

THE LOGIC OF MORAL DISAGREEMENT

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates by conceptual analysis the nature of moral disagreements and examines the methods that must be needed to settle them. I begin by examining disagreements in general. A disagreement of any kind is a complicated relation which presupposes (1) the object or issue, (2) two disputants, (3) the disputant's beliefs about, attitude to, or action towards the object or issue concerned; it consists in (4) the relation between the things in (3); and it has (1) - (4) as necessary conditions. I then distinguish and consider three kinds of disagreement: disagreement in belief, disagreement in attitude, disagreement in action. Further, disagreements in which the disputants have a common ground, logical or psychological, are distinguished from those in which they have not. In terms of these distinctions, the contrast between moral disagreements and disagreements in science is made. Both moral disagreements and disagreements in sciences might, I argue, fall in either of these last-mentioned categories (chapter 1).

Disagreements in morals are those in which two disputants have contradictory judgments on an object belonging to any one of the different orders of morality: Moral acts, moral rules, and moral principles (chapter 2). To answer the question of how moral disagreements are settled, I examine the logic of moral discourse and moral reasoning.

Moral judgments are based on reasons which are descriptions of the object or issue concerned; to say that an act is right or wrong implies that we have some reason for saying this; and this reason must be universalizable in the sense that all acts similarly situated are to be similarly treated. Further, when one says that an act is right or wrong he also implies that, other things being equal, he is prepared to do it in the appropriate circumstances. These two features are logical requirements of all moral judgments, and thus no principle can be a moral one unless it satisfies them (chapter 3).

With the help of these two formal requirements of universalizability and prescriptivity, we can see, I submit, that moral reasoning can be valid or invalid. And to justify the rightness or wrongness of an act, we can show that it is a case of or is subsumed under a moral rule that can in turn be proved by appealing to a moral principle. A moral principle, being a fundamental criterion of the rightness or wrongness of action, is not susceptible of logical proof "in the usual acceptance of the term". However, to say this does not imply that it cannot be proved in a broader sense of the word; there are, I contend, tests of a valid moral principle, namely, that it should satisfy the two logical requirements of prescriptivity and universalizability and should serve the purpose of morality, (chapter 4).

According to the logic of moral judgment and moral reasoning, we can rationally settle moral disagreements. If the disputants hold the same moral point of view, their moral disagreement may be settled logically, when their beliefs about the object or issue in point are the same; the methods utilized to settle it are scientific and logical. In certain cases, in which the disputants hold conflicting fundamental moral principles, the moral disagreement can be settled either by proving that the principle or judgment of one disputant does not satisfy the formal requirements of moral judgment or by proving that his principle or judgment to be invalid (chapter 5).

The validity of moral principles or moral judgments relies on a rule of validity of moral argument; therefore, to settle a moral disagreement does not necessarily imply that the two disputants accept what is proved; in other words, the disputant's acceptance of a moral judgment is not relevant to a valid settlement of a moral disagreement, just as the acceptance of the truth of a belief of two disputants is not relevant to the valid settlement of disputes in other disciplines. Finally, and in conclusion to this thesis, I argue for the claim that moral disagreements can be settled rationally, just as can disagreements in the sciences.

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INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, men possess great power to control Nature and through their scientific research industrial development is rapidly improved. Naturally, their living should be happier than ever before. But the facts show, on the contrary, that they are living in a warlike situation and under the threat of destruction. People do not use atomic energy to better the living conditions of their fellow men, but rather to construct nuclear weapons to engage in war. People do not give food to people of other countries, rather, they aid them with arms to kill each other. People do not use scientific facilities to amuse their species, rather, to stir up hate between them. Without doubt, what causes this tragedy to happen is very difficult to answer completely; yet we can, at least, point out the main cause: the conflict of human values including the conflict of morality.

Moreover, as regards educational, political and economic factors, people of different cultures are and will be more often getting together. Although different cultures do not imply different moralities, it is more probable that they will have different behaviour patterns. Consequently, moral disagreements are more likely to occur between them than between people of the same culture.

From what we have said, it follows that disagreement in morals is the acute phenomenon in human affairs. To

solve any problem it is necessary to understand its nature beforehand. Though the problem of moral disagreements has great bearing on our moral life, we do not pay much attention to it, at least not as much as we pay to the study of nuclear weapons. On the other hand, disagreements in morals are very similar to the disagreements in, for example, sciences; the study of these will throw tremendous light on the disagreements in other fields. Therefore, the study of disagreements in morals is not only important practically, but is also theoretically interesting.

The phenomenon of disagreements in morals is, in one sense, on empirical datum which should be the subject of Sociology; but it also can, however, be the subject of philosophy if we study the conceptual structure of it and the latter study should be the necessary condition of sociological study.

The method of study of the problem in this thesis is conceptual analysis by which I anatomize the logical structure of moral discourse to show what moral judgment is and how we justify it and our moral acts, and by implication to show the logic of moral disagreements. From the analysis, it will be revealed that moral disagreements can, to a great extent, be settled by rational methods.

1. THE LOGIC OF DISAGREEMENT

1.1. The Conditions of Disagreement

In daily life, disagreements between people about something often occur even in exact scientific research; nevertheless, the logic of the concept is very vague. Before discussing disagreements in morals, it is worth analyzing the conditions of disagreement in general.

First of all, let us consider the object of disagreement. Whenever two persons have belief about attitude or action toward different objects, we cannot logically say that they disagree with each other on the objects. At most, we describe them as having belief about attitude or action to different objects.

Suppose a person X says: "The rose is red"; the other person Y says: "My hat is black". They are talking about two different objects. If we consider the logical relation of their sayings, we should say they are contingent: from any one statement, we cannot infer the truth value of the other, nor can we get any hint of anyone's belief about the object which he did not talk about. It is senseless to describe the case as X disagreeing with Y in belief about the objects and it can be false to predict that they disagree with each other on one of the objects. For it is possible that X believes "Your hat is grey", "Your hat is black", or "You have no hat on your head at all"; and Y believes other probabilities about the rose. Yet,

if X did not talk about the rose but talked about Y's hat, we could then properly say X disagrees with Y about the colour of Y's hat; their statements are logically incompatible though they might, if Y's hat is green, be false.

From the above discussion, we showed one point: that disagreement between two persons or more (it could be reduced to the relation between two) must be about the same subject.

It might be asked what kind of object should be the legitimate object of disagreement of any kind? At the first glance, the question seems irrelevant to the problem we shall discuss; actually it is not. It has bearing on the question whether the given disagreement is a real disagreement or not. For example, when two persons dispute the character of "the ghost in the machine", one says "it is wise", the other denies it. If we deny there is a ghost in the machine, the object on which they dispute does not exist. Consequently, their saying cannot be in real disagreement.

However, on the problem, we need not lay down any definite criterion of legitimate object of disagreement, but must point out one convention that any disagreement presupposes its object to exist and the criterion or criteria of existence must be in accordance with the field in which the disagreement occurred. Actually, we cannot lay down a general criterion of existence:

in mathematics the criterion of existence for number is different from the criterion for existence of objects in nature sciences. Even in science, the atom exists in a sense which is different from the sense in which we say the table exists in a classroom. Furthermore, when we say certain persons exist in fiction, we are not saying they are real like Johnson in the White House.

On the other hand, disagreement presupposes the disputants who disagree with each other. Two different statements about, or two different attitudes to, or two different actions toward one object are strange to describe as they disagree with each other. Statements can be contradictory or incompatible or independent with each other; attitudes or actions can be contrary or opposite to or different from each other. Only in those cases in which two disputants hold two contradictory, incompatible statements, or contrary attitudes or opposite, different actions to the same object, do disagreements occur. Without disputants, we cannot consequently say we settle or do not settle the disagreement.

Two persons or more and one object are necessary conditions of disagreement, but this is still not sufficient. When two persons and one object are accidentally or incidentally closed together, they may have some relation to each other: looking at, thinking about, etc. But, by no means do they have disagreement between them unless they have contradictory, incompatible beliefs about, or

contrary attitudes to, or different, opposite action toward the object. In short, to talk about something as a disagreement, the disputants' belief about, attitude to, or action toward the same object is the very essential element.

In this section, I have shown that disagreement of any kind is a complicated relation which must presuppose (1)-(3), consist in (4), and have (1)-(4) as necessary conditions.

- (1) The object,
- (2) two disputants,
- (3) the disputants' beliefs about, attitude to,
or actions toward the object concerned,
- (4) the relation between the things in (3).

1.2. The Kinds of Disagreement

In order to analyze disagreements in morals adequately, it is profitable to distinguish kinds of disagreements. Theoretically speaking, disagreements can be classified in many ways according to the criterion we choose; yet we adopt some which serve our purpose best.

To begin with, I shall divide them, from the point of view of the relation between the disputants and the object, into three categories:

- (1) disagreement in belief,
- (2) disagreement in attitude,
- (3) disagreement in action.

Now let us consider disagreement in belief. Here is the well-known definition of disagreement in belief formulated by Professor Stevenson in his celebrated book

Ethics and Language:

Questions about the nature of light-transmission, the voyages of Leif Ericson, and the date on which Jones was last in to tea, are all similar in that they may involve an opposition that is primarily of beliefs....In such cases one man believes that P is the answer, and another that not-P, or some proposition incompatible with P, is the answer; and in the course of discussion each tries to give some manner of proof for his view, or revise it in the light of further information. Let us call this 'disagreement in belief'. (p. 2)

It is clear that disagreement in belief is that two persons dispute about the characteristic, which may be perceptual, scientific, of the same object of the physical world; and their beliefs are contradictory or incompatible with each other. Accordingly, if two persons have different beliefs about the object in the sense that one of them holds the belief PVQ against his opponent P, they do not, then, disagree with each other. For example, X says: "The rose is red"; Y, the other person, says: "The rose is red or pink". Their sayings are not contradictory or incompatible but can be both true if the rose is red and false if the rose is black.

Disagreement in attitude is sharply different from what we have just discussed. Two persons disagree with each other in attitude to the object when they have contrary attitudes to it -- one approving of it, for instance, and the other disapproving of it. Attitude consists of

two components, the pro or con feeling to the object and the disposition of action to the object.¹ Analogously, two persons may have, as in the case of belief, different attitudes to the object without having contrary ones; that is, one of them has an indifferent attitude to it. For example, in the coffee break time, X and Y had decided to drink something together. X proposes his favourite place, Cafeteria A, but Y objects to it. In this case they have a contrary attitude to Cafeteria A. But if Y expresses an indifferent attitude to Cafeteria A, in other words, he does not care where they go, they do not disagree in attitude to the cafeteria at all.

The final kind of disagreement is the one which has a bearing on disagreements in morals. In ordinary life, we express moral disagreement in two different ways: in what we have done in the moral situation, and in the way we appraise the act done by another person in a moral situation. And it is likely that what we have done is not consistent with what we have said of the same act done by the other person in the same situation; in other words, we may hold the same moral rule but act differently. For we, as normal human beings, are sometimes practically inconsistent or exhibit Akrasia.

To the same object, two persons disagree with each other in action if, and only if, they have a different action to it. Different action may be also opposite

1 Cf. W.H.F. Barnes, "Ethics Without Proposition", Aristotelian Society Supplement. Vol. XXII, (1948), pp. 1-30.

action in the sense that these are in conflict with each other, e.g. protecting and destroying. And one other point we must bear in mind is that in disagreement in action, also in disagreement in attitude, the object must be the same in the sense that two disputants subjectively think it to be identical in the relevant aspects even though it is not so; in other words, disagreement in action or in attitude presupposes that the disputants have the same belief regarding the object concerned. In Mr. Baier's terms, when they engage in the "theoretical task", they must have the same conclusion on the object, but act differently in the "practical task".

1.3. Two General Types of Disagreement

In the last section, I suggested that disagreements can be classified into three categories. But each of them, from another point of view, might be categorized into two groups:

- (1) disagreements on the object about which two disputants have a common ground to reach agreement;
- (2) disagreements on the object about which two disputants have no common ground to reach agreement.

I believe that, in ordinary life, no one of the three types of disagreement which we discussed in the last

1 Cf. K. Baier, The Moral Point of View, (Cornell University Press, 1958), p. 142.

section, falls entirely into (1). But some philosophers, e.g. Professor C. Stevenson, fail to make this point. He identifies disagreements in science with disagreements in belief which should, he thinks, be of (1); and confuses disagreements in morals with disagreements in attitude which, he thinks also, should be (2). His view is theoretically false and practically misleading.

In order to make my points clear, it is necessary to analyse his view.

First of all, let me consider his view on the common ground to settle disagreements in belief:

"It will be obvious that to whatever extent an argument involves disagreement in belief, it is open to the usual methods of the sciences. If these methods are the only rational methods for supporting beliefs ... then scientific methods are the only rational methods for resolving the disagreement in belief ...¹

Scientific methods, as we ordinarily understand it, are experimental methods which can be used to discover what is the case. Assumedly, people, including scientists, acknowledge it to be the good method to settle the disagreement in belief; but to say this does not, however, imply that all disagreements in belief will be in one sense settled by it. For the statement that disagreements in belief cannot be settled by scientific methods is not contradictory. Moreover, many disagreements in belief are actually unsolvable by it. Examples will demonstrate this point.

1 C.L. Stevenson, "The Nature of Ethical Disagreement", in Readings in Philosophical Analysis, (ed. H. Feigl and W. Sellars, N.Y., Appleton-Century-Crafts, Inc. 1949), P. 590.

Suppose X and Y disagree with each other on whether God is omnipotent, or whether all things in the universe are expanding. I do not think these two disagreements can be settled in principle by scientific methods. It might be objected that the two sentences express no statement at all. Even though I admit this, there still are examples which cannot be resolved by them.

Disagreements in belief about an object of the past which cannot be reproduced even with our scientific research at its best are not susceptible of any proof by them to decide whether one belief or the other is true. It is logically contradictory that we say at the present we produce or see an historical object; consequently, we cannot prove in practice belief about it as we prove belief about the atom.

In history, especially ancient history, two persons can disagree with each other on any object; scientific methods or methods of other sorts give them no help in settling the dispute unless they mutually accept some criteria of proof. Nevertheless, the criteria of proof in the field are not as definite as we ordinarily suppose. It might be more controversial than those of valid reasoning in morals.

If one of the examples is true, I have enough logical force, then, to refute the assertion that all disagreements in belief can be resolved by scientific methods

since we have one counter-case to refute a general statement.

Even if we admit that all disagreements in belief can be resolved by scientific methods, all disagreements in science may not be resolved by these methods. For they consist not only of disagreements in belief but, at least in theory, also of disagreements in attitude.

To accept the scientific methods as the rational method to resolve disagreements in belief is to accept a set of criteria: criteria of evidence, of legitimate operational processes, of proof and so on. Why do we accept these criteria rather than the other? To this question, scientific methods give us no answer as the criterion of truth itself gives no answer to the question of why we accept it as the right criterion. In sciences or in descriptive discourse, direct observation by sense is the final court of appeal of any statement: no matter how complex or abstract it may be, every descriptive statement must be verifiable by them. But it is not, however, that every person having the ability to see can do the job; certain conditions must be satisfied to be the qualified observer; in other words, certain criteria are presupposed. The data observed by a colour-blind person or by a 'bad experimenter' are not recognized even by themselves. Mr. P. H. Nowell-Smith nicely describes the cases:

If a man finds that his judgments about colour differ consistently from those of others, he will admit himself to be colour-blind. He might start by saying that two things were the same colour; but if he finds that everyone else says that they are different he will retreat into the language of 'looks to me'. In the same way a man who finds that his readings of scales and meters differ from other people's does not immediately write to Nature to claim that his observations upset some well-known scientific law; he realizes that he is a bad experimenter and probably takes up some other career. The existence of colour-blind persons and bad experimenters does not prevent our using objective language; for the dissentients are willing to allow that the common opinion is correct, however much it may conflict with their own experience.¹

It is evident that to choose normal people's eye or "common opinion" as the legitimate test rather than the colour-blind person's or "bad experimenter's" is a logically presupposed criterion when we use scientific methods, and that people accept certain criteria is a contingent fact from which we could not infer that they are the necessary criteria which we must choose. On the contrary, when a revolution in the structure of the human body happens to the effect that most people are colour-blind, it is quite possible that the criterion of the test we use now might be replaced by another. Actually, some persons regard evidence from the Bible as a better reason than those of observed data for believing or disbelieving a statement. When two persons or scientists disagree on the criteria of evidence or proof, in the sense that which of them is better, as often happens in scientific research, scientific methods here are useless.

1 P.H. Nowell-Smith, Ethics, (Pelican Book, 1961), p. 57.

Among disagreements, I am inclined to admit that disagreements in science are easier to settle than those in morals because scientific methods in research are only concerned with the subject matter which, as it were, is free from or not relative to human desires and the situation in which the subject matter is located; but moral matters are necessarily involved in them. However, this difference does not make disagreements in science different from moral disagreements in kind: one has a common ground, the other does not. On the contrary, they may be of two kinds:

- (a) Both disputants regard the same sort of reasons as good reasons for believing or disbelieving, choosing or not choosing certain criteria, acting or not acting in a certain way.
- (b) No agreement as to how they should settle the dispute.

In the course of the above analysis, I have brought out that disagreements in belief are not necessarily such that between disputants, there is common ground by which the disagreements in question can be settled.

Now let me turn to discuss disagreements in attitude. As we have seen, attitude consists of two components: one's pro or con feeling and disposition to act toward the object. Accordingly two contrary attitudes cannot be one true, the other false; but one of them might be right or wrong, jus-

tified or unjustified. I agree with Professor Findlay on this point; he says:

"...people are more or less justified in having attitudes of certain sorts and of certain degrees of intensity toward objects and situations of certain typical constellations of circumstances. It is obvious that talk of this sort is widespread and well-established: we have no hesitation in saying that someone is showing a thoroughly warranted attitude of amazement or anger or shame in a certain situation, or that he is manifesting such attitude in a proper and suitable degree, whereas, in the other case, we have no hesitation in finding an attitude bizarre, uncalled for, out of place, unwarranted, or at least of quite an inappropriate quality or intensity."¹

However, not all our attitudes to any object in any situation are of this category; some of them are neither right nor wrong, justified or unjustified in the sense that there is no established rule or criterion about them, nor can we classify them as the subclass of the general rule.

It should be obvious that the standards or rule of right or wrong, justified or unjustified attitude in any society are not explicitly formulated as her laws are formulated in code. On the contrary, they are implicitly, more or less, implanted in our personality through the process of being educated and/or of imitating a way of life. But as soon as we are involved in disputes about whether certain attitudes are right or wrong, justified or unjustified, we will, as we try out the use of ordinary words, find it out.

1 Findlay, "The Justification of Attitude", in Language, Mind, and Value, (George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1962), p. 165.

If what we have said above is true, Professor Stevenson's view that disagreement in attitude cannot be resolved by rational method¹ will then, be false. Of this, I shall say more in detail in Chapters 3 and 4.

So, disagreement in attitude may be of type (1) if the attitude on which two disputants disagree is an attitude about which there is a rule of right or wrong and the rule is accepted by them, otherwise, it will be (2).

