

Concluding Remarks

In this work an attempt has been made to give a defense of the idea that there are objective moral standards. Plato argued that there are moral values that are independent of what anyone, anywhere happen to think of them. This idea was defended by both Moore in England and Hartmann in the Continent. In the opening chapter we have made an attempt to highlight the concerns of moral realism. We have tried to show that Moral realism is not only an ontological theory but it has a very strong epistemological dimension. It has to do not only with moral metaphysics, namely, what kind of a thing a value be? This is an especially difficult question for the realist. Moral truths and norms are not like the objects science studies. Moral truths cannot be scientifically tested. We do not bump into them. We do not touch them or taste them. Either we have to side with the skeptic and say that there are no moral truths or we have to say that the morality is a matter of our attitudes and desires. Whatever position we take, ethical thinking is not and cannot be an effort to correctly report on a set of moral truths not of our own making.

There have been different responses in the history of moral philosophy to this dismissive attitude. In respect of the status of goodness or value both Moore and Hartmann subscribe to what may be called ethical realism and Neo-Platonism. Both of them inherited the Platonic tradition and applied it to their respective theories of value. We have tried to show, besides an exposition of their theories, the similarities and the differences in their thought patterns. One major similarity between them is that with respect to the nature of objectivity of goodness or value, they unanimously hold it to be a non-natural type of objectivity. The very idea of non-naturalism has been criticized as

something bizarre in the history of moral philosophy. Yet Moore exerted tremendous influence on subsequent philosophy arousing skeptical doubts and various forms of non-cognitivism. Moore was in a way the precursor of meta-ethical thinking initiated by the questions of reference, meaning definition of moral words, particularly 'good'. His open-question argument became an instrument for the testing of the validity of defining a value term naturalistically. Similarly, in the Continent, following Hartmann, there developed a style of thinking, called phenomenology of value. Values are quasi-real entities related to consciousness through the act of intentionality.

A second response is to show that moral values are somehow related to the nature of human mind. Human mind is so constituted that it serves as the fountainhead of moral values; that may be human desire and appetite, sympathy or desire for happiness. This is a way of an answer to the objection that there are dis-analogies between science and morality. This is also a kind of realism. We have preferred to call it 'naturalistic realism' as opposed to Moore's non-naturalistic realism.

Moral realism has also attracted the attention of contemporary philosophers. Though the entire system non-cognitive meta-ethical theories are committed to reject the factuality and existence of moral values, we have tried to show that these theories could not fully give up the cognitive element in moral matters. In fact many of them have resorted to preserve the truth claims of moral sentences utilizing the current researches in grammar and syntax. This is called the minimalist approach to truth.

The position of J.L. Mackie is dissected, and although we have not been able to meet his objections headlong, we have shown that the moral realist does not talk of the existence of values in the way Mackie has understood it. Many moral philosophers of

anti-realistic persuasion have also found Mackie's arguments not very cogent. We have discussed the views of Simon Blackburn, R. M. Hare in particular. Others have thought that Mackie's "error theory" spells bad faith in moral matters.

The questions of moral relativity and moral disagreement, two stumbling blocks in the way of the moral realist, are raised and taken care of. We have tried to untangle the skeins of these arguments and have shown that moral relativity or moral disagreement fails to supply evidence against moral realism. Though we have offered a number of considerations we should have also have also tried to draw comparison between disagreement in morals and disagreement in other areas of philosophy. This we could not do in the body of the presentation. So it would not be quite out of point to state a few ideas on that comparison. We believe that there is an objectively correct position about whether there is a God, or such a thing as free will. Despite the fact that intelligent, open-minded individuals even philosophers, continuously disagree about such matters. These puzzles, like those in other areas of philosophy are not resolvable by means of a widely agreed upon, determinate method. They are certainly not resolvable solely by making careful mathematical calculations, or referring to one's empirical observations. Most philosophical disagreements proceed in the absence of the relevant sorts of shared, rock-bottom intuitions that could serve as a common basis from which to derive agreement. Since this does not threaten the existence of objective truths in other areas of philosophy, it should not do so in ethics, where matters are in all relevant respects the same.

About moral facts we have taken a stance-independent view. Moral facts are objective in a very strong sense. They are true and exist independently of what any

human being, no matter what his or her perspective, thinks of them. Moral facts are not scientific ones and do not pass the standard test of ontological credibility. Moral facts cannot be conformed like scientific facts, but are no worse for that our moral beliefs are capable of motivating us all by themselves, and usually, though not invariably, do so. Moral obligations constitute reasons for everyone to act as they direct, regardless of whether these reasons bear any relations to one's existing commitments. The existence of persistent disagreement in ethics is insufficient to cast doubt on moral realism. At least some moral principles are knowable via self-evidence and others by consensual agreement.

In the last chapter the question of moral objectivity is specifically discussed in relation to truth and justification. Various theories of truth and justification are discussed to decide upon the status of moral judgements. We have ended the discussion with a brief reference to John Rawls theory on the Kantian variety of constructivism and the unique kind of coherentism in support of the objectivity of moral claims. We think there should be a rapport between Rawls' theory and the moral realist's theory of objectivity, if we interpret moral realism not as a rigid stand but qualified realism as stance-independence.

In the last part of the present work, we have made an attempt to state the considerations on the notion of moral validity in the moral theories of Kant and Habermas in a comparative way. This is significant in a manner because we started with a comparison of Moore and Hartmann and conclude with a comparison between Kant and Habermas. We have not attempted any critical discussion of their conceptions because their very understanding was difficult Habermas tells us that the goal of his

philosophy is to reconceptualize Kantian ethics in such a way that the monological testing of norms according to the categorical imperative is replaced by some real process of cooperative efforts at consensus to grasp. This raises the likelihood of another possibility, a comparative study of Habermas and Rawls.

We have not accepted the currently popular effort to conceive ethics as a kind of science. And have insisted that moral truths and properties occupy a distinctive area in our ontology.

In doing our job we have consulted all the major figures on moral philosophy who have made significant contribution in the area under discussion. We have also fallen back on philosophers and views which are pertinent for our quest. There are, we must confess, too many issues crisscrossing and overlapping one another. Yet, I have tried to remain not to be involved in side issues, or at least, to keep clear of them. I have tried to introduce, explain, motivate issues and take a critical stand whenever needed. This work is strictly introductory, but it is not merely a survey of the established terrain. I have stated, analysed reanalyzed the extant concept, theories and arguments. But wherever possible I have tried to say something of my own. In this endeavour of mine I remain indebted to all the philosophers in this area.