

CHAPTER III

OBLIGATIVE THEORY OF THE LANGUAGE OF MORAL OBLIGATION

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1. The Obligative Discourse

From the analysis of the various kinds of ought sentences attempted in the last chapter, it becomes clear that ought sentences express moral binding in general. While finding out the nature of this moral binding further, we saw that it is the concept of 'demand' which satisfactorily describes the nature of the moral binding as expressed in the ought language. In other words, the language in which the judgements of moral obligation are expressed may be said to be a demand language, as the concept of demand is central to it. From the functional point of view, it may also be called an 'obligative' language, as it performs an obligative function and has an obligative meaning. This is the view of the ought sentences already attempted. Since it is some-what different from the views held by other thinkers and expressed in the form of different theories like Emotivism, imperative theory, Prescriptive theory etc., it needs a different name. For want of a better name, let us call it the 'Obligative Theory' of the language of moral obligation. The object of this chapter is firstly to describe, in some

details, this 'obligative theory' which is proposed by us; and secondly to propose and discuss an analytical linguistic model for the judgement of moral obligation.

A distinction needs to be made, at the outset, between this theory and other theories. It is that, while all the other theories are regarding the moral language in general, the obligative theory proposed here, concerns itself only with the language of moral obligation in particular. It is not a general theory of moral language, but a particular theory explaining the nature and function of the language in which the judgements only of moral obligation are expressed. It has, thus, only a limited scope and application. Perhaps it is because of the general nature of other theories that they are found to be inadequate to explain the particular concept of moral obligation, there being other moral concepts like 'good' and 'right' to be accounted for a general theory. A comprehensive study of moral life will have to formulate a theory that will clarify and explain all the important moral concepts and so inter-relate them as to give the theory internal harmony and external unitary character. That however, is not the purpose of this study which confines itself to the concept of moral obligation alone, and consequently, to the language in which it is expressed.

After this initial clarification, it will be proper to consider briefly the various linguistic expressions which constitute the obligative language. The various kinds of ought sentences have been already described and analysed in the last chapter. These are mainly three terms used in the obligative language to express the judgements of moral obligation, and they are 'obligation', 'ought'. The verb *obligare* finds different expressions such as to be obliged, to oblige, to be under obligation, obligatory and obligation itself. These various expressions based on the root *obligare*, are used in different linguistic contexts, but they have analogous meanings. Of these, the most important ones, for our purpose, are 'to be under obligation' and 'obligatory'. The former applies to a moral agent, and the latter to a moral act. The examples will be 'A citizen is under obligation to pay taxes' and 'Paying taxes is obligatory on a citizen'. It is to be remembered, however, that all these terms have meanings which are non-moral as well as moral, although we are concerned only with the moral ones.

The broad meaning of the term 'duty' is the same as that of 'obligation'.

Some thinkers¹, however, make a distinction between the two by saying that obligations may be many, but duty can be one only, meaning thereby that duty is the obligation, the winner of the conflicting obligations in a given moral situation. As for example, Carritt says, "it is only the strongest present obligation which constitutes a duty"². But that 'duty' has a broader meaning also need not be denied. In this broader sense, we can speak of 'conflicting duties', as of 'conflicting obligations'. For all practical and also theoretical purposes, then, 'duty' and 'obligation' may be taken to mean the same thing.

The term 'ought', which is an auxiliary verb, is perhaps more popular and significant than the other two. The central place which the concept of 'ought' has assumed in the recent ethical writings, especially of the linguistic analysis, and naming the language of moral obligation as 'ought-language', are the indications of this. From the analysis of the ought-sentence also, it can be easily seen that the term 'ought' has a richer meaning with different kinds of ought-sentence expressing the judgements of moral obligation have been already enumerated and described; so they need not be stated here. To indicate only the extent of ought sentences generally, it may be said that

they cover both particular and universal sentences, and among the former that is, particular, both ante-eventum and post-eventum ones.