With regard to disagreement in action, we can also, it seems to me, make the same point as we have stated on disagreement in attitude.

By and large, we are social beings; we are implanted, to some extent, with certain patterns of action or behaviour which are approved by society as right or wrong in a certain type of situation with a certain type of object. Generally speaking, society implies the existence of social rules; her members can tell whether a given course of action or behaviour is contrary to or in accordance with, or required by custom, law, manners, etiquette, morals. In other words, to be a social being implies having social rule-governed behaviour or action. If the action on which two persons disagree with each other is of the category we have just mentioned, the disagreement will be settled by the rule concerned, i.e. it belongs to (1).

1 Cf. C.L. Stevenson, Ethics and Language (Yale University Press 1949), chapt. VII, p.p. 152-173.

On the other hand, sometimes owing to rapidly changing situations, we must have new patterns of action to adapt to the new circumstances. The new patterns of action are likely to be of a type to which no social rule can apply. Obviously, disagreements on the last kind of action are (2).

Up to the present, I think I have shown that three kinds of disagreements discussed in 1 and 2 might fall into two general types of disagreement. But I still leave one problem in the dark: that is, what is the nature of the common ground behind the disagreement?

Here I shall make the discussion brief since it will be examined in great detail in chapters 4 and 5. Roughly speaking, it might be of two kinds: (a) logical, (b) psychological. Let us consider some examples to make clear the distinction.

Suppose two persons disagree as to whether a flying boat is a ship, and they both agree on the definition of "ship". It is obvious that when disputants in question examine whether flying-boats have the characteristics of a "ship" or not, their disagreement should be resolved unless they or one of them does not care about committing logical inconsistency; in other words, according to the agreed criterion of ship, they can resolve the dispute logically.

In another case, two persons have the same dispute, but do not have the common agreed definition of "ship"; instead, they have the common purpose that they must settle the dispute in order to solve the problem of traffic management. This common purpose is, I term it, psychological common ground.¹ I am inclined to believe that we have psychological common ground to settle the moral disagreement: when logical ground is not available.

1 Cf. R. Crowshay-Williams, Methods and Criteria of Reasoning, (N.Y., The Humanities Press, 1957), chapt. 12, pp. 173-204.

2. MORAL DISAGREEMENTS

2.1. Orders of Morality

It seems to me that moral disagreements are quite complicated matters; "when ethical (moral) issues become controversial, they involve disagreement in belief ...but there is also disagreement in attitude."¹ Furthermore, from the viewpoint of the object of disagreement, they are multifarious. In order to reveal their complexity, it is necessary to examine the orders of morality. Metaphorically speaking, morality has different orders: moral act, moral rule, and moral principle. But to say this does not mean or imply that in ordinary life we are clearly aware of the structure of morality; rather it suggests that we can identify them through the course of analysis.

What is a moral act is a question which should be answered before disagreements in morals arise. Generally speaking, two persons must agree with each other on what is morality before they dispute moral matters. For to disagree on what is morality is different from disagreeing on what is right or wrong in morals; as agreement on what is a human being does not imply agreement on what is a good or bad man.

With reference to the disputed object, it may be easier to make the point clear. The disagreement in

1 C. L. Stevenson, op. cit., p. 11.

morals is disagreement about an object which can be categorically predicated by some moral term: right or wrong, good or bad. We cannot, for instance, apply moral adjectives "right" or "wrong" to the chair located at the position which is in the middle of the exit without committing a category mistake;¹ consequently, we are not having disagreement in morals when we dispute about the position of the chair in question. By the same token, when we dispute about the definition of the word "morality" or about the logical structure of the concept of morality, we are not disputing moral matters, but logical matters. It is logically illegitimate to predicate a logical discussion as morally right or wrong. In short, disagreement in morals is different from disagreement about morality because the objects that they are concerned with are of different logical types. To the former problem, it is the moralist's job to give the solution; to the latter, the moral philosopher's.

It should be plain now that to assert what is a moral act, moral rule, or moral principle does not commit us to holding a moral point of view and to clear their nature is the first step to clear disagreements in morals.

First of all, let us consider moral acts. Action or act is a vague concept. As Professor Austin points

1 Cf. G. Ryle, The Concept of Mind, (New York, Hutchinson's University Library, 1949), p. 16.

out, "we need to realize that even the simplest named actions are not so simple".¹ For this reason, it might be useful to pay a little attention to the logic of action before discussing the moral act.

In ordinary speech, the terms "action" and "act" seem to be used synonymously; but actually, there is a difference in their application. We use the term "action" to denote a thing that simply happens to us such as the heart beating, but use the term "act" to refer to the thing that we do such as raising our arm. We do not call the heart's beating the act of the heart or human action, rather the action of the heart; we usually call raising our arm a human action. In other words, every act is an action; but not every action is an act unless it is done by a human being.²

Human acts are multifarious; according to Bentham, they might be divided into (1) positive and negative, (2) external (transitive and intransitive) and internal, (3) transient and continued, (4) indivisible and divisible, and/or (5) simple and complex.³ However, among the above categories, we cannot pick up one to be the object of moral evaluation; for they are only concerned with human

1 J.L. Austin, "A Plea for Excuse", in Philosophical Papers, (Oxford Univ. Press, 1961) p. 127.

2 Cf. Eric D'Arcy, Human Acts - An Essay in Their Moral Evaluation, (Oxford University Press, 1963), Chapt. I, pp. 1-61.

3 J. Bentham, The Principle of Morals and Legislation, (The Hafer Library of Classics Edition, 1963), pp. 72-75.

acts as human performance, and the performance itself is not the object of moral evaluation unless it satisfied other conditions which will be seen later. Indeed, we often apply the word "good" to human performance, e.g. a good ski-jump, a good shot; yet that is not a moral evaluation at all.

As the object of moral evaluation, human action is of a special kind which is not only bodily movement or performance but has other properties. What are the other properties? Let us consider Aristotle's answer. He said, "When these (acts) are voluntary, we receive praise and blame; when involuntary, we are pardoned and sometimes even pitied."¹ And voluntary action, in his own words, "would seem to be one in which the initiative lies within the agent who knows the particular circumstances in which the action is performed."² From the quotations, we should see that only a voluntary act can be the object of moral evaluation and a voluntary act presupposes (1) that the agent has initiative within and (2) that the agent's knowledge about the circumstances in which the act is performed. Without doubt, the key concepts in (1) are "initiative" and "within"; and if they are clear, (1) will be obvious. Suppose "within" means inside the agent's body and "initiative" is synonymous with motivation or motive, then (1) can be rendered as the act

1 Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, (The Library of Liberal Arts edition, 1962), Tr. by M. Ostwald, p. 52.

2 Ibid., p. 57.

has motive inside the agent's body. From this and the assumption that human action can be, as Freudians think, motivated by conscious motive as well as unconscious motive, is true; (1) has the implication that many human actions such as kleptomaniacs' stealing, insane persons' killing can be the object of moral evaluation. This is incompatible with our ordinary conception of the voluntary act; the initiative of the voluntary act should, therefore, be the conscious motive or the intention of the agent.

Accordingly, when a person acts voluntarily, he is acting intentionally and knowing what is his intention. It is logically absurd that one is acting intentionally without knowing what he is acting for. However, this does not mean that the agent must act for something other than the act itself or that every voluntary human action is a means to an end. For the agent may intend the act as his end or intended object such as the performance of an action on the stage is the end of the actor. Certainly, it is allowable to say that the actor's act has two statuses: the act itself and the intended object of the actor.

The intention of the agent to perform an act is also the reason for the act; when he is asked by another person why he did A, he replies by describing his intention.¹

1 Cf. G. E. M. Anscombe, Intention, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1957), p. 9.

Nevertheless, the reason he gave for his act is an explanatory reason, but not necessarily the justificatory reason; or in Mr. Strawson's¹ terms, the reason he gave for his act is "his reason" but not necessarily "the reason". In the moral situation, particularly in the moral conflicted situation, we, as a moral agent, often think that to act in a certain way in given circumstances is our duty, yet our belief may be false. For, we always suppose 'our reason' for the act as 'the reason' for the act or "subjective duty" as "objective duty"; and two things are not mutually implied.

It is a truism that every act is performed in certain circumstances and the intention of the act is circumstance-dependent. To intend something is to intend its realization in the circumstance about which the agent must have some belief before his decision to intend it. So the intentional act, more or less, implies the agent's knowledge of the circumstance in which the act is performed; in other words, satisfying (1) is in some degree satisfying (2). But how much knowledge about the circumstance in which the act is performed should the agent have in order to make his act voluntary? To this question, we must give the answer after analyzing the notion of circumstance.

According to Aristotle, circumstances consist of (1)

1 Cf. Strawson's contribution in Freedom and the Will, (ed. by D.F. Pears, London, MacMillan and Company Ltd., 1963), p. 61.

who the agent is, (2) what he is doing, (3) what thing or person is affected, and sometimes (4) the means he is using, (5) the result intended by his action and (6) the manner in which he acts. And a man who acts in ignorance of any one of them is considered as acting involuntarily.¹

The notion of circumstance is, as we have seen, very complicated; to know the given circumstances is to know many things in the world. It might be argued, as the skeptic does, that we, as human beings, cannot act voluntarily because we are unable to know completely even one item of the circumstances in which the act is performed and the criterion of knowing them is difficult to lay down. Of course, the remarks are in one sense true, but in another sense, false.

In order to act voluntarily, we are required to consider all alternative courses of action open to us and all things involved: what course of action we should choose in the given situation, how to act, what will happen if we did a certain act, ... etc., and we, perhaps, make a mistake in the course of deliberation, i.e. ignore one or some of them. But, ignorance of circumstances does not necessarily exempt the agent's act from blame; in day-to-day moral evaluation, we have a definite criterion to assess human action to be volun-

¹ Aristotle, op. cit., pp. 56-57.

tary or not even though when the agent performs the act, he is unaware of some items of the circumstances. For ignorances are of many kinds: some are due to carelessness, negligence; some are due to the complexity of the circumstances about which the agent cannot know within his knowledge or his power.

Usually, if we act without enough deliberation on the situation or without proper attention to the circumstances concerned, we will, if the act produces undesirable consequences, be condemned or blamed. But if we try our best to consider the things involved, we will be pardoned even though it has undesirable effects. "When a man must act ..." as Reid said, "he ought surely to use all the means in his power to be rightly informed. When he has done so, he may still be in error; but it is an invincible error, and cannot justly be imputed to him as a fault."¹ Of course, my statements may be very loose and the further difficulty comes up, that of how to judge whether the agent tried his best. To make my statements precise and to ease the difficulty, it seems to me there is one way, i.e. to study the actual use of moral terms in different contexts.

From the above discussion, it should be evident that knowledge of ourselves and knowledge of the world in which we live is very important to us as the moral agent. Consequently, under the morally indetermined or conflicted

¹ Essays on the Active Powers, V, in the Works, (Edinburgh 1863), vol. II, p. 647.

situation, it is a good move to accept advice, for instance, from Socrates rather than advice from a school boy; for the former has excellent knowledge to make a right moral judgment, but not the latter.

To know the circumstances in which the act is performed implies, as shown above, to know the consequences of the act. However, this remark is not clear owing to the meaning of "consequence" being ambiguous. In one sense, we cannot know the consequences of the act as we know the colour of the book-cover which is put in front of us; for before the act was performed, there were no consequences or effects of the act at all which we could perceive or assess. Only in another sense, we can know the consequences or effects of the act as we know that it will rain tomorrow; in other words, we know the possible consequences or effects of the act. Hence, it may be useful to distinguish actual consequences from possible consequences of the act. In terms of the distinction, it is, perhaps, possible to explicate the intention of the act as part or all possible consequences of the act, i.e. what we intend are the possible consequences of the act. To be true, when we engage in deliberation on whether to act in this way or another way, we are asked by ourselves the question, "Does it serve our purpose?" or, "Can it realize our intentions?" and we compare and weigh different possible consequences of the alternatives open to us; then we decide one course of

action which, according to our belief about it, is the best one, i.e. we think that its actual consequence will be what we intended. It is also true that what we thought is the case is not always actually the case, and on the contrary, what we decided is always shown to be the worst one, or the actual consequences of the act are not what we wish and if we choose otherwise, our intended object will be materialized. For example, X a person, intends another person Y, dead; there are many alternative courses of action: shooting him with a gun, poisoning him, knifing him, etc., which can realize X's intention. Finally, having considered relevant situations, he chooses to shoot him with a gun because of his thinking that this is the best act to cause Y's death. After X shot him, Y was wounded but still alive and in comparison with buying a knife, X spent more money to buy a gun.

By and large, the actual consequences of an act, as suggested above, are likely to classify as intended and/or unintended from the agent's point of view; if the consequences of the act are what the agent performs the act for, they are intended; otherwise, they are unintended. The latter category also can be divided into (a) the expected which the agent does not intend but knows to be the consequence of the act; and (b) the unexpected which the agent does not intend and does not know to be the consequence of the act. Let us consider an example to clear the point. Suppose I open the window in order

to get fresh air; after I open the window, some actual consequences have occurred: (1) fresh air came in, (2) the temperature in the room was lowered, (3) a cat jumped into the room through the window. According to the classification, (1) is my intended consequence, (2) unintended but expected, (3) unintended and unexpected.

If what we have said above is true, then, the theory that to judge a human act is good or bad must be in accordance with the intention of the act, is not incompatible with the theory that it is in accordance with the consequences of the act. Mr. Hare made a similar point in his work Reason and Freedom:

It is not possible to distinguish between a moral judgment made on the ground of the effects of an action, and one made on the ground of the character of the action itself; it is possible to distinguish only between different sorts of intended effects.¹

Although we have discussed the human act and its consequences in some detail, the distinction between them is not explored yet. It is not as obvious as it appears; on the contrary, it is pretty hard to demark one from the other. For example, L.H. Oswald shot J.F. Kennedy with a rifle.² Consider the following possible sayings of his act:

- (a) He tensed his forefinger.
- (b) He released the spring.
- (c) He fired a rifle.

1 R.M. Hare, Reason and Freedom, (Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 124.

2 I am supposing that Oswald is the man who shot J.F. Kennedy.

- (d) He shot a man.
- (e) He pulled the trigger of a rifle.
- (f) He assassinated Kennedy.
- (g) He made Johnson the President of the U.S.A..
- (h) He stopped all entertainment activities in
the U.S.A. on November 22, 1963.

Did Oswald do one act or eight acts? or one act with seven consequences? To these questions, we have no clearcut answer generally; only according to the circumstances in which the act is performed and the intention of the questioner, we could draw the demarcation between them. And there is not necessarily only one correct description of a given act, e.g. (a) - (f) are correct descriptions of Oswald's act. Furthermore, sometimes we have often called the description of the consequences of the act as the act itself.¹

Up to the present, I think I have briefly shown the nature of a voluntary act, but its relation to a moral act is still left untouched. All moral acts are voluntary acts; yet the reverse is not true; acting voluntarily does not imply acting morally unless the act has some effects direct or indirect, on other persons, In other words, voluntary acts performed in interpersonal circumstances are moral acts.

In daily life, we make a moral evaluation on the human act as well as on the agent; with reference to his

1 Cf. Eric D'Arcy, Op.cit., p. 13.

act or disposition to act in a moral situation, we appraise the man as good or bad; if a man never acts in a moral situation, we are unable to judge his moral character. The moral act, therefore, is the fundamental thing for moral evaluation. However, blaming or praising an act differs from evaluating the agent morally: on the basis of its actual consequences, the moral act is judged; on the basis of the expected including intended consequences of the act, the agent will be blamed or praised. For every man is responsible for the expected consequences of his act, i.e. the consequences of the act can be known within the agent's power at the moment of his action. Consequently, to say "John did it" or "I did it" is not only describing that John or I did it voluntarily but also ascribing moral (or legal) responsibility for the act to John or to me. In ordinary contexts, sentences of the form "He did it" are primarily used in an ascriptive sense.¹ Nevertheless, ascribing responsibility to a person presupposes the criterion of responsible action even though the criterion is not explicitly formulated but implicitly laid down in the paradigm case; otherwise, we cannot demark legitimate ascription from the illegitimate. Moreover, in some contexts, the sentence "John did it" may be primarily used in a descriptive sense such as an historian uses it to describe a voluntary act done by John in the past. In short, sentences of the form "He did it" may be primarily ascriptive or descriptive depending on the context in which they are used; and using them to

¹ Cf. H. K. A. Hart, "The Ascription of Responsibility and Right", Aristotelian Society Proceedings, (1949-50), p. 171.

ascribe responsibility implies the assertion that the act satisfies the criterion on the responsible act; i.e. describes it. But, on the other hand, using them to describe does not imply its ascriptive meaning, and in an ordinary context, their function is primarily ascriptive.

In any situation, when we act voluntarily or intentionally, we are, as we have said, doing it for a reason which is the result of our deliberation. It is impossible to consider, in practice, every random case in every occasion in which we have to act unless the situation is entirely foreign to us. As a matter of fact, to make up our mind what to do, how to act, we consider alternative courses of action in accordance with rules which we learned from other persons or from our own experiences. Similarly, we choose a course of action under the guidance of moral rules in a moral situation. A moral rule is a proposition which states with reason implicitly that a certain type of action is generally right or wrong, i.e. any action of that kind is right or wrong unless there is reason to be contrary. For example, "Killing is wrong" except in the case of self-defence, killing in war, or mercy-killing. In other words, the moral rule is not held in all moral circumstances; it can be over-ridden by another moral rule.

On the other hand, moral rule is not relevant to all moral circumstances: the rule "killing is wrong" is not relevant to a situation in which killing is not involved.¹

¹ M. G. Singer, Generalization in Ethics, (N.Y., Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1961), p. 99.

It appears that moral rules are well established and prevail in society, such as "Thou shalt not commit adultery" and "Lying is wrong"; but they are not necessarily so. Moral rule can be a rule which was established at the moment of the agent's acting. For, to choose an act in a given circumstance is to adopt a rule that the other act similar to the act chosen should be done in similar circumstances. "Suppose that a man has to choose between two alternative actions x and y ... if he decides that x ought to be done, he commits himself, because of the universalizability of 'ought', to the view that in circumstances of this kind an act like x ought to be done rather than one like y."¹ Nevertheless, this does not imply that reasonable acts are equally good acts or all moral rules are equally valid; it is possible and always the case that we act on the bad reason or invalid moral rule. About this, I will say more in Chapter 4.

Moreover, moral rule differs from laws and regulations; the latter are laid down by authority and administered by special organs such as policemen and judges, but the former is not. Every one as a moral agent is, metaphorically speaking, legislator and judge of his own moral rule and moral principle; as far as morality is concerned, everyone has to make his own decision of moral rule and moral principle; other persons cannot make them for him unless he has first decided to take or obey other persons' orders.²

1 R.M. Hare, Op.cit., pp. 130 - 131.

2 R.M. Hare, The Language of Morals, (Oxford University Press, 1952), p. 70.

By and large, a moral rule is not formulated in a rigid and well-ordered way, rather in a way which is highly vague and capable of reinterpretation; on the other hand, moral situations in which we live are very complicated to the extent that every case can be subsumed under some other rule. Consequently, the conflict between moral rules applied to a concrete case often happens. For example, suppose that X is asked a question about a fact by Y and that X knows the answer and can (practically) give the answer, and suppose further that X has promised Z not to tell the truth about the fact; in this case X either tells the truth or keeps the promise, but cannot do both. To get rid of the conflict, X must refer or appeal to a moral principle on which moral rules are founded.

