing 'ideal' is quite obvious.

As for 'priority' he says, "This characteristic of morality, namely, the demand for precedence over other lines of conduct may be called its priority."²³ It has, however, two forms-weak and strong. The former means that a prescription is unassailable; the latter means that it is never to be neglected.

Now, the demand of moral obligation for superior consideration must be thought to be legitimate. The claims of any particular moral prescription are to be recognized as rightful claims before we are bound by them. Legitimacy, however, is complex notion and involves more than one elements in it. It entails that the claims are well-grounded, that is, some proof or argument for their justification is possible. This is the first element in legitimacy, namely, possibility of justification. The Second one is intersubjective validity, that is, moral prescriptions must be considered equally binding upon oneself and others. In

21. Ladd, op. cit. p. 84. The whole Ch. V is very important in this connection.

22. Ibid. p. 103.

23. Ibid. pp. 103-104.

this sense, they may be said to be impersonal or social.²⁴ This element includes in it a kind of generalizability. The third element is, what he calls, foundation in reality, that is to say, moral obligations are in a sense, founded on the nature of things, they are natural to man. This gives them, what Durkheim aptly calls, sacredness—a notion combining within itself both authority and satisfaction of desire.

In short, moral obligations, in virtue of being moral “... are superior in that they claim sufficiency, ultimacy and priority, and are thought to be legitimate in that they are justifiable, intersubjectively valid, and founded in reality.”²⁵ Thus, the concepts of superiority and legitimacy account for all the essential characteristics of the peculiar or special authority of moral obligation as distinct from non-moral obligation. They may also be said to clarify the various notions in terms of which other thinkers have conceived morality, namely, its constraint, prerogativity, un-conditionality; stringency, desirability; impersonality; disinterestedness; generalizability, sociality, reasonableness, objectivity and sacredness. (The concept of socially-important, emphasised by Swann²⁶ can be said to be covered by the notion of sociality in the list).

4. Ideal-view of 'Morality'

We have discussed above the formal characteristics of the morality of moral obligation. We have also referred to the attempts to define morality in terms of content. In addition to these two points of view of content and form there is one more point of view from which we may look at morality of moral obligation, and it is, as suggested by Warnock, the 'pursuit of ideal' (We have already referred²⁷ to this point in connection with the distinction between content and pursuit of ideal). From this point of view, moral obligations may be thought to be the necessary outcome of the pursuit of ideal, and their morality may be said to consist in their being required or demanded by the Ideal. This view has the merit of combining in it both form and content, the question is only of determining or formulating the ideal itself in such a way that it possesses, in

24. Ibid. p. 105

25. Ibid. p. 107

26. Swann, J.H. *Analysis of Morals*, pp. 68-69.

27. See foot note 8.

herently, the authority to demand. Its nature will determine the content of morality, serving at the same time as the source of its authority. The only formal characteristic, in this case, will be being demanded by the ideal so formulated. It is implicit in this that such a demand of the ideal is superior and legitimate in virtue of being the ideal's demand. It is obvious that this view centres round the concept of ideal and, what is more, its appropriate formulation. We may make a few points about this ideal-theory.

Firstly, it seems to be a comprehensive view and it is possible for it to cover both content and formal characteristics of morality. Secondly, it does justice to human nature and human situation, and thus brings home to us the fact that morality is not foreign to man forced on him externally, as it were, but is natural to him, as natural as the pursuit of ideal is. Thirdly, it states, at the same time, the ground of moral obligation, which is the ideal itself. Fourthly, what is most important, it is quite in conformity with the nature of moral obligation which we discussed in the last chapter. There we saw that moral obligation is best conceived as a demand. We did not discuss there, whose demand it is, or who is the demander. On this view we can now say that it is the ideal which makes demands on the moral agents.