From a functional point of view, the obligative sentences may be divided into two groups—those sentences which express the judgements of moral obligation proper and those which state 'reasons' for them. Let us call the whole discourse'. So far as the 'reasons' for the particular obligations are concerned it may be seen that broadly, they are given in the form of general rules, and if we analyse the nature of these rules, we find that they are mostly the statements of generalized obligations, that is, they are expressible in the form of universal ought sentences. To put it the other way round, the universal ought sentences or what are called rules, serve mostly to supply reasons for the particular judgements of moral obligations, and the other, stating reasons for them, yet, for all theoretical as well as practical purposes, their nature and function

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1. Roughly, the distinction between 'obligation' and 'duty' corresponds to Ross distinction between 'prima facie and actual' obligations (*Right and Good*, p 19) and Grice's one between 'Abstract and actual' obligations (*The Grounds of Moral Judgement*, p. 31).
 2. Carritt, E.F. "Ethical and Political Thinking" p. 3.

may be taken to be the same, only that the latter perform an additional function of stating reasons. This means that we can conveniently combine the two kinds into one, and say that the obligative or ought-language consists of the sentences which express particular and general moral obligations; to be precise, they express the judgements of moral obligation.

This is true when the 'reasons' are stated in terms of general rules of conduct, that is, in terms of universal ought-sentences. And it is generally the case. But, if the reasons for particular judgements of moral obligation are expressed otherwise, then what? The answer is that, a broader conception of 'obligative discourse' must include both the judgements and their reasons. Yet, it is possible to conceive 'obligative discourse' some what narrowly to include only ought-sentences, particular and universal 'reasons' may or may not be stated by the universal ought-sentences. As only the obligative discourse which is expressible by it, is to be accepted, at least so far as our purpose here is concerned.

Coming to the nature and function of the language of moral obligation, the conclusion in this regard, of the analysis of the various kinds of ought-sentence, is that 'ought' is a morally rich and complex concept. *Ought-sentences* may perform a variety of functions, which are, all of them, significant for a moral theory. For example, an ought-sentence may express either an evaluation, or a command, or a *description* of an ideal state a demand or again a prescription, or even a decision. Generally, it functions to guide, recommend and direct the moral course of conduct. But, not all of these functions can be said to be central or essential to the ought-language; only one of them may be primary and essential, and the others, only secondary. It was seen that, speaking generally, the essential function of the ought language is to express 'moral binding'. It was also seen that, the 'moral binding' expressed in the ought-language, is most satisfactorily described as a moral demand. That is, to say, the ought-language primarily and essentially expresses the 'demands' made on the moral agents; that, the ought-language is a demand-language. This function is proposed to be called the 'obligative function' and the language, 'obligative language'. Consequently, the theory of the language of moral obligation which is proposed here, is named 'obligative theory'.

2. Characteristics of Moral Obligation

In order to clarify the nature of the obligative language and bringing out its complex structure, it will be useful to state briefly the broad characteristics of the 'binding' that is, moral obligation, which are either directly expressed by, or implied in the ought-language.

Firstly, 'obligation' is bilateral. That is to say, it involves the consideration of 'others' and their claims on the moral agents. In the demand-language this would mean that the two poles are agent or demandee and damander. 'Owing', 'indebtedness' are of the same nature, and belong to the same family of concepts.

Secondly, the concept of obligation does not exclude either deontic or teleological considerations. It can be, and in fact it should be, interpreted in both ways. This is possible because 'obligation' involves both deontic and teleological considerations.

Thirdly, the moral binding expressed in ought-language is a necessary binding having an inherent compulsive force. This may be termed moral necessity as distinct from logical, Psychological or legal necessity. The language, expresses it in the form of 'ought'.

Fourthly, 'moral obligation' is universalizable. This means that it is reasonable.

Lastly, the judgements of moral obligation are based on objective and impersonal ground or have objective and impersonal reasons. If moral binding is to be applicable to 'all', it has got to be objective and impersonal. This is why in the obligative discourse, the reasons for particular ought-judgement are given in terms of universal ought-sentences or rules.

These are, in brief, the broad characteristics of 'moral obligation' which should naturally be reflected in the 'obligative language'.

3. Demand-Language and its Referents.

The demand-language, further, is a 'relational' language. By relational language is meant here, a language which expresses and is essentially based

on relation. It is to be distinguished from an adjectival language which describes merely the qualities of things. In order to bring out the exact meaning of 'relational language' it is not sufficient to say merely that it expresses a relation. What is essential to it is that it is based on relation or relations which are inherent in the relata. So far as the obligative or demand-language is concerned, it will be seen that it demander and the demandee and is essentially based on the relations or rather, the inter relation among the constituents of the concept of moral obligation. Because there cannot be any demand without the inherent interrelation among the constituents of the concept of moral obligation, it is said that the demand-language is essentially based on 'relation' and is, thus a relational language. The self-evident force of 'ought' which tempts us to compare it with a command, is derived from this inherent interrelation between these constituents. The important point to be noted in this connection is that this interrelation is inherent, that is, natural.