Moral principle is a fundamental principle of morality which holds in all circumstances, allows no exception and is relevant to every moral circumstance in which moral questions arise.¹ When the moral rules conflict with each other in a given circumstance, or when we doubt the right or wrong, or validity of moral rules, moral principle comes in as the final judge of these problems.

Moral principle as a fundamental principle of morality is not susceptible to proof; as Mill clearly told us:

"To be incapable of proof by reasoning is common to all first principles; to the first premises of our knowledge as well as to those of our conduct. 2

1 M. G. Singer, Op.cit., pp. 96 - 133.

2 J.S. Mill, Utilitarianism, in Essential Works of J. S. Mill, (Bantam Edition), p. 220.

For, it does not follow from any higher principle, rather, from it moral rules are derived; and to say a fundamental principle can be proved is logically absurd, i.e. to assert that a fundamental principle is not fundamental. A moral principle, although it cannot be proved, is not arbitrarily decided in the way in which we decide to drink coffee or tea. On the contrary, it is psychologically bound; "What sort of principles a man adopts will, in the end, depend on his vision of the good life, his conception of the sort of world that he desires, so far as it rests with him, to create."¹

According to Mr. Singer, there are many moral principles such as (1) the generalization argument, (2) the generalization principle, (3) the principle of consequences (if the consequences of doing x are generally desirable, then, it is one's duty to do x), (4) the principle of suffering (it is always wrong to cause unnecessary suffering), and (5) the principle of justification.² Of these, I want to argue that some are logical principles rather than moral principles. Being a principle by which moral rules are judged to be right or wrong, by which we distinguish moral matters from the immoral, a moral principle is different from a logical principle of moral words by which we distinguish moral matters from the non-moral.

1 P. H. Nowell-Smith, Op.cit., p. 313.

2 G. M. Singer, Op.cit., p. 104.

To clear my point, let me consider the generalization principle: "Anyone who judges an action to be right for himself implicitly judges it to be right for anyone else whose nature and circumstances do not differ from his own in certain important respects (what is, for any similar person in similar circumstances)."¹ It is, as Mr. Monro terms it,² the principle of consistency which also holds in other discourses such as scientific discourse and aesthetic discourse. If we say it is a moral principle we are committed to say that it is also an aesthetic principle; else, we commit logical inconsistency, i.e. violate the generalization principle.

Obviously, the above argument also holds good for the principle of justification, for it is also a logical principle which is presupposed in another kind of reasoning. In morals, to say the act A is right is implicitly asserting that every act B similar to A in relevant respects is right, otherwise the assertion that B is not right must be justified. We also can find it from science: to say the object A is red is implicitly asserting that every object B similar to A in relevant respects is red; otherwise, the assertion that B is not red must be justified, e.g. point out B is pink.

If my argument is sound, then two of them, (2) and (5) are logical principles. The distinction between moral principle and logical principle will be discussed in the next chapter.

1 Op. cit., p. 7.

2 D.H. Monro, "Impartiality and Consistency", Philosophy, Vol. XXX V, (April and July 1961), p. 161.

2.2. Disagreement in Morals

In the last section I have shown, though briefly, that morality has three orders and that there are some logical relations among them. Now I shall attempt to explore the logical structure of disagreements in morals with the help of this "order-distinction" in morality and three kinds of disagreements, i.e. disagreement in belief, in attitude and in action.

In regard to their object, disagreements in morals can be of the following three types:

- (1) Disagreement on moral acts.
- (2) Disagreement on moral rules.
- (3) Disagreement on moral principles.

To begin with, I shall examine (1). A moral act is a complex thing which, as we have seen, consists of bodily movement, intention of the act, as well as the circumstances in which the act is done; its consequences determine its character. To know what a moral act really is implies knowledge of all these things; and the ways we come to know them are not as simple as the way in which we come to know something by direct observation. Without doubt, we can observe the overt action of another person, but not his intention about which we can, from his behaviour, know only by analogical inference. Just as we can justifiably infer from his frown that he is feeling uneasy, so by observing his overt actions in certain circumstances we can infer, by all rules of analogy, that he

has a certain kind of intention. Furthermore, the connection between the frown and the uneasy feeling is a causal one; yet the relation between a person's overt action and his intention is not as regular as that. So, to know correctly the intention of another person's act in a given circumstance, we need knowledge of the agent as well as the circumstances. The more knowledge we have of the agent, the greater the probability of a correct prediction of the agent's intention we get.

Roughly speaking, people are different in life experiences about other persons and in their abilities to predict another's intention. They often have, therefore, different beliefs about a moral act in a given circumstance. If they have incompatible beliefs about it, they disagree with each other about it in belief. Moral disagreements are always due to the disputants' disagreement in belief about the moral act although they hold the same moral point of view. For example, suppose, in wartime, W, X, Y, Z belong to one army unit; one day, W shoots X in a neutral area. Y disagrees with Z on W's act: Y says "It is morally wrong", Z denies it. Suppose further, they both agree that W shot X; but Y thinks that W murdered X, because he believes that W knew X had a mission to spy on their enemies' activities and would be back at the time when he was shot. Further, Y knows that X had killed W's brother by accident at the beginning of the war and suspects that W wished to revenge his brother

by doing in X. On the other hand, Z does not know that story, but believes that W supposed X to be an enemy agent when he shot. In this case, though Y, and Z hold to the same moral rules that "revenge is wrong" and "killing enemy soldiers in war is right", they have incompatible beliefs about W's intention to shoot X, which causes them to have incompatible moral judgments.

Some other types of moral disagreement are not due to the disputants' incompatible beliefs about the intention of the act, but rather, about its consequences. Examples of this kind are easily to be found in daily life. An act that a lawyer repeatedly asks the witness about her experiences with her lover who was killed by his client, might be judged to be morally right by a law student, but morally wrong by a widow. In this case, suppose they hold the same moral point of view; the moral disagreement between them emerges owing to the fact that their beliefs on the consequences of the lawyer's act are incompatible, i.e. the law student has neither an idea of, nor experience of the suffering of the witness caused by the lawyer's act in that circumstance, but the widow knows what the feeling of the witness in the situation would be.

Besides, it always happens that when two persons dispute about the nature of an act: one holds that it is voluntary, the other denies it; yet the dispute is not a moral disagreement at all. They disagree with each other on empirical or logical matters. However, in ordinary speech,

this kind of disagreement is expressed often in an obscure form which misleads us into thinking that it is a moral disagreement. For example, X says "an act, A, is morally wrong"; Y says "no, it is not." Y's saying is ambiguous; in one sense, its meaning is that A is morally neutral, neither right nor wrong. If Y's saying is taken in this sense, it is not, then, incompatible with what X said; for its truth does not render X's saying to be false but meaningless. In the other sense, its meaning is that A is morally wrong. Only in this sense does Y disagree with X on moral matters.

What I have brought out above is that some moral disagreements on moral acts are caused by disagreement in beliefs about them. But this means neither that disagreement in belief about an act necessarily implies moral disagreement about it, nor that agreement in belief about an act necessarily implies moral agreement on it. For two persons, having incompatible beliefs of the intention of an act, might have the same moral judgment on it provided that they make their moral judgment on a moral act regardless of its intention but only in accordance with actual consequences of it about which they have the same belief. Again two persons agreeing on what a moral act really is, might disagree in moral judgment on it if their criteria of moral judgment are entirely different from each other: e.g. one according to its intention, the other according to the actual consequences.

It should be clear that whether two persons' disagreement in belief about a moral act affects their moral judgments on it or not, depends on their moral point of view.

Let us consider the relations between them.

(i) If two persons hold the same moral rules but disagree in belief about an act and its consequences, they, then, identify it as a different kind of act and categorize it according to different rules. The results may fall in two sets:

(1) The act was identified by them to be a special case of different moral rules with the effect that it belongs to opposing categories. For example, one categorizes the act of shooting a man as killing an enemy and as a special case of the moral rule "killing an enemy is right"; the other categorizes it as murdering a man and as the case of the moral rule, "murdering a man is wrong." Consequently, the act of shooting a man belongs to opposing categories: right and wrong.

(2) The act was identified by them to be a special case of different rules to the effect that it belongs to the same category. For example, one categorizes the act of telling something to another person as telling a lie and as a special case of: "telling a lie is wrong"; the other categorizes it as breaking a promise and as a case of: "breaking a promise is wrong." They both judge to be wrong in accordance with different moral rules. In

the same manner, they may judge another act as right. From the above analysis, it is obvious that only in (i) (1), moral disagreement occurs, and the main dispute of this type of moral disagreement is the dispute about what the act really is. When two disputants are fully informed and agreeing what kind of act the individual act is, the moral disagreement will be logically settled, otherwise, one of them must be logically inconsistent.

In daily life, many moral disagreements, I am convinced, are of this type. We, as normal persons, by and large, hold the same moral rules, yet often identify the same type of acts differently. On the one hand, any act falls under an indefinite number of classes and can be described in many ways; on the other hand, we differ in our ability to distinguish relevant from irrelevant features of circumstances in which the act is done and to assess the consequences of it.

(ii) If two persons disagree with each other in belief of an act and its consequences, and their moral rules are incompatible with each other, they, then, identify the act as being a different kind and a case of different rules. The possibilities will be the same as (i), i.e. the act belongs to the opposing or the same category. Only in the former possibility can moral disagreement occur; yet it differs from the type of moral disagreement expressed in (i), (1) in the sense that it cannot be logically settled when two disputants have the same beliefs of the act and of its consequences. Their discussion about it

and its consequences, if any, can change their disagreement in belief of them, but even when they agree on what kind of act it is, they still disagree in their moral judgment about it, as their moral rules which apply to it are in conflict. For example, suppose two persons X, Y, disagree in belief about an act: a drug was injected into a sick person's body which caused him to die. X believes that it is murder; Y believes that it is mercy-killing. X and Y also disagree in their moral judgments about it. Suppose further, that X holds that mercy-killing is wrong, Y, that mercy-killing is right. After a long discussion between them, X is convinced that it is mercy-killing, yet the moral disagreement remains. Certainly, it is for different reasons, i.e. they hold conflicting moral rules.

Unless we are inconsistent or hypocrites, our attitude toward an act must be consistent with our moral judgment about it: judging it right with pro attitude, wrong with con attitude. So if two persons disagree in moral judgment about an act, they must disagree in attitude to it and in the circumstance its action is required, they also should act differently.

In ordinary speech, to say an act is right is to make an objective claim; when our moral judgment is incompatible with another's, we are prepared to defend it with reason and challenge our opponent's. By the same token, if two

persons have the same belief of an act but incompatible moral judgments about it, they also must be prepared to argue to determine which is really right. But in this case, they will not dispute the nature of the act, but rather will dispute the rightness or validity of their moral rules.

Moral rules are, as we have shown, derived from one or more moral principles. If two persons disagree as to the validity of moral rules, but adhere to the same moral principles, their dispute can be logically settled when they have the same belief of them. Strictly speaking, their disagreement on the validity of their moral rules is caused by their disagreement in their beliefs of the nature of them. For example, suppose X and Y disagree on the moral propriety of the statement that "birth-control is right", and both accept the principle of utility as the principle of moral evaluation. When they have the same belief of the consequences of the practice of birth-control, they must have the same judgment about it. On the other hand, if they disagree on the validity of it and also have different moral principles, the information of the nature of the rule is no use, in other words, their disagreement is not disagreement in belief but is one of another kind. The way to resolve it, in my opinion, is to discuss their moral principles and their ideal of life. Naturally, disagreement about moral principles occurs. However, two persons holding different moral

principles do not necessarily have an entirely different set of moral rules; "killing is wrong", for instance, might be derived from the principle of utility and the will of God.

The point about the attitude and action of the disputants in disagreement on moral acts is also true in disagreement on moral rules. To judge that a moral rule is right or valid implies the speaker's pro attitude and conformed action to it, i.e. act according to what the rule requires in the relevant circumstances; if two persons disagree in moral judgment on a moral rule, they also disagree in attitude and action to it. From this, we may say that two persons disagree in action in moral circumstances is a prima facie reason for asserting that they hold different moral rules.

3. THE LOGIC OF MORAL DISCOURSE

3.1 Prescriptive Meaning of Moral Words

In the above two chapters, I have shown what is the logical structure of disagreement in general and moral disagreement in particular, yet, the problem of how moral disagreement might be settled is still left untouched. Now, I am going to deal with it in the following three chapters. Before analyzing moral arguments, it is necessary to reveal the logic of moral discourse.

Morality, as a social institution, has a distinctive function: to harmonize the desires and actions of members of a society, or, to put it in Professor Baier's words, "to yield reasons which overrule the reasons of self-interest in those cases where everyone's following self-interest would be harmful to everyone."¹ In order to live together peacefully, people have to, one way or the other, establish a set of rules, or a morality, which standardizes their acts in moral situations; and moral rules must be formulatable in words by which they can be promulgated, reinforced, and taught to the members of the society. For this purpose, there is a moral discourse or moral language in our ordinary language.

It is commonly thought that moral language can be identified by its physical form, for moral utterances consist in a special kind of words which are usually called

1 The Moral Point of View, p. 309.

"moral words". Indeed, when someone says to us, "You ought to donate some money to the Retarded Children's Fund", or "Helping persons in need is good", we are readily inclined to suppose that he is using moral language to advise us to act in certain ways. However, a sentence containing a moral word, e.g. "ought", "right", "good" and so forth, is not a conclusive reason for saying that the term is used in its typical moral sense. "The only way to settle conclusively what any part of a language means is to discover the circumstances, both linguistic and non-linguistic, in which the speakers of the language are prepared to use it",¹ in other words, the question whether a moral word is being used in a moral sense or not would be identical to the question whether or not the speaker is using it to express moral instruction, for the same word-type may, in different contexts of the same type of context, be used in different senses. Let me quote from Mr. Hare's illuminating analysis of the different senses of "ought" in a moral context to illustrate the point. He says,

"...there is a conscious inverted-commas use of value-words in which, for example, 'I ought to do X' becomes roughly equivalent to 'X is required in order to conform to a standard which people in general accept'. But it is also possible to use the word "ought" and other value-words, as it were, unconsciously in inverted-commas; for the standard which people in general accept may also be the standard which one has been brought up to accept oneself, and therefore not only does one refer to this standard by saying 'I ought to do X', but one has feelings of obligation to conform to the standard.²

1 J. Bennett, "On Being Forced to a Conclusion", Aristotelian Society Supplementary, vol. XXXV, (1961) p. 115.

2 The Language of Morals, p. 167.

If, from the sentence which includes a moral word, we cannot say that the speaker is using it as a moral utterance, by what criterion, then, can we say that the speaker is using it as a moral utterance, or in a moral sense? The answer to this question is that a sentence containing a moral word is neither a moral utterance nor an expression of a moral judgment unless it is used for prescribing actions either to oneself or to others. This point, it seems to me, follows from the very nature of morality and the primary function of moral language. Accordingly, when we use the sentence "Helping persons in need is good" in a moral sense, we are not to be taken as referring to the act or describing it, but rather as prescribing or saying that one should do that kind of act in that type of circumstance. It is logically absurd to use moral utterances without prescribing.

In ordinary speech, the moral judgment "X is right" implies "X ought to be done"; my saying "X is right" implies "I ought to do X" or "Let me do X" in the circumstances where action is required. And it implies, furthermore, "Everyone similarly situated ought to do X". If we tell someone "You ought to do X", and when our circumstances are similar to his in relevant respects, but yet we do not do X, we are acting in a self-contradictory way. As Mr. P. H. Nowell-Smith points out,¹ the moral judgement "I ought to do X" is different from the judgement "You

1 Ethics, pp. 185-186.

ought to do X"; the former expresses a decision, yet the latter advice or an injunction. However, when I say "You ought to do X" to someone, I commit myself at the same time to the decision that if I were in his position, I ought to do X. Similarly, when I say "I ought to do X", I also commit myself to prescribe this course of action to all persons similarly situated. It is clear that, in saying this, I am asserting that moral prescriptions are universal prescriptions: which apply to a certain type of person in a certain type of occasion rather than directly to an individual and a particular occasion. This is because the giving of a moral prescription is based on a moral rule, or reason, which is universalizable.

Moral prescriptions or prescriptions of any other kind, do not deal in the past; they guide actions which have not yet been done; they direct someone to do certain acts in the future. Though we often use the sentence, "Do it again", its literal meaning would be "Do the same kind of act again". To do an individual act twice is logically impossible and it is senseless to prescribe someone to do the logically impossible.

On the other hand, giving moral prescription is not giving command or order: if the person to whom we give moral advice does not accept our prescription, he is at liberty to act in accordance with his own choice without being (criminally) disobedient. In other words, it does not determine, even partially, the act of the person addressed; he has to decide to do or not.¹ Furthermore,

1 Cf. R.M. Hare, "Freedom of the Will", Aristotelian Society Supplementary, vol. XXV, (1951), pp. 161-178

moral prescription is not relevant to every situation, but only to those in which the person addressed has to answer the practical question, "What shall I do?" It is pointless to advise someone to do anything in a situation in which he is not required to act. So, when we say that moral judgment has prescriptive meaning, we mean by it that it prescribes a course of action to someone in a practical situation. A priest, in a Sunday sermon, exhorts his listeners by the moral remarks "Everyone ought to love his enemy"; he does not urge them to love their enemies immediately, but rather, advises them that if they have enemies, they ought to love them. To a listener who has no enemy, his moral remark will be senseless and irrelevant just as the remark to a bachelor "You ought to love your wife", makes no sense. It is important to make a distinction between directly prescribing and indirectly prescribing. When we tell a person who faces the practical question, "What is the best thing to do?" in the circumstances where he is required to act, to do something with moral utterance, "You ought to do X", or "X is right", we are directly prescribing him. On the other hand, we indirectly prescribe a course of action to an individual if we tell him, "John's act X, is wrong" or "I ought not to do X" when he is not in the position to act. For our sayings imply that if you are in the same position as John's or mine, you ought not to do X or any act similar to X. In short, indirectly prescribing is telling someone to do a certain act in the future when he will have the

choice of doing it. To be true, indirectly prescribing depends on the memory of the person addressed or on the other means that can make him bear the moral judgment in mind when he has to act; otherwise, the moral judgment will lose its prescriptive force. It is clear that moral education would be of this type of prescribing, i.e. indirect moral prescription.