Lastly, the content of morality, which is generally conceived in terms of well-being of human beings can be included in ideal. Superiority and legitimacy of moral demands can be said to be inherent in the acceptance of the ideal, and the acceptance itself is natural to man since the ideal is appointed by human nature itself. With all this, however, the formal characteristics, in this view, remain somewhat implicit. In order to make them explicit, it is better to mention them clearly in addition to saying that moral obligations are the demands of the ideal. In this we follow Ladd — but with a very significant difference. We conceive moral obligations to be demands while he conceives them to be prescriptions. As for morality or moral obligation, we saw above that the ideal-theory is quite adequate and satisfactory since it includes and supercedes both the content and form approaches. But, for the sake of clarity, we may say explicitly that the morality of moral obligation consists in its being the legitimately superior demand of the ideal, wherein, it is understood that legitimately superior is the characterization of demand of the ideal. The term ideal is kept vague so far.

5. Moral Rules

A moral obligation is always expressed in the form "X ought to do Y" - an ought sentence. However, moral obligations are of varying generality, though we recognize only two broad classes, namely, particular and general obligations. The latter assume the form of what we call rules which themselves are of varying generality. They serve as the maxims of conduct and as moral rules they may be said to be, what Kant calls, categorical imperatives. There is, however, a difference between a moral rule and a moral principle. Singer²⁸ has devoted a full chapter to bring out the distinction between the two and also their mutual relationship. Kant also seems to make this distinction, which in his philosophy, amounts to the distinction between the particular categorical imperatives and the supreme principle of categorical imperatives which determines them. The latter is also called the Moral Law. What Singer calls principle is Moral Law. Hare²⁹ also seems to assume this distinction in his discussion of moral principles, where he refers to Golden Rule and Kantian Moral Law as principles.

Rules are many and they are likely to clash. Therefore, we feel a need of some highest rule that would justify them and also decide between them. It is the 'Principle' or 'Law' which serves this need. In other words, a Moral Principle or Law serves to harmonize moral rules, to justify them, and to decide between them if there is a clash. That a Principle can, and is required to, justify particular rules, means that the rules themselves are grounded in or spring from the Principle. They are, so to say, the various particular manifestations of the supreme Moral Law itself. Concrete acts are governed by rules which in turn are governed by the Moral Principle, whatever it is. The Intuitionists may object to this view saying that there is no necessity of a single supreme Moral Principle as the rules as also their validity are known directly by intuition. But we know that Intuitionism is not free from its inherent difficulties and drawbacks. Further, the rational demand for justification and consistency are better satisfied by the Moral Law than by Intuition. Intuition by itself cannot bring harmony in the world of rule as the Principle does. Hence the criticism of Intuitionism that it leaves us

28. Singer, *op.cit.* Ch. V.

29. Hare, R.M. *Freedom and Reason*, Ch. 3.

with a heap of unrelated obligations. Thus, we see that some supreme Moral Principle or Law is necessary to govern moral rules and, therethrough, the whole range of moral behaviour of human beings. This supreme Moral Principle or Law is the supreme demand made by man's moral life or his life-ideal on him. The Moral Law as conceived here corresponds to Kant's Categorical imperative of which he gives different formulations. Its formulation depends on the nature of the ideal which it embodies.

We have said above that moral rules are essentially of the nature of demands and that they are better conceived as the various expressions of the supreme 'Moral Demand'. But there are also other ways, of describing moral rules. Mabbott³⁰ discusses quite at length these views of moral rules in connection with the thesis that rules are basic morality. We have already referred to the intuitionists view that moral rules are self-evident and have also seen the reason not to accept it. Another view is that, moral rules are empirical generalizations. But as Maboott says, "Now this theory seems to me the one theory about them which is certainly false."³¹ This is evident because otherwise there will be no difference between the moral and the non-moral, the normative and the descriptive. Yet another view is that moral rules are nothing but utilitarian precepts. Mabbott conswiders this view at length and points out its inadequacy. A sheer utilitarian approach is not sufficient to explain the nature and function of moral rules.