Now, it is necessary to say something about the referents of the language or moral obligation among which the said interrelation exists. It will throw light on the complexity of the structure of both the concepts and the language of moral obligation.

So far an ought sentence is concerned, it refers to only two factors Agent and Act. For example, "You ought to do X", in which 'you' is the agent, and X, the act. The third referent, namely, moral situation is either explicitly stated as in the particular cases, or is generalized and is not so stated as in the case of universal ought-sentences. 'Moral situation' is in any case, a directly relevant constituent of moral obligation along with Agent and Act. In fact, it is only in a moral situation that a question of moral obligation arises at all. Thus, there are at least three factors which are directly involved in the use of the obligative language, namely, Agent, Act and Moral Situation or simply Situation. These are the minimum referents of the language of moral obligation. In the demand-language, they will be called Demandee, Demandum and Demand-Situation respectively which will be the linguistic counter-parts of those conceptual constituents.

Now, the concept of 'demand' logically implies also the 'Demander' along with the aforesaid Demandee and Demandum. This is the fourth constituent,

the nature of which is very complex and hence difficult to determine. In anticipation, however, of the discussion of the 'ground' of moral obligation, to be undertaken later and its conclusion, let it only be said that 'Demander' is the 'Ideal and which is, thus, the fourth conceptual constituent. Lastly, if the moral judgements, especially of obligation are analysed, it will be found that reference to some rule or principle is certainly involved in them. These moral rules or principles of practical guidance have a hierarchy of their own which ultimately points to a supreme moral principle or Law. This Moral Law is the supreme demand so to say. Now it is already said that 'Demander' is the 'Ideal'. The question is, what is the relation between the Ideal and the Moral Law? In answer it may be said that the Moral Law or Principle is the practical embodiment of the Ideal governing the whole obligative discourse and also our practical life. While the Ideal governs the whole of our life, Moral Law governs our moral life only. This is not the place of discussing this point in greater detail. That will be done in connection with the problem of the 'ground' of moral obligation in due course. Our purpose, there, is only to describe the various constituents of the concept and the language of moral obligation. Accordingly, it will be clear from the above account that there are in all five constituents of the concept of moral obligation, namely, Agent, Act, situation, Law or Principle and Ideal. Correspondingly, there are also five referents in all of the obligative or demand-language, namely, Demandee, Demandum, Demand-Situation, Principle of Demand or Demand-Principle and Demander.³ All these will be fully dealt with, later on, in connection with the 'Structure of Moral Obligation.'

Thus, the variety of the referents of the demand-language clearly brings out the complexity of the obligative language, which is really the reflection of the complexity of the concept of moral obligation that it expresses.

After thus getting known the various constituents of the concept of moral obligation and consequently, the referents of the obligative language, the complexity of their interrelation becomes evident. The obligative language is based on the interrelation among these referens and expresses primarily the relation of binding between the 'demander' and the 'demandee' with respect to

3. Following, Ladd : *Structure of a Moral Code*. Ch. VII.

the 'demandum'. This relation may be further said to be an impersonal moral relation of inherent binding having a necessity of its own. This moral necessity is the 'third kind of necessity'⁴, the other two being logical and causal ones.

From among the various constituents, however, the ought-sentences, as we saw, explicitly expresses only two, namely, Agent and Act, and at the most, third, the situation in case of particular sentences. The remaining two, namely, Principle and Ideal, are only indirectly involved, though they are of equal importance. They may be said to be the necessary conditions of the very possibility of the use of obligative language. It is in the moral situation that any problem of moral obligation ever arises. The moral act chosen from among many alternatives in the particular situation following ultimately the Principle which in turn is the practical expression of the Ideal, is said to be 'obligatory'. And the agent is said to be 'under obligation' to do it. Thus the whole complex of interrelationships is seen to be reducible to the relation of 'obligation' or 'moral binding' with 'demand' as its central concept. This, it is hoped, brings out clearly the relational nature of the obligative language. Accordingly, 'being under obligation; in case of agent, and 'obligatoriness' in case of act, are not adjectival in nature, but relational. That is to say, they are not qualities of agent and act respectively, but are the expressions of the same relation of obligation, or moral binding, 'Being under obligation' is to be bound by, and to, the moral Principal or Law, and through it, to the acts governed by it on the one hand and to the Ideal on the other. 'Obligatoriness' is the relation on the part of the act of highest conformity to the Moral Law on the one hand, and through the Law, the relation of demand to the agent. The whole of this complex interrelationship essentially and basically, presupposes the commitment of the agent to the Ideal, which, in the ultimate analysis, is the sole determiner of obligations through the Moral Law, making demands on the agents.

