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The Moral Society: Its Structure and Effects

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Preface

Some people claim that when they are speaking of moral obligations, rights, virtues or vices, they are speaking of their own personal preferences about how they and others should behave. Others claim to be speaking about the mores of their society -- the customs or conventions of that society. Such views of morality are relative, in the first case, to individual people, and in the second case, to societies. That is to say, on these accounts, the same action by some agent at some time, may be morally good with respect to one person or society and morally bad or morally indifferent with respect to some other person or society. The first account may also be described as subjective, that is to say, concerning personal feelings about behaviour rather than any objective facts about that behaviour.

Others claim that there is necessarily a prescriptive or perhaps an imperative aspect to our moral discourse. Some of these would claim that moral discourse is not to be taken as the sort of thing in which truth and falsity is relevant at all, though, perhaps 'correct' and 'incorrect' are still allowable. Clearly, what is prescribed or ordered by one person may not be prescribed or ordered by someone else. So such accounts of moral discourse remain relativist in that sense.

Nobody in their right mind would doubt the existence of personal preferences, societal mores and prescriptions and commands. But there are those, perhaps the great majority of us, who think that no amount of discussion of such matters alone can amount to moral discourse. They believe that if we knew any moral principles at all, these would provide an absolute and objective guide to behaviour that is independent of anyone's feelings, prescriptions or commands and what is acceptable in society.

This inquiry is primarily about this latter sense of morality and the sort of society in which absolute objective moral beliefs are a significant constraint on behaviour. There is nothing new in the idea that the indoctrination of such moral beliefs provides a mechanism for social control. The questions which this inquiry raises are firstly whether such indoctrination is some sort of a fraud or at least an artifice, and secondly whether or not this mode of societal control is conducive to human satisfaction.

These questions have been addressed by previous authors including Thomas Hobbes, David Hume and John Mackie. These authors answered both questions in the affirmative. I argue, to the contrary, that there is no evidence for the view that the use of absolute objective moral beliefs as a social control is conducive to human satisfaction. The matter is an empirical issue to be determined by psychological and sociological research. However, much research that is practiced under the name of moral sociology assumes a relativist approach to morality, so that what is being studied is the socialisation of human beings, or perhaps the development of altruism in children. These things are of great interest and doubtless of relevance to the study of morality in society. But I am concerned that they are no substitute for such a study. Some of the conjectures addressed in this inquiry have received some attention from psychologists and sociologists. But much more work needs to be done. If this essay gets some more people to think about moral sociology and stimulates more empirical research in the area, it will have done its job.

The author appreciates helpful discussions with his colleagues in the Philosophy Department at the University of Queensland, Richard Brandt and Frithjof Bergmann of the University of Michigan, the late John Mackie of University College, Oxford, Hector Munro of Monash University, the late Malcolm Rennie of Goolmangar, John Burnheim of the University of Sydney, Jack Smart of the Australian National University, Graham Jamieson,

INTRODUCTION

There is a widespread belief that if most people were to abide by their moral beliefs then life would be much more satisfying for almost everybody than it would be if most people were not bothered about morality at all.

In opposition to this position, it is suggested here that the more that people are motivated by moral concerns, the more likely it is that their society will be elitist, authoritarian and dishonest, that they will have scant respect for most of its members, that they will be relatively inefficient in engendering human happiness, self-esteem or satisfaction, that they will be relatively inefficient in the resolution of conflicts, and that their moralising will exacerbate conflicts, often with physical violence or even war as a result.

The arguments which will be offered for this position are unlikely to be conclusive. The issue falls within the realm of moral sociology, and the fact is that there is very little solid sociological evidence available for or against the position.

My motive for presenting my views on the matter as best I can is not simply the desire to correct a widespread false belief. Many widespread false beliefs would be relatively harmless. But this one, if I am right, is not. I am concerned enough for others to try to warn them of the dangers of morality. Even if the evidence for such danger is below par, a warning is not irrelevant to such concern if the dangers are great. This book will have served a purpose if it stimulates some of its readers into a genuine investigation of their own beliefs concerning morality.

Here is a synopsis of what is to follow.

Chapter 1 is about the meaning of moral terms. Though the meaning of moral terms clearly varies from some people to others, I argue that the meaning of moral terms delineated here is traditional and in conformity with most common practice. That view is that morality is not relative to persons or societies; that if some particular act (as opposed to a type of act) is morally good or bad or right or obligatory it is absolutely so. The view is also that the moral worth of people and their behaviour is an objective matter that is not to be determined by subjective feelings about those people or their behaviour.

Thus, I argue in particular that 'morality' does not usually mean what some people name, or rather, I would say, misname personal morality, that is, the ways in which some individual person would like everybody, including herself or himself, to behave. On the contrary, it will be allowed that some person could want everyone to behave in a way which was, perhaps unbeknown to that person, immoral.

I argue also that 'morality' does not usually mean what sort of behaviour is acceptable or unacceptable to a society, that is, what I shall call the mores of a society. It will be allowed that when William Wilberforce and other reformers argued that the mores of their society were immoral, they were not contradicting themselves.

By the same token, when people talk about what is and is not moral, they are not to be taken as talking merely about the moral beliefs of a society or individual; nor merely about how things appear morally to a society or individual. It will be allowed that moral beliefs can be false; and that appearances, including moral appearances, can be deceptive.

More controversially, I shall argue that if there were any knowledge of moral obligation, it would have its primary source in an intuitive apprehension of a moral quality by some person using a faculty that most people call 'conscience'; in other words, that morality has an intuitionist epistemology. Neither purely logical considerations nor these combined with sense experience can be a primary source of moral knowledge.

In Chapter 2, I present my view of the structure of the moral society and its method of

self-perpetuation. I suggest that the faculty of moral conscience is a myth and that moral obligations are myths also. There are no moral obligations to be known, and, even if there were, we are not possessed of the intuitive apparatus needed to apprehend them.

Since there are no moral obligations, there is nothing whose existence would entail the existence of moral obligations. So there are no moral virtues, vices, sins, morally good, bad or evil people, acts, or products of such acts, or goods that we are morally obliged to promote, or evils that we are morally obliged to avoid or eradicate.

The morality of a society is stipulatively defined as the extent of the occurrence throughout society of

> (a) the belief in moral obligations, vices, moral virtue, sins and morally good or bad acts or morally good or bad people, and
>
> (b) the wish to conform behaviour to these moral beliefs.

I shall claim, and these are sociological conjectures, that:

> (a) Many, if not most, societies today are highly moral in the sense just outlined.
>
> (b) Within moral societies, the desire in moral agents to act morally and to have others acting morally is instilled by using reward and punishment in childhood. Some moral beliefs will be instilled in the process.
>
> (c) Moral agents may also accept moral beliefs from those whom the agent regards as moral authorities -- parents, teachers, ministers of religion, et cetera.
>
> (d) There is a rough social ordering of moral authority within the moral society for the purposes of moral indoctrination and the application of rewards and punishments for moral success and failure.
>
> (e) Those at or near the top of the moral hierarchy may sometimes modify their systems of moral belief by mistaking their personal desires about behaviour for moral insights.
>
> (f) One's place in the moral ordering is a function of, among other things, one's self-esteem, and this, in turn, is a function of the extent to which rewards have exceeded punishments or vice versa in one's moral conditioning.

In Chapter 3, the sociological effects of morality's perpetuation mechanisms are discussed. It is argued that the moral society will have a tendency to be elitist, authoritarian and inegalitarian. Its members may have unnecessary burdens of ego competition and guilt. Where there is conflict between conflicting moral leaderships, the chances of physical violence and warfare are enhanced.

Chapter 4 critically examines various ideas about how morality or systems akin to morality may be used to maximise satisfaction. It is concluded that there is no evidence to suggest that morality as an institution within human society is of any such use.

Chapter 5 examines the possibilities for empirically testing the theories outlined in Chapters 2 and 3.

Let us proceed, then, to a discussion of what is meant by 'moral' and its cognates.

Chapter 1 -- The Meaning of 'Moral'
1.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I shall try to explain what I mean by 'moral' and its cognates. I do not claim to be using the term in any eccentric sense. Nevertheless, readers may wish to check their semantic intuitions against mine to ensure that we are not at cross purposes. I shall not attempt to construct a neat definition which captures all the relevant logic of the term within one short axiom. I am not sure, in any case, whether that is possible. Instead I shall make ten logical points and hope they will suffice to ensure sufficient understanding.

I do not claim that all these points are uncontroversial as a description of the commonly accepted meaning of moral terms. Indeed I doubt very strongly that there is such a thing as the commonly accepted meaning of these terms. I would claim, to the contrary, that there is considerable variation in the semantics of 'moral' and its cognates throughout English speaking societies at least. Moreover, even within what might be regarded as

standard usages, there may be vagueness and variation of meaning which can engender confusion. In such cases, I may take the liberty of stipulating exactly what I mean. Nevertheless the senses of 'moral' to be used here will be within range of what is standard understanding. This claim will be supported by appeal to recent empirical investigations by F.E.Trainer [1] in Sydney with children, university students, university staff and adults from the public at large. It would be surprising if this sub-culture differed markedly in these respects from other parts of Australian society or, for that matter, from other sub-populations of the English speaking societies, or even from any of those societies that have been influenced strongly by any of the major religions, including at least Judaism, Christianity, Mohammedanism, Hinduism and Buddhism. Our evident ability to comprehend the morality, if such it is, in the cinema and television productions of these various cultures would otherwise need an alternative explanation. Nevertheless, the matter is in need of further empirical investigation.

The ten points concern:

1. a stipulation to delineate what I shall mean by 'moral proposition' as, for example, in such contexts as 'Non-moral propositions never entail moral propositions.'
2. the fact that terms which may be useful in expressing moral statements, in particular, the words 'obliged', 'good', 'bad', 'right', 'wrong', are not always used in the assertion or denial of some moral proposition -- that the words just mentioned are not, in fact, specifically moral words at all,
3. the absolute or non-relative nature of moral obligation,
4. the objective nature of moral obligation,
5. the universalisability of moral obligation,
6. the source of moral knowledge,
7. the non-moral implications of moral statements,
8. the meaning given here to 'moral', 'immoral' and 'amoral' and a denial of the alleged prescriptivity of moral assertions,
9. a denial of the alleged overriding nature of moral obligations,
10. a (hopefully) non-controversial stipulation to ensure that the nihilist view presented here is not trivialised by nominalism -- a disbelief in the existence of abstract entities.

I shall now go on to say a little about each of these points in turn.

1.2 Moral Propositions, Moral Terms and Moral Nihilists

In a moral society, most people will want to do what is morally right and hence will want to know their moral obligations. A correct understanding of what counts as moral knowledge is therefore important in an understanding of the moral society. As we shall see in section 2.6, there are many different theories about moral knowledge. What many of these theories have in common is the idea that moral knowledge has very different origins to knowledge of the world gleaned through the senses (such as knowledge of how many coins there are in my pocket) or to knowledge of a conceptual nature (such as whether all divorced people have been married).

For such theories to make sense, moral truths and falsities have to be differentiable from other sorts of truths and falsities. I shall call anything that is either a truth or a falsehood a proposition. So the problem is to differentiate moral propositions from other kinds of propositions.

Some have claimed that if moral knowledge is to have different origins from knowledge of other matters, then moral propositions should not be validly deducible from non-moral propositions. This seems to be the intent of David Hume's famous dictum, in his Treatise of Human Nature that it is fallacious to argue from 'is' to 'ought' or 'ought not'. To quote:

In every system of morality which I have hitherto met with, I have always remarked, that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary way of reasoning, and establishes the being of a God, or makes observations concerning human affairs; when of a sudden I am

surprised to find, that instead of the usual copulations of propositions, is, and is not, I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an ought, or an ought not. This change is imperceptible; but is, however, of the last consequence. For as this ought, or ought not, expresses some new relation or affirmation, it is necessary that it should be observed and explained; and at the same time that a reason should be given, for what seems altogether inconceivable, how this relation can be a deduction from others, which are entirely different from it. [2]

Arthur Prior has argued, [3] that if moral propositions cannot be deduced from non-moral propositions, then there cannot be any moral propositions. The way his argument runs can be illustrated as follows.

Allow that both 'The moon is yellow' and 'The moon is not yellow' say nothing about what is morally right or wrong. Allow also that 'It is morally wrong for Mary to have an abortion' expresses a moral proposition (whether false or true does not matter) and consider the argument:

> The moon is yellow.
> Therefore, either the moon is yellow or Mary has a moral obligation to feed her children.

If we count this as a valid argument (and most people would), then we would have to count the conclusion as a non-moral proposition, if Hume's dictum were to be respected.

Very well. Let us count the conclusion as a non-moral proposition. But consider now the equally valid argument:

> The moon is not yellow.
> Either the moon is yellow or Mary has a moral obligation to feed her children.
> Therefore Mary has a moral obligation to feed her children.

We appear now to have a valid argument from non-moral premises to a moral conclusion. If we stick to the idea that we cannot validly deduce moral conclusions from non-moral premises, then we shall have to count as non-moral the proposition that Mary has a moral obligation to feed her children. Since we could do the same for any proposition whatever, it appears that we cannot count any proposition as a moral proposition if we stick to the idea that we cannot deduce a moral proposition from non-moral propositions. [4]

But does this show that we can reap moral knowledge from non-moral facts? That was Hume's primary concern. The answer is no. Why?

Allow that it is possible to know that the moon is yellow. Then by virtue of the first argument it is also possible to know via such knowledge that either the moon is yellow or it is morally wrong for Mary to have an abortion. So if knowledge of moral propositions cannot have its origin in knowledge of non-moral propositions, we have to count 'The moon is yellow or it is morally wrong for Mary to have an abortion' as expressing a non-moral proposition.