So far as Mabbott's own view about the morality of rules is concerned, he states it thus : On the view I have been defending, a good reason (and the only good reason) for approving a particular action is that it is the carrying-out of a rule, and a good reason (and the only good reason) for approving a rule is that its general adoption would do good on the whole.³² It will be seen that this view is akin to our own except that in our view, there is a third factor in between the rule and the good, namely the moral law, what he calls the good on the whole is covered by our concept of ideal. The additional factor of the moral law makes

30. Mabbott, J.D. Moral Rules form the Proceedings of the *British Academy*, Vol. XXXIX, See also Nowell. *Smith-Ethics*, Ch. 16.

31. *Ibid.* p. 100

32. *Ibid.* p. 115

our theory even more adequate than Maboot's as it constitutes the unifying principle of moral rules absent in his view, and, at the same time embodies the good or the ideal in it.

6. Content of Moral Obligation

We now pass on to consider the nature of the content of moral obligation. By content is, here, meant that which we ought to do, the concrete demands, or that of which they are expressions. It is what the obligation are about. On the whole, it is believed that the content of moral obligation has a reference to the interests, or well-being of all the person in a society. It is thus social in nature. This is supported by the fact that moral obligations arise invariably in social situations, where interpersonal relationship is involved. According to Raphael³³ claims of others constitute the content of moral. He says further that claims arise out of needs and interests. Therefore, a creature that has need is a potential bearer of claims in virtue of having a need and sharing a common world of inter-course with the moral agent. As he says, "But in speaking of obligatory acts I have said that their content always relates to the interests of other persons or creatures"³⁴ By interest he means enjoyments objects of desire.

It is a very common view that morality is only social, that moral obligation has only social content. In other words, it serves the interests of society by putting the moral agent under obligation to satisfy or at least, safeguard the interests of other persons, who have claims on him. As Raphael puts it, "... obligations arise only where there are claims, i.e. where the agent stands to some other person or persons in a relationship which, in some metaphorical sense, binds them together".

On the whole, it can be said that the concept of good, represents the content of moral obligation. The concept of value is also involved in it. As Laing says, "it is the value of the thing which is the ground of the obligation to desire it."³⁵ In connection with the concept of value in relation to that of obligation,

33. Raphael, D.D.: "Moral Judgement" Ch. VII.

34. Ibid. p. 117

35. Laing, B.M. : "On value" *Philosophy*, Vol. X, 1935.

however, we have to bear in mind that actualization of value itself is a value. According to Laing, it is because of this value attaching to realization of value that obligation comes to have meaning. In order to understand obligation it is necessary to interpret what ought to be as what ought to be realized. The point is that, the content of moral obligation can also be interpreted in terms of value.

The question is now, whose good is it? Is it the good of the agent or of the society? As seen above the sociological approach emphasized society. There are the individualists, however, who may emphasize the needs of the agent himself. By and large it is accepted that moral obligation does refer to the satisfaction of others' claims as to their good. This is called the social good and includes the good of the other members of society together with the good of society as such. This is perfectly right. But to disregard the good of the agent himself will be one-sided. Moreover, it will leave no scope for the voluntary acceptance of the obligations on the part of the agent. This is a very serious point which forces us to include the agent's good also in the social good. It may be said that it is already included and therefore. What we say is unnecessary. But it is not always so. The emphasis on duties to others, involving social good at the cost of the agents individual good is not uncommon. It is the logical outcome of the sociological view that, ultimately, it is only the society which is the source of moral obligation and its authority. This exclusive emphasis on society, however, ignores the moral nature of obligation which is something more than being only social, it comes from within. But the acceptance of the fact of being under obligation on the part of the agent will not come from within unless it is vitally connected with his own well-being in the ultimate analysis. This means that the content of moral obligation is constituted of the individual agent's good' no less than, of the social good. The actual content is social in nature, that is, refers to others' interests, ends and claims. But it must be shown to be related ultimately to the agent's own good or *summum bonum* to effect its voluntary acceptance by him, which is the characteristic of morality as distinct from coercion.