This becomes clearer from the consideration of the universal ought-sentences. They are commonly used as moral rules for guidance of conduct in particular situations. They are also used as 'reasons' for particular demands in those situations. But, all the universal ought-sentences are not of the same

4. Nowell-Smith, *Ethics*, pp.220-201.

generality. A hierarchy, so to say, of generality is seen among them; and the highest rule may be used as a reason for establishing the lower ones coming under it. Further, the generality may be concerning either the Agent, or the Act or the Situation. Thus, the structure of moral regulation constituted of moral rules, is seen to be pyramidal in nature, with the moral Law at the apex. The moral Law is the supreme moral principle governing all the rules and judgements of moral obligation. As such, an indirect reference to it is always present in all the general and particular judgements of moral obligation expressed in the ought-sentence. Moral Law is thus the supreme moral demand embodying the Ideal. It was the greatness of Kant to have realized this and put it forth in clear and emphatic terms.

It is already seen that the moral binding of obligation is inherent, so far as the moral field is concerned. This means that 'Ought' contains its own authority and no external authority, other than the Moral Law is needed. This is the truth in the insight of the Neo-Intuitionists like Ross and Prichard. It is true to say within moral field that I should do my duty simply because it is my duty. The terms 'ought' and 'obligation' express this self-evident moral binding, which is in the very nature of things, inherent in the interrelation among the constituents of the concept of moral obligation. This inherent character expressed by 'ought' has very important bearing on the problem of 'obligation' and 'motivation'. We shall discuss this question later in the second part. here it is referred to only to point out the implication of the demand-language for it.

Looked at from the motivational point of view, the demand-language expresses not one demand, but in fact two demands: one directly, and the other by implication. They may be called the first-order and the second-order demands. The first (order) demand, which is direct, asks the agent to do the act expressed in the particular judgement of moral obligation, and the second (order) demand implied in the concept of 'ought' asks him to 'act on it', that is, to 'act on the first demand'. Thus, in the demand sentence "You ought to speak the truth", the first demand is 'speaking the truth,' while the second implied demand is 'acting on this first demand'. The second moral demand, which, when expressed clearly, will read "You ought to be motivated or moved to act by a moral demand", is implied universally in all the moral obligations. It is the logical requirement of

the demand-language, 'Motivation' is, thus, itself related to moral obligation as a requirement (or demand). A moral agent may or may not be moved, actually to act on a particular moral demand, but he is morally required to be so moved. If he is not moved, he may be said to lack in 'morality'. This all depends on his having a 'sense of obligation' which is to be developed with effort by both the individual and the society.

4. Three Aspects of Obligative Language

Now, it is possible to distinguish three aspects of any language, namely meaning, communication and reality, though they are fundamentally interdependent, and therefore, inseparable from each other. It is, therefore, necessary to see what these aspects are so far as the obligative language is concerned. The general reference to these aspects have already been made in one form or the other; they are only to be specifically stated here.

Of these three, 'meaning', is a broader concept which includes the other two, namely, communication and reality. Further, 'communication' of a language is always about 'reality' expressed in it. Both together along with the general nature of their unity constitute the 'meaning' of a language'. It is better, therefore, to start with 'reality' and then discuss 'communication' and finally, the general nature of meaning'. The reference to reality is also called the 'ontic reference'.

The 'reality' of the obligative language concerns primarily, two of its referents, namely, agent and act. As regards the agent, the reality is his 'being under obligation', and regarding the act, it is its 'obligatoriness'. Thus, the reality contained in or expressed by the obligative language is two-fold, namely, 'being under obligation' on the agent's part, and 'obligatoriness' of the act. These are evidently the two sides of the same fact of binding. It may be called a 'moral fact', and the obligative language may be said to be 'descriptive' in so far as it describes this 'reality' or 'moral fact' of binding, It is, however, needless to say that this, 'moral description' is different in nature from factual or empirical description. The two-fold reality of 'being under obligation' and 'obligatoriness' is, as is already said, to be interpreted in the light of the relational nature of the obligative language. Its complex nature also cannot be ignored. So far as the knowledge of this reality or moral fact is concerned, at least one thing is certain,

that it is beyond sense-perception. It may be a result either or reason or of intuition or of both together.