If what we have said above is correct, then the view that "it is legitimate to criticize the character of Napoleon or Hamlet or express an opinion concerning the propriety of some action they performed or are supposed to have performed, without wishing to prescribe in any way to living people"¹ is not true. The criticism about Napoleon's or Hamlet's act is implicitly criticized on any human being's act which is similar to their act in relevant respects, and in effect it is, though not directly, to indirectly prescribe, or give, moral instruction, unless it is explicitly declared that the criticism is not a moral criticism. As a matter of fact, historians and novelists almost always give moral prescription through their moral evaluation of acts or the character of historical or fictitious figures in their writings, and we can always ascribe moral responsibility to them for the moral views expressed in their works. It is easy to find many novels or historical books which are prohibited for the reason that they may demoralize the morality of their

1 E. Gilman, "The Distinctive Purpose of Moral Judgments", Mind Vol. LXI, (July 1952), p. 316.

readers. Even historians or novelists use moral words in the inverted-comma way in their writing, the prescribing force of their judgment on action or character may occur; this is partly because their readers might not know their purpose in using the moral word and partly because in ordinary speech, moral instructions are given in this way.

Moreover, to prescribe a certain course of action to someone presupposes that he can do the act prescribed; this is the logical principle "ought implies can" which governs our moral prescription and moral evaluation. The word, "can", or "could", is used in ordinary speech in an unclear way. It may be used to express logical possibility. For example, the statement "John can lift himself" does not assert that John has strength to lift himself but expresses that it is not (logically) self-contradictory to say "John can lift himself". We can logically do everything except those things designated by a logically self-contradictory predicate; we cannot logically lift something without lifting or drawing a square-circle; we can in this sense of "can" lift ten thousand pounds at one time, or draw a Platonic ideal circle. Without doubt, "ought" does not imply "can" in this sense. For if it did, many acts which we usually excuse would be blamed, and many acts which we recognize to be senseless to guide other persons to do could be comprehensibly prescribed.

On the other hand, "can" may be used to express the physical possible, i.e. the possibility does not conflict

with a law of nature: "John can lift ten thousand pounds at one time" is an example of this type of statement. But it does not imply that John has the ability to do it in certain circumstances. If a man is about to be crushed by a ten thousand pound weight, it would be pointless to urge John to lift it up to save the man's life though John holds a moral rule "Saving one's life is right". For this reason, we are entitled to say that "ought" does not imply "can" in this sense of "can".

The third sense of "can" expresses technical possibility. In this sense, to say that a person can do X is to say that he can technically do X, or that it is not technically impossible for him to do X, or it is within his power to do X. This is, I am convinced, the true sense of "can" in the principle "ought implies can".

The sense of 'imply' in which "ought implies can" is not logical entailment, but is a weaker relation like 'presupposition', i.e. unless the person has the ability to do X, the question whether he ought to do X or not, does not arise. Consequently, we cannot blame a person morally when we know he was unable to do X; by the same token, it is senseless to prescribe a person to do Y unless we are sure that it is within his power to do Y. If we know that John had burned that book which he borrowed from the Public Library, it is pointless for us to say to him, "You ought to return the book to the Public Library" though it would make sense to say, "You ought to repay it".

Some philosophers, known as determinists, hold the view that everything that has happened had a cause that preceded it, so nothing ever could have happened except what did happen. If this view is true, it seems to follow that it does not make sense to say "John could have done Y instead of X" and "John ought to have done Y instead of X". Consequently, moral judgment about past acts is senseless. As a matter of fact, it is quite legitimate, in ordinary speech, to say "John could have done Y instead of X"; and the saying is not necessarily incompatible with the determinist's view. The remark "John could have done Y instead of X" is a short way of saying "John could have done Y instead of X if he had so chosen"¹; in other words, it is a hypothetical statement. It should be evident that a hypothetical statement does not express a belief in a third alternative alongside two categorical statements, e.g. "John did X" or "John did not do X"; so the statement "John could have done Y instead of X" does not exclude two later statements in the way that they exclude each other.² It can be true without implying the falsehood of each of them.

In general, the individual's ability to do something is reflected in ordinary language. Although a past act is logically impossible to recur, it is easy to draw the distinction between undone acts that we could have done and undone acts that we could not have done. By inductive

1 G.E. Moore, *Ethics*, p. 277., p. 367.

2 P.H. Nowell-Smith, op. cit., p. 274.

methods, we can know what we could have done and what we could not have done; and statements "We could have done Y instead of X" or "We could not have done Y instead of X" can be verified. As Professor S. Hampshire points out:

'He could have done X if he had tried' is a counter-factual conditional statement; as such it is generally established as true or as false, or as probably true or as probably false, by individual argument via a whole set of general propositions; for an observer the argument will proceed by moral general propositions about the agent's behaviors and about the behavior of similar people in similar circumstances. ¹

By the same method, we also can say that a person can do, or has ability to do, a certain act in the future; and this kind of statement can be directly verified.

It is clear that, for the reason that the individual's ability to do something can be known, moral evaluation of past or future acts and moral prescription are possible. It is equally clear that the principle "Ought implies can" is the evidence for the view that moral discourse has prescriptive meaning.

3.2. Descriptive Meaning of Moral Words

In the latter section, I have argued that moral words have prescriptive meaning; to say this, however, does not imply that it is the sole meaning of them. It is legitimate to say that in addition to their prescriptive meaning, moral words also have another kind of meaning; and they do, in fact, have descriptive meaning.

1 "Freedom of the Will", Aristotelian Society Supplementary, Vol. XX V, (1951) pp. 169 - 170.

Moral prescription, as we have shown before, is made for a reason that is about the action; or put in another way, moral prescription implies evaluation of the act prescribed such that it has certain characteristics, or satisfies certain criteria. Being a simple or complex statement about fact, the set of criteria of a moral word is its descriptive meaning.

It may be said that moral words which have prescriptive and descriptive meaning are ambiguous. This is mistaken. For the meaning of a word is not indivisible; it can have many aspects.¹ Accordingly, descriptive and prescriptive meaning are two aspects of the meaning of the moral word.

The logical relation between two aspects of the meaning of a moral word is not a mutual implication. The descriptive meaning of moral words does not, by itself, entail prescriptive meaning; otherwise, the view will commit the naturalistic fallacy. But, on the other hand, prescriptive meaning of a moral word presupposes descriptive meaning, though not special content of it; in order to prescribe someone to do something, we must inform him what we prescribe him to do. When we tell a person, "John is a good man", even he knows who John is or the description of John; in order to follow the advice or to accept the moral prescription, it is required for him to know by what criteria in virtue of which a man is to be called "good", or

1 Cf. S. Toulmin, The Use of Argument, (Paperback ed., Cambridge University Press, 1964), P. 35.

what the characteristics are that make a man a "good" one. If he does not know the descriptive meaning or the criteria of 'good', he cannot do anything, for he does not know what kind of man he is recommended to imitate. Even if we directly point out John to him, he still would be unable to sort out which characteristics of John should be imitated, because moral goodness is not based on John's appearance which can be directly observed.

Indeed, there is a difference between knowing John and his history, and not knowing who John is when he hears "John is a good man" without knowing the descriptive meaning of 'good'. In the former case, he could, if he is patient enough, choose some respects of John to imitate in turn, until we admit that what he imitates satisfies the criteria of "good man". Yet this process cannot be used in the latter case: he does not even know what characteristics John has, consequently he has nothing to imitate. By the same token, if we tell someone that "X is right" and he does not know the descriptive meaning of 'right', he might do X in all situations if he knows the denotation of "X" or he can do nothing. It is clear that to say "John is a good man" is not only a prescriptive utterance aimed at getting individuals to imitate John's good character, but also makes an objective claim, namely, that John has certain characteristics which make him a good man.

The descriptive meaning of a moral word is similar to the descriptive meaning of a word like "red". But one

point we should notice is that a man who accepts the descriptive meaning or the set of criteria of "good man" is "likely to live, not merely talk, differently from one who does not. Our descriptive meaning-rule has thus turned into a synthetic moral principle."¹

Owing to their descriptive meaning, moral words can be used like descriptive words, for conveying information of purely factual character. If we tell someone "John is a good man" and he does not know who John is but knows our criteria of "good man" and then he undoubtedly gets information from our remarks about what sort of man John is. Moreover, if he subsequently becomes acquainted with John, and discovers that John behaves exactly as we said, he will verify our remarks; on the contrary, if he finds that John has murdered a man and treats his family very cruelly, he will falsify what we said. His reason for verifying or falsifying our remarks is the same as his reason for verifying or falsifying the statement "John is six feet tall"; in other words, the moral judgment "John is a good man" and the empirical statement "John is six feet tall" are verified or falsified by facts. Moral words, then, can be taught in the same way descriptive words are. Suppose we tell a man who does not know the criteria of "good man" that "John is a good man", he certainly cannot get any information from the statement. But if we present him with enough instances of "good man", e.g. tell him "John is a good man", "Smith is a good man" ... etc., he will

1 R. M. Hare, Freedom and Reason, p. 23.

eventually know what kind of man is a good man if he pays careful attention to the instances after hearing our sayings. We can, through the same process, teach a child to learn the meaning of the word "red". It must be pointed out that there is an important difference between learning the set of criteria of a moral word and learning the meaning of a descriptive word. In the former case, what the man learned is the set of criteria of our "good man" which may not be the set of criteria of his "good man". But in the latter case, what the child learned is the meaning of "red".

It is commonly known that the meaning of human language is "open textured"; consequently the descriptive meaning of moral words also shares this general feature. As a matter of fact, we learn the meaning of descriptive words ostensibly; a process in which the object the word denotes and the word are connected, and the connection between them which is not explicitly shown, must be guessed by us. Moreover, the object denoted by the word is not the meaning (connotation) of the word; in order to know it, we have to exercise our intelligence to observe and to compare the objects denoted by the word on many occasions. By and large, we suppose that the word means (connotes) the common characteristics of the objects, yet in fact, among the objects what we can perceive is the similarities or resemblances between two of them; which similarity and in what degree to be required are uncertain. Naturally, the borderline case occurs and we have to make a decision to apply

the word to it or not. For example, when we learn the word 'red' we are directed to observe the ripe tomato, mail-box, brick, blood, etc.. However, we do not see a property among them, but perceive the similarity between ripe tomato and mail-box, or brick and blood; and it always happens that similarity between the first two objects is different from that between the second two in some degree; so the meaning (connotation) of 'red' is not precise. When we see an object whose colour is between orange and red, we have to decide that it is a red object or an orange one. The same kind of uncertainty might be found in our learning the descriptive meaning of moral words. Of course, the meaning of words is not taught by one example; but no matter how many examples are used, there still is a vague area which cannot be put beyond the possibility of doubt. Even if we use language to define a word, the resulting definition will inevitably be vague, for the language we use to define the term is inexact. Owing to the open-texture character of the descriptive meaning of a moral word, moral disagreements about borderline cases always occur: one disputant identifies it as the special instance of one rule, the other as a case falling under the opposite rule. Even about more definite cases, we may disagree. "Particular fact-situations do not await us already marked-off from each other and labelled as instances of the general rule, the application of which is in question; nor can the rule itself step forward to claim its own instance";¹ one and the same case can be easily identified in opposite ways.

1 H.L.A. Hart, The Concept of Law, (Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 123.

In general, the descriptive meaning of a moral word is more complicated than that of the simple predicate, say, "red". It seems to follow that the former is more vague or loose than that of the latter. This is not the case at all. They may be vague or exact according to how rigidly the criteria have been laid down by custom or convention; it is at least logically possible to define both with the same precision.

If we say "X is red" we are committed to say that anything which is like it in the relevant respects would likewise be red; the relevant respects are those which entitle us to call X "red", or are the defining characteristics of the word "red", i.e. redness. In other words, the remark "X is red" implies "X has the characteristic redness"; if anything has the characteristic of redness, it logically follows that it is red. In virtue of the descriptive meaning of the words, descriptive judgment can be universalizable. Moral words, as we have shown, also have descriptive meaning, therefore, moral judgment also can be universalizable.¹ We make moral judgments about acts or an individual's character in accordance with the descriptive meaning of moral words; to judge an act right or a man good is, only in one sense, to assert that the act conforms to the criteria of right or has right-making characteristics, or that the man conforms to the criteria of good man or has good-making characteristics. In other words, an act is right because it has right-making characteristics; as any act, other things being equal, having right-making

¹ Cf. R.M. Hare, Op. cit., pp. 7-29.

characteristics will be right regardless of who did it, or where or when it was done. By the same token, a man is good because he has good-making characteristics of his kind; so any man, other things being equal, having those characteristics will be good regardless of who he is, or where or when he lives. On the other hand, when I say "I ought to do X now in situation A", I implicitly say "I ought to do X in the future at any place where situation A will occur and I ought to have done X in the past at any place where situation A occurred"; furthermore, "All persons similarly situated ought to do X at any time or in any place where situation A occurs." Conversely, if I say "John ought to do Y in situation B now", I implicitly say "he ought to do Y at any time in any place in situation B" and "anybody like John ought to do Y at any time in any place in situation B." And as an "ought-judgment" presupposes a "right-judgment", I ought to do X in situation A owing to the fact that X is right in situation A. It follows that in one sense, universalizability of moral judgment implies reversibility between the agent and recipient of an act, since, according to the descriptive meaning of moral rule, to be an agent or a recipient is determined by a set of conditions, everybody can be either of them provided that he meets the given conditions. For example, John, as a police-officer ought to or is obliged to arrest Smith who stole a pair of shoes from a department store; on another occasion, Smith, on duty as a police-officer ought to or is obliged to arrest John who murdered a man. This kind of reversibility is

logical. In some cases, the agent-recipient position of an act actually cannot be reversible, though it logically can be. The moral rule "Parents ought to feed their children" is applicable to anybody who has a child or who is the son of someone: if X is the father of Y, X ought to feed Y; conversely, if Y is the father of X, Y ought to feed X. But if X is the father of Y, X cannot be the son of Y; so their stations cannot be conversely changed and the agent and recipient position in this case is irreversible.

Let us consider another example, suppose X says "I ought to hurt Y", the third person Z asks X, "Why ought you to hurt Y?" X replies "Because it gives me pleasure and every act which makes me pleasure is right." Z asks again, "Do you think everything that gives someone pleasure is right?" X replies, "No, only those which give me pleasure." Z asks one final question, "If you derive pleasure from Y hurting you, ought Y to hurt you?" X replies "Yes". In this example, X's reason for hurting Y is universalizable, and also consequently, logically reversible. But it is obvious that X's act of hurting Y is not reversible in the sense that the act of giving a gift can be reversible, i.e. the agent who gives a gift to the recipient is willing to be the recipient. These two senses of "reversible" are different from each other in their nature: the former is logical, but the latter may be called moral. If a man accepts "John as a police-officer ought to arrest Smith who stole a pair of shoes from a department store" must

(logically) accept "Smith on duty as a police-officer ought to arrest John who murdered a man"; for the reversibility of John's and Smith's position is derived from the rule "Police-officers ought to arrest criminals", i.e. two cases are special instances of the rule. A man who accepts the rule cannot accept one but refuse the other without being logically inconsistent. Nevertheless, a man who commits a logical inconsistency is not morally wrong. On the other hand, if the agent-recipient position of the act cannot be reversible in the second sense, the act may be morally wrong for it may violate the Golden-Rule: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." Certainly, the Golden-Rule, as Mr. Hare points out, can be made analytically true by suitable interpretation according to the universalist's thesis, i.e. it becomes a logical principle.¹ But if it is a logical principle, it cannot, at the same time, be a moral principle. As we know, logical principles are the principles that guide us in making consistent judgments, moral or factual; they can only be contravened, breached, violated by molecular judgments; by their very nature they differ from moral rules or principles which govern our conduct. It is impossible for human conduct to violate logical principles; by the same token, moral judgments cannot be morally right or wrong though the act of uttering the judgment might be. From this it should be clear also that the principle of impartiality, a moral principle, is different from the principle of universalizability which is a logical principle.

¹ Ibid., p. 34

In descriptive discourse, the truth or falsity of a statement is by and large, universally accepted. Some people might think that the universal acceptance of descriptive statements is logically derived from the universalizability of descriptive words. If so, owing to the universalizability of moral words, moral judgments or moral principles would logically be universally accepted; yet, in fact, moral judgments or moral principles are not universally accepted; therefore, moral judgments or moral principles cannot be universalizable. The reasoning of the argument is sound, but unfortunately the conclusion is not true for its premise is false, namely the universal acceptance of descriptive statements is not logically implied by its universalizable character; but rather, by the universal acceptance of the criteria of truth. And moral words have not only descriptive meaning like purely descriptive words, but also prescriptive meaning. Although another person might accept what we assert in a moral judgment, he might legitimately refuse our moral judgment without inconsistency if he does not accept our moral principle i.e. does not accept the descriptive meaning of moral words.

Morality requires that we universalize the principle on which we act and judge; not that the principles be in fact universally accepted. Universalization is perfectly consistent with a diversity of actual moral principles. One man has his set of moral principles which he universalizes, another has another set which he universalizes."¹

As we have said before, any word which has descriptive meaning is implicitly universalizable owing to the fact that

1 B. Mayo, Ethics and the Moral Life, (London, MacMillan and Company Ltd., 1958), p. 64.

its descriptive meaning is universalizable. And it is a fact that the content of descriptive meaning of any word may be very simple to the extent that it has only one characteristic, or a very complicated one which must be formulated in a long list of predicates and logical terms. The following may be raised: Does the simplicity or the complexity of the descriptive meaning of a word influence its universalizability? The answer here is "no". The universalizability of a descriptive word is not a matter of degree. In general, the simple predicate has a wider application range than the complex one: for example, the application range of application of the word "red" is wider than that of "rose red", i.e. the objects of the latter class must be the objects of the former, but the reverse is not true. When a word X has a wider application range than that of the word Y, we say that X is more general than Y. Yet they are both universalizable. With regard to moral rule, we can make the same point. Moral judgments about acts are made for a reason which is a set of the characteristics of things; the reason may be very simple or complex, i.e. the moral rule on which the moral judgment bases may be general or specific: the moral rule "one ought to keep his promises" is more general than the rule "one ought to keep his promise to his girl friend", but they both are universalizable. It is clear that the universalizability of a moral rule is different from its generality; to be universalizable, a moral rule must not be formulated in highly general predicate, but it must have descriptive meaning.

4. REASONING IN MORALS

4.1. The Validity of Reasoning in Morals

The notion of a moral act presupposes a reason for acting in such and such a way; and to have a reason for (or against) doing something implies the complex process of deliberation. This is Mr. Baier's description of it:

Deliberation is an activity that has two distinguishable stages. The first consists of a survey of the facts for the purpose of drawing up a list of those that are relevant considerations; the second, of the weighing of these considerations, of these pros or cons, with a view to determining their relative "weight" and so deciding the course of action supported by weightiest reasons, the course that has the weight of reason behind it.¹

It is clear that our moral acts are the conclusion, in a sense, of reasonings of some sort. In this kind of reasoning, the ways in which different agents survey the facts, view given situations, and, finally, reach a decision, are multifarious; people think in different ways. This is, in part, it seems to me, the subject-matter of psychology. But on the other hand, if we investigate what the logical relation between the reason and the act is, what the proper ground is in a moral situation on which the agent chooses one course of action rather than the other, or by what criteria he judges certain facts, to be the "weightiest" reason for doing the act, we examine the logic of moral reasoning. This is the task of Ethics.