Allow now that it is possible to know that the moon is not yellow (on nights when it is silvery, say). Then if we have knowledge that either the moon is yellow or it is morally wrong for Mary to have an abortion, we have not derived this knowledge from the colour of the moon alone. We could, of course, have such knowledge if we knew the second disjunct to be true, namely that it is morally wrong for Mary to have an abortion. But then we would have derived knowledge of the disjunction from knowledge of a moral proposition instead of vice-versa. If Hume is to be rebuffed, someone would have to show how the disjunction is to be known without any prior moral knowledge, given that we know the first disjunct to be false. That does seem to be impossible.

A fairly simple way of differentiating moral propositions from other sorts of propositions that seems to capture the epistemological spirit of Hume's dictum, if not its logical letter is to define a moral proposition as one which entails that there is at least one moral obligation. Thus (1) expresses a moral proposition, but (2) and (3) do not.

(1) Mary has a moral obligation to feed her children.
(2) The moon is not yellow.
(3) Either the moon is yellow or Mary has a moral obligation to feed her children.

Although moral (1) is validly deducible from non-moral (2) and (3), we cannot learn the truth of (1) from that deduction.

A term, M, will be said to be a moral term if and only if 'There is something that is M' or 'There is something that is an M' or 'There is something that Ms' expresses a moral proposition.

I shall use the expression 'moral nihilist' to mean one who believes that all moral propositions in the above sense are false. So although a moral nihilist may quite happily believe in (2) or (3), she or he will not believe in (1).

Thus any proposition that entails a moral proposition will itself be a moral proposition. So there will be no non-moral proposition which, by itself, entails a moral proposition. It will still be possible, as in the second argument above, for two or more non-moral proposition to entail a moral proposition. However, the conjunction of any statements, moral or non-moral, which together entail a moral statement will be a moral statement.

Someone may object that this definition of moral propositions is too narrow because, so they might claim, there are morally evaluative propositions that fail to entail the existence of moral obligations. They may claim, for example, that there are acts that someone might want to describe as morally good, even though the agent had no moral obligation to perform the act, or indeed, any act at all.

However, it is not just moral obligations of the agent that are relevant to our stipulation. Anyone's moral obligations will do. The question is whether someone, not necessarily the agent, has a moral obligation, given that the act is morally good. I would wish to claim, firstly, that if an act is morally good, then one has a moral right to perform that act, and secondly, if one has a moral right to do something, then at least one person has a moral obligation to refrain from hindering one in the performance of the act. If these points are allowed, then clearly this sort of evaluative statement falls within my definition of a moral statement.

Similarly, statements asserting the existence of virtues, thought of as a subclass of those personal characteristics which everyone has a moral right to promote, and vices, thought of as a subclass of those personal characteristics we all have a moral right to discourage, as well as moral rights as suggested above, entail the existence of moral obligations and hence come within the definition.

There is a considerable amount of literature devoted to the question of which moral concepts are more fundamental than which. Philippa Foot, for example, has claimed that a sound moral philosophy should start from a theory of the vices and virtues.[5] Some feel that some moral entities are reducible to others or conversely that some are ontologically prior to others. Some, like Bernard Williams, reject this approach as wrong-headed. He considers all these things as different considerations which are genuinely different from one another. (Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy, p. 16) [6] Part of Williams' case involves a rejection of certain semantic analyses of moral terminology, for example, a semantic analysis of moral rights in terms of goods, put forward by G.E. Moore. [7] Many involved in such debates appear to take it that the sort of logical considerations which semantically link the existence of one sort of entity with the existence of another entails some sort of metaphysical reductive relationship between the entities themselves. I have argued elsewhere [8] that the notions of necessary existential dependence and ontological priority whose applications involve so much controversy are themselves highly suspect. I certainly do not wish to claim that any ontological priority of obligations over moral rights or virtues or vice-versa arises out of the merely logical claims made above. Rights, virtues, vice, goods, evils and obligations, like husbands and wives, would be of quite distinct kinds even if the meanings of those terms are inter-definable.

This does not allow, however, that there could be rights without obligations any more than there could be wives without husbands. Williams attempts to drive a wedge between a morality based on moral obligations (without which, he claims, we would be better off) from other aspects of ethical life (which he would like to see retained). This separation, however, cannot be maintained.

1.3 A Distinction between Moral Terms and Terms Used for Moral Discourse -- A Criticism of Certain Arguments for Naturalism

1.3.1 'Ought', 'Should' and 'Obligation'.

Many words which are used to assert or deny moral propositions are also used in non-moral contexts. Consider for example:

(4) Planets are obliged to move around the sun in elliptical orbits by virtue of the inverse square law of gravitational attraction.

(5) Given the present position and velocity of the missile it ought to impact hereabouts fifteen minutes from now.

(6) In Britain, Australia and New Zealand, one is obliged to drive on the left hand side of the road.

(7) In soccer, all players except the goalkeepers are obliged to keep their hands from touching the ball.

(8) You should use this spanner if you do not wish to burr the nut.

Philippa Foot has expressed doubt that there is a specifically moral sense of 'good'.[9] I would claim in addition that 'obliged', 'ought' and 'should' do not change meaning as we move from moral to non-moral discourse. The uses of these words in the examples above are not even evaluative usages, let alone moral usages.

The word 'obliged', in moral and non-moral uses, simply means 'bound' or 'constrained'. The constraint may sometimes be moral, but it may, on other occasions, be due to aesthetic feelings, social pressures, legal considerations, physical laws, long or short term aims or desires, or any other boundary conditions that restrict behaviour.

The word 'ought' is commonly used with a verb in the infinitive mood, for example, 'ought to use' and 'ought to be'. Call any single-verb sentence containing an 'ought to V' verb phrase an ought-sentence. Let the same sentence with 'ought to V' replaced by the appropriate indicative mood form of V be called, in the tradition of David Hume, the corresponding is-sentence. I claim that what an ought-sentence says is that the corresponding is-sentence expresses a truth throughout a restricted range of possibilities. The restriction is, or at least should be, determined by the context of the discussion in which the ought- sentence occurs. The restriction may be one in which people are supposed (truly or falsely) to be doing what they are morally obliged to do, or one in which all the laws of physics remain true. The restriction may be to some possibly false suppositions or perhaps some facet of the actual world, or both of these things simultaneously. Note that the restriction may be determined, at least in part, by the specification of a whole class of propositions, for example, as above, by the specification that all the laws of physics (whatever they may be) remain true, without any member of the class having to be specified or known.

Some philosophers in recent times have failed to pay heed to the fact that certain words of constraint that are commonly used in making moral statements can also be used within contexts that are logically unrelated to morality. As a result, they have led themselves to believe that one may argue from indisputable and, indeed, empirically determinable worldly facts to conclusions asserting the existence of moral obligations. This belief is commonly called 'naturalism'.

In the last few decades, an essay by John Searle, 'How to derive "ought" from "is"' [10] and another by Philippa Foot, 'Moral Beliefs' [11], have given some hope to many would-

be naturalists. Because the influence of these articles has been so widespread, I propose now to examine the arguments in some detail. Readers who are already find naturalism to be implausible may care to proceed directly to the next section. We shall see that Foot's argument suffers from the fallacy just mentioned. Whether Searle's argument does or not, depends on whether one takes him as arguing that propositions asserting the existence of moral obligations follow from propositions describing a matter of fact, namely an act of promising. There is no need to read his article in that way, though many have done so. Nowhere in it does he actually talk of moral obligations, though he does talk of obligations and he does take the entailment to be to what he calls an 'evaluative statement'. Regardless of Searle's intention in this regard, it is the argument that purports to show that moral obligations arise out of promising that is of interest to us here, so (with apologies to Searle) we shall substitute 'moral obligation' for 'obligation' throughout a reconstitution of that argument.

1.3.2 Does a Promise Necessarily Create a Moral Obligation?

The stimulation for Searle's essay was the famous passage, quoted in section 1.2 above, from David Hume's Treatise of Human Nature. [12]

In opposition to Hume's idea that there is a logical gap between matters of fact and the existence of moral obligations is the time worn idea that some moral obligations arise out of those sorts of human interaction known as promising or entering into contracts. It can be found in Hobbes' Leviathan and more recently in E.F. Caritt's Ethical and Political Thinking. [13] This is the basis of Searle's argument, or at least the argument with which we are concerned here, which I shall hereafter call 'the argument from promises'. This is the way it goes:

1. Some people sometimes deliberately engender expectations in others by saying that they are promising something.
2. That such behaviour as described in (1) takes place is empirically determinable.
3. Such behaviour as described in (1) is an act of promising.
4. If someone promises, they place themselves under a moral obligation to keep the promise.
5. If someone places themself under a moral obligation, then they are under a moral obligation.

Therefore,

6. There are at least some moral obligations whose existence is empirically determinable.

There may be differences between people in what they mean by 'promise'. Some may accept that it is logically true that the act of promising places the agent under at least a prima facie moral obligation, by which I mean a moral obligation that may or may not be over-ridden by some other moral obligation.

Others would argue that, whether or not it is true that promising places the agent under a prima facie moral obligation, it is not logically true that it does so. This truth, if it were a truth, would be a contingent truth -- contingent, not necessarily on how the world happens to be, but rather on what is right and what is wrong. Such people would claim that one would not be contradicting oneself if one were to say that someone had made a promise and were to deny that there was a corresponding prima facie moral obligation. With this sense of 'promise', a moral nihilist, one who did not believe in the existence of moral obligations, could consistently believe in acts of promising without having to give up her nihilism. She could simply deny premise (4).

Could the nihilist consistently accept the idea that it is logically true that promises generate a prima facie moral obligation? Yes, provided that she also believed that there were no promises in that sense of 'promise'. But she would not have to deny the existence

of many cases of people deliberately engendering expectations by the 'promising' ritual. The same sort of argument would apply to any term which had both moral and non-moral implications, 'murder' and 'traitor' for example. The fact that the non-moral implications of such terms are frequently exemplified would not entail that the moral implications of those terms are also exemplified. So regardless of the nihilist's interpretation of the term 'promise', it appears that sound observations of promising rituals need not affect her nihilistic belief.

In an article replying to objections,[14] Searle says:

when one enters an institutional activity by invoking the rules of the institution one necessarily commits oneself in such and such ways, regardless of whether one approves or disapproves of the institution.'

Now this point of Searle's seems to be quite correct. Further, to commit oneself is to bind oneself to a course of action. Let us, for the purposes of the argument, also grant the rather moot point that promising is a social institution having a set of associated rules. Then it would follow that to give a promise is to render oneself obliged to act in accordance with the rules of promising, that is, to keep one's promise. Let all this be allowed. The question which then arises is whether such an institutional obligation (let us call it) is also a moral obligation. As we have seen, an obligation need not be a moral obligation. An obligation is merely some sort of constraint on behaviour.

The word 'committed' is similarly associated with restriction of choice, though again the restriction need not arise from any moral beliefs. Although the word can occur in moral and evaluative contexts, examples (9) and (10) below clearly show that this need not be the case.

> (9) I understand you are committed to marrying the lady, but is that commitment the result of social pressure, or an outcome of your love for her?
> (10) The horse rider is committed to the jump.

Thus Searle is wrong when he regards R.M. Hare as tacitly accepting the derivation of an evaluative statement from a descriptive one when Hare says: 'If a person says that a thing is red, he is committed to the view that anything which was like it in the relevant respects would likewise be red.' [15]

But as Hare points out in reply, [16] the commitment involved here is one that arises simply from the business of sticking to the meaning of the word 'red'. It may be true that that is something we want people to do and that, in a sense, may be evaluative and it may be true that Hare is presupposing that this preference is held by his readers. But being constrained by a particular aim is a different matter from having other people preferring that you are so constrained or even from having that preference yourself. The two are quite logically distinct.

Note in passing that whether or not it is correct to allow that all moral statements are evaluative, not all evaluative statements are moral. Statements concerning personal preferences are evaluative but not necessarily moral. 'I prefer sex to golf' is an evaluative statement but it is not a moral one. 'You should prefer golf to sex' may be a moral statement depending on whether the constraint being commended is presupposed to be a moral constraint rather than, say, a constraint imposed by the heart condition of the person being advised together with the presupposed desire of that person to avoid a heart attack. Non- moral evaluative statements concerning preferences and desires are statements concerning the psychology of individuals -- not what they have a moral obligation to do or to prefer.

If some philosophers regard themselves as naturalists by virtue of being able to argue from statements about the way the world is to what people ought to do, they have missed the point of Hume's famous is-ought gap. For it is quite clear from the context of Hume's discussion that by a proposition 'connected with an ought, or an ought not' he was referring to moral propositions. That matter is quite a different one from the matter of being

able to argue from propositions truly descriptive of the world or aspects thereof, to propositions expressed with sentences containing words like 'ought', 'should', 'must', 'committed' and 'obliged' which can occur both in sentences expressing moral judgements as well as sentences which do not.

With these thoughts in mind, let us return to the claim that the existence of moral obligations is a logical consequence of the fact that people sometimes commit themselves to rule-governed institutionalised relationships with other people and that promising is such an institution. If this claim is correct then it should apply equally to other rule-governed institutionalised relationships between people -- playing soccer for example. However, it is far from clear that this is the case. If one is committed to playing a game of soccer and one is subsequently in breach of the rules of soccer, then one has provided evidence towards one's lack of ability as a soccer player, or perhaps that one has decided to stop playing soccer and to do something else. But one has not necessarily thereby provided evidence of one's bad moral character. It does not follow that one has sinned.