Coming to the second aspect of 'communication' of the obligative language, it may be said that it primarily asks the agents to accept the 'reality' and act on it. That is to say, the obligative language communicates primarily that the moral agents are bound also to accept the 'reality' or moral fact of binding and, further, to act accordingly. Thus it will be seen that while the reality of the obligative language is a 'moral binding'; its communication is also, 'binding' of another sort. The binding as reality is the two-fold moral binding which concerns primarily the content, while the binding as communication is the formal binding to accept the first binding itself. For example. "You ought to do X", describes the reality 'your being under obligation to 'X' and 'X's obligatoriness on you'. This is primary binding. It communicates that "You ought to accept' you ought to do X' and act on it". This is primary binding. It communicates that "You ought to accept' you ought to do X' and act on it. This is secondary formal binding. They may also be called first order and second order bindings respectively as seen before, In simple terms, the communication of the obligative language is 'asking' to accept the reality of the obligative language and act on it. This communication has its own force and authority which lends the obligative language the compulsive nature which it has.

These two aspects, namely, reality and communication together constitute the general 'meaning' of the obligative language, It has been already said that his meaning is 'moral demand'. That is why the obligative language is said by me to be a demand-language. No concept other than 'demand' can describe and explain satisfactorily and adequately the nature of moral binding called moral obligation as expressed in the 'ought-language'. 'Demand' as the meaning of the obligative language does justice to both of its 'reality' and 'communication', that is, both the first and the second order moral bindings, and has the necessary force to express these bindings. To distinguish this kind of meaning from other kinds, let us call it the 'obligative meaning'⁵, from which the language in which the judgements of moral obligation are expressed, receives its name-'obligative

5. Following Stevenson's *Emotive meaning*.

language'. In short, it can be said that the obligative language is that which has the obligative meaning, that is to say, which expresses moral demand, with its characteristic force, and includes both the 'reality' and 'communication' of the obligative languages within it.

5. Richness of Obligative meaning

Now, the demand expressed in the obligative language is primarily behavioural and not existential. That is to say, it pertains to some action or doing an act, or a course of behaviour and not to 'being' something. In other words, obligation is primarily, 'to do' and not 'to be' something. The distinction between these two kinds of obligation or demand is no doubt valid and important. But the two cannot, they are mutually implicative because 'being' and 'doing' are, that way, just two aspects of the same thing; one static and the other dynamic. Speaking concretely, one can certainly understand that being a morally good or virtuous man means 'doing' morally good or right acts. This is why, it is said above that the moral demand is primarily behavioural, and not exclusively, because, secondarily, by implication it is existential as well. But, whatever the relation between 'being' and 'doing', it is true that the primary function of the obligative language is to express "obligation to do" and not 'to be'. This becomes quite clear from the various kinds of ought-sentences all of which ask the agents 'to do' the obligatory act, and not 'to be' something. In this case also, however, the relation between 'being' and 'doing' becomes clear if it is remembered that through all these moral demands 'to do', we are really asking the agents 'to be' moral. But this is secondary to the nature of the obligative language.

It should be noted further, that obligative language does not merely describe this 'doing' of a morally obligatory act, but it asks us to do it. This is the 'obligative function' as distinct from the descriptive function of a language. The former 'asks to do' while the latter 'describes doing'. Naturally, the latter lacks the force, referred to above, which the former has. About this function of 'asking' also, it is to be noted, again, that it can be done in more than one way. You can ask a man to do some thing by way of either command, or request, or again, advise and even recommendation or guidance. The way, the obligatory language asks the agents to do the morally obligatory acts, is different from all the aforesaid ways. It asks in the form of 'demand' and that too, indirectly through the statement

of 'binding'. The term 'ought' in the ought-language performs this function very well. The peculiarly and mysteriously compulsive force of 'ought' makes it the most appropriate term to express the rich obligative meaning in all its shades. The complexity, the binding force, and the subtle indirectness of 'demand' are very appropriately and adequately expressed by the 'ought' — sentences'. They can express even the post-eventum judgements of moral obligation in the form of post-eventum ought-sentences, in which is found a strange union of the past and the future.