Before analysing the validity of moral reasoning, let us, for the sake of convenience, define the meaning

¹ K. Baier, Moral Point of View, p. 93.

of the two phrases: "Moral reasoning" and "reasoning in morals". By "moral reasoning" we mean a special kind of reasoning which differs from two familiar kinds: deductive and inductive reasoning. On the other hand, "reasoning in morals" denotes those reasonings that occur in moral arguments which may include deductive, inductive and moral reasoning. The distinction between the meanings of two phrases is parallel with that of other two phrases: "scientific reasoning" and "reasoning in science".

In this section, I am not prepared to attack the problem: What sorts of reasonings are designated by the phrase, "reasoning in morals"?; as I have explained it above, but rather I am interested in arguing for the thesis that moral reasoning can be valid or invalid.

To begin with, let us consider Professor Stevenson's view on the problem. In his book Language and Ethics, he devotes a full chapter to this problem. Having admitted that reasonings in morals might be deductive or inductive, he says 'The inference (from a factual reason to a moral conclusion) will be neither demonstratively nor inductively valid. By these standards of validity, it will always be invalid' (p. 153) and 'In general when E (a moral conclusion) is supported or opposed by R (a factual reason), R neither proves nor disproves the truth descriptive meaning E. So unless "valid" is to have a misleadingly extended sense, the question, "Does R permit a valid inference to

E?" is devoid of interest.' (p. 155) If we insist on talking about validity in this connection, all we do is 'selecting those inferences to which we are psychologically disposed to give assent'. (cf. p. 171) Obviously, the relation between R and E is, according to his view, psychological rather than logical.

Granting that there is moral reasoning, we first examine Stevenson's first point that the inference from factual reason to a moral conclusion will be neither demonstratively nor inductively valid. It is analytically true that, according to the criterion of valid deductive or inductive reasoning, reasoning of any other kind is invalid, just as every move in American football is illegal in accordance with rules of soccer. But the question is: Why is the criterion of validity in deductive or inductive reasoning held to be a valid criterion of all kinds of reasoning? Or put it in another way: Why is the valid analytical or valid inductive argument held to be the paradigm of all reasoning? An American football player may know that when he catches one ball with hands, his act violates rules of soccer; but this is, for him, beside the point. Even he does not know the rules of soccer, he can play well if he plays in accordance with the rules of American football. The rules of soccer are irrelevant to American football; as the two games are different. If the rules of soccer can legitimately be applied to American football, there

would be only one game rather than two. It is absurd to insist that American football players must observe all the rules of soccer. By the same token, when we are reasoning inductively, we need not care whether we violate rules of deductive reasoning or not. The latter are irrelevant to the former.

Being a special kind of reasoning which is different from the deductive and inductive sorts, moral reasoning has its own criterion of validity which must be derived from the study of paradigm case of valid moral reasoning.¹ In general, every kind of reasoning has its own logical criterion to be discovered by examining the individual, peculiar case.

An example may throw some light on this point. Suppose John, working in a butchery, is appointed by the manager to buy some good pigs from the market. After spending a day grading the pigs in the market, he came back with no pigs. His manager asked him, "Why didn't you buy some good pigs?" to which John replied, "Because there were no good pigs in the market." The manager asked him again suspiciously, "What kind of pig do you consider a 'good pig'?" John seriously answered, "A good pig must be virtuous in its conduct, etc.." In this case, John cannot pick out any pig that conforms to his criterion of "good", for he uses the criterion of "a good man" to grade

1 Cf. J. O. Urmson, "Some Questions Concerning Validity", Essays in Conceptual Analysis (ed., A. Flew, MacMillan and Company Ltd., 1960), p. 125.

pigs; and this is nonsense. Pigs and men vary in essentially different ways. The criterion used to grade them must vary, accordingly. Anyone who applies the criterion of valid deductive or inductive reasoning to moral reasoning commits the same mistake as does John. That is, they both use grading labels inappropriately or illegitimately. If we regard John as having done a senseless thing, we must also say that the man who applies the criterion of validity in deduction or inductive reasoning to moral reasoning falls into the same error.

It may be argued, however, that this is a misinterpretation of Stevenson's argument, for inferences he concerns himself with are those from the fact that induces one's approval of the object, to the moral conclusion. In other words, the inference from the fact that induces one's approval of the object to moral conclusion is psychological. However, even if it is interpreted in this way, Stevenson's view is not necessarily true. It seems to me, the notion of "reason" is different from the notion "cause". To induce someone to approve of something, we may use many techniques, e.g. brain-washing, hypnotic-suggestion, torture, and so forth; and, without misusing the language, we can call these operations the causes of the man's approval of an object; it would be very strange to regard them as reasons for his approval of it. Reason is logic in its broadest sense, and not a psychological phenomenon. In ordinary speech, when we ask someone why he approves

of something, we do not ask for the cause of his approval of it, as we ask a doctor why we have certain illness. What we want is a logical reason which is universalizable. That is, the reason for one's approval of X is also the reason for approval of Y which is similar to X's relevant respects. Further, the reason for our approval of X is the reason for our approval of the class of objects of which X is a member. He may argue that factual reasons of acceptance of a moral conclusion is not identical with causes of accepting it, but the reasons is one kind of cause of accepting it. But this argument might create another difficulty, namely, to distinguish this kind of cause from others (including brain-washing, etc.).

In morals, the reason for approval of some act, does not necessarily imply that it rests on a good or valid reason even if it is a universalizable one. Personal reasons for the approval of some acts are, in other words, not objectively good reasons for the approval of them. It is not the case that everyone's reason for the approval of an act is equally right or valid, or that everyone's reason for the approval of an act has the same logical force. If its contrary is true, we should have no moral perplexity, and need not spend our energy and time in deliberating what we should do. Consequently, it is improper to morally criticize another person's acts, and senseless to teach children how to behave morally. This is so as one's reason for the approval

of the act does not imply the other's approval of the same act; unless, that is, we presuppose that all men's reasons for moral approval are the same.

However, in flesh and blood moral situations, we advance moral criticism of the conduct of others. When we condemn or praise them, we are not merely expressing our personal approval or disapproval of them, but at the same time, are also claiming that our reasons for condemnation or praise are good reasons. Furthermore, we are prepared, if they are challenged, to argue for them. And if our argument is found to be mistaken, we are also prepared to admit our error which can be checked by the proper application of moral rules. On the other hand, when we face a number of alternative courses of action in a moral situation, we, as moral agents, choose one among them which is supported by what we are prepared to defend as a good reason. This choice is made in accordance with a set of objective rules. Though we may be moral critics or agents in a moral situation, we use the same kind of rules to judge as well as to decide what to do, because the reason for doing something is also the reason for saying that it ought to be done.¹

We also give children moral education. These facts are incompatible with Prof. Stevenson's view that moral reasoning cannot be valid or invalid. There are, then,

1 Cf. D.G. Brown, "Evaluative Inference", Philosophy, (July 1955), p. 215.

two possibilities: either (1) his view is false or (2) we all use moral language incorrectly. But this latter possibility cannot be correct, for his view does not legislate how we should use moral words, but rather is an analysis of our actual use of them. If a scientific theory does not fit the facts, it is not the facts that are wrong but rather, the theory that is false. By the same token, his view must be mistaken. Therefore, the criterion of valid moral reasoning which is implicit in moral discussion and moral deliberation cannot, as Mr. Toulmin says, "be explained away by this kind of psychological analysis."¹

What, then, is meant by "valid moral reasoning?" The question will be answered in the following sections.

4.2. Practical Syllogism

Some reasonings in morals are of the kind that may be called practical syllogism. But the name, "Practical Syllogism", as Mr. Von Wright points out, "can be used and has been used to mean different things."² Here, I should like to deal briefly with two kinds of practical syllogisms which it seems to me, have a bearing on moral arguments.

The first is as follows:

- I. You want A.
Unless you do B, you will not get A.
∴ You must do B.

1 Reason in Ethics, p. 41.

2 G.H. Von Wright, The Varieties of Goodness, (N.Y., The Humanities Press 1963), p. 163.

In this syllogism, the major premise is a statement of fact which describes the psychological state of a man. The minor premise, on the other hand, states a relation between what the man wants, A, and the means to get it; in other words, it may be called a statement about the relation of a means to an end. What a man may want can be anything, e.g. a physical object, a certain kind of situation, etc.; but the means, in this kind of syllogism, is an act which may produce certain consequences that the man wants. For example, a man wants to turn on the lights in his house; to realize his end, he must turn on the switch of the lights in his house. And the act of turning on the switch of the lights is sufficient means to his end. But some acts are not a sufficient means but, rather a necessary means to an end; that is, doing it does not necessarily produce the end, but if it had not been done the end would never have been realized. John, a high school student, wants to study in a university. It is the regulation that any high school graduate desiring to go to university must submit an application for entrance. So John must apply in order to get in the university; but the act of applying is not the sufficient means to his end. Having applied for permission to enter the university does not imply that he will be permitted to enter the university, for applying only is the necessary means to his end (entrance to the university). There are other kinds of acts which are sufficient means

to an end in certain circumstances, but which may be necessary means to the end in other situations. For instance, suppose Smith wants to reach the train station on time; to realize his end, there are many means, e.g. call a taxi, ask someone for a ride, or run. But if he is short of money to pay taxi fare, has no time to wait for a car to pass by, the only means in this circumstance is to run. In other words, running is the necessary means in this situation to his end.

It is obvious that the relationship between means and end in this type of syllogism is not logical; it may be causal, legal or conventional. However, from the premises, the conclusion follows as a practical necessity, or the premises provide us with good reasons for doing the thing which is the necessary means to an end which we want. For whenever we want something, we are trying to get it;¹ wanting something as an end, other things being equal, we are ready to do anything reasonable that enables us to get it unless the act is beyond our power. In ordinary discourse, we admit this type of syllogism to be a good argument; or we may say that they are valid argument in their own right.²

The second kind of practical syllogism that I should like to consider is:

- II. All men ought to help persons in need.
John is a person in need.
 ∴ All men ought to help John.

1 Cf. G.E.M. Anscombe, Intention, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1957), p. 67.

2 Cf. Von Wright, Op.cit., p. 167.

The major premise of it is a moral rule. As we can see, it is a general judgment about: (1) the agent, (2) the act, and (3) the recipient of the act. Accordingly, from this syllogism we can develop two further syllogisms. The other two are:

All men ought to help persons in need.

I am a man.

∴ I ought to help persons in need.

and: All men ought to help persons in need.
Donating money to the Relief Fund is helping
persons in need.

∴ All men ought to donate money to the
Relief Fund.

Certainly, it is not the case that every major premise of the second type of syllogism is about three things; but, by and large, about the agent, and the act or thing. Furthermore, whenever we deliberate and ask ourselves: "What should I do?", we are always aware that we are men. Consequently, we usually suppress the minor premise "I am a man" of the syllogism, and directly infer the conclusion, "I ought to do such-and-such". For example:

All men ought to help persons in need.

John is a person in need.

∴ I ought to help John.

The minor premise of this type of syllogism is a statement of fact, but the fact relevant to morality is sometimes very complicated. As Mrs. Foot points out:

When people argue about what's right, good, or obligatory or whether a certain character trait is or is not a virtue, they do not confine their remarks to the adducing of facts which can be established by simple observation or by some

clear-cut technique. What is said may well be subtle or profound, and in this sort of discussion as in others...much depends on experience and imagination.¹

We cannot for instance, introspect another's feelings, thus determining how much pain they suffer, or what quantity of pleasure they enjoy; in order to know them, we must rely on our own experiences and imagination. This is the main reason for saying that moral reasoning is a highly complex matter.

In our practical reasonings, we often infer a moral conclusion from a fact or facts that are described in minor premise of a syllogism; e.g., from the fact that doing X will make a man suffer pain, we infer that we ought not to do X. This reasoning is not valid according to the rules of formal logic. Nevertheless, we always accept it as a sound argument. Why do we do so? To this question, there are two answers. The first is Mr. Hare's. He holds that the reasoning is enthymematic. It makes use of a suppressed major premise which is a moral rule or principle; if it is explicitly stated, the reasoning is deductive in the sense that it only utilizes rules of inference of ordinary logic.² The second is Mr. Toulmin's (among others). He suggests that the reasoning from facts to a moral conclusion is a special kind of reasoning in morals; it proceeds by a special rule of inference which might be called "The rule of least suffering."³ Apparently,

1 P. Foot, "Moral Argument", Mind, vol. LXVII (October 1958) p. 513.

2 Cf. The Language of Morals, Chapt. 3, pp. 32-55, and his review of Toulmin's book, Reason in Ethics, The Philosophical Quarterly, Vol. 1, (July 1951), pp. 372-375.

3 Cf. Reason in Ethics, Chapt. 11, pp. 148-163.

these two views are incompatible with each other; yet, they have one point in common, namely, moral reasoning can be valid or invalid. For the present purpose, we need not overly concern ourselves with the respective merits of the competing views, but accept, as Mr. Baier does,¹ the view that a moral rule or principle can be treated as either the major premise of a practical syllogism or as the rule of inference.

The conclusion, on the other hand, is a moral judgment of what we ought to do. In moral circumstances, having completed the theoretical task, i.e. finished the practical syllogism, we, as moral agents, must perform the practical task: do what the conclusion tells us. In Aristotle's words: "... if the premises involve action, the soul is bound to perform this act at once."² The meaning of moral word entails a particular prescription, namely, "Let me do it", so the conclusion of this type of syllogism is, in one sense, an action.

The practical syllogism is valid in accordance with the rules of formal logic. If we accept the major and the minor premises, we cannot refuse the conclusion without being self-contradictory, for the conclusion is implicitly included in the premises. It may be argued that the major premise of the practical syllogism is not a statement which can be either true or false, and as "valid reasoning" must have some connection with truth, so the

1 Cf. The Moral Point of View, p. 94.

2 Aristotle, op. cit., p. 183.

reasoning cannot be valid. But it would be mistaken to argue in this way. The validity of the reasoning does not depend upon the truth-value of premises but rather upon the meaning of logical words such as "all", "and" "or".¹ The judgment, "I ought to do X and Y" entails the judgment "I ought to do X" due to the meaning of "and". It is obvious that a man who accepts the proposition "I ought to do X and Y" must not only accept that he ought to do X, but also that he ought to do Y. By the same token, we cannot consistently accept the proposition "All men ought to keep their promises" without also accepting the proposition "John ought to keep his promises". The rules of formal logic, therefore, can apply to moral discourse.

It is not senseless to ask the question whether the major premise of the type of practical syllogism discussed in this section (4.2, II) is right (or good) or not. This raises the problem of the justification of moral rules; this will be dealt with in Section 4.4..

4.3. Good Reasons and Fundamental Reasons in Morals

When we engage in practical reasoning, we survey the situation in which we find ourselves, and consider what we can do or what is in our power to do. By and large, in any given circumstances, there are many courses of

1 Cf. R.M. Hare, The Language of Morals, Chapt. 3, pp. 32-54.

action within our power; but we can take only one of these courses of action. Accordingly, the problem of choice arises. In order to choose, we consider each of them, and review the reasons in support of the alternatives. The reasons for (or against) doing something are facts. To say this, of course, does not imply that every fact is reason for (or against) doing something; to be a reason for (or against) doing something, the fact must be subsumed under a rule of reason, i.e., rules of reason make facts reasons for (or against) doing something. The fact, for instance, that the performance of X will make A suffer cannot be the reason why we should not do X unless there is a rule of reason or consideration making-belief of the form: "Making other persons suffer is wrong" which is the major premise of our practical syllogism or rule of inference. We might say, therefore, when we consider what we should do in particular circumstances, we are making use of practical syllogism or using practical reasoning. When our reasoning leads us to two conflicting conclusions, which one we should do, has not yet been decided; this will be resolved by appealing to a fundamental moral principle. We must weigh the reasons that support them; that is we should determine which course of action is supported by the weightiest reason. Weighing, it should be clear, presupposes some standard or criterion by which we can measure and compare the value of different actions; if this criterion does not exist, we cannot sort out which

of them is the weightiest reason and, consequently which action is the right one. Indeed, it is possible that on some occasions, there is only one course of action supported by reason; thus, the problem of weighing the respective merits and faults of the case does not arise.

Now, let us consider the question; what kind of facts constitute good or valid reasons for (or against) moral acts.

To ask what a valid or good reason in morals is, is to ask what the paradigm of a good or valid reason in morals is; and before these questions can be properly raised the logically prior question: Is there a paradigm of good or valid reason in morals? should be answered. If the answer to the latter question is negative, the former question cannot come up. We, as moral agents, can say with certainty that there are paradigms of good or valid reasons in morals. From the fact that a specified person or a group of persons, it may be argued, have a paradigm of good or valid moral reasons, it does not follow that other persons or groups also have them. This is to misunderstand the logic of "reason".

A reason for doing something is different from a particular person's reason for doing it. If John says "R is my good reason for doing X", and Smith says "R is my good reason against doing X", their sayings are not contradictory.

It is quite possible that they may either be both true or both false. But, if John says "R is a good reason for doing X" and Smith says, "R is a good reason against doing X", or "R is not a good reason for doing X", their sayings cannot be both true or both false.¹ Consider a parallel case in theoretical discourse. Suppose John says, "The flower looks red to me", and Smith says, "The flower does not look red to me", their sayings are by no means contradictory in the same sense that "The flower is red" is contradictory to "The flower is not red". The logic of the remarks, "R is a good reason for doing X", is the same as that of the remark "The flower is red". It is clear that a good reason for (or against) doing X is not relative to a person or group. Even if it is a fact that neither any person or any group regards it is a good reason for (or against) doing X, it may still be a good reason for (or against) doing X provided that it has certain good-making characteristics, or conforms to the criterion of a "good reason". On the other hand, the fact that everyone accepts it as a good reason for (or against) doing X, does not imply that it is, in fact, a good one. Acceptance is not the relevant characteristic of a good reason, just as the acceptance of a belief is not the relevant characteristic of its truth.

Paradigms of good reasons in morals are not difficult to find. For example, John meets his old friend James in the street; he has not seen James for a month.

1 Cf. K. Baier, "Good Reasons", Philosophical Studies Vol. IV (January 1953), p. 4.

After shaking hands with him and chatting with him a while, John says to James, "I have to give this book back to Smith; I promised to return it today". We all agree that John has a good reason for leaving his old friend to give the book back to Smith, for giving back the book to Smith is keeping a promise. It may be asked: Why is keeping the promise a good reason for doing something? Because, I reply, of the moral rule that promises ought to be kept. It is analytically true that if one ought to keep his promises, then the fact that doing something that would keep his promises is a good reason for doing it.¹

It is clear that giving the book back to Smith is to keep a promise, and is good reason, relying on the moral rule, "Promises ought to be kept". It follows from this that an action supported by a good reason is an action which is a special case of a moral rule.