Thus, the fact is that the social good together with the individual good constitutes the content of moral obligation. Here, again, the social good can be inherently binding on the agent only through his individual good. In fact, the two

goods are not opposed but imply one another. Their source is most likely to be common, and must be inherent in human nature itself. Now, we suggest that the concept of ideal best serves this purpose. Ideal represents the social and the individual goods in one as its two aspects. Or more truly, the ultimate good is the same, namely the ideal and what are called the social and individual goods represent it from the social and the individual points of view respectively. As we have seen in the previous chapter, it is this ideal which makes demands on the moral agents. This leads us to the conclusion that the content of moral obligation is constituted of the claims or demands of the Life-Ideal having the social and the individual goods as its aspects. The concrete source of the content of a particular obligation, however, is the concrete moral situation in which it arises; the Life-Ideal determines it.

7. Distinction Between Moral and Non-moral Obligations

Let us now discuss the problem of the distinction between moral and non-moral obligations in some details. We commonly recognise five kinds of obligations, namely, moral, political, legal, social and religious, of these, the political and the legal obligations may be conveniently classed together for our purpose, though there is a very subtle internal difference between the two. This is justified because, generally, political obligation is conceived in terms of obedience to law. Green's theory, for example, of political obligation tries to answer the question which, according to Prichard, has the form "what is the true ground or justification of obedience to law?"³⁶ Further, ultimately, the nature, purpose, authority and sanction are the same in both the cases, only that they are studied from political and legal points of view. The concept of political obligation is elaborately and classically discussed by T. H. Green in his lectures on the "Principles of Political Obligation". Bosanquet³⁷ also has discussed it. As for the concept of legal obligation, it is quite extensively dealt with by Hart³⁸ in his articles. But, for our limited purpose, what is necessary is their broad characterization only. From this point of view we may treat the political and the

36. Prichard, H.A. *Moral Obligation*, p. 54.

37. Bosanquet, B. *The Philosophical Theory of the State*, Chs. III and IV.

38. Hart, H.L.A. "Legal and Moral Obligation" In Melden A.I. (Ed.) *Essays in Moral Philosophy*, pp. 82-107.

legal obligations as of one kind and call it political obligation; the other kinds are — moral, social and religious obligations.

We know that constraint or binding is central to the concept of obligation in general. It is, therefore, common to all kinds of obligation. so far as the content of social and political obligations is concerned, it is evidently social, and is wholly concerned with the interests or good of others as expressed in the form of claims or demands of the society and the state respectively. Religious obligation has partly social and partly individual content: it is concerned with others as well as the agents themselves in relation to Deity or God. In case of moral obligation, whether it is only social or both social and individual depends, in one sense, on whether we have duties to ourselves or only to others. It is rather difficult to answer this question because even if we had duties to ourselves, we would not feel bound by them. I, for one, think, that we do have duties to ourselves and that we either become aware of them ourselves or else, are made aware by others when we fail to discharge them. From this point of view, moral obligation may be said to be both social and individual in content. We have also seen before that the content of moral obligation is individual as well as social in the sense that it refers to the individual as well as the social good. Thus, we see that while the content of social and political obligations is social, that of moral obligation is individual as well.

The distinctions become even more clear when we consider the most important element in the concept of obligation, namely, its ground, source or authority. The authority of political obligation is the institution of state backed by the governmental machinery capable of punishing those who fail to discharge the duties towards it. The source of religious obligation is said to be God Himself who gives certain commandments to the human beings to obey. Now the authority of the state is felt in practice and therefore, its demands or claims cannot be avoided. In the case of religious obligation however, if one does not believe in God, one can safely escape His Commandments and their binding.