Now, it is possible to distinguish between 'demanding' and 'expressing a demand' in connection with the function of the obligative language. Strictly speaking, the function of the obligative language cannot be to demand, as it is the demander or Ideal which demands, not the language. It is to express the moral demand'. This is true. But, it should also be noted that the demarcating line between 'demanding' and 'expressing demand' is very thin. In order to express a demand, the language, must have, itself, a demanding nature; any language will not do. That is why, it is the ought-language which is chosen to express moral demands, and not the descriptive language. Therefore, speaking broadly and from a practical point of view, the difference between 'demanding' and 'expressing demand' is almost imperceptible. One is direct, the other indirect. But, speaking strictly, and from the theoretical point of view, we have to say that the primary function of the obligation language is to express moral demands. There are other secondary functions like describing, guiding, evaluating, directing, prescribing and so on. It also functions to express imperatives or commands. But all these secondary functions are performed by the obligative language only by implication.

From the above discussion it becomes clear that though the linguistic expression of the judgement of moral obligation seems to be simple, its meaning, in fact, is rich with implications and presuppositions, which go to make it very complex. It adds further to this richness to consider the various points of view from which a judgement of moral obligation can be and may be looked at. There are four such points of view which give us a square model of the judgement of moral obligation. A judgement may be looked at from the points of view of either the agent, or the adviser, or again, the law-maker or lastly, the judge. The same judgement of moral obligation may be based on different

reasons for the different points of view as suggested by the square model. There are, however, certain reasons which are common to all of them. To say that a moral judgement is objective is the same as saying that it is essentially based only on these common reasons, or reason. This square model, however has no direct bearing on the obligative language itself. Its essential meaning is undisturbed by it. But it points to the possible extension of its implied meaning, thus adding to the richness of its total meaning.

The obligative language exhibits, further, an interesting as well as instructive peculiarity. While in the concept of obligation, there is an emphasis on 'owing' on the part of the agent, referred to as his, 'being under obligation', the obligative language itself, however, in which it is expressed, emphasises 'claim' of others' or 'morality' or what is called the 'Ideal', on the moral agent. Functionally, it would mean that the obligative language emphasises the 'demand' made by the Ideal on the agent. This peculiarity of the obligative language is instructive especially in connection with its bilaterality and complexity.

The obligative language thus differs from the descriptive or indicative, evaluative, emotive, prescriptive and imperative languages, in its nature and function. In other words, the obligative theory of the language of moral obligation is different from the descriptive, evaluative, emotive, prescriptive and imperative theories which are also proposed to explain the nature and function of the language of moral obligation in particular as also the moral language in general. They are, thus, alternatives to the obligative theory which is here proposed. In order, therefore, to justify the claim of the obligative language that it explains the nature and function of the language of moral obligation more adequately than any other theory, it is necessary to consider the various theories critically and point out their inadequacy. Accordingly, a critical consideration of the important theories of the language of moral obligation will be undertaken in the next chapter. It is however, necessary to bear in mind in this connection, that the obligative theory is not exclusive of the truths contained in the other theories. It does not reject them as totally erroneous. On the contrary, it accepts the functions, ascribed variously by these theories to the language of moral obligation, as secondary to and contained in the primary and essential function of, expressing moral demand. The analysis of the various kinds of ought-sentences in the second chapter has brought out this point unambiguously.

In conclusion it may be said that nobody denies that the ought sentences express 'moral binding', except, perhaps the emotivists. The differences arise as to only the nature of this moral binding and its expression. Different conceptions of moral binding and its expression give rise to different theories of the language of moral obligation. Here, an attempt is made to propose and present the obligative theory in as detailed a manner as possible. Its principal contention is that the concept of demand is the heart of the whole of the discourse of moral obligation. This contention as we shall see, is amply borne out and supplemented by the consideration of the essential nature and ground of moral obligation.

6. Analytical Linguistic Model

After outlining the Obligative Theory of the Language of Moral obligation, we may, now, propose and discuss an Analytical Linguistic Model for the Judgement of Moral Obligation, based on it. It may be considered either as an extended, but integral part of the obligative theory, or as its precise expression in the form of working model.

We have seen that ought - language expresses moral demand made by the Ideal through the Principle on the moral Agent to do a particular Act in a given moral situation. It is very difficult to accommodate this complexity of the concept and language of moral obligation in a compact linguistic model. Moreover, there are many kinds of ought sentences which the proposed model should do justice to.