But if the judgment that relies on moral rule is a good reason for doing something or saying that something ought to be done; then, in any case that involves more than one moral rule, and where these rules conflict, there will be good reasons for and against doing something. If we have no rule to determine the superiority of reason, we cannot decide which of them is the best in a given circumstance. For example, suppose John had promised L.H. Oswald to return the rifle to him on

1 Cf. D.G. Brown, op.cit., p. 217.

November 21, 1963; but suppose further at that time, Oswald is insane and has displayed murderous tendencies. If John returns the rifle to him, it is probable that someone will be shot; if he does not, he will break his promise. In this case, promise keeping is a good reason to return the rifle to Oswald; on the other hand, the fact that returning the rifle to Oswald will probably cause someone's death is a good reason against keeping one's promise, for there is a moral rule "Helping someone to kill others is wrong". Unless John has a rule of superiority of reason to reconcile the conflicting rules, he cannot decide what to do. Certainly, he may make an arbitrary choice, e.g., throw a coin to decide what to do; but this is not a rational choice.

In our everyday moral decisions, there is a more fundamental rule or principle by which we weigh two conflicting good reasons and which not only determines which act is to be performed, but also provides the justification for it. We have shown in 2.1. that when two moral rules conflict with each other in particular circumstances, we appeal to a moral principle to decide which of them is appropriate to that circumstance, and the moral principle has a descriptive meaning that is the fundamental reason for (or against) doing certain things.

Let us consider an example to elucidate this point. In moral matters, the rule, "Telling lies is wrong" provides us with a good reason against telling lies. All

instances of lying, however, are not wrong; in some instances lying may be admitted to be a morally good thing. We may say that lying is not morally wrong unless telling lies involves doing other things that are the fundamental good reasons against doing it. In most cases when one tells a lie he deceives some other person with the effect that their interests are hurt; and if everybody lies and engages in deception, communications and social co-operation will be impossible. It is this kind of undesirable consequences regarded as fundamental good reason that opposes our telling lies. If every human being is omniscient, there is, according to our moral principles, no good reason against telling lies: because everybody knows everything, telling lies cannot hurt anyone. It is clear that telling lies will cause undesirable consequences is the fundamental good reason against lying; and that fact is warranted by our moral principle: "The principle of utility." It follows that the fact warranted by a moral rule is not a conclusively good reason, but a prima facie one.

It is important to notice that the word "good" in the phrase, "good reason" in moral reasonings is not used in a moral way though it may be an evaluative word as the "valid" is.¹ It does not predicate an object that can be either morally good or bad. To say that the reason is "good" (or "bad") is to say a logical judgment rather than a moral judgment.²

1 Cf. J.O. Urmson, Op.cit., p. 126.

2 Cf. D.G. Brown, Op.cit., p. 219.

4.4 Justification of a Moral Act and Justification of a Moral Rule.

In moral situations, once having decided to do an act, we, as moral agents, act. It is evident that when we engage in deliberation, in one sense, we are predicting, among other things, some states of affairs will result from the act which we have decided to do. Predicting is describing something that will happen but not necessarily that has happened; in other words, our prediction about the act may be true or false. After the act has been done, we, as a moral critic, have a job to do: to check whether the act is really what we supposed it to be or not, or whether its actual consequences are the predicted consequences or not. This is a part of the justification of the act.

To justify an act in a set of given circumstances is not to justify it from the agent's point of view, but rather from the critic's point of view. The moral agent requires that an act has not been done yet; and the justification of an act which is the proper business of the critic, requires that the act has been done. It may be said that the justification of an act, strictly speaking, presupposes its existence; we cannot justify nothing. In our moral deliberations, we use hypothetical statements such as "if I do X, then a state of affairs Y will happen", but at the time X has not been done, and Y has not happened. Therefore, providing a reason for performing an

act does not justify it. And what the agent decides to do in future may not occur in precisely the same way in which the agent envisaged it: What he does may be not only the act of a certain category which he thinks that one ought to do, e.g., keeping a promise, but also of other category which he thinks he ought not to do, e.g., helping someone to kill somebody. Although when John deliberates what to do, he has a good reason (i.e., the rule of promise-keeping) for giving back the rifle to Oswald, after Oswald used the rifle to kill President Kennedy, his good reason for giving back the rifle to Oswald is over-ridden, and consequently, the act is unjustified.

The most important and difficult part of the justification of an act is to find out to which act-category it belongs, and to which act-category it should belong. The first consists in a theoretical inquiry; the second is moral evaluation (of the first). The second presupposes the first, for if we don't know what the act is, we have no ground to assess its moral worthiness.

To perform the theoretical inquiry concerning an act is not as simple as we commonly think. To do a particular act is to do many things; and to know precisely the components and how they fit together are an extremely complex matter. As some philosophers hold, it is practically impossible to know the actual consequences of an act in all times in particular circumstances;¹ and the

1 Cf. G.E. Moore, Principia Ethica, (Cambridge University Press, 1960), Chapter V, pp. 124-180.

character of the act is determined by the circumstances in which it had been performed. Accordingly, to find out what the act really is, we must firstly find out what the circumstances are; this is also a difficult task. Furthermore, even when we know all the characteristics of an act, there still is one job to do and it is no easier than the previous ones: namely, to compare the act with the paradigm of a good or bad act. Because facts do not speak for themselves, the set of criteria of application of moral words which is derived from the paradigm, is open-textured, and in human situations, no two similar cases exactly the same.¹ Indeed, it is hard to identify precisely the act to be a special case of a rule; at any rate, these difficulties do not prevent us from proving that the act should belong to a certain act-category or that a moral judgment about the act, is right or wrong. To prove that an act is wrong, we need not wait till we know all its actual consequences, all the facts of the circumstances in which the act is done; nor do we have to be absolutely certain that the act is similar to a paradigm case.

What we should do is try our best to complete two tasks: (1) to find out the characteristics of the act; and (2) to subsume it under a moral rule. That is the justification of a moral act.²

1 Cf. J.R. Lucas, "The Lesbian Rule", Philosophy, (July 1955), p. 200.

2 Cf. J.O. Urmson, "The Interpretation of Moral Philosophy Of J.S. Mill", The Philosophical Quarterly, (April 1953), p. 33.

It is clear that the justification of a moral act consists in pointing out that it is a special case of a moral rule, e.g., to justify our act of giving back the book to Smith by pointing out it is a special case of the moral rule, "Promises ought to be kept", for our act of giving back the book to Smith is an instance of keeping one of our promises. And the proof is not conclusive in the sense that it pre-empts all the data that we know of the characteristics of the act, but rather is presumptive. However, unless counter-reasons are found, it is unreasonable to suspect the validity of our proof,¹ just as unless a counter-example is produced, it is unreasonable to doubt the truth of a general statement, e.g., "All men are mortal."

One may ask the question "Is it really right to give back the book to Smith?" After we point out that giving back the book to Smith is a special case of the moral rule "Promises ought to be kept." The question is senseless, for we cannot, logically speaking, give a general moral reason to prove that a particular act is morally correct except by referring to a moral rule of which the act is a special case.² Consider, for example a parallel case. When we say that the empirical statement, "The flower is red," is true, we are saying that it has certain relationships which make it true, i.e., it corresponds with reality or conforms to a criterion of truth. Similarly, the saying that a theorem in a mathematical system,

1 Cf. A.P. Griffiths, "Formulating Moral Principle", Mind (January 1956), p. 43.

2 Cf. S.E. Toulmin, Reason in Ethics, p. 146.

is true, is saying that it has certain truth-making characteristics, e.g. it is derived from axioms in accordance with the rules of inference, and conforms to a criterion of mathematical truth. Beyond referring to the criteria of truth, we cannot provide other logical reason to justify them. It is obvious that the way in which we justify the truth of an empirical statement or mathematical theorem is to show it is a special case of the criterion of truth in its field; in the same way, we justify the rightness of a moral act performed in accordance with a moral rule.

Sometimes, when the act we performed is not obviously a case of an established moral rule; we seem to justify it by the direct application of a moral principle, i.e., directly assess its consequences. Actually we do not apply the moral principle to the particular case, but rather to a moral rule which is established in accordance with a moral principle. For when we justify the act as being right, we also implicitly justify the kind of act of which this particular act is a special case due to the universalizability of moral judgments. That is, when we say that a particular act is right, we are implicitly saying that any act that is similar to it in relevant respects is right.¹ It follows that to justify a particular act, it is not necessarily to refer to moral rules which are established beforehand.

1 Cf. R.M. Hare, Freedom and Reason, pp. 130 - 131.

To say that, after we justify a particular act by reference to moral rule, no further question about the rightness of the act can be sensibly asked, does not imply that we cannot (or should not) question the rightness of the moral rule. It not only makes sense, but is also important to ask for the justification of them.

In daily life, we perform moral acts without asking the question "Are our moral rules right?" unless some peculiar type of situation comes up, e.g., when the living conditions are violently changed to the effect that the practising of certain moral rules would be disastrous.

We cannot justify a moral rule by just pointing out that it is a moral rule; to justify it is to explain or to give reasons why this kind of action is right or wrong; and formally speaking, the procedure of justifying a moral rule is not too different from that of justifying a moral act, though we appeal in each case, to a different criterion or rule. What, then, is the criterion or principle by which we can justify moral rules? As we have intimated earlier, the answer to the question is: we justify moral rules by moral principles (which are the fundamental criteria of rightness or wrongness). Usually, if the rightness of a moral rule is in doubt, we assess the consequences of its practising; in other words, we justify moral rules by appeal to the principle of utility. Indeed, the principle of utility is not the only logically

possible moral principle; it is, however, the only plausibly practical one. Any principle being a criterion of the rightness or wrongness action in moral situations, if it is universalizable and prescriptive, is a "moral principle"; but a logically possible moral principle is not necessarily a practically possible one in the sense that human beings, as such, are willing to live on it. A moral principle is the fundamental principle of morality which cannot be, logically speaking, justified by another principle. To say this does not imply that we cannot justify moral acts or moral rules, for each of them has its own appropriate kind of justification. If we insist that the rightness of moral acts must rely on the rightness of moral rules, and that the rightness of moral rules must, in turn, rely on the rightness of moral principles, we will commit an infinite regress and consequently can prove nothing. To prove something, we must depart from a ground which need not be proved or whose proof is irrelevant to the thing which we want to prove.

One may ask: "Can we provide any kind of reason for adopting a moral principle?" It seems to me, the answer to this is in the affirmative. Although it is logically impossible to prove a moral principle, we may give other sorts of reasons for adhering to it; and these reasons may be good or bad.

A moral principle is principle of action which guides our actions in moral situations, to adopt or to adhere to

a moral principle is to be prepared to live a certain type of life, for it will determine in large part one's moral conduct, and this, in turn, will materially affect one's life. If a man has an ideal of life, he must adhere to certain moral principles which lead him to realize his ideal. Accordingly, we might argue,^{by}/I type practical syllogism which we discussed in 4.2., that he had good reason for adhering to certain moral principles rather than to others. For example, a man who aspires to be a benefactor of humanity, cannot hold a moral principle from which the moral rule: "Hurting others is right" is derived.

A man who consistently acts on this moral rule can never be, logically speaking, a benefactor of humanity. It is obvious that what he is doing is incompatible with his ideal of life. Hence, we have a good reason for saying that he should not adopt that moral principle from which the moral rule is derived.

It is logically possible that people may aim at different ideals of life and consequently different moralities; this, however, does not imply that their (different) ideals of life, or the means to realize them, have nothing in common. In fact, they, as human beings, have many common desires and interests, on which a single morality can be formed. As Mr. Strawson says:

It is important to recognize the diversity of possible systems of moral demands, and the diversity of demands which may be made within

any system. But it is also important to recognize that certain human interests are so fundamental and so general that they must be universally acknowledged in some form and to some degree in any conceivable moral community.¹

Thus, if any moral principle cannot satisfy our common interests and help us to realize our ideal of life, we have a good reason for discarding it, or for saying that it is a bad moral principle.

1 P.F. Strawson, "Social Morality and Individual Ideal", Philosophy, (January 1961), p. 11.

5. MORAL ARGUMENTS

5.1. Logical Arguments

As we have shown, disagreements in morals occur between two persons having conflicting moral judgments on an act, a character or a moral rule: one asserts "X (an act, a character, or a moral rule) is right or good," the other denies it. There are many types of disagreements in morals, and each type should be settled by an argument that is appropriate to it.

One type of moral disagreement is caused by the disputants' disagreement, in their beliefs about the act, the character or the moral rule at issue, i.e. the disputants hold the same moral point of view, but have contradictory beliefs about it. It should be clear that to settle this type of disagreement, we can use a logical argument in the sense that we appeal to the commonly accepted criteria or criterion of "right" (or "wrong"), "good" (or "bad") after we agree on the facts. And the method we employ in getting the facts straight is not, in essence, different from that we use in finding out the true nature of a disease. Even if we, as disputants, do not have any knowledge of or experience about the factual matter at issue, we might ask a specialist in the relevant field, e.g. consulting a psychiatrist, or an older person who has some experiences with it, helps us get correct information.

Within this type of moral disagreement, there are two sub-types: (1) disputants who hold the same moral rule, but

disagree in their beliefs about the nature of an act or the character; (2) disputants who hold the same moral principle, but disagree in beliefs about the nature of a moral rule.

It is obvious that disagreements of type (1) are mainly due to the disputants' identifying the same act with two different kinds of acts with the effect that it is subsumed under two conflicting moral rules. As soon as the disputants know the true nature of the act, their disagreement should be settled logically. Let us examine one example developed in 2.2. to illustrate the point: Y disagrees with Z on W's act, namely, that of shooting X; but they both agree that W shot X. Y thinks that W murdered X because he believes that X was on a mission to spy on their enemies' activities and was due back precisely the time he was shot; Y also knows that X had killed W's brother by accident at the beginning of the war and suspects that W wished to revenge his brother by doing in X. On the other hand, Z does not know that story, but believes that W supposed X to be an enemy agent when he shot. To settle the disagreement, we might firstly ask W the question whether he knew, when he shot, that it was X. If W's answer is negative after extensive questioning, Y's belief that W knew that it was X when he shot, is refuted; consequently, Y's moral judgment is invalid. Of course, W's answer may not be true. And if we doubt it, we may try the case as judges do in court. Y also believes that X had killed W's brother, that W had expressed a desire to revenge his late brother by killing X; and that W knew that X would be back at the time when

he shot. In effect, then, W shot at X with the intention to kill him. If all evidence supports Y's beliefs, Y's moral judgment is proved to be correct. Consequently, the disagreement is logically settled, for the relevant facts support Y's assertion that W's act is a case of murder. This assertion, taken in conjunction with the moral rule, "It is wrong to murder," which Z and Y both accept, entails Y's moral judgment; and is the conclusion of a valid practical syllogism. It is quite possible that Z insists that his moral judgment is valid and Y's is invalid after the evidence is provided. Nevertheless, this only shows that Z is unreasonable. Clearly, the method used to settle the disagreement just discussed also holds good to settle the disagreement between the woman and the law student, mentioned in 2.2..

Disagreements of type (2) happen between people who live in different social conditions and who hold conflicting moral rules which can be derived from a moral principle to which they both adhere. For example, X grows up in town A where drinking-water is scarce; X moves to town B, and sees Y waste drinking-water. Naturally, he thinks that Y's act is morally wrong for he holds the moral rule that "wasting drinking water is wrong." Y denies X's moral judgment of his act due to the fact that he adheres to a moral rule that states that "wasting drinking-water is right." Obviously they both agree that Y's act is a case of wasting drinking-water, but as they hold conflicting moral rules,

the moral judgment passed on this act differs. In order to convince his opponent, each of them offers reasons in support of his moral rule. After having listened to Y's reasons, X knows that drinking-water in town B is excessive; that if its inhabitants do not waste it one way or another, undesirable results will follow, and that Y's moral rule is derived from the principle of utility, which he also holds. Consequently, X concedes that his moral rule does not hold in these circumstances, for undesirable consequences would follow if he acted on his moral rule. It is evident that their moral disagreement is settled by a factual argument. When the facts of the case are known, X must accept that his opponent's moral rule holds good in the given situation; otherwise, he will be acting in a self-contradictory manner. In daily life, many of our moral disagreements are of this type; the main cause of them is that people apply their moral rule to all situations without noticing the range to which their moral rule can properly be applied. That is, a moral rule does not hold good in all situations, as does a moral principle. It may now be concluded that this type of moral disagreement is caused by someone's mistakenly applying a moral rule.

Sometimes, these are cases in which the disputants hold the same moral rule or principle without knowing exactly what it is. Before investigating the facts of the case that give rise to the moral disagreement, they should, to settle the disagreement, examine the moral rules or principle that they hold, and formulate the exact criterion of "right" (or

"wrong"), "good" (or "bad"). It may be argued that we cannot say that they hold the same moral rule or principle even though they agree on a new formulation of one, for it is possible the new one is different from what they originally held; and if they do not know what their moral rule or principle really is, we have no good evidence for saying that they hold the same moral rule or principle. Indeed, these points may be sound. This case differs from the other in that the disputants who clearly know that their moral rules or principles are in conflict, agree a new rule or principle through a course of argument. And further, there is no conclusive reason for denying that the reformulated one is not what they originally held.

On the other hand, it may be the case that, owing to the inexact or vague character of moral rules or acts, some acts are on the border line in the sense that they may be subsumed under two conflicting moral rules. The disagreement over them cannot be settled logically, even though the disputants hold the same moral rules.

The beliefs we hold are not always true, and it is psychological fact that we sometimes persist in our beliefs in face of counter-evidence. Therefore, it is important to distinguish a "true" settlement of a moral disagreement from a "false" one. This distinction is based on the truth or falsity of the disputants' beliefs about the object in question. It is possible, in the course of argument, that one of the disputants, owing to his status or ability to persuade etc., may convince his opponent to accept his be-

liefs as being true, though they are, in fact, false; consequently, the disagreement between them is settled. But it is not a "true" settlement for it is based on false beliefs. What I have termed a "true" settlement of a moral disagreement of type (1) or of type (2) is a moral agreement in accordance with true beliefs; otherwise, it is a false one.

It should be obvious that what disputants argue about in a disagreement of type (1) or of type (2) is, technically speaking, the minor premise of a practical syllogism; and a minor premise of a practical syllogism is, as we have shown, a factual statement which can be proved by scientific methods. As soon as disputants agree on it, their moral disagreement should be logically settled in accordance with their commonly accepted moral rules or principle which can be a major premise, or rule of inference, of a practical syllogism.

The second type of moral disagreement is that two disputants disagree with each other on a moral act or rule due to their holding conflicting moral principles. It is evident in these cases that they have no common ground on which they can meet to settle their disagreement. However, disputants can appeal to certain logical properties of a moral judgment, viz., universalizability and prescriptivity, to refute his opponent's moral judgment. One may accept his opponents moral principle as valid, and from it deduce the prescriptivity of the judgment, and ask his opponent to act accordingly. If he fails to do what his moral principle prescribes, there may be conclusive reason to say that the moral

principle he alleges to hold is not a valid moral principle. Consequently, the disagreement between them is not a moral one. In a sense, it is logically settled.

Let us consider an example to show how the logical argument runs. Suppose X is an egoist, and holds the following moral principle: "Any act serving X's interest is right." By implication, he also holds: "Killing for X's interest is right." It is possible that X's moral principle is the same as the principle "Any act serving one's interest is right." If so, any act, then, serving our interest is right, and killing X for our interest is right; X ought to be killed if killing him will serve our interest. According to universalizability of moral judgments, unless X is willing to kill himself or to be killed, he is acting in a self-contradictory way, and, by implication, his principle is not moral principle.

X may argue that his moral principle is not "Any act serving one's interest is right" but "Any act serving X's interest is right." It is true that the denial of the former does not imply the denial of the latter. But we may ask, "Why is every act not right unless it serves X's interest?" To meet our challenge, X has to offer reasons in support of his moral principle. He may specify a set of features e.g. having a special name, or having been born in a certain place. These reasons do not, obviously, vindicate his moral principle, for everyone has a special name or was born in a certain place. If these features entitle X to pursue his interest, they should, by the same token, entitle everyone to pursue his interest. In effect, his principle should be "Any act ser-

ving one's interest is right." In order to preclude other persons from having the right to pursue their interest, X may choose some logically particular feature which only he possesses. This manoeuvre rules out all possibilities of other persons having moral reasons to pursue their interest; but it also, unfortunately, renders this principle one that cannot be universalizable. Any moral reason must be able to be applied beyond the particular person in a particular situation to a class of persons in a certain type of situation.¹

What X offers does not satisfy this requirement, for it cannot logically be met by other persons except X. So X's principle is not a moral one; and it follows that the disagreement is not a moral one.

Even if we admit that X's moral principle can be universalizable, there is another logical argument that can be used against him. According to the universalizability and prescriptivity of moral judgments, X's moral rule entails that, regardless of who is killed, what kind of instrument the killer uses, and where the killing occurs, the act of killing is right if it is in X's interest. It follows that if it is in X's interest to be killed, he should be killed. Suppose it is a fact that because X's morality permits him to kill others if this will serve his own interest, X is warned that if he does not discard his morality and cease the killing of others, he and his family will be killed; and suppose further that the safety of his family is what X most wants. In a

1 Cf. Singer, Generalization in Ethics, p. 24.

situation in which it is in X's interest to be killed, X ought to be killed in accordance with his moral rule. If he does not want to be killed or does not accept the singular prescription that is entailed by his moral rule, he rejects his moral rule. And, by implication, his rule is not a moral one because it does not satisfy the logical requirement of all moral rules, namely, prescriptivity.

Further, if X does not want to be killed, he must discard his moral rule. Clearly, he will act in his interest by discarding his moral rule that "killing for X's interest is right" if it benefits X, and will be acting in his own interest by saving his and his family's life. This should bring out an inconsistency in X's position, as he is unwilling to act as he would have others act.

Certainly, if X is willing to be killed in his own interest, the logical argument cannot touch him. But it is unlikely that X, as a human being, is inclined to act in this way.

It is worthwhile pointing out here that the fact that people do not want to do or to have certain things done to them does not provide us with logical reasons for saying that they ought not to do them; for it is illegitimate to deduce the "ought" from the "is." This fact prevents them from accepting the singular prescription that their moral rule entails or from acting on their moral rule; thus they either refute their moral rule or principle, or render their moral rule or principle non-moral.¹

1 Cf. R.M. Hare, Freedom and Reason, pp. 108-109.

So far, the arguments that I have discussed rely, for their cogency, on consistency. To be consistent, it is clear, is not necessarily to be consistent with valid moral rules or principles, just as a deductive inference consistently in accordance with a rule may not be consistent with the valid rule of inference. For the sake of convenience, let us term the individual's moral rule or principle his "personal morality", and valid morality, as "morality". In the latter type of disagreement, one of the disputants may argue by pointing out that his opponent's moral rule or principle is incompatible with morality even though he may consistently act on, and criticize other person's conduct by, it. For example, a man holds the moral rule, "killing is right," and whenever he faces the practical question, "whether he should kill someone or not," he always acts on the dictates of his rule and criticizes the conduct of others by it. He is consistent. But his moral rule is, by no means, a valid one, for it is incompatible with the valid moral rule, "killing is wrong." Perhaps, this kind of argument also appeals to consistency when the disputant believes that his moral rule is not only his "personal morality," but also "morality." Accordingly, if his opponent points out that his rule is inconsistent with morality, his opponent shows that his moral rule is not the same as the valid one. It is possible that he knows that his moral rule is not valid but still insists that it is the right one. This does not affect his opponent's proof. Consider an analogous case; a man, B, makes an inference according to the rule $P \supset Q, \bar{P}; \therefore \bar{Q}$ consistently. His in-

ferences are invalid due to their failing to have a sound rule permitting them. Regardless of whether B accepts our proof or not, his inferences are logically proved to be invalid, and his rule of inference is not the right one according to rules of inference in logic.

On the other hand, it is quite possible that two disputants' moral rules or principles are both inconsistent with morality. After discussion, one of them may yield, and accept his opponent's moral rule or principle; they then get agreement on the point at issue. Nevertheless, their agreement is not a valid one, for their moral rules or principles are incompatible with morality.

This type of argument presupposes morality. If there is none, the argument will beg the question. In fact, there are valid moral principles just as there are valid rules of inference.

5.2. Generalization Argument.

In a moral discussion, when we disagree with someone about the rightness (or wrongness) of an act, and where there is no common ground for settling the disagreement, we may try to resolve the dispute by arguing that "if everyone acted in this way, the consequences would be undesirable; therefore, it is wrong to act in this way." For example, a man says that it is right for him not to vote in an election; we, holding the denial of his moral judgment, may offer an argument: "if everyone acted like

you, no one would vote and the government would collapse; this consequence is undesirable; therefore you ought to vote." The argument is known as the "generalization argument."

Evidently, the structure of the argument is fairly complicated. It is not purely a logical argument in the sense that it wholly relies on the logical properties of a moral judgment (universalizability and prescriptivity), but rather is partly logical and partly moral. At any rate, this type of argument is very powerful in achieving moral agreement. Before examining conditions under which it can be validly applied, let us inspect the structure of the "generalization argument."

In short, the argument contains two parts: the first relies on a logical property: the universalizability of moral judgments; the second, on a moral principle.¹

As we have shown in chapter 3, moral judgments are universalizable: a man's saying "I ought to do X" implies that anyone whose position is similar in relevant respects, to mine, ought to do X.

It is obvious that the universalizability of moral judgments provides a logical link to connect the rightness of one's act with the rightness of everyone's act which belongs to the same act-category. If moral judgments are not universalizable, the rightness of one act does not imply

1 Cf. Singer, Generalization in Ethics, Chapt. IV, pp. 61 - 95.

the rightness of the same kind of act, and we have no logical reason for saying that a man is contradicting himself when he asserts that his act is right without also being willing to assert that all acts of the same kind are right. And it would follow from this that "I ought to do X" has no logical connection with the first part of the generalization argument: everyone similarly situated ought to do X." The generalization argument, therefore, presupposes the principle of universalizability.

The universalizability of moral judgments is due to their descriptive meaning which is a description of right- (or wrong-, or good-, or bad-) making characteristics of an act including the motive of the agent and the circumstances in which the act is done; an act is right because it meets certain conditions; an agent ought to do X, because he is in the position to do X. The step from "I ought to do X" to "everyone similarly situated ought to do X" is restricted universalizability.¹ Namely, everyone's position must be the same as or exactly similar to, my position; or the scope of "everyone" is restricted to the class of persons of which I am a member, or to those who meet a set of conditions which I satisfy. For instance, the scope of "everyone" in the universalization from "I ought to feed my children" to "everyone ought to feed their children" is restricted to those who are fathers of children; it is senseless to extend the scope of "everyone" in

1 Cf. op. cit., p. 63.

this case to cover those who have no children. Obviously, the principle of universalizability cannot apply to everyone or to all acts regardless of their character.

The second part of the argument is the "principle of consequences." "If the consequences of doing X would be undesirable, then it is wrong to do X." This is, in my opinion, a moral principle for it is possible that there is a morality in which the rightness (or wrongness) of an act is not based on its consequences.

It is important to note that the principle can be interpreted in two different ways due to the ambiguity of "undesirable."¹

If we interpreted "undesirable" as "undesirable on the whole" the principle will be read as "If the total consequences of doing X are undesirable, i.e. if doing X will bring about more undesirable consequences than desirable consequences, no one ought to do X." On the other hand, if the meaning of "undesirable" does not have the proviso of "on the whole," the principle will be "If some of the consequences of doing X are undesirable, regardless of whether there are desirable ones or not, no one ought to do X." Doing a certain act does not necessarily produce either desirable or undesirable consequences exclusively; it is the case that some of its consequences are desirable and some undesirable. If we adopt the latter interpretation, many acts which are ordinarily regarded as right would be

1 Cf. op. cit., p. 64.

morally wrong. Consequently, I think that the former interpretation is the proper one. The term, "undesirable," on the other hand, is a relative word just as is the word, "happiness." People might have different or incompatible desires. The principle itself does not give a definition of the meaning of "undesirable" or of what is undesirable. Agreement on the principle is quite consistent with disagreement on what is desirable.

In practice, if people agree on the principle, what is desirable to them is easy to settle, for human beings have many common desires.

This argument does not refer to the consequences of an individual act, but rather to the collective effect of everyone's acting in a certain way. The consequence of an individual act may not be undesirable, but if everyone acts in the same way, the consequences may well be disastrous.

On the other hand, the argument cannot validly apply to all kinds of action. For among them, some cannot be done either by everyone or, by no one without undesirable consequences. If everyone, for instance, produced food, we would be short of other kinds of daily necessities; this is undesirable; therefore, no one ought to produce food. But on the contrary, if no one produced food, people would starve; this is also undesirable, therefore, everyone ought to produce food. Obviously, to this kind of action, the argument can be invertibly applied. Thus, according to the argument,

everyone should act in a certain way and no one should act in that way; or certain kinds of acts are simultaneously right and wrong. In order for the argument to have a valid application with respect to some acts, it is necessary that it cannot be invertibly applied with respect to that action. In other words, an argument of the form: "If the consequences of everyone's doing X would be undesirable, then no one ought to do X" is valid only if it is not the case that the consequences of no one's doing X would also be undesirable."¹

Every act is performed in a certain context; and we cannot abstract it from these circumstances to assess its consequences. In theory, the consequences of a certain act may be undesirable if it is done by everyone. However, it is unlikely that everyone has the right to do it, due to the fact that not everyone is in a position to act in the same way. It would be undesirable if everyone took their holidays at the same time; but it is just not the case that everyone is entitled to take their holidays at the same time; somebody must always be left on duty. Further, even if everyone has the right to perform certain acts and if everyone's doing it would bring about undesirable consequences, it is not desirable for everyone to do it. For example, granted that everyone has the right to take his own life, it is certain that not many people are willing to do so. Therefore, when we assess the collective consequences of a certain kind of act, we should

1 Cf. op. cit., p. 72.

consider the actual conditions in which that type of act will be done by everyone; in other words, we must consider whether the collective consequences of a certain kind of act are empirically possible. Professor Baier is, I think, right in laying down three conditions which a wrong act must satisfy in accordance with the generalization argument:

- (i) the consequences would be undesirable if everyone did it;
- (ii) all are equally entitled to engage in it and
- (iii) engaging in this sort of behaviour is an indulgence, not a sacrifice....¹

In moral disputes, the generalization argument usually is very powerful in settling moral disagreements. But sometimes, our opponent may, to escape the logical consequence of the argument, provide reasons for denying that its application to the case in question is legitimate. And it should be noticed that there are perfectly legitimate ways that our opponent can use for this purpose.

He may show, for example, that he is in a unique position; accordingly, no other person has the right to do what he has done. It follows that there are no collective consequences of everyone's doing it, and that the question of whether its collective consequences are undesirable or not, does not arise. By implication, the argument is out of place in this case. For example, in policy-making conferences, the participants have to vote to decide which policies should be adopted; the chairman of the conference, however, does not vote. It is obvious that if every participant does

¹ KE Baier, The Moral Point of View, p. 211.

not vote the policy cannot be decided, and this consequence would be undesirable. But the chairman can argue that his act is not wrong in accordance with generalization argument, for no participant of the conference is in the same position as is he. Assuredly, the chairman's act (of not voting) is justified.¹ But if his reason for not voting is that he is the son of Smith, then, the reason is not a good one, for this would provide every participant with a good reason for not voting because they all are the sons of someone. (I am assuming here that Smith's interest is not particularly involved in the decision, for if it were, this might provide the chairman with excellent grounds for not voting.) Thus the argument can, under certain circumstances, legitimately apply to his act.

Our opponent may show that only a few persons are situated as is he, and that even if everyone similarly situated in this way acted in the same way, the consequences would be not undesirable though if many persons did the same, the collective effect would be disastrous. For example, John who is a fireman drove his fire-engine through a red-light. This is justified but if everyone did the same, the consequences would be undesirable. By the generalization argument John's act is wrong. But John can show that not everyone has the right to drive in the same way, as not everyone is a fireman racing to the scene of a fire. Indeed, John may point out, there are very few people similarly situated, and their driving through the occasional red-light will not

1 I am assuming throughout that the chairman acts solely as a moderator and does not have the right to vote.

cause undesirable consequences.

On the other hand, our opponent may deny that this moral judgment is universalizable. Thus, the moral judgment, "I ought not to vote in this election" does not imply that "everyone similarly situated ought not to vote in this election." So the generalization argument cannot apply to his actions. He is, in effect, rejecting the principle of universalizability and thereby rendering his judgment non-moral.

Our opponent accepts the generalization as valid; but argues that his act of not voting in an election is not wrong even though the collective consequences of his act result in the collapse of the government. And his reason is that the collapse of the government would not, in his view, be at all undesirable. Now, the disagreement about the act of not voting is changed into the disagreement about the desirability or undesirability of the collective consequences of the act. The latter disagreement clearly should be resolved by the individual's response to the collective consequences of the act. Accordingly, we may ask him in which situation he would prefer to live. If he rejects the anarchist's solution, he must vote.

If the anarchist votes, he fails to act on his moral judgment that his act of not voting in an election is not wrong; consequently, he is acting in an inconsistent way. Obviously, the latter step of the argument is made with

the help of one of the logical properties of moral judgments - prescriptivity. If our anarchist would prefer the collapse of the government, and consequently, does not vote, he is acting in accord with his moral beliefs. This cannot, however, prove that his act is not wrong, for the collective consequences of his act - the collapse of the government may be undesirable to others; in a sense, then his actions are wrong in accordance with the generalization argument.

5.3. "How would you like it if someone did that to you?"

This is a kind of Golden-Rule argument. Usually, when people act in moral situations, they do not know exactly what the consequences of their act will be. In order to show or to remind them of undesirable consequences of their act, such as, for example, inflicting pain on others, we can use this so-called argument. There are two possible ways to do this. The first way is to point out that his situation is similar to the victim's or the receiver's. In accordance with his moral judgment, he also should be the receiver or the victim of the act. For instance, we may argue against a Nazi who holds that "It is right to put Jews into the gas-chamber," by pointing out that he has Jewish blood; and thus he should also be put into the gas-chamber. Our argument, obviously relies on the universalizability of moral judgments rather than on the Golden Rule. If he is not willing to be put into the gas-chamber, he is not acting on his moral rule, and thus, his act is inconsistent with his moral rule. To be consistent, he

must change his moral rule. The second way is that, regardless less what situation our opponent is in, we just ask him to imagine how he would like it if he were in the victim's position. There are two possible answers our opponent may give: (1) "I dislike this being done to me" or (2) "I like this being done to me." If his answer is the former, we can say his act is wrong due to its violation of the Golden Rule, and, by the same token, prove that our opponent's moral judgment, "This kind of act is right," to be mistaken. If his answer is the latter, his act is right, for he does to others what he would have them do to him. But if we formulate the Golden Rule as "Do unto others as they would have you do unto them, and don't do unto others what they would not have you to do unto them," his act would be wrong when its receivers dislike it. It is obvious that the version of the Golden Rule "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" differs from, "Do to others as they would have you do unto them, and don't do unto others as they would not have you do unto them,"¹ in the sense that an act that violates the former formulation of the rule does not necessarily violate the latter. Only in the case where human beings have the same wants, will the two versions be identical. Golden Rule is, it seems to me, established to prevent acts that would hurt their (potential) receiver's interest. If it is so, the latter version should be better than the former, for the reason that we need not, in the latter, presuppose the contingent fact that human beings have common wants or interests. And even if they have, the latter can

1 Cf. G.H. Von Wright, The Varieties of Goodness, p. 201.

work as well as the former.

In the second way of using the argument, the force of argument is not logical, but rather psychological, i.e. we appeal directly to the desires or wants or interests of the individual. If our opponent has no desires or wants or interests, or does not care about his own interests, or has no imagination of the possible undesirable consequences of an action, the force of the argument will be minimized or lost. With these three classes of persons it is extremely hard to work this line of argument with any success.

To be sure, it is not feasible to perform an act that has undesirable consequences, in order to show its undesirability. What we can do is to describe the act vividly. For this purpose, we may ask our opponent to read novels in which similar types of acts are described, or to see a moving picture in which similar types of acts are performed.

The "How would you like it if someone....?" argument cannot apply to some cases. This point can be elucidated by considering an example: Suppose Smith killed a banker when he robbed the bank; Smith is caught, tried, and sentenced to death. James is in charge of carrying out the penalty. When James is about to put the rope round Smith's neck, Smith asked James, "How would you like it if someone hanged you?" Surely, James would not like to be hanged. Could we conclude, by this argument, that James' act is wrong? Before answering this question, let us look closely

at the difference between the two cases. Obviously, these two acts belong to the same act-category: that of killing a man. But the vital difference between them is that they are done for different reasons, Smith killed the banker in order to rob his money; his act is supported by no morally good reason. We can prove that his act is wrong by the argument. On the other hand, James, when he hangs Smith, is just doing his duty as a hangman. His act is morally justified. Therefore, we cannot conclude that it is wrong by the "How would you like it if someone ...?" argument. If we conclude that it is wrong, we would also be committed to say that every act of punishment is wrong according to the Golden Rule.

It follows that the "How would you like it if someone ...?" argument cannot apply to acts which are supported by morally good reasons even though they go against the receiver's interest.

This argument relies on the Golden Rule. If our opponent accepts it, we can argue by appealing to consistency. On the other hand, if he does not regard it as a valid moral rule, he is consistent when he denies that an act which violates the rule is wrong. However, the Golden Rule is a rule of "morality," consequently, we can prove validly that his moral judgment that "Acts that violate the Golden Rule are right" is wrong, even though he does not accept our proof or the Golden Rule and the argument engendered by it.