The phrase 'social obligation' is somewhat ambiguous. What is meant by it, here is the kind of obligation having social content, that is, constituted of others' claims and, what is distinctive of it, having society as its authority or source. Customs, conventions, folkways and mores may be said to be the rules

stating social obligations. Social disapproval, social boycott etc. are the sanctions of society, which is the ultimate source, and ground of social obligations.

The political, religious and social obligations have external authorities, namely, state, God and society respectively. In the case of moral obligation, however, we have seen that its authority comes from within the agents, that is to say, it is inherent and is represented by the Life-Ideal which human beings naturally strive to attain. Even if we say with Kant that this authority is the Moral Law, it is not external, since the law itself is grounded in man's rationality, and is accepted as one's own. Moreover, on our view, the Moral Law is nothing but the embodiment of the Life-Ideal in the form of supreme moral demand. The point is that it is inherent and is not forced from outside. It is because of the external authority of the non-moral obligations that they have 'coersive' nature while moral obligation presents itself as the call of one's own higher self. Now it is true that I have also to accept state, God and society as authorities for their respective obligations; but still, as grounds they are external. This point is borne out by another fact that while mere outward conformity of acts to the demands is enough in case of at least social and political obligations, morality is also concerned with motives and all that which is summed up in the phrase self-culture to which even some duties are devoted.

Difference is also seen between the ends which the moral and the non-moral obligations try to attain. On the whole, social harmony or stability may be said to be the object or end of both political and social obligations, while religious obligation has communion with God as its end. As for the moral obligation, its ultimate end is the Life-Ideal including the so-called Moral Ideal. To speak in terms of harmony, it is the individual's internal harmony (call it spiritual) expressing itself in the social harmony. In terms of good it is the *summum bonum* including both individual and social goods.

A further clue to these distinctions is the consideration of what happens when they come in conflict. The two questions in this connection, namely, (a) why should I be moral? and (b) why should I discharge my political, social and religious duties? — are of different levels. It is the moral consideration that furnishes the justification, or otherwise, of the political, social and religious obligations. We accept these obligations ultimately on moral ground. If, some

of these obligations are found to be contrary to moral requirements it is our moral duty not to abide by them and even to try to resist them, reform them. Social, political and religious reforms are based on wider moral considerations which are essentially human in nature. In other words, as mentioned above, moral obligation always over-rides, or is legitimately superior to, the non-moral obligations. It is a wider and a more fundamental concept and is at the basis of them.

The comparative picture of the different kinds of obligation, that emerges out of the above discussion may be stated in a nutshell as follows :

- Political obligation** : Content-social; authority-external i.e. state; object-social harmony; requires moral justification.
- Religious obligation** : content-both individual and social; authority-external i.e. God; object-communion with God; requires moral justification.
- Social obligation** : Content-social; authority-external i.e. society; object-social harmony (stability); requires moral justification.
- Moral obligation** : Content-both social and individual; authority-over-riding, inherent and internal i.e. rational (humanity etc.) object-Life-Ideal including moral ideal to be justified in the light of ultimate goal of life.

Of these, the social obligations constitute what is called the customary morality. The legal or political obligations embody the moral convictions of the society. Legal code is externalized morality while, morality is internalized law plus something more which is purely individual, or call it spiritual. In this spiritual aspect, morality is akin to religion. They are purely individual (not subjective), in that respect, unlike the political and the social institutions. For me, this spiritual aspect is vital to morality as it is to religion. But the difference between the two lies in the fact that religion invokes some super-human being as its basis, while morality considers man, as he is, and wishes ideally to be, sufficient as its basis. If, religion is interpreted in a different way, this difference is very likely to

diminish, if not vanish altogether. For example, if God is taken to mean the 'Life-Ideal', and not a person, then, the divine commandments become the demands of man's own Ideal. Thus, religious authority becomes internalized and, in fact, religion becomes identified with what I have called spiritual life, which is the culmination of the moral life.