The full-fledged model as per our obligative theory will be "one's/ doing/ in a given situation/, yes/ for the Ideal / expressed in the moral Law." As we see, this model is quite general and has six columns, representing Agent, Act, Situation, the fact of binding of Demand, Ideal and Law. That is, it contains all the five constituents of the structure of moral obligation along with the fact of moral binding. Thus for example.

You ought to speak the truth (in a given situation) = Your speaking the truth in a given situation, yes, for the Ideal, expressed in the moral Law.

This is as I have said, a full-fledged model, which need not always be practically used. Situation is very often generalized, and so need not be referred to. Similarly the Moral Law always expresses the ideal, and hence, it also need not be referred to. Eliminating these two factors, therefore, the model becomes—

You ought to speak the truth = Your speaking the truth, yes, for the Ideal
, or

One ought to do x=one's doing x, yes, for the Ideal.⁶ Here 'one' is the Agent, 'X' the Act, 'Yes' represent the force of moral binding or demand, and for the Ideal' the ground of the demand. To express a posteventum ought-sentence, this model will require a little modification with regard to the tense. it, then, will be —

One ought to have done X = One's doing X in the past, yes, for the Ideal.

Here, 'in the past' indicates the post-eventum nature of the moral judgement. The rest of the model remains the same. Ignoring tense and combining Act with Agent, we have three basic factors left in the linguistic model which we have proposed. The general (universal) ought sentence —

“One ought to do X” = One doing X/Yes/ for the Ideal.” the particular ought-sentence —

He ought to speak the truth = His speaking the truth / Yes / for the Ideal. The first two factors, namely, 'his speaking the truth' and 'yes' correspond to what here calls the phrastic and the 'neustic' respectively. The third factor, 'Ideal' in our model, is the 'ground' of the 'neustic'. Let us call our three factors 'the act, the demand and the ideal' respectively.

The last precise and practical model is evolved out of the first full-fledged model. Let us call the first full-fledged model, Model A which has the general form —

6. As said earlier, 'Ideal' stands for the ground of moral obligation.

*. It is the please, neustic, following R.M. Hare, that has become a convention. But 'ought' appear to enshrine a descriptive force to which the hear may be expected to agree, Hence 'yes'

Model A : — “One's doing X, in a given moral Situation, yes, for the Ideal expressed in the Moral Law.”

In this form, all the factors involved in the concept and language of moral obligation, are clearly stated along with its binding force. The second form of the model is more precise and practical, and we get it by eliminating the two factors, 'situation' which is always generalized in a general ought-sentence, and 'Moral Law' which is always the practical embodiment of the Ideal, and hence implied in it, and by joining together Act and Agent which can easily be done. This form of the model may be called Model B which will have the general form —

Model B : - “One's doing X, yes, for the Ideal”.

There is no basic difference between the nature of the models A and B except for their forms. Whatever, therefore, will be said of the characteristics of 'B', will be applicable to 'A' as well. Further, as this form of the model is unable to distinguish post-eventum ought-sentences from the anteeventum ones, we shall have to make a little modification, for the purpose, in it, and formulate Model C as follows :

Model C : “One's doing X, in the past, yes, for the Ideal,”

(for Post-eventum ought sentences)

Model C also does not differ basically from models A and B except for the phrase 'in the past' which is meant only to indicate the post-eventum nature of the judgement of moral obligation. Hence, the basic characteristics of the model B will apply also to the model C.

7. Merits of the Model

As for the merits of our proposed model, firstly, our model does justice to all the constituents of the structure of the concept and language of moral obligation. This is done especially by the Model A.

The model, further, expresses distinctly the force of demand as represented by 'yes' in the model. This characteristic of the model is very important because it is this binding force of demand which is central to the concept of moral

obligation. The model, therefore, must be able to represent it properly. Now, from the analysis of the concept of demand, it will be seen that its force is neither so weak as that of prescription, nor so strong as that of command or imperative. It lies in between the two. It is, therefore, necessary that the model brings out the force of demand as distinct from prescription and command. I hope, our model does this job very well. We have used 'yes' to indicate the demand-force, in the model. If, instead, we want to indicate a prescription, we shall have to use 'please' in place of 'yes' as for example, Here's model does as follows :

You ought to do X = your doing X in the immediate future, please.