Hare [17] comes close to the point. He considers an example of Searle's, namely that whenever a player (of baseball) satisfies conditions E (where conditions E are the conditions under which, according to the rules of baseball, a batsman is out) he is obliged to leave the field.

Hare claims that this is not a tautology nor a statement about English word-usage nor a prescription about word-usage in English. He claims that this is a rule of the game of baseball and that it is not therefore a rule about how we speak correctly but rather how we play baseball correctly. He goes on to claim that it is, or implicitly contains 'a synthetic evaluation or prescription not necessarily about word-usage'.

But Hare gives too much away here. The rule of the game is not that the batsman is obliged to leave the field under conditions E, but rather that he does leave the field under conditions E. The obligation or constraint on the batsman's behaviour under conditions E, is that he can't both act as baseball batsman under condition E and not leave the field. If he does not leave the field under those conditions, he is not playing baseball.

Now, if the person who has been batting refuses to leave the field under conditions E, the onlookers may hiss and boo and cry out that the batsman ought to leave the field. There are several different possible obligations to which the onlookers could be referring. They may believe that the batsman, although committed to acting in accordance with the rules of baseball, does not know the rules, and they are telling him just what those constraints amount to. More likely, however, they believe that he is perfectly aware of the rules and is aware of the fact that conditions E applies and has reneged on his commitment to play the game thus frustrating the desires of the other players and the onlookers. Thus they may be reminding him of the social constraints in the situation on the assumption that he would wish to act in accordance with the wishes of the other players and onlookers. Alternatively, and especially if the batsman has made a rude gesture at the onlookers indicating that he does not care about their desires in this regard, they may be referring to what they believe are moral constraints on his behaviour to (say) minimise the frustration of other people.

There may be multiple constraints on one's behaviour. In the baseball situation mentioned above, there could be at least three quite distinct constraints on the batman's behaviour, all of which are obliging him to leave the field. It would be incorrect to treat these quite disparate obligations as identical.

Similarly in the 'promising game' -- assuming that there is such a thing -- an obligation to keep one's promise could arise in a number of ways including the one of committing oneself to the game, the one of not wishing to disappoint the expectations of the person promised, and finally the one (if it existed) of having a moral obligation not to renege on one's promising obligations. These are quite distinct constraints on behaviour and neither the existence of the second constraint nor the existence of the third constraint is deducible

from the presence of the first.

Some may still insist that the second and third constraints are identical to the first, that is, that social constraints arising out of altruism or fear of sanctions are identical to moral constraints which are in turn identical to the constraints arising out of commitments to institutionalised rule-governed procedures. That this identification is a mistake becomes clear if we consider a case where the third sort of constraint is present without the other two. The case I have in mind is the case whereby people commit themselves to a game of solitaire patience. Insofar as one is so committed, one is obliged to place a black seven on a red eight. Yet even if this commitment held, it would be absurd to say that the player was thereby socially obliged by altruism or fear of reprisals to put a black seven on a red eight. Likewise it would be absurd to say that the player thereby had a moral obligation to do so. However an argument which parallels the argument from promises is no less applicable in the case of solitaire patience than it is to any other case of commitment to rule-governed behaviour.

So as an example of an argument from empirically testable statements to moral statements, the argument from promises fails. From the fact that one has committed oneself to keeping a promise, it follows only that there is a commitment to oneself. It does not follow, without further premises, that there is a commitment to another person let alone society at large. Nor does it follow that there is any social, let alone moral, commitment involved. It is logically possible of course, that both the latter sorts of commitment also obtain, but they would not have to obtain.

In deductive logic one cannot get something for nothing. As many have pointed out, if there is evaluative or moral information in the conclusion of argument, then that information must be there in the premises -- otherwise the argument is deductively invalid. Most critics of the argument from promising have been concerned to examine the premises of the argument for hidden moral connotations. However it turns out not that there are moral implications in the premises, but that there should be none in the conclusion.

1.3.3 Is Prudence Necessarily a Moral Virtue?

Philippa Foot's case for naturalism is contained in her article 'Moral Beliefs'.[18] The first half of this article is an attempt to argue a conclusion which most people would readily accept, namely that many moral assertions have empirically testable entailments. Let me short-circuit discussion of Foot's reasoning here to say that I for one would agree with this conclusion for reasons to be given in section 1.8.

It is the second half of Foot's article which is more relevant to naturalism. She begins by arguing to the conclusion that it is a bad thing to injure oneself.

Now if by 'bad' she means morally bad, and if by something's being an injury she means something which is wholly determined by the way the world or aspects thereof happen to be, then her case for naturalism is established. But can 'bad' here mean 'morally bad'?

Moral descriptions correctly apply only to acts, agents, the tools or products of agents, certain items called 'goods' that we are morally obliged to promote, and others called 'evils' that we are morally obliged to avoid or perhaps eradicate. So if we accept that necessarily injuries are morally bad, then any injury would necessarily fall into one of these categories. The obvious candidate is an evil that we are morally obliged to avoid. But why should we believe that we are morally obliged to avoid injuries?

What is this badness that injuries necessarily have, according to Foot? Recall that words like 'good', 'bad', 'ought', 'right' and so on can properly be used in contexts other than moral contexts, and let us ask 'What sort of a context entails the sort of badness that Foot associates necessarily with injuries?'.

It seems clear that the sort of badness she has in mind is failure to be prudent. Now, as

Foot herself claims in her article 'Goodness and Choice' [19], goodness may have nothing logically to do with the choices of the person who speaks of it and hence with the prudence (or the lack thereof) of that person. However, the sort of 'badness' associated with her idea of 'injury' certainly has. The premises of her argument seem to be:

> (i) that injuries are necessarily damage causing a malfunction of some part of the body,
>
> (ii) that necessarily such damage is a harmful thing to the body and
>
> (iii) that necessarily all people want to avoid harm to their bodies.

The last premise is not meant to deny that people may have other desires which may override their desire to avoid harm. D.Z. Phillips and H.O. Mounce [20] have objected to the last premise, and the first, too, is dubious. But let those objections pass. What follows from the premises is that necessarily all people wish to avoid injuries to themselves. So at the most what Foot has shown is that it is necessarily imprudent to allow oneself to be injured. Further it is clear from her discussion of the nature of injuries, that this is all she takes herself to be arguing for.

Now of course it is true that good and bad are used in contexts concerning prudence. Thus we can call people good liars, meaning that when they wish it they can produce speech acts that are good for deceiving others, that is, that are likely to produce the desired result. Again, we can call a high bridge a good place for a suicide, or we can even talk of a good suicide meaning one which was achieved in such a way that success was highly probable. But we do not for those reasons believe that such places and such suicides are morally good. On the other hand there are many things such as masturbation, extra-marital sex, and homosexual acts, which are thought or have been thought by many to be morally wrong, even by those who thought such acts would not run afoul of any desire of those who committed them. Again, Kant believed that we had a moral obligation to punish the last murderer, even if no useful consequences were to accrue from such punishment. Further, the very notion of an evil person is one whose aims are morally bad. If such be an evil person's aims, wherein lies his or her imprudence in trying to achieve them? If some desires can override others, a desire to act immorally may override any desire to avoid any inconvenience arising out of doing so, and if it is prima facie imprudent to act in such a way as to run into things one wishes to avoid, it is even more imprudent to act in a way that is contrary even to one's greater preferences. So even if Foot is right in believing that prudential goodness and badness arise out of situations to be found in the world about us (and I grant that she is, despite her questionable arguments for it), she has yet to show that prudence is necessarily a moral virtue.

In her essay 'Virtues and Vices', [21] Foot reneges on her arguments in 'Moral Beliefs'. She claims that her mistake was in believing that 'moral judgements give reasons for acting to each and every man'. But this is irrelevant to the invalidity of those arguments. The question was not whether or not it was necessarily prudent to act morally well, but rather whether or not it was necessarily morally good to act prudentially.

1.3.4 Ought One Act in Accordance with One's Moral Obligations?

In section 1.7 I shall argue that moral knowledge cannot be gained from empirical observations, nor from logical considerations, nor from any mixture of logic and empirical studies. I shall claim rather that moral knowledge could be gleaned only via moral intuition. Whether anybody is possessed of such intuition is another matter.

However, there is some unfinished business in this section. Searle's original argument was intended to show that it is possible to argue from empirically determinable facts to 'ought' statements. In our reconstructed version of Searle's argument in section 1.3.2, we omitted Searle's last step, namely the step from an assertion of the existence of an obligation on someone to do something to a statement claiming that that person ought to

do that thing. Now that step, I claim, is invalid without further assumptions that may be false, and hence not empirically determinable facts.

Suppose that the government has passed a law saying that all people, on reaching the age of eighteen, should present themselves to army headquarters for national service. Suppose John has just reached the age of eighteen. Clearly, he is legally obliged to present himself for national service. But that he ought to do so is far from clear. What he ought to do is relative to the possibilities under consideration. If the possibilities are those in which he obeys the law, then yes, he ought to present himself. But if his country is at war, so that joining the army is a dangerous business, and if the possibilities under consideration are those in which he optimises his chances for survival, then perhaps it would be correct to say that he ought to flee to another country. Again, if the possibilities under consideration are those in which he does what is morally right, and if the war in which his country is engaged is unjust, then once again, he ought not to present himself.

Again let me stress that the suppositions that determine these 'oughts' and 'ought nots' may not be factual. So that what he ought to do, be that determined by legal, prudential or moral considerations, is not a purely factual matter. Falsehoods as well as facts may determine the truth of the proposition expressed by an 'ought' statement. Thus, given that the possibilities under consideration are those in which John obeys the law, it does not follow that he will obey the law. It makes sense, given the appropriate suppositions, to say that John ought to be doing something but that he isn't doing it. Thus what somebody ought to be doing or, in general, what ought to be the case is dependent on some facts, but not wholly so dependent. However, as Searle has insisted seems correct, that what obligations one has is a factual matter. It is a fact that one is obliged, in the playing of solitaire patience, to refrain from putting a black seven on a black ten. It is a fact that one is legally obliged to obey the rules of the road. It is a fact that one is obliged by prudence to obey the rules of the road. I claim, though there are those who would deny it, that were one to have any moral obligations, that too would be a matter of fact. We shall come back to that point in sections 1.5 and 1.9.

The point I wish to stress here is that whether the proposition expressed by an 'ought' statement follows from a statement which entails the existence of some obligation or other depends on the set of possibilities under consideration. If the obligations are legal obligations and the set of possibilities are one's in which people are doing the morally right thing the proposition expressed with the 'ought' statement simply would not follow. But similarly, if the obligations were moral obligations and the possibilities were those in which the law is being obeyed or in which people are maximising their personal satisfaction, the proposition expressed with the 'ought' statement would not follow. In general, then, it is not a logical truth, that quite independent of dialectical context, one ought to do whatever one is morally obliged to do.

In a society in which almost everybody wants to be doing what they have a moral obligation to do, the possibilities under consideration for future behaviour would probably be one's in which they were doing the morally correct thing. But the fact that it would be a rare context in which a particular form of argument would be invalid, does not validate that argument form in general. There may yet be those whose overriding concerns are for their own well-being or for other matters rather than morality or for whom morality is of no concern at all. moral obligations to what one ought to do.

1.4 Absolute and Relative Views of Morality

The sort of moral obligations I am talking about are absolute -- not relative to a society or a person for example. In this section I shall try to make it clear exactly what I mean by 'absolute' and 'relative'. Consider the following sentences:

(11) Most people would wish that no-one give pain to anyone else.

and

(12) Most people in this society would wish that no-one give pain to anyone else.

The proposition asserted by an utterance of (12), and hence the truth or falsity of what is asserted, varies depending on the society to which reference is being made. Which society that is, depends on the context in which the sentence is uttered. That information is not carried by the sentence alone. The sentence, as Cartwright [22] would say, is incomplete. An utterance of (11), on the other hand, does not need contextual supplementation identifying a particular society to yield a truth value.

We say that what is expressed by an utterance of (12) is relative to some presupposed society; whereas whatever is expressed by an utterance of (11) is absolute -- at least as far as societies are concerned.

Most of the sentences we utter (some would say all of them) are incomplete, if only because the verb form is tensed and hence refers to an instant in time which may vary from one utterance to another. Even proper nouns vary in their reference from occasion to occasion. Indeed any word at all can be used as a name -- and anything may be called by any name.

Let us assume, however, that the referent of some term, say X, is given; and that the time of the utterance is given also. Let F be some descriptive word or phrase. Then different utterances of the sentence 'X is F' may or may not express different propositions depending on the semantic properties of the description F.

For example, if F were the description 'is big', the proposition expressed would depend on the sample under discussion with which X is being compared. If F were 'is a grandmother', however, no extra contextual information would be necessary to convey a unique proposition.

Call the description F absolute if and only if, given the meaning of F, a particular referent for X, and a particular time at which the sentence 'X is F' is uttered, given that we are presupposing the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, there is one and only one proposition such an utterance may express.

Call F relative if different propositions can be so expressed, depending on contextual information not available from the utterance alone.

The point to be made here is that the sort of ascriptions of moral obligation I am talking about are absolute -- not relative. For example, the proposition expressed by any utterance of 'Mary has a moral obligation to care for her mother' is unique given the referent of 'Mary' and the time of utterance.

Many people are relativists and would object to the stipulation just made. Relativists are usually subjectivists also in the sense of 'subjectivist' to be given in the next section. Let us therefore leave discussion of the subjectivist-cum-relativist till then.