6. CRITERIA OF MORAL AGREEMENT

In the preceeding chapters, we have discussed the structure of moral disagreements and ways in which they could be settled. Settling a moral disagreement, as we have suggested, may be either that it is dissolved into a non-moral one, or that the disputants get agreement in the sense that they accept a valid common moral judgment. By what criteria, can we tell that two persons agree on moral matters?; this question we have not yet studied. Now, let us consider it briefly.

It should be noticed that two persons, having no moral disagreement, may not agree on all moral matters, for, one of them may have no moral opinion about them. To have moral agreement on them implies that both individuals have the same moral opinion or the same moral judgment about them. It should be clear that in order to explicate the phrase, "to have moral agreement", we must clear the meaning of the phrase, "to have the same moral judgment." And the latter cannot be told unless the meaning of the phrase "to have a moral judgment" is known. Making a moral judgment on something presupposes a moral rule or principle by which the object is judged. It follows from this that two persons having the same moral judgment on something implies that they also hold the same moral rule or principle.

By their nature, moral rules or principles are not only practical in the sense that they guide our action, but are

also theoretical in the sense that they govern our moral appraisal of actions. If we adhere to a moral rule or principle, we have to act on it and criticize the other person's conduct by it. Acting on a moral rule or principle is not only acting on it sometimes on some occasions, but all the time in all similar occasions unless there is an over-riding reason against doing so. And the willingness to do a particular act in a particular situation according to moral reasons implies that the agent is prepared to do the similar act in similar situations. If we do not perform similar acts in similar situations, we shall be inconsistent. Our doing a particular act, A, in a particular situation, S, on a moral reason, implies the moral judgment, "Act A is right under circumstances S", which, in turn, entails the universal prescription, "Do an act similar to A in all situations similar to S"; if we fail to do an act which is similar to A in a situation similar to S, we implicitly deny the universal prescription, just as the statement, "This crow is white", denies the empirical generalization, "All crows are black." We cannot, logically speaking, accept the universal prescription and at the same time, perform an act which is incompatible with it without acting in a self-contradictory way, just as we cannot accept the two empirical statements mentioned above without contradicting ourselves. Therefore, by doing an act which is incompatible with the universal prescription, we implicitly reject it and the moral rule or principle from which it is derived. It follows that a man's failing to

act on a moral rule or on a moral judgment entails his rejection, or dissent from it. This feature of acting on a moral rule or principle is derived from the logical property of moral rules or principles, universal prescriptivity. Therefore, to say that we hold a moral rule or principle entails that we do what it prescribes.

It is important to notice that the enquiry as to whether a man acts on a moral rule or not, should be from the agent's point of view. When we view an act from the spectator's point of view, the fact that a man fails to act on his moral rule or principle does not necessarily imply that he clearly knows what he has done is contrary to his moral rule or principle. He may, when he performed the act, have forgotten some relevant features in the given situation, e.g. when he promised to return the book to his friend, or not know the nature of the act, e.g. to unintentionally inflict pain on someone. To be sure, forgetfulness of what one ought to do does not justify his not doing it. By and large, if a man repeatedly forgets to do what his moral rule prescribes on those occasions where action is demanded, we are inclined to doubt that he really holds the rule, even if he verbally claims that he does. But in some cases, we do not even doubt that a man holds a particular moral rule even though he forgets to act on it. For example, if a man often forgets to keep his promises because he concentrates his attention on taking care of his seriously ill son when he should be doing what he had promised, or has

suffered a loss of memory resulting from a car collision, etc., we do not say, in ordinary speech, that he is acting against his moral rule, or that he does not really hold the moral rule "Promises ought to be kept." There are, indeed, cases between the polar positions of always forgetting to act on a moral rule in ordinary situations, and of forgetting to act on a moral rule in extraordinary situations such as loss of memory after an accident. And what kind of explanation we should accept as sound or as providing good reasons for not doing what his moral rule prescribes depends on the circumstances.

An individual may also fail to act on a moral rule because he mistakenly identifies the case as not being one which is an instance of the rule he holds; or he may act against the rule without being wholly aware that he is doing so. Of these cases, we cannot say, in a full sense, that he is acting contrary to his moral rule, for the reason that saying that someone is acting against his moral rule implies that he is fully aware, when he does it, that what he is doing is violating his moral rule.¹ But, of course, we might blame him as ignorant.

Further, even from the agent's point of view, a man who does not do what his moral rule prescribes cannot be said to be going against his rule when the rule is overridden by a superior moral rule he holds, i.e. what he did

¹ Cf. P.L. Gardiner, "On Assenting to a Moral Principle", Aristotelian Society, Proceedings, (1954-55), p. 31.

was to follow the over-riding rule in a situation in which two moral rules are in conflict. For example, to return a rifle to a homicidal-maniac, is to keep one's promise; but it is also helping to kill. Not to return the rifle (when one has promised to do so) violates the moral rule "Promises ought to be kept"; but his returning it violates another rule "It is wrong to help someone to kill." Suppose also, that in his morality, the latter rule is superior to the former; accordingly, he acts on the latter rule. In ordinary speech it is strange to say that he does not hold the former rule, though he acts knowingly against it. Again, when a man is confronted by moral conflict, and thinks that two moral rules have equal force, he must yield to one of them. One can hardly say that he acts against the other one. Obviously, this case is different from the case in which a man, in a moral conflict, knowingly yields to the inferior moral rule. It might be said, in general, that a man's acting against a moral rule with over-riding reasons is not to infringe it, or not to fail to accept a singular prescription which is entailed by the rule. That is to say, the subordination of one moral rule to another moral rule is not equivalent to not holding the former moral rule at all.

There are also cases which exemplify the well-known problem of Akrasia or moral weakness. It is a common occurrence that people, in moral situations, fail, with compunction or remorse, to do what is prescribed by their moral

rule after their trying to do it; we usually admit that they hold the rule.¹

It should now be evident that when a man does not act on his moral rule, he is not acting against it unless he is fully aware, when doing it, that what he is engaged in doing is contrary to a moral rule that he holds, and yet does the act without over-riding moral reasons or compunction or remorse. And, in the absence of counter-vailing factors, including over-riding moral reasons, a man, who holds a moral rule, should consistently act on it. This behavioral criterion is a necessary criterion of holding a moral rule, but not a sufficient and necessary one.

It is important to point out that in saying, "act consistently on a moral rule", does not mean that the agent must actually have done all acts which the rule prescribes on all occasions. For, understand in this above-mentioned way, it would be impossible to say that a man holds any particular moral rule till he is dead; at that time, we can check all that he had done to find out whether he had acted consistently on it or not. To be sure, no one knows in future how many occasions on which he should do acts prescribed by a moral rule, will come up; and it is logically impossible to have done something in future. Even if, up to the present, he consistently acts on the rule, he may

1 Cf. R.M. Hare, The Language of Morals, p. 169.

violate it in the future. Consequently, it is impossible to judge whether he really holds it or not, just as we, advocating the rigorous application of the verification principle, cannot say that a general empirical statement, "All crows are black", is true, for we have not observed all past, present and future crows.

If by "Acting consistently on moral rule", we mean that, so far the agent had not acted against the rule in all appropriate circumstances. That is, we admit that a man holds a moral rule or principle till we know that he had acted deliberately against it without any good reason, or compunction or remorse, just as we accept the empirical statement "All crows are black" as true on the evidence we have, till we discover a counter-example, e.g. a white crow.

Certainly, a man's having not acted against a moral rule, does not imply that his having acted on it on some occasions, just as not having found a counter-example to the general empirical statement, "all crows are black" does not imply that we have some evidence that some crows are black. It is possible that the agent may never have acted on the moral rule just as it is possible that we may never have seen a black crow. Apparently from this interpretation of the phrase, "acting consistently on moral rule", it follows that a man holds all moral rules or principles that he has never acted against. However, this logical consequence does not follow for the behavioral

criterion for this, as we have earlier mentioned, does not provide us with necessary and sufficient condition for holding a moral rule or principle. And it is improper to lay down the condition to the effect that if a man holds a moral rule or principle, he has acted on it at least once. For this condition entails that no one can hold a moral rule or principle unless he has ability and right to act on it. It follows that a man who cannot (logically and/or technically) do what the rule prescribes is precluded from holding it. Consequently, a bachelor cannot hold moral rules about marriage, e.g. "One ought to be faithful to his wife" or "Parents ought to provide food for their children", for he has no wife and children; it is logically impossible for him to act as a husband or a father. This logical consequence is incompatible with the fact that we always say that a bachelor can hold the moral rules even if he cannot act on them. This is because of the fact that there is, in ordinary speech, another criterion of holding a moral rule or principle besides the behavioral one. That is, a man who holds a moral rule or principle when he has no ability and/or right to act on it, should pass the following tests set up by Ryle. Ryle writes:

- (1) That he utters it (the moral conviction) regularly, relevantly and without hesitation.
- (2) That the other things which he says regularly and unhesitatingly presuppose it.
- (3) That he is ready or eager to try to persuade other people of it and to dissuade them of what is inconsistent with it.¹

1 G. Ryle, "Conscience and Moral Convictions", Philosophy and Analysis, (ed., M. Macdonald, Basil Blackwell, 1954), p. 158.

A moral act is an act in accord with reason; to say that a man is acting morally implies that he is making moral judgment. It is logically impossible to act morally without making any moral judgments. From this, we may say that the consistent moral appraisal by a moral rule is a necessary criterion of our holding it. In other words, a man cannot be said to hold a moral rule if he does not use it to appraise moral matters consistently. To say this does not imply the holder must make explicit his moral judgment, e.g. utter his moral judgment loudly or write it out clearly; he may keep his moral judgment to himself.

A moral rule is, as we have said before, not only a rule of moral appraisal but also a rule of action. If we make a moral judgment in accordance with moral rule, we must also be prepared to act on it in a situation where action is demanded. So, to hold a moral rule, we must not only consistently apply it in our moral appraisal of acts, but must also act on it consistently; furthermore, our acts must be consistent with our moral judgment.

It is clear that which criterion is appropriate to decide which moral rule a man holds depends on circumstances. So far the criteria we suggest are:

- (1) A man holds a moral rule or principle if, and only if, he consistently applies the moral judgment and acts on it in the absence of countervailing factors; his acts must be also consistent with his moral judgment and vice-versa.

- (2) In the case that a man cannot act on the moral rule, he holds it if, and only if, he consistently applies it to make moral judgments.

Now, we are in the position to formulate the criterion of moral agreement. Two persons are in moral agreement on a moral act if they hold the same moral rule and principle which is relevant to it. And this implies that they will act in the same situations, have the same criterion of right (or wrong), good (or bad), and have the same attitude to the object on which they are passing moral judgment.

The criterion of moral agreement formulated above may be said to be too strong. For, two persons who hold the same moral rules and always act in the same way in similar situations cannot be, in accordance with it, described as being in moral agreement if they hold different moral principles. For example, one's moral rules are derived from principle of utility, the other's from "The Will of God"; but, in practice their moral rules are the same, and they act in the same way in similar situations. These two individuals, though they agree on moral matters, disagree on what is the fundamental criteria of the rightness (or wrongness) of action. We must admit that they have, for all practical purpose, the same morality. So, we may suggest another, and weaker criterion of moral agreement: two persons are in moral agreement if in moral situations they always act in similar ways.

7. CONCLUSION

Disagreement in morals, as we have tried to show, can be settled rationally. Our contentions are that moral judgments have the logical properties of universalizability and prescriptivity; that there are paradigm cases of valid moral reasoning; and that we can settle moral disagreements rationally in virtue of these logical features of moral judgments. To make this view clear, we should elucidate three different senses of the phrase, "settling a moral disagreement." In short, settling a moral disagreement may be taken in three ways: (a) the two disputants arrive at moral agreement; (b) the disagreement is validly settled; (c) the disagreement is dissolved into a non-moral one.

Let us analyse them respectively. In section 5.1., we suggested that when two disputants, both holding the same moral rule or principle, disagree on a moral matter due to their disagreement in beliefs about them, their disagreement may be settled in two ways: (1) by getting moral agreement on logical grounds, i.e. what they agree on is a valid moral judgment in accordance with their moral point of view; or (2) getting moral agreement not on logical grounds, i.e. what they agree on is not a valid moral judgment that is determined by the moral rules or principle on which they both agree. Of (2) we are not inclined to say that their disagreement is settled rationally, in the sense that a moral judgment is supported by appropriate moral rules or principle; for their beliefs about

a given issue, though they both agree on it after discussion, are false; that is, the minor premise of the practical syllogism, of which a commonly accepted moral rule or principle is the major premise, is false. Of course, this kind of settlement of a moral disagreement differs from those that are settled by other kinds of methods such as brain-washing or coercion, for it is based on reason. From what we just said, (a) should be divided into two classes: the class of valid agreements of which (1) is a case, and the class of invalid agreements to which (2) belongs.

Further, they may not even, after long argument, reach agreement, but one of them may have proved, in the course of the argument, that his moral judgment is true in accordance with their commonly shared moral point of view, without getting his opponent's acceptance of it. That is, his belief about the issue, or the minor premise of the practical syllogism, is true. In some cases, disagreement between two disputants is due to their disagreement on a certain moral principle, though their beliefs about the issue are the same. In order to show that his opponent's moral judgment is not correct, one of them may point out that his own moral principle is true¹ in the sense that it is identical with the principle of morality, i.e. point out that the major premise of his practical syllogism is

1 I use the terms "true" and "false"; "valid" and "invalid" in at times extended senses. But this can be made clear from the context. The choice of the terms is perhaps unhappy, but none other are available.

true. But his opponent may still not accept it. In two cases can moral disagreements, in my opinion, be validly settled. To say this implies that settling a moral disagreement validly or rationally does not entail that two disputants get moral agreement. There are parallel cases in disputes in the other disciplines. For example, two persons disagree over their beliefs about an issue or the solution of an equation; one of them has proved that his belief or solution is true by showing that his belief is supported by good empirical evidence; or that his criterion of evidence is true; or that his solution is logically derived from axioms in accordance with valid rules of inference or that the axioms from which he derives his solution is the true set. In spite of this, his opponent does not accept this proof. To be sure, his opponent's reluctance to accept his proof does not, in any way, affect its validity, because it relies on the criterion of evidence in empirical discourse, or the rule of validity in mathematics, but not on his opponent's acceptance of it. By the same token, the validity of a moral judgment relies on a moral rule or principle, but not on the individual's acceptance of it. It is obvious that our view is incompatible with that of the Emotivists, for they deny that there can be such a thing as valid moral reasoning. According to their view, to draw a distinction between valid and invalid moral reasoning is senseless. An Emotivist would hold that the settlement of a moral disagreement simply consists in the two disputants reaching

agreement on the issue in question, regardless of how, or on what ground, they settle it; by implication, then, the distinction between a valid and an invalid settlement of moral disagreement is equally senseless.

The Emotivists may argue that when we say that disagreement over a moral principle can be rationally settled by showing that one disputant's moral principle is valid, we are begging the question by legislating which moral principle we ought to hold. Their reason for arguing in this way is that, since a moral principle is a fundamental criterion of the moral rightness or wrongness of actions and there is no test of valid or invalid moral principle, it cannot be valid or invalid. To be sure, moral principle is not susceptible to logical or direct proof in the sense that it is derived from another principle; however, we cannot, from this, infer that there is no test of a valid moral principle. We might prove that there is in a broader sense. As Mill has pointed out, "There is a larger meaning of the word proof, in which this question is as amenable to it as any other of the disputed questions of philosophy."¹

Moral principles must be universalizable and prescriptive. To be universalizable implies that the statement does not contain a proper name or other singular terms; and to be prescriptive implies that the principle cannot be self-contradictory in the sense that an act may be both right and wrong in accordance with it, for it is logically impos-

1 J.S. Mill, op. cit., p. 192.

sible that a person do and do not do one and the same act the same time. These two formal requirements may be said to be tests of a valid moral principle, i.e. no principle can legitimately be called a "moral" principle if it does not satisfy them. Furthermore, prescriptivity and universalizability of moral principles, though they are formal, may impose some restrictions on the content of the moral principle.¹ Human actions can be divided into two classes: first, we have those that are psychologically possible; second we have those that are psychologically impossible to be done by humans; further, moral principles are held in all moral situations and can be applied to all moral agents. So, actions prescribed by moral principle must not only be those which can practically be done by some agents, but by all. Accordingly, when we consider what moral principle meets this condition; we cannot argue purely on logical grounds; the answer to the question (viz., what moral principle is possible psychologically for individuals to act on?) should come from a view of human nature based on empirical investigations. If it is in the nature of the human animal to pursue pleasure and to eschew pain, no moral principle, then, can properly prescribe people to perform, in all situations, acts that will cause them to suffer pain, because it is practically impossible that they can perform that kind of act. It follows that a

1 Cf. R.M. Hare, Freedom and Reason, pp. 97 - 100.

moral principle cannot (properly) prescribe acts that are against human nature.

A morality, it seems to me, is established for a purpose. If all human acts were of the kind that never have undesirable consequences, and if all human beings acted to maximizing other people's happiness, there would be no point to morality. But, unfortunately, that is just not the case. It is a contingent fact that many individuals act in their own interest at, if necessary, the cost of others. Thus, in order that people live peaceably together, they must have some rules of conduct to prevent acts that may hurt others, and to recommend acts that promote the happiness and well-being of everyone. This is the purpose of morality, and it is practically necessary that individuals accept and abide by it. From this common purpose, we can derive another criterion of a valid moral principle, namely that a valid moral principle must serve it whenever possible. Moreover, it is quite possible that some principles of conduct may serve the interest of all individuals involved, but it is also possible that one of them may serve them in a better way. Accordingly, we have a criterion to determine which of two (or more) conflicting ones is the one that will best serve our interests.

Evidently, a valid moral principle or morality is not that which is accepted by a group of people or by all human beings, but rather that which satisfies a certain set of criteria.

Among possible moral principles, I believe that the principle of utility or the greatest happiness principle is the best moral principle for three reasons: First, it satisfies the logical requirements earlier laid down; second, it is based on human nature; and third, it serves for the most part of the purpose of morality.

If what we have said is correct, the Emotivist's argument in support of the contention that no moral principle can be proved to be either valid or invalid is unsound. Perhaps, they will not accept the criteria of a valid moral principle. If so, we cannot convince them, just as we cannot convince sceptics in other enquiries. We may, however, ask of them the following questions: On what ground do they doubt that what we say is not true?

On the other hand, a moral disagreement may be settled by converting it into a non-moral one. This can be done by showing that one of the disputant's moral judgment does not satisfy one or both of the logical requirements of moral judgments. This is (c) sense of settling a moral disagreement. This way of settling moral disagreement appeals solely to the logic of moral judgments; therefore, it can also be valid or invalid.

It should be very clear by now that a moral disagreement, like a dispute in science, can be settled rationally; but in saying this, I do not wish to imply that all moral

disagreements can be settled in the sense that all disputants accept what is rationally proved. But this phenomenon is not peculiar to morals; in science, it often turns out that valid agreement is not reached because one party will not accept another's proof even when he ought to. Nevertheless, we admit that disputes in science can be settled rationally. This phenomenon provides no better reason to deny that moral disagreement can also be settled rationally.

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