If, on the other hand, we want to express a command or an imperative, we shall have to use 'must' in place of 'yes'. No ethical thinker has suggested such a model in terms of 'must'. Even Hare gives the same model for command as he gives for prescription, namely-Shut the door=your shutting the door in the immediate future, please.⁷

But we may ourselves frame the command model as —

Do X = Your doing X (in the immediate future), must.

Thus, the three phrastic 'please', 'yes' and 'must' may be taken to represent prescription, demand and command respectively. On this background, then, it will be evident how distinctively our model represents the force of demand, in addition to the various structural constituents of moral obligation.

Equally important is the characteristic of our model which, gives it its completeness. It is that, it states even the ground of moral obligation or demand. The same we have called the demander which is the Ideal that one pursues throughout his life.

The statement of demand is incomplete without the statement of the demander. Consequently, the model which expresses only the demand, and not the demander or its ground, is deemed to be incomplete, the phrase being "for the Ideal". This gives the reason for the demand and thus, expresses, by implication, the rationality or moral demand.

7. *Language of Morals*, pp 17-18.

Some may object to our inclusion of 'ground' or 'demander' in the model for the simple reason that no ought-sentence itself states it. An ought-sentence expresses only a judgement of moral obligation without clearly stating the authority or ground of the judgement. This is beyond disputes, as any ought-sentence is of the type — “One ought to do X” — wherein no ground or reason is stated. But, the question is, should a model represent only the overt structure alone of an ought-sentence? or should it also analytically represent that is implied in and essential to a judgement of moral obligation? When we say that it is an analytical model, I think, we expect from it something more than mere transformation of an ought-sentence into a model. One of the essential functions of model is to bring out and represent what is essential to the concept and language of moral obligation. Though a linguistic model, it is not merely a model of language, but of the judgement expressed in it as well. Hence, statement of the ground of the judgement becomes a part of a model's function. True, 'reason' will differ with the theory of moral obligation. But a model is expected to state it all the same. In case of our model, the ground is stated in the form of Ideal. This of course, presupposes our Ideal-demand theory of moral obligation. But this cannot be an argument against our model as any model, for that matter, does presuppose some theory or the other. A model has no existence independently of the theory at its base. If we accept that a model should be a complete representation, then the necessity of stating or representing 'ground' or 'reason' in it becomes apparent, as a judgement can never be complete without the reason for it. In case of moral demand, it can be said that a judgement or demand cannot be complete without the demander or its authority, call it ground or reason.

8. Some Clarifications :

The phrase “for the Ideal” in our model, however, is not a conditional phrase, which would be “If the Ideal”. It expresses the unconditional character of the demand and the universal acceptance of the Ideal; it expresses the fact that the ideal is the same for, or common to, all the human beings. It is because of these characteristics of the 'demander' or the ideal, that a moral demand has the force which it has in practical life.

Since the same model is applicable to particular as well as universal ought-

sentences, the essential nature of particular judgements of moral obligation can be said to be the same as that of general moral rules. They differ only in their generality and practical functions.

We have already seen that a model only in terms of phrastic and neustic and without the third factor of 'reason' or 'ground', is at best incomplete. Hence, I have proposed a three tier model instead of two tier one. The three tiers of it I have called 'the act' 'the demand' 'the ideal'-represented in the model as 'one's doing X/yes / for the Ideal", respectively. This is the minimum that is required of a model. Our full-fledged model A we know, has six tiers, the half of which need not be used in practice.

The analytical model proposed here does presuppose our obligative theory of the language of moral obligation on the one hand, and generally the Ideal-demand theory of moral obligation, on the other. It is so constructed as to be suitable and adequately express the ought-language along with the ought-judgement expressed therein.

Lastly, I am aware that Hare has used 'yes' as the neustic for indicative sentences, while I have used it for ought-sentences. The indicative stated there is, however, existential, like — 'all mules are barren' = all mules' being barren, yes"⁸. For a partly behavioural indicative also Hare uses the same model as : 'You are about to shut the door' = Shutting of the door by you in the immediate future, yes"⁹. The latter use indicates the possibility of its being used to represent a future act. Further, as 'yes' can indicate a particular act, it can as well express 'asking to do it', In case of 'doing' anyhow, I think, 'yes' acquires a force which is like that of 'ought'. In addition, we have the third 'ideal' part of the model that will distinguish it from an indicative.

8. Ibid, p. 189

9. Ibid, p. 188.