1.5 Objective and Subjective Views of Morality -- Moral Nihilism

It is not uncommon for people to use 'objective' and 'subjective' in the way that I have used 'absolute' and 'relative' in section 1.4 above. However, it is common also for 'objective' and 'subjective' to be used to distinguish between two sorts of values. Subjective values are taken to be personal preferences or values which are a function of personal preferences, for example, the value of goods in a marketplace.

Objective values, on the other hand, are taken to have an existence which is logically unrelated to personal preferences. Thus aestheticians may debate whether the beauty of a sunset is to be equated with the preference most people would show for that sort of visual stimulation, or whether that beauty would be there even if there were no people to think about it; that is, whether the beauty is objective.

The senses of 'morally right', 'morally wrong', 'morally good', and 'morally bad' with which this essay is concerned will be objective.

By 'moral nihilism' I shall therefore mean the belief that there are no objective moral values. Some would interpret Hobbes (The Leviathan) and Hume (Treatise of Human Nature) as being moral nihilists in this sense, and the appellation would apply also to such modern philosophers as Hector Monro [23] and John Mackie [24]; though Hector Monro,

who uses moral terms subjectively, may not be content with that way of describing himself.

Clearly, if what is morally right or wrong is an objective matter, then so is the matter of who has what moral obligation. For one's actions will be morally right if they are in accord with one's moral obligations and morally wrong if they are not.

If readers were to think, at this stage, that the difference between the subjectivistcum-relativist, on the one hand, and the objectivist-absolutist-nihilist, on the other, is merely an uninteresting verbal matter of no substantial consequence, they would be wrong. It is true that the world-view of the subjectivist-cum-relativist often coincides with that of the absolutist objectivist nihilist in one important respect -- a disbelief in objective absolute moral values. Indeed it is frequently the case that a disbelief in absolute objective moral values is conducive to the adoption of a subjectivist or relativist semantic theory. Why is this so? To answer this, we must first distinguish between subjectivism and relativism taken as descriptive theories of the semantics of ordinary moral discourse, on the one hand, and subjectivism and relativism taken as prescriptions concerning what we should mean by our moral terminology, on the other.

Let us first discuss the descriptive theories. Of course neither subjectivism nor relativism, taken as descriptions of ordinary moral discourse, are logical consequences of moral nihilism. What would make these positions plausible, given nihilism, is the extra premise that most users of moral discourse are also moral nihilists -- disbelievers in absolute objective moral values. If moral discourse entails the existence of moral values, and most users of moral discourse do not believe in either absolute or objective moral values, then the moral values they are talking about, given their sincerity, must be neither absolute nor objective.

However, it is just this extra premise that is crucial to the difference between the absolutist-objectivist view of the moral society and the subjectivist-relativist view of the society. Clearly, the matter is not merely a verbal issue. It is a matter of primary importance in the sociology of morality. A society in which most people have beliefs in absolute objective values and are anxious for everybody to conform their behaviour to those values is likely to be a very different sort of society to one in which few people, if any, have such beliefs.

The matter is not one to be resolved by armchair discussions between philosophers. The matter is an empirical issue to be resolved by empirical sociological research. Some such research has, in fact, already been done. The study of the moral attitudes and beliefs of people in Sydney, New South Wales, by F.E. Trainer seems to indicate that

... the objectivist view is far more common than the subjectivist view, and that it is a very frequently assumed position. This evidence... reinforces the belief formed early in the interviewing that one of the most notable things about the structure of moral thought is that it is dominated by a (usually vague and implicit) objectivist metaethical position. [25]

Trainer's objectivists, by the way, are also what we here call absolutists, and his subjectivists are also relativists. So if the people of Sydney sampled by Trainer are not morally eccentric, then the subjectivist-cum-relativist is simply wrong to regard his theory as a true, or even approximately true, theory of the semantics of ordinary moral discourse.

Now if one does not understand the moral discourse of others, one is unlikely to understand their intentions in using moral discourse. That is, one is likely to misunderstand the pragmatics of moral discourse. For example, if one believed that moral obligations were, by virtue of the meanings of those terms, what most of the people affected by our acts would want us to do, were they apprised of all the relevant information and were ideally rational to boot, then one might reasonably believe that moral discourse is primarily used in those situations in which people are trying to reach rational social decisions which in some way maximise the satisfaction, in the long term, of all concerned. However, as we shall see in Chapter 4, moral discourse is often used to stifle such attempts at rational social decision.

This is where the prescriber of subjectivism-cum-relativism comes on to the scene. She or he prescribes that we all start talking with a subjectivist-cum-relativist semantics in order to prevent moral discourse from being used in this way -- in order to prevent assertions of intuited falsehoods about alleged absolute, objective moral obligations being used to bring an end to useful social discourse.

However, such a prescription will be like water off a duck's back to the very people that our prescriber is trying to censor. Those who believe that there are such absolute and objective moral obligations and values will, if they have any sanity at all, insist on using a language which is sufficiently rich in concepts to express their beliefs. Furthermore, the conceptual impoverishment prescribed will also inhibit the expression of contrary belief -- the nihilist belief that there are no (absolute, objective) moral obligations or values.

People who use moral terms subjectively in the knowledge that most people do not are akin to those theologians who, like John Robinson in his Honest to God [26], speak of themselves as Christians but interpret religious terms in such a way that, when properly understood, they turn out to believe nothing that a person ordinarily called an atheist would not believe.

It is true that explications, as Rudolf Carnap would have called them [27], which stipulate a revised meaning to terms already in use, can sometimes be useful. Such revisions are not uncommon within the development of scientific concepts, especially when almost all of those who use some descriptive term have come to believe that it no longer describes anything in its original sense. In this way, words like 'atom', electron', 'resistance' and so on have changed their meanings over the years as scientific research has altered the ontological beliefs of the scientific community. These semantic changes would have been pointless if a large proportion of that community had remained committed to beliefs in the existence of the sort of thing that used to be described by the terms in question. For, in that case, people would have wanted to be able to discuss whether or not the things existed, and that would have been difficult if not impossible in the explicated language.

I conclude then that subjectivism-cum-relativism, as a prescription, is so much philosophical pie in the sky. If our wish is to prevent the destruction of rational social decision by moralising, then rather than confuse everbody still further by using moral words with a different meaning, we enter into a discussion of the moral beliefs being asserted, honestly asserting our disbelief in a way in which we shall be properly understood. We say truthfully, in short, that we are moral nihilists and enter into a debate on that issue.

1.6 The Universalisability of Moral Obligations

Moral obligations are assumed here to be universalizable. That is, if any particular person had a moral obligation at a particular time and place, then that moral obligation would be an instance of a true moral principle that would apply to any person at any time or place.

As an example, let us assume that Smith had a moral obligation to go home to her husband at five o'clock, whereas Jones would not have sinned had he gone off to the public house at that time. Why should there be such a difference? Because Smith, say, has led her husband to expect that she will return home as soon as possible after work and there is, let us pretend, a moral obligation on everybody at all times to try to satisfy the expectations they have deliberately engendered in others. Jones, of course, has not led anyone to expect anything of him at that time.

Moral rights will also be assumed to be universalisable. Smith's husband had a right to expect her home at five o'clock because (let us suppose for the sake of illustration) anybody has a right to expect someone home at five o'clock if that person has engendered that expectation. Jones' husband had no such right.

There is a common fallacy, particularly within some liberation movements, which comes

in the guise of an argument against discrimination between, say, A's and B's (men and women, pigs and human beings, whites and blacks, for example). The person who favours the discrimination is asked to rationalise the discrimination in terms of other properties that A's have or other properties that B's have. So far, so good. Such a question may yield a response which gives us a better understanding of why the person wants the discrimination.

Now occasionally the response is that there are no further properties, C and D, say, such that all A's are C's and all B's are D's and which are the basis for the discrimination. It is just that A's are favoured over B's by virtue of their being A's and by virtue of B's being non-A's.

Now we come to the fallacy -- which is to regard such a response as being either irrational or amoral or both. It need be neither. Indeed, if such a response were either irrational or amoral, it would be a simple matter to push any discriminator into such a response by asking for a rationalisation for the discrimination between C's and D's, and then between E's and F's and so on until the discriminator ran out of ideas and was forced to admit that there was no further rationale in mind which justified the discrimination. Rhetorical ploys of this kind, which tend to leave the respondent speechless, may be good debating tricks; but they are not likely t convert the unconverted who, despite their attitude to women, blacks, Jews, catholic, or animals, may still have a taste for honesty in intellectual discussion.

The fallacy is often thought to be sanctioned by some sort of principle of universalisability, which is why it is mentioned here. There have been some difficulties in formulating various versions of the principle [28], but I do not think that there are any logical difficulties with the principle I have in mind which, put more formally, goes as follows:

If someone X has a moral property M at some time, then there is some property of X, say F, which logically entails neither being M nor being identical to X, but which is such that if any person at any time had F, the they would also have M.

Now, recognising this principle, one might reasonably ask someone for the with which they justify the ascription of M to X; but the principle does not allow one to demand some further property G, non-identical to F, which justifies the ascription of M to all the F's. There may be some such property and discriminators may be able to provide it, but they cannot be accused of irrationality or amorality simply because they are unable to justify their belief that all F's are M's with something of the form 'All F's are G and All G's are M'.

Discrimination is what morality is all about. The whole idea is to provide a rationale for discrimination in favour of certain sorts of acts, people and things are against other sorts of act, people and things. So even if a particular discrimination seems bizarre to the liberationist (or, perhaps, particularly if it seems bizarre) it is not unlikely that the discrimination will have a basis in moral belief. It is ill-conducive to the elimination of discriminations which one dislikes or detests to fool oneself about the rationality or moral fervour of the discriminators. One's chances of bringing about what one takes to be social reform are unlikely to be enhanced by false beliefs about what is going on in the mind of others.

1.7 The Source of Moral Knowledge -- Conscience, Empiricism, Moral Rationalism and Moral Scepticism

The most distinctive feature of moral obligations is how we are supposed to come to know of their existence. Anything that can be learnt can be learnt from someone who already knows. However, at the beginning of such a chain of education there have to be people who have found out for themselves.

Part of what I shall mean by 'moral obligation' is that any first knowledge of the existence of a moral obligation has to occur via a faculty of conscience, that is, via a sort of sixth sense -- an ability to intuit the moral truths.

For some people, conscience as I have just spoken of it, would be something possessed only by a god. We ordinary mortals would know of our moral obligations only if the god revealed these things to us -- either directly or via a priestly authority. Such beliefs are consistent with the notion of 'moral obligation' being adopted here.

Again, it is consistent with this notion of moral obligation that there is no such thing as a moral conscience in the sense just outlined. Some would claim, and with plausibility, that the only things that can be known by intuition are certain simple so-called analytic truths -- propositions whose truth is a function only of the meanings of the terms used to express them. So-called synthetic propositions, whose truth value is a function, at least in part, of matters other than the meanings of terms, can be known only by sense experience of the world about us.

Such an attitude is often called judgement empiricism. Can one remain a judgment empiricist and still allow the truth of (indeed the analytic truth of) the proposition that if there is any knowledge of the existence of a moral obligation, then that knowledge derives, in part, from the exercise, by somebody or other, of their moral intuitions -- their conscience?

The reconciliation of these two beliefs can proceed in two ways. The first way is to claim that the basic principles of morality are not synthetic but are analytic and hence may be known by logical intuition consistent with the empiricist doctrine. I shall call this belief moral rationalism. John Locke in his Essay Concerning Human Understanding held this view of moral knowledge.

The second way is to embrace moral scepticism -- to hold that no moral propositions are known and none will ever be known. The only route to moral knowledge does not obtain in the real world. It obtains only in the imagined possibilities of moral believers. Moral nihilism, of course, would entail moral scepticism, since there would be no moral knowledge if there were no moral truths to know.

Naturalism, the belief that moral knowledge is to be gained by empirical investigations of natural phenomena, is entailed by empiricism conjoined with the belief that there is knowledge of synthetic moral fact. We met with naturalism in section 1.3. Appendix 1 is a discussion of two very popular forms of naturalism. That discussion goes some of the way to justifying the stipulations being made in this present section which rule naturalism out of court. However, the substantive issues about the availability of moral knowledge must await sections 2.6 and 2.7.

1.8 Non-moral Implications of Moral Statements

It is not in general true that a statement that someone ought to do some act, A (say), implies that that person can do A. [29] For example, as she steps off an aeroplane in Brisbane, Mary may say, 'I ought to be meeting Jan in Melbourne right now.' Mary promised to meet Jan before she boarded the flight from Melbourne, and, like many moral agents, she believes that she has a moral obligation to satisfy any expectations deliberately aroused by her in others. But, of course, it is now physically impossible for her to be in Melbourne at the promised time. Brisbane and Melbourne are thousands of kilometers apart.

Nevertheless, there was a time in the past when Mary could have acted so as to meet Jan as arranged in Melbourne. So 'ought to A' entails, if not always 'can A', 'could have A-ed'.

The point has the following importance. It shows that any moral statement has non-moral worldly consequences. But contrary to what Phillipa Foot seems to be arguing in the first half of her 'Moral Beliefs', [30] the point should give no comfort to naturalists. To assume otherwise is to fall foul of the fallacy of asserting the consequent.

There are two kinds of error which I commonly encounter in discussion about moral statements. The first proceeds as follows. It is pointed out that the words used to morally describe acts, products and people are very numerous and invariably describe non-moral

aspects of the world also. It is also pointed out that the whole of the non-moral component of a moral statement cannot be removed to leave a statement which is purely moral in the sense that it has all moral and no non-moral implications. All that is true and indeed follows from what is being said about the non-moral implications of moral statements in this section. But then the conclusion is drawn that moral and non-moral matters are inextricably mixed in the sense that there are aspects of the world which one cannot describe without some moral implications.

This conclusion simply does not follow. Allow that 'flying-horse' statements are those statements which entail the existence of flying horses. Allow also that although the existence of flying horses entails the non-flying-horse statement that there are horses and also the non-flying-horse statement that there are things that fly, all these non-flying-horse statements can still be made truly of the real world. We do not need to believe in flying horses because we believe in the truth of all the non-flying-horse implications of the existence of flying horses.

The second mistake that is commonly made proceeds as follows. It is pointed out that many words, 'pleasant', 'unpleasant', 'kind', 'unkind', 'altruistic', 'affectionate', 'loving', 'hateful', 'hurting', 'loyal', 'honest', 'dishonest', 'trustworthy', 'useful', 'agreeable', 'distasteful', for example, are often used to give an objective evaluation even though these words are purely empirical, having exemplifications that are testable via ordinary observations. It is also pointed out that although a word may have no unempirical semantic aspects, it may still be used evaluatively. The conclusion is then drawn that evaluation is just a matter of use -- that there is no semantic difference that marks evaluative from non-evaluative discourse. Hence there is no need to postulate unempirical ways of knowing evaluative truths.

Of course some evaluative descriptions may be testable in the ordinary empirical ways simply because they are subjective evaluations, that is, statements about personal preferences or statements derivable from such. However, moral statements, as defined in section 1.2, are not of this sort.

Again, it is true that any description whatever can be used to evaluate something objectively, as long as one's interlocutors are committed to the belief that anything of that sort is objectively good or bad as the case may be. People may then validly argue to the objectively evaluative conclusion using the unstated linking premise. It is true also that no amount of such a procedure can give objective evaluative semantic content to any explicitly stated premise which does not have objective evaluative content to start with. Nor can such a procedure detract from the objectively evaluative content of the conclusion.

If affection, kindness and love are not necessarily virtues, it is possible for them to remain exemplified even if there are no virtues. One does not have to be affectionate, kind or loving out of a sense of moral duty. Indeed it is doubtful that one can be so. Neither is it logically necessary that being affectionate, kind or loving is being virtuous. But even if these qualities are not virtues, we may still approve, desire, admire and encourage these qualities in others.

1.9 The Alleged Prescriptivity of Statements Concerning the Existence of Moral Obligations -- Immorality and Amorality -- Moral Societies

Contrary to what some modern writers, for example R.M.Hare [31] would have us believe, I would claim that the extent to which moral statements are action-guiding owes little to the meaning of 'moral obligation' or its cognates.

Any contingent statement may be action-guiding. 'There are two metre waves at Noosa Beach' may guide the behaviour of a keen surf-board rider, and 'There is a prima-facie obligation not to inflict pain on others' may also guide the behaviour of someone who wants to be morally good.

However, just as statements about waves would be unlikely to affect the behaviour of one who had no intention of going near the sea, so statements about moral obligations

need have no guiding effect on the behaviour of those (let us call them amoral) who have no wish to satisfy any moral obligations. [32]

The prescriptive nature of moral statements in our society is not guaranteed by the meanings of such statements, but rather by the large proportion of people who want to do what is right.

The only semantic truths to be gleaned from this area are that people are morally good in so far as their actions conform with their moral obligations, and that people are morally bad, that is immoral, in so far as their actions do not so conform. (Of course, any moral nihilist, myself included, will not believe in moral obligations, and hence will not believe in morally bad people either.)

Note in passing that what I have called amoral people (who are not necessarily immoral people) may be a very mixed group. Firstly, there are those who believe that they have moral obligations, but are indifferent as to whether or not their actions conform with these supposed obligations. Secondly, there are those who are incapable of wishing to conform their behaviour to any moral beliefs, because they have not the conceptual ability to think of moral matters. Thirdly, there are the moral nihilists, who have the conceptual ability to consider propositions concerning the existence of moral obligations, but who do not believe that there are any mora obligations to which their behaviour may conform.

Note that amoral people may or may not be immoral and immoral people may o may not be amoral, consistent with the stipulations offered here.

By moral person, I shall mean one who believes in moral obligations and who wishes her or his own behaviour, as well as the behaviour of others, to conform to those supposed obligations. A society will be more or less moral, depending on the proportion of its members who are moral. Thus 'moral'. in 'moral person' is here opposed to 'amoral' rather than 'immoral'. If moral nihilism were true, nobody would be immoral, but people could still be moral or amoral.

Note that the amoral person as defined here need not be the 'stereotype from gangster movie' that Bernard Williams lampoons in the first chapter of his book Morality. [33] Nor need it be prudent to treat the amoral person as a 'natural disaster' as Frank Snare has suggested. [34] For all that has been said here, it is perfectly consistent for an amoral person to be kind and intelligent, wanting nothing more than the happiness and optimum satisfaction of all other sentient beings. It is consistent also with the existence of self-righteous terrorists rebelling against what they see as the evils of society, and the existence of moral megalomaniacs who sincerely and successfully preach the moral necessity of acts of genocide.

I suspect that both Williams and Snare are conflating being amoral with being what they believe to be immoral or conversely, being moral in the sense of trying to conform one's behaviour to one's moral beliefs (which may or may not be false) a opposed to being moral in the sense of succeeding in conforming one's behaviour to what, if anything, actually is morally correct behaviour.

The mistake is not confined to philosophers. F.E.Trainer has criticised psychologists of the Piaget-Kohlberg school for importing their own moral beliefs into the, observations of moral (as opposed to amoral) behaviour and their theoretical treatment of those observations. [35] Certainly many psychologists of this school, for example Wilson [36] and Bull, [37] [38] equate moral behaviour and altruistic behaviour. Unkind moral behaviour is ruled out a priori. [39]

However, many an unkind act is done out of a sense of moral duty, and conversely, people from time to time regard themselves as having, forsaken their moral duty in refraining, out of altruism, from inflicting some punishment they regard well-deserved.

The cause of this myopic conflation of morality with altruism or with socialist behaviour seems to be the conflation of moral as opposed to amoral with moral as opposed to immoral. These psychologists have set out to study the development moral (as opposed to

amoral) behaviour, but this has become confused with the study of the development of (what they believe to be) moral as opposed to immoral behaviour.

Those who regard moral statements as being prescriptive by logical necessity a falling into a similar error. They do not conflate the possibility of immorality with amorality. Rather, they just deny the possibility of being amoral.

1.10 The Alleged Over-riding Nature of Moral Considerations

It is commonly held that moral obligations are supposed to override other considerations, such as the non-moral desires of the agent or of others. Similar comments apply to this idea about moral obligations as applied to the action-guiding nature of moral obligations. Clearly, moral considerations will not be overriding for amoral people.

The alleged overriding nature of moral obligations is sometimes used by subjectivists [25] to meet the objection that many personal desires about behaviour are logically unrelated to moral considerations -- for example, the desire to scratch an itch. Desires about behaviour that override other considerations are said to mark out the personal morality of the agent. If we allow that one may be indifferent to one's supposed moral obligations, we are not using 'moral' in this subjectivist sense.

1.11 Nominalism and the Existence of Moral Obligations [41]

There are many philosophers who do not believe in the existence of abstractions such as numbers, properties and things like obligations. They believe that these things are fictions invented by us as a crutch to communication and constructive thought. Such people are often called 'nominalists'.

Many nominalists, however, would be concerned about being labelled as a moral nihilist because of their belief that there existed no moral obligations. They might believe that there are many people who are morally obliged to do or refrain from doing this or that, but they would not believe that there existed any moral obligations applicable to these people.

To calm the nerves of any such nominalist reader, I shall stipulate for the purposes of this essay that the existence of moral obligations means merely the existence of people who are morally obliged to do or refrain from doing something.

The logical geography of 'moral' as I use that word and its cognates here, is, of course, not limited to the points made in the last ten sections. There are also the fairly obvious connections between 'moral obligation' and such words as 'evil', 'sin', 'virtue' and 'vice' plus many other logical connections that would not be so obvious. However, I hope the logic that has been given will make the usage in the rest of the essay clear to the reader.

In the next chapter, we move on from these semantic matters to examine the sociology of the moral society.

Notes for Chapter 1

[1] Trainer, F.E., Dimensions of Moral Thought, New South Wales University Press, 1982.

[2] Hume, Treatise of Human Nature, Book III, Part I, Section 1

[3] Prior, A.N., 'The Autonomy of Ethics', Australasian Journal of Philosophy, 38 (1960), pp 199-206

[4] Some of these matters, and others throughout this essay, would not have been considered by the author had it not been for the stimulation of his colleague Andre Gallois.

[5] Foot, Philippa, 'Virtues and Vices' in Virtues and Vices and Other Essays in Moral Philosophy, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1978.

[6] Williams, Bernard, Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy, London, Fontana, 1985.

[7] Moore, G.E., Principia Ethica, Cambridge University Press, 1959, sections 8-9.

[8] Hinckfuss, Ian, 'Necessary Existential Dependence', Australasian Journal of Philosophy, 54, 1976, pp. 123-132. My scepticism about these notions has been criticise by Richard Routley in Exploring Meinong's Jungle and Beyond, Canberra, Philosophy Department, RSSS, ANU, p. 289. Routley suggests that the difficulties I encounter in explicating these notions in terms of classical and modal apparatus vanish if one is

allowed a neutral logic with relevant entailment. It is true that, even with classical constraints, one can construct modal models in which 'a exists entails b exists' is true. Such a model would be one in which there is no possibility in which a exists and b does not. The question then becomes, 'Does such a model model the logic of any terms a and b such that the item designated by 'a' cannot possibly exist under some other designation where b fails to exist?' I remain sceptical on that issue.

[9] Foot, Philippa, 'Moral Beliefs', Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, LIX 1958, pp. 83-104. Reprinted in Virtues and Vices, op cit.

[10] Searle, John, 'How to derive "ought" from "is"', Philosophical-Review 73 (1964), pp. 43-58.

[11] Foot, op. cit.

[12] Hume, loc. cit., [2] above.

[13] Caritt, E.F., Ethical and Political Thinking Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947

[14] Searle, op. cit.

[15] Hare,

[16] Hare,

[17] Hare,

[18] Foot, op cit.

[19] Foot, 'Goodness and Choice', in Virtues and Vices, op. cit.

[20] Phillips, D.Z. and H.O.Mounce

[21] Foot, 'Virtues and Vices', op cit.

[22] Cartwright, R., 'Propositions' in Butler, R.J. (ed) Analytical Philosophy, Oxford Basil Blackwell, 1962.

[23] Monro, D.H., Empiricism and Ethics, Cambridge University Press, 1967.

[24] Mackie, J.L., Ethics - Inventing Right and Wrong, Harmondsworth, Penguin 1977 and Hume's Moral Theory, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980.

The non-existence of moral obligations in the sense used here, namely, as obligations which occur, if at all, in a way which is logically independent of human desires an aims, whether self-oriented or other-oriented, is implicit in the teachings of philosophers such as Protagoras, Hobbes, Mandeville, Hume, Nietzsche and more recently John Mackie and John Rawls ('Kantian Constructivism in Moral Theory: The Dewey Lectures 1980', Journal of Philosophy, LXXVII, 9, September, 1980), who look on morality as an artifice of human society, rather than an edifice existing independently of human thought and behaviour to which human desire and behaviour ought to conform. The teachings of Protagoras are preserved in the dialogues Plato. The relevant writings of Hobbes, Mandeville, and Hume are to be found D.D. Raphael (ed) British Moralists 1650-1800 vols 1 and 2, O.U.P., 1969. Nietzsche's Geneology of Morals is perhaps the best source of his beliefs in this area. Naturalists such as Philippa Foot who believe that all statements of moral obligations are logically equivalent to prudential statements about human aims and desires, and other moral naturalists, such as John Searle (see section 1.3) who write as if the is-ought gap does not exist, are also implicitly denying the existence of moral obligations in the sense used here -- the intuitionist sense of morality. Such philosophers are akin to those theologians who claim to believe in God, but interpret 'God' in such a way that, when properly understood, they turn out to believe nothing that a person ordinarily called an atheist would not also believe.

Since writing the first draft of this manuscript, my attention has been drawn to an excellent, though as yet unpublished, article called 'Against Ethics' by John P. Burgess of Princeton University. In the essay, Burgess argues for 'amoralism' -- 'the position which rejects the whole institution of morality'. His argument in a nutshell is that there is no reason to believe in objective values and that on the contrary there are good reasons to disbelieve in objective values, and that since morality rests on belief in objective values, it is reasonable to believe that morality rests on falsehoods. That being the case, it is

impractical to base one's actions on moral considerations.

Moral nihilists such as Hume, Mackie and Rawls abound, but most of them perversely embrace the institution of morality despite their disbelief. Burgess is a welcome exception to this rule. Mackie, too, began to have doubts about the usefulness of the moral institution shortly before his untimely death. These doubts are expressed in the conclusion of his Hume's Moral Theory, (op cit).

[25] Trainer, F.E., Dimensions of Moral Thought, (op cit), p. 159.

[26] Robinson, John, Honest to God, Philadelphia, SCM Press, 1963.

[27] Carnap, Rudolf, Logical Foundations of Probability, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1950, Chapter 1.

[28] See for example John Mackie's Ethics - Inventing Right and Wrong, op. cit., Chapter 4.

[29] I owe this point and the example which follows to Rodney Allen.

[30] Foot, 'Moral Beliefs', op. cit.

[31] See Hare, R.M., The Language of Morals, O.U.P. 1952, or more recently, his Moral Thinking, O.U.P., 1981.

[32] Cf. McNaughton on internalism vs externalism

[33] Williams, Bernard, Morality, Cambridge University Press, 1972.

[34] Snare, Frank, 'Dissolving the Moral Contract', Philosophy, 52, 1977, pp. 301-312. Since writing this, Snare seems to have mellowed a little towards the moral sceptic. See his 'The Empirical Bases of Moral Scepticism', American Philosophical Quarterly, 21, 3, July, 1984, pp. 215-225.

[35] Trainer, F.E., op cit
Piaget, Jean, The Moral Development of the Child, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1977.
Kohlberg, Lawrence, 'The Development of Children's Orientation Towards a Moral Order. 1. Sequence in the Development of Moral Thought, Vita Humana, 6, 1963, pp. 1-33.

[36] Wilson,J., 'What is Moral Education?' in Introduction to Moral Education by J. Wilson, N. Williams and R. Sugarman, London, Penguin, 1967.

[37] Bull, N.J., Moral Judgement from Childhood to Adolescence, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969.

[38] Bull, N.J., Moral Education, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969.

[39] P.W.Musgrave's The Moral Curriculum: A Sociological Analysis, (London, Methuen, 1978) does not commit amoral-immoral conflation. However, Musgrave defines morality 'as relating to the principles concerning how we choose to act in situations where there are consequences for others'. As Musgrave realises, this definition is too broad. Principles concerning how we choose to act where there are consequences for others may be prudential as well as moral. 'Kill as many of the enemy as possible' may be a good principle to adopt if you want to win battles, but it is not a moral principle. Again, the principle 'Honesty is the best policy' may or may not be a moral principle, depending on whether 'best' is to mean 'morally best' or 'best for achieving the respect and co-operation of one's fellow citizens'. Again as Musgrave realises, his definition is also too narrow on two counts. It does not cover such possibilities as moral obligations towards animals, nor does it cover such self oriented acts as masturbation which are often regarded as immoral.

The sociologist E. Durkheim (Moral Education, New York, Free Press, 1961, p 30: has correctly said that 'an act is not moral, even when it is in substantial agreement with moral rules, if the consideration of adverse consequences has determined it' that is, if it has been determined by prudential considerations alone whether self-oriented or other oriented. Brian Cheers (Ideology in the Helping Process, Bundoora, Preston Institute of Technology Press, 1978, p.5) says that a moral issue is any question to which there are alternative answers available which cannot be comparatively evaluated by recourse to empirical enquiry. This again is too broad. One common reason why the answers to some questions cannot be evaluated by empirical enquiry is that they presuppose falsehoods. Thus no

amount of empirical enquiry can establish the average height of twelfth century gnomes, if there were no gnome, about in the twelfth century; yet the average height of twelfth century gnomes is not a moral issue. If the moral nihilist is right in saying that there are no mora obligations, the unavailability of empirical tests for morally sound behaviour is explicable in the same way. However, Brian Cheers' analysis nevertheless correctly places a limit on the nature of moral issues.

J.Wilson (op cit, pp. 192-4) seems to treat the business of moral education as the business of making people more socially acceptable, and the sociology of morality a the business of finding out what this amounts to. He defines moral development ii terms of the development of certain psychological abilities such as what he call PHIL (the degree to which one can identify with others) EMP (the ability to judge other people's feelings), CIG (the ability to have a reasonable idea of what consequences one's actions will have) and so on. However, a person could be quite amoral and possess all these skills.

Such research may be relevant to morality, but it is inclined to miss those social relationships which are specifically moral among the not necessarily moral factor such as altruism, fear of sanctions, the maximisation of co-operation and probably a host of other causes of inter-personal behaviour.

[40] See, for example, Monro's Empiricism and Ethics (op cit)

[41] 1 was stimulated to write this section by a discussion with Richard Routley as we strolled through an existent jungle at Tambourine.

Chapter 2 -- Its Structure and Preservation

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I shall attempt to describe the structure of the moral society and its self-preservation mechanisms.

Section 2.2 critically examines the conventional wisdom that it is the useful consequences of morality which encourages people to foster it within their societies.

Section 2.3 looks at the mental conditioning that is associated with the moral upbringing.

Section 2.4 examines the moral hierarchy or pecking order that is established with moral upbringing.

Section 2.5 examines the use of the doctrine of deserts in encouraging people to remain moral after their morality has been established, and its effects in ensuring that members of a moral elite are rewarded in both power and material goods, giving them a vested interest in the preservation of the morality in society.

Section 2.6 examines the clash between the wide-spread belief in moral conscience and the equally wide-spread belief that the only road to knowledge of contingent truths is via observation using our ordinary sensory abilities.

Finally, in Section 2.7 I state my case for moral nihilism -- the belief that there are no moral obligations and that the morality of society is based on myth.

Let us proceed, then, to examine the preservation of morality.

2.2 The Perpetuation of Morality -- Some Implausible Views

Few who are reading this will disagree that they live in a moral society. Few will disagree that the society that they live in is elitist, authoritarian, intellectually dishonest in its social decisions, lacking in esteem for most of its members, inefficient in the resolution of conflicts, inefficient in maximising human happiness, satisfaction or self- esteem, and, because of the threat of war with other societies, physically dangerous. Again, few will disagree that most, if not all, moral societies bear these rather dislikeable qualities.

The fact that all moral societies bear these qualities is no evidence for the theory that morality tends to generate these aspects of society. Perhaps any amoral society would bear these qualities also. Perhaps these qualities of societies are brought about by 'human nature' and societies would bear these qualities in greater degree were it not for the ameliorating effects of morality.

Many would argue that these qualities arise in a society because of its immoral nature. They would claim that if the society was moral (as opposed to immoral) as well as moral (as opposed to amoral), then all such distasteful qualities would vanish.

An alternative and contrary claim is that, as a sociological matter of fact, the way morality perpetuates itself within a society is causally sufficient for the perpetuation and aggravation of these aspects of society. It is the purpose of this essay to present this conjecture in such a light as to make it plausible enough to be at least worthy of more thorough investigation.

What do we know about the way morality within society perpetuates itself? Let us begin by examining a fairly common explanation for the perpetuation of morality, namely that morality brings obvious advantages to all the individual members of a society -- or at least a large proportion of them. Hence most members of a moral society will make it their business to perpetuate the system for the sake of these obvious advantages -- or so goes the argument.

Why would people believe, if indeed they do, that the morality of others is generally an advantage to themselves or at least to most people? It does not seem plausible that direct empirical evidence generates their confidence in the advantages of morality. Most of us have never lived in an amoral society to compare it with what we have.

Hobbes conjectured in the Leviathan that the pre-moral 'state of nature' was a fairly violent affair in comparison with a morally mature society. Paradoxically, he wrote during the civil wars at a time when blood-letting between competing moral systems in Britain was at a peak. But of course competing moral systems had been hacking away at one another before that for thousands of years. One may have thought, therefore, that it would have been reasonable for Hobbes to have dwelt at greater depth on the dangers of conflicting moralities and the likelihood of a continuation of such conflicts. One might also have expected him to have considered the continued exploitation of the poor and weak by the rich and powerful -- a feature glaringly evident in Hobbes' own seventeenth century as well throughout the history of moral civilisation as Hobbes would have known it.

Of course, nobody could have predicted the extent of the slaughter that was to follow: the massacre of the moral Catholic highlanders by the moral Protestants at Culloden and its aftermath, the genocide of the peaceful and hospitable stone-age Tasmanians by people from moral Britain, the mutual slaughter of all those dutiful men on the Somme and on the Russian front in World War I, the morally sanctioned slaughter in World War II, especially in the area bombing of Hamburg, London, Coventry, Cologne, Dresden, Tokyo, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the subsequent slaughter in Korea, Vietnam, Northern Ireland and the Middle East -- all this among people the great majority of whom wanted above all to be good and who did not want to be bad. If life in a 'state of nature' was less secure than this, things must have been very exciting indeed for our stone-age ancestors.

However, let me stress again that one cannot infer from all this that the violence would have been any less had those societies been amoral. The point being made is that if the only evidence there is to hand on this matter is of moral societies which frequently lapse into extremes of violence, then such evidence hardly favours the moral societies. We know that they are very violent. With no evidence one way or the other about amoral societies, at least they stand a fifty-fifty chance of being relatively peaceful.

One might suggest that the evidence might be there at a deeper level. Thus, if we had a measure of the morality of a society, that is, the tendency of its members to be motivated by moral considerations, as well as a measure of the violence of a society, then we might discover a negative correlation between morality and violence.

But we might discover instead that the two are positively correlated. The violence of which we hear daily in the Middle East is not committed by people who have the reputation of lacking moral motivation. Moreover, the Swedes, who, rightly or wrongly, have the reputation of being relatively amoral, are certainly a relatively peaceful society. But all this

is sociological hand-waving. The fact is that no-one has done the research necessary to show which way, if any, the correlation goes. So it cannot be that this sort of empirical observation is the cause of the widespread belief in the advantages of morality.

Some might argue that it is in some way inconsistent to prefer to live in an amoral society. There exists a fairly sizeable literature which discusses the question 'Why should I be moral?'. The question presupposes that one should be moral. Many authors have argued that the denial of this presupposition is some sort of absurdity. Some recent writers, Francis Snare for example, have argued that this is a mistake. [1] It is true that any moral reason to be moral would beg the question. But for all that it makes perfectly good sense to ask for and to give non-moral reasons to be moral or to deny that there are any good reasons to be moral.

Many writers assume that there is no problem for the altruistic agent in providing a reason to be moral. They assume that the agent will perceive that moral behaviour will always coincide with altruistic behaviour. That assumption would be valid if the only beliefs in moral obligations implied that one ought always to behave as if one were kindly disposed to all other people. But it is clearly false that all moral beliefs are of this kind. (See section 1.9.) Some people have beliefs in their moral duty to their god, their sovereign, their country or their political ideals and such morality could (and frequently does) run counter to such altruistic inclinations such people have.

If any such person were strongly altruistic, or had any other strong motivations that ran counter to their moral inclinations, both the question 'Why should I be moral?' and the question 'Why should I want anyone else to be moral?' would be of considerable significance.

However, for many people with a conflict between moral and non-moral motivations, the moral motivations would be over-riding. For such people the idea that they should not be moral seems absurd. The question 'Why should I be moral?' has for them the false presupposition that being moral is not an end in itself -- that it is merely a means to some other end. Their response to this question would be to deny this presupposition rather than to attempt to provide the requested explanation.

Yet there is no logical necessity about the over-riding nature of the supposed moral obligations of these people. (See section 1.10.) So the question still remains: why are these people so motivated? Why do they prefer that they and others be morally good and not bad? If it is neither through observation nor rational calculation that people come to prefer the moral society, how does it come about that they do?

Fear of the unknown could be an explanation except for the fact that few people have ever reflected at length on the matter. They take it for granted, quite correctly, that society is moral (as opposed to amoral) and any suggestion that they might reconsider their preferences in favour of an amoral society is rejected with the immediacy of a knee-jerk reflex. But if only a handful of eccentric philosophers have ever considered the matter at length, it seems hardly likely that these considerations should have provided a motivation or a mechanism for the perpetuation of morality. We must look, therefore, for a mechanism which does not involve a continual rational choice by large numbers of people.

Most people would agree that it is in early childhood, when the moral concepts are being learnt, when the child lives in an environment of continual moral injunction, that these pro-attitudes to morality are instilled. In the following three sections, I sketch a theory concerning the development of pro-attitudes to morality and the perpetuation of morality as an institution. There is no claim for originality in what follows and the account is doubtless an oversimplification of all the psychological and sociological complexities involved. The account is presented as a first approximation which, hopefully, is accurate enough to support the consequences (see Chapter 3) which I believe to follow from it.

2.3 The Moral Upbringing

In our society most children have many of their actions rewarded by smiles, hugs, sweet

foods, or other gifts in association with words which translate into 'good' or one of its cognates. They are told that they are good or that they have done well. Other actions are punished with frowns, withdrawals, angry shouts or physical violence accompanied by words which translate into 'bad' or one of its cognates. The child is told that it is naughty, that it has failed in its duty or that it has sinned.

The end result of this training is a person who wants to be good and who has an aversion to being bad. When people reach this psychological condition, they will usually have quite a few beliefs about which sort of acts are good and which bad. It little matters for the perpetuation and operation of the moral society as a moral society, what these moral beliefs are. What does matter is that these morally trained people are now in a position to be morally propagandised by those whom they regard as their 'betters', that is, those who they feel know more about what is right and what is wrong than they do.

This is doubtless an oversimplified account of the moral training of children, but most psychologists and sociologists in this field would, I think, agree that something of this nature is a very large part of the moral upbringing of children. Carl Rogers is a case in point. He says:

'The infant needs love, wants it, tends to behave in ways which will bring a repetition of this wanted experience. But this brings complications. He pulls baby sister's hair, and finds it satisfying to hear her wails and protests. He then hears that he is a "naughty bad boy" and this may be reinforced with a slap on the hand. He is cut off from affection. As this experience is repeated, and many, many others like it, he gradually learns that what "feels good" is often "bad" in the eyes of others. Then the next step occurs, in which he comes to take the same attitude towards himself which these others have taken. Now, as he pulls his sister's hair, he solemnly intones, "Bad, bad boy". He is introjecting the value of another, taking it as his own. He has deserted the wisdom of his organism, giving up the locus of evaluation, and is trying to behave in terms of values set by another, in order to hold love.' [2]

There may be more going on here than Rogers allows, however. Perhaps it is not just that the infant is introjecting other people's values, if all that amounts to is introjecting other people's desires and preferences. Perhaps the infant is introjecting morality also. There is a difference. If the parent had acted just the same except for telling the child, however angrily, that she did not like that behaviour, rather than calling him a 'naughty, bad boy', then the child would not be intoning 'bad, bad boy' to himself when he pulled his sister's hair next time. Rather he would be reminding himself of his mother's dislike of that behaviour. True, he would probably come to introject that dislike, but he would not come to believe that he is bad.

Rogers seems to believe that the socialisation process, however accomplished, causes the child to become 'out of touch with his own valuing process', and this, he thinks, can be psychologically disturbing. This may be so. It may be even more psychologically disturbing for the child in later years if he is protected from such socialisation. I don't know. An additional psychological disturbance, however, is the insult added to threat and injury in providing a moral overlay to the socialisation process.

The moralisation process is more than a mere socialisation process. Moralising tends to generate people whose concern to be good and to avoid being bad overrides their other concerns -- including any concerns to satisfy the wishes of themselves and others, where these are inconsistent with their moral introjections.

Of course, if the moral nihilist is right in believing that there are no moral obligations, such moralising also gives the child a false view of the world as one in which moral goodness and badness are exemplified. In any case, the resulting self image of the child could turn out to be that of a morally bad person -- and the morally trained child is very anxious not to be morally bad. That would certainly be psychologically disturbing.

Morally trained people of all ages look for moral guidance in the same way as morally

trained children do. They look for and receive injunctions from their elders, priests, newspaper editors, television commentators, radio announcers, doctors, lawyers, magistrates, university lecturers, union organisers, people in uniform or perhaps even their mates down at the public house. Almost all people will be candidates for moral leadership provided that they bear themselves with sufficient pride and dignity and self-esteem to encourage the respect and confidence of their followers.

2.4 The Moral Hierarchy

The occurrence of moral leadership generates a moral hierarchy -- a hierarchy of authority in matters moral. At the pinnacle will be those whose moral injunctions spread furthest: the controllers of the mass media, be that the pulpit, the press, radio or television. Some of these leaders may not be known to the majority of the population, but it matters only that they are known and respected by the succeeding tier of the elite.

Often, too, the heroines and heroes of society, the leading politicians or journalists, may at best be puppets well removed from the centres of power. Even though they may believe themselves to be autonomous and uninfluenced, their positions as mouthpieces in the moral society may rest in the hands of relatively unknown people who nevertheless have sufficient influence at an appropriate level to control the occupation of those positions if not the charismatic occupiers themselves.

This is not to deny the possibility of a society's hero or heroine being at the peak of a moral hierarchy. Nor is it to deny that there may be tensions, even dangerous conflicts, between members of a moral elite vying for prestige and its accompanying power. Nor is it to deny that there may be value-laden ideological feedback via various societal structures from the common people to the controllers and operators of the mass media. It is being suggested, however, that the more moral a society is, the more it is that power and moral authority are to be equated. How would this hierarchy of moral authority arise, and how would it be perpetuated?

Remember that our morally well brought up people desperately want to do what is right. Hence they will be anxious to know what is right and what is wrong. Let us assume for the moment, as will be argued in section 2.7, that the moral nihilist is right -- that there is no moral right or wrong and that there are no moral obligations. Our moral agents, of course, will not be acting on this assumption. They will believe that there are moral obligations to be known. They will not be able to see or otherwise sense or rationally calculate these obligations. There will not be any moral obligations to see, sense or calculate. Neither will they be able to deduce their non-existent moral obligations from any truths that they have come to know. Hume's is-ought gap will be there if only because it is invalid to deduce falsehood from truth.

Now when there is something we wish to know and we do not know how to discover the truth for ourselves, we usually look for an authority on the matter. There are physicists, medicos, lawyers and accountants who not only have knowledge of physics, medicine, law and tax dodging, but who are trained to discover truths in these areas for themselves. Their ways of coming to know what they know are often a mystery to we lay people, but we trust in their expertise. So likewise, the moral lay person, not knowing the answer to his or her moral dilemma, nor knowing any way of finding out for himself or herself, may seek out an authority in whose moral expertise he or she feels confident. The authority, in turn, may sometimes feel the need to appeal to a still higher authority and so on.

If this were the only explanation of moral belief, it would lead to an infinite regress of moral authorities, in which case the moral society could not exist. So if moral nihilism and hence moral scepticism were correct, there must be at least one other mechanism for the production of beliefs in moral values and obligations.

David Hume has given us an insight into the mechanism required in his Treatise of Human Nature. Hume claimed that morality 'consists not in any relations that are the objects of science;' and 'that it consists not in any matter of fact, which can be discovered

by the understanding.' He says:

Take any action allowed to be vicious; wilful murder for instance. Examine it in all lights, and see if you can find that matter of fact, or real existence, which you call vice. In whichever way you take it, you find only certain passions, motives, volitions, and thoughts. There is no other matter of fact in the case. The vice entirely escapes you, as long as you consider the object. You never can find it, till you turn your reflection into your own breast, and find a sentiment of disapprobation, which arises in you, towards this action. Here is a matter of fact; but it is the object of feeling, not of reason. It lies in yourself, not the object. [3]

Thus Hume is claiming that belief in objective moral values is a mistake. The mistake can occur if one takes one's personal sentiments for perceptions of objective reality.

Some have taken this idea of Hume's to be an argument in favour of naturalism. Hector Monro writes:

According to the non-naturalist natural qualities give rise to the non-natural quality of goodness which gives rise to feelings of approval in human beings.

Now, the naturalist will ask, is the middle step here really necessary? Why not just say that the natural qualities of things produce feelings of approval in human beings and that we use moral terms to express these feelings. This would give us an explanation of the facts of morality without invoking any dubious entities. [4]

Although the naturalist's attempt to avoid explanations involving the dubious non-natural qualities is along the right tracks, the explanation offered by Monro for moral sentiments is dissatisfying in three ways. Firstly, it is consistent with a lack of non-natural qualities, that many people may nevertheless believe in such qualities (if not by that description) and may therefore use moral terms in order to state those beliefs. Secondly, the approval these people feel for some natural qualities may not be quite so directly a function of those qualities as the naturalist explanation would have us believe. Such approvals are likely to be tempered, or even drastically altered, by the moral agent's beliefs in non-natural qualities and the attitudes she or he has been conditioned to bear towards things with such qualities. Thirdly, the subjectivist-naturalist account of moral feelings fails to explain the existence and role of a glaringly evident feature of the moral society, namely the moral elite or what P.W. Musgrave in his book The Moral Curriculum calls 'the agents of respectability', whose identification, as Musgrave points out, is of major importance in the sociological study of morality. [5]

Furthermore, there is a way in which it may be moderately reasonable for moral agents to take their personal sentiments as an indication of objective moral fact, if not for the direct result of the application of their moral conscience. Let me explain.

Moral people who believe themselves to be less than virtuous are those who endure the annoyance. if not the psychological stress. of having some of their natural tendencies inconsistent with what they believe their moral obligations to be. Good people, virtuous people, would be those whose natural tendencies and whose moral obligations are in accord. Of course, if there were no moral obligations there would be no good or virtuous people. However, insofar as any people believe themselves to be virtuous, they are able to equate their natural preferences and inclinations with what is morally acceptable, and such injunctions that they wish everyone to abide by, they can equate with moral obligations. Thus they can believe themselves to have a sound moral judgement or a good conscience and can feel confident enough in their moral beliefs to pass on their moral judgements to others. Sometimes, perhaps often, this confidence in their own valuations and their lack of confidence in other people's valuations; combined with a fear that society is headed down the morally wrong tracks, taking them and their loved ones with it, can lead them to give their moral advice whether solicited or not. This, I conjecture, is the mechanism behind the priests and their pulpits, the newspaper editors and their editorials, the politicians and their platforms, the propagandists and their mass media.

How then does the moral society generate its pharisees, its magistrates, its priests and cardinals, its charismatic leaders -- its moral elite? Several mechanisms could be responsible, but I shall describe one which seems plausible. Again, the needed training takes place at an early age.

Children will vary in the way they react to condemnation and praise, and the quantities of condemnation and of praise will vary from child to child. One child will be held up to others as an example -- good or bad -- thus giving some children a moral boost at the expense of others. The children who receive most moral boosts from their parents or guardians are likely to believe what they are continually told, namely that they are very good. These will be the children who succeed in pleasing their moral mentors most. Other children get the inverse treatment and go into adulthood with an inferiority complex and a tendency to seek continual moral guidance and leadership from their 'betters'. Most people end up somewhere on the spectrum in between.

But those who are convinced of their own goodness will be those most likely to become the moral leaders of society. In fact such moral self-confidence is a necessary condition for entry into the moral elite. For with such self- confidence, it is easy to believe that what one wishes for oneself is moray permissible, and how one wants others to behave is morally obligatory. A good person will not want what is wrong.

2.5 Moral Deserts

The moral training of children involves reward and punishment for being what their moral superiors regard as good and bad respectively. But the training does not end at childhood. It extends throughout life. If adults stop worrying about doing their duty they may cease to train their children to do so and the moral society may fall rapidly into disrepair. This may sound like Malcolm Muggeridge or Mary Whitehouse, but in this case they would be correct. They may be right, too, if they believed that western society was already some way along the road to moral dissolution.

However, to return to my point, if morality is to keep going, the moral carrot and stick must be displayed or applied continually to most people throughout their lives. The punishments include frowns, snubs, deprivation of income, deprivation of possessions, imprisonment and physical violence. The rewards include smiles, honours, property, economic security, power and privilege. This is the system of moral deserts. Again it is the trainers, not the trainees, who determine who deserves what.

Further, many of those low on the moral scale seem to be content or even eager to see that the privileged elite, loaded as they are with wealth and power, are rewarded still further. This is because they will be trained to assent to the proposition that people should get what they deserve -- and of course better people deserve more.

According to the gospels, Christ taught that it was easier for a camel to get through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. That sort of talk would have been enough to bring ruin to any nicely established moral hierarchy. But despite the message of the gospels, the Christian church soon found that it, too, had to embrace economic inequalities if it was to flourish as a strong moral system.

Of course, economic reward is not the only possible reward, but to a moral trainer, the advantage of economic or material rewards is that they show in a much more permanent way than the more ephemeral smiles or ego-strokes, and thus the trainee can be held up as an example and an incentive to others.

But there is another reason which could influence the moral trainers to keep up some sort of system of deserts, economic or otherwise. Being higher up the moral pyramid, they are believed to 'deserve' more than would otherwise be their 'fair' share. They have a vested interest in morality and its system of deserts and the perpetuation of both. So their propaganda is heavily laden with their views on the 'importance' of morality with the presupposition, often made explicit, that in making any decision, moral considerations outweigh any other considerations.

To sum up, it is conjectured that the moral society perpetuates itself in the following way:

Moral trainers apply the doctrine of deserts to condition most of the populace into being moral.

The training program generates a moral elite who have a vested interest in preserving the system and whose rewards include the power to see that the training program is preserved.

2.6 Moral Knowledge

The story told in sections 2.2 to 2.5 about the perpetuation of morality is consistent with the falsity of moral scepticism and moral nihilism, and many aspects of the story would be plausible enough whether or not one was a moral sceptic or nihilist. However, the story is made more plausible if moral scepticism and moral nihilism are accepted. In this section, several attitudes concerning moral knowledge will be briefly reviewed. The idea of a moral conscience is examined in more detail. It is argued that so-called 'moral sense' theories contain an implicit appeal to a faculty of moral intuition or conscience. Moral rationalism, naturalism and non-cognitivism are claimed to be invalid ways of avoiding both the Scylla of judgment empiricism and the Charybdis of moral scepticism. The outcome will favour a sceptical attitude on matters moral. In section 2.7, a case for moral nihilism will be presented.

It was conjectured in section 2.4 that the morally self-confident equate what is morally right with their own natural inclinations and preferences. Their moral beliefs are the result of searching within their own breasts -- as David Hume put it in his Treatise of Human Nature. However, what they are doing and what they are thought to be doing are often two quite different things. What is often thought to be happening is that people are consulting their conscience. What sort of thing is this consultation supposed to be?

Conscience is often thought of as some sort of extra sense, but it is supposed to differ from the usual sort of sensory apparatus in one important way. With the ordinary sensory apparatus such as sight, hearing and touch, we receive sensations caused by things actually there in the world about us. But conscience is supposed to be able to tell us something about not only what is actually happening, but also what could possibly happen. The object of our ordinary sensory perception is our immediate environment. The objects of our conscience are possibilities -- possible agents, their possible acts and the possible products of those possible acts. Via their conscience, some people, at least, are supposed to be able to learn whether a kind of act is good, bad or indifferent -- before they ever experience that sort of act in actuality. It is in this way that ultimate moral principles -- principles with the aid of which all other moral truths are derivable -- are supposed to be knowable a priori, that is to say, prior to experience.

Jiminy Cricket is not of much use to his Pinnochio, if he is able to say only after the behaviour in question, that he has perceived it to be good or bad. Moral knowledge is for keeping you on the straight and narrow path to righteousness -- preventing sin, not simply describing it. The moral agent wants to know more than whether some act that actually occurs is good, or bad or indifferent. He or she wishes to know also which acts would be good, or bad or indifferent, were they to occur.

This latter remark makes would be moral principles look a little like the principles of physics -- the laws of nature. Insofar as an engineer (say) is equipped with knowledge of physics, he or she can have knowledge of what sorts of bridges would collapse under what conditions and which would remain standing. This sort of knowledge is hypothetical knowledge -- knowledge of possibilities -- physical possibilities in this case. It is knowledge which goes beyond which actual bridges have collapsed or even which actual bridges will collapse. To repeat, it is knowledge of what sort of bridges would collapse (whether or not there are or will be bridges of that sort).

There are many facts about the world that are not directly observable -- theoretical facts

such as, for example, that the strength of the magnetic field at some point is proportional to the rate of change of the strength of the electrostatic field at that same point. One cannot directly perceive with one's senses that this is so, even though it be true that it is only via sensory experience that we can come to know or reasonably believe this to be true. It is nevertheless the case that these worldly facts do not require inner judgements of a factual sort on possibilities, for us to know them to be true. Finding out how the world happens to be involves at most conjecture, rational deduction and observation. The only knowledge of possibilities involved in all of this is knowledge of the logical relations between such possibilities -- what implies what.

Richard Brandt has claimed that moral laws are known in a similar way. [6] We 'see' that certain actual acts are good, bad or indifferent as the case may be, and extrapolate on these cases to produce conjectures about moral laws, conjectures which may or may not be falsified by future moral 'observations'. The more a conjecture survives the tests of experience, the more we are justified in taking it to be a moral law.

Others, like the eighteenth century philosopher Francis Hutcheson [7] and more recently Frithjof Bergmann and Michael Smith [8], have regarded the moral properties of immediate moral sense like secondary properties -- powers in the objects to produce sensations of moral approval or disapproval within us.

An immediate objection to such theories is that although our sensory apparatus includes eyes for visual phenomena, ears for aural phenomena and fingers for tactile phenomena, nowhere do we find a sensory organ devoted to moral phenomena. Someone might reply that of course our immediate perceptions of the world are visual, tactual, aural and so forth, and not moral; but that having perceived events in the normal way, people are then able to bring their moral sense to bear on those observations.

However, it is there that the analogy between knowing laws of nature and knowing moral principles breaks down. The perceivable facts of the case having been ascertained, what role is this inner moral sense supposed to play? Presumably what it does is to enable the moral observer to 'see' that this sort of act under this sort of circumstance is good (bad, indifferent). Thus when the tale of the moral observer is spelt out in full, we see again that with fairly plausible assumptions, this would entail the existence of the sort of conscience that was being discussed earlier, namely one which could directly intuit the truth of moral principles.

Many people talk about a so-called 'fact-value' distinction -- an alleged distinction between statements purporting to be true as opposed to statements of value which are supposed to be neither true or false. But for the sort of person who has the sort of intuitionistic idea of morality and moral knowledge so far outlined in this section, this usage would be misleading. Such a person (let us call her or him a conceptual intuitionist) would claim that if there were moral values, then there would be corresponding moral facts, namely, that there are these values.

The conceptual intuitionist would allow that there are three sorts of propositions:

Statements that are true or false because of semantic or logical considerations -- considerations having to do with the meaning of expressions and their grammatical construction -- and this alone;

Contingent non-evaluative statements whose truth or falsity is dependent not only on semantics but also on facts about how the world happens to be;

Contingent value statements whose truth or falsity depends not just on semantics and the way the world happens to be, but also on moral facts.

Conscience, if there were such a thing, would not discover logical relationships. Rather it would discover the moral properties of possibilities -- possible acts done under possible circumstances and the possible consequences thereof and the possible agents who would do such things. The moral rationalists like Locke and Samuel Clarke were right to see intuition about possibilities, or ideas as they called them, or forms as Plato called them, as

being necessarily at the root of any moral knowledge. Where the rationalists were wrong was in thinking that this sort of intuition would be the same as logical intuition. Conceptual truths, (analytic truths as they are often called) such as the truths of pure mathematics and logic, may be universal, eternal and immutable. But the sentences which express such truths do so by virtue of the meanings of the words and the construction of the sentences. Any moral truths intuited by one's conscience, however, would not be true by virtue of semantic considerations alone -- that is to say, analytically true. On the contrary, to use philosophical jargon, they are supposed to be contingent (or as some say, synthetic). That is, if one were to deny them one might be wrong, but one would not be contradicting oneself.

Moral empiricists, or naturalists, as they are called, are right in thinking of moral knowledge as synthetic. Where they are wrong is in believing that such moral truth can be found by observation of nature alone. The basis of moral knowledge, if there were such a basis, would be a priori knowledge of synthetic truths.

However, as the teachings of seventeenth and eighteenth century British writers such as Locke and Hume have become accepted and disseminated by later philosophers, more and more people have lost faith in the possibility of there being a priori knowledge of synthetic truth. The only a priori knowledge possible, so most people who think about it now believe, is conceptual or 'analytic' knowledge such as logic and pure mathematics. All other knowledge is empirical, that is, it is to be gained via observation. No place is left for synthetic a priori knowledge. The idea that some people can come to have knowledge of contingent properties of possibilities via some sort of sixth sense is a case of the so-called Platonic fallacy -- a treatment of abstract objects as if they are concrete. We can think about possibilities, but we cannot observe them. They are not the sort of thing that can be causally efficacious, so they are not the sort of thing to affect our senses, no matter how many senses we may have.

But if empiricism is widespread, and it is also widely believed that moral knowledge, if any, must be rooted in conscience, why isn't the world filled with moral sceptics, that is, people who claim that nothing can be known of our moral obligations? One reason would be that societies can live with obvious contradictions for generations or even centuries -- especially if the contradictory beliefs are part of the rationales for important societal relationships. In religion this phenomenon is commonplace. It is no less so in morality -- or, for that matter, within science. What usually happens under these circumstances is that the apparent contradiction becomes tagged as a philosophical problem so that society can go on believing in its inconsistencies while the philosophers wrestle with their 'problem'.

There are always three ways with a dilemma -- to opt for one of the two horns -- or to wax sceptical over the dilemma being a real one at all. Of course, those taking the latter line often feel obliged to state why everybody is wrong in thinking of the situation as paradoxical. Occasionally the sceptic is right and a way can be found between the horns of the dilemma. But just as often the sceptic is wrong. There is no valid way out.

In such cases invalid 'ways out' often begin to appear, for example, like John Robinson's Honest to God, mentioned in section 1.5. Robinson avoids the acceptance of a metaphysics, inconsistent with the world view of most modern people by transforming God into an abstraction whose existence no-one normally thought of as an atheist would want to deny.

With morality, the 'ways out' have been moral rationalism (Basic moral knowledge is analytically true.), naturalism (Basic moral knowledge is synthetic but can be discovered empirically. Subjectivist theories would fall under this heading.) and lastly, non-cognitivism (There are no knowable moral truths -- not because none of the moral truths can be known but because moral language does not express propositions that are true or false. In that way it is supposed to be akin to the language of imperatives or perhaps emotive expressions such as 'Hoorah!' and 'Alas!').

This may read like a fairly clear-cut classification of mistaken attitudes to moral knowledge. With particular examples it is not so clear, however. One such example is John Searle's theory that in any case of a promise sincerely being made, there is a moral obligation to keep the promise. (See the Appendix.) Searle has claimed that this moral theory about promise-keeping is not only true but analytically so. Now if someone who shared this belief of Searle's also regarded the proposition as a basic moral truth, then one would have to classify that person as a moral rationalist. If that person were instead to regard it not as a basic moral truth at all, but rather just a semantic truth of language, then we could regard that person as a naturalist. He or she would believe that one could discover, at least in part, what prima facie moral obligations there are, by observing promising behaviour -- something that actually occurs in the world. The same comments apply to Philippa Foot's theory (see the Appendix) that the moral goodness of an act is to be equated with the self-interested prudence of that act.

Non-cognitivists are correct in believing that moral statements carry with them an emotive or an imperative or prescriptive force -- for those who wish to be morally good. So much was granted in section 1.9. But it does not follow that such statements are not propositional as well.

One of the prime motivations in the present century for saying that these statements are not really statements at all is the combination of three factors:

moral scepticism

the belief in the importance of morality, and

a doctrine about meaningfulness known as the verificationist theory of meaning.

According to one formulation of the verificationist theory of meaning, a sentence in the indicative mood is meaningless unless there is some way of knowing whether or not what it supposedly expresses is true. This theory, which became a central tenet of what was known as logical positivism, has become within the last few decades to be viewed with suspicion by most philosophers. I shall not be concerned to argue against verificationism here. However, if both moral scepticism and verificationism were correct, then it would seem that expressions which entailed the existence of moral obligations would turn out to be meaningless -- given that such expressions were in the indicative mood. Yet given the importance of such expressions they could not be meaningless. The way out of this impasse, therefore, was to deny that such expressions were really indicative, despite their superficial grammatical form. Their moral implications therefore were declared to have no descriptive meaning, but merely an emotive or prescriptive or imperative meaning.

Even those positivists who would reject the verificationist theory of meaning might feel pressed into non- propositional accounts of moral statements if they felt that the acceptance of moral scepticism removed a prop from the importance of morality. Non-propositional attitudes towards morality would be examined with a view to supplying an alternative prop.

However, non-cognitive theories of moral discourse have lost their popularity with philosophers over recent decades. The main reason for this is that non-cognitivist analyses have failed to do justice to the logic of statements which quantify over moral obligations, rights, virtues or vices, as in

13 It is difficult to conform to some moral obligations.

as well as statements within which moral statements are embedded as clauses, for example, as the antecedent of a conditional as in

14 If Mary is morally obliged to go, then I shall encourage her to do so.

or within statements of belief or cognition such as

15 Mary knows (believes) that she has a moral obligation to go.

Again, attempts at imperative analyses of 'ought' statements have failed to account for non-evaluative uses of 'ought', which, as we have seen in section 1.3, can be given the same semantic treatment as uses of 'ought' within moral contexts.

It would seem reasonable, given the above considerations, to allow that conceptual intuitionism, judgment empiricism and hence moral scepticism are all true. All that is consistent with there being moral obligations, none of which, given scepticism, we shall ever know. In the next section, we shall examine briefly the rationality of believing in such unknowable moral obligations.

2.7 The Case for Moral Nihilism

If there is no special way of knowing called 'conscience' and if there is no hope of arguing either from logical considerations or from readily observable facts to the existence of moral obligations, is it nevertheless possible to allow that one might reasonably believe in moral obligations? How could that be?

Someone might suggest that, like molecules and Santa Claus, the existence of moral obligations may be postulated to explain observable phenomena. We quite reasonably believe in such a postulate if the postulate yields a good explanation of the phenomena concerned, provided that no countervailing explanation is at hand.

Thus we believe in the existence of molecules because the postulation of their existence explains so much about the behaviour of gases and the phenomena associated with heat, and there is to hand no other plausible but contrary explanation of the phenomena. We disbelieve in Santa Claus because we think that there is a contrary yet much more plausible explanation of how the Christmas gifts come to be in the stocking.

Now someone may claim that the postulation of the existence of moral obligations could help to explain, for example, the psychological phenomena of moral concern and guilt together with beliefs in moral obligations themselves. The details of such an explanation may not be explicit -- but let that pass. In any case the strategy fails. For in sections 2.3 to 2.5 a countervailing but much more plausible explanation of these phenomena has been presented, and if that explanation is accepted, there remains no reason to believe in the existence of moral obligations.

Now if there is no reason to believe in the existence of moral obligations, there is no need to believe in the existence of vices and virtues either. For virtue is conformity to one's moral obligations and vice is failure to so conform. If there are no moral obligations then there cannot be conformity to them or failure to conform to them. Similarly, if there are no moral obligations, there is no sin, evil, decency, indecency, nobility, vulgarity, avidity -- if the existence of sin, evil, decency, et cetera each entail the existence of vices or virtues and hence the existence of moral obligations.

Notes for Chapter 2

[1] Snare, Francis, 'The Empirical Bases of Moral Scepticism', American Philosophical Quarterly, 21, 3, July, 1984, pp. 215-225.

[2] Rogers, Carl, 'Towards a Modern Approach to Values: The Valuing Process in the Mature Person' in Person to Person: The Problem of Being Human by Rogers, C.R., and Stevens, B., New York, Pocket Books, 1967.

Other modern psychologists and sociologists seem to agree with the view that the technique of reward and punishment lies at the root of the moral development of the child. G.M. Stevenson in The Development of Conscience (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966) gives a far more detailed and sophisticated account of the processes than the doubtless oversimplified version given here. The classical work of Jean Piaget (The Moral Judgment of the Child, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1977 -- first published in French in 1932) and the subsequent work of Lawrence Kohlberg ('The Development of Childrens' orientations towards a Moral Order 1. Sequence in the Development of Moral Thought', Vita Humana, 1963, 6, pp. 11-33), are the most well-known attempts to study the psychological end results of moral training.

Carl Roger's examination of the training process (op cit) develops the theory of introjection in a way that is quite compatible with the story told in this section, even though the description is not as detailed with respect to the moral aspect of the matter as I would

wish. I am indebted to Graham Jamieson for bringing the work of Rogers and other moral psychologists to my attention during some helpful discussions on an earlier draft of this essay.

[3] Hume, David, Treatise of Human Nature,

[4] Monro, D.H., Empiricism and Ethics, Cambridge University Press, 1967, pp. 80-81.

[5] Musgrave, P.W. The Moral Curriculum: A Sociological Analysis, London, Methuen, 1978, p. 14.

[6] Brandt, Richard, Ethical Theory, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 1959.

[7] Hutcheson, Francis, 'An Inquiry Concerning Moral Good and Evil' in Raphael, D.D. (ed) British Moralists (1650-1800), O.U.P., 1969, pp. 261-299.

[8] These views of Bergmann and Smith were conveyed to me in discussion.

Chapter 3 -- The Consequences of Morality

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter it was stated that there were aspects of a moral society that most people would not desire. In this chapter I wish to argue in more detail for this position. Some of the argument has already occurred, especially with respect to economic inequality in Section 2.5. But there is more to say about elitism, authoritarianism, moral denigration and guilt, inequality and revolution, the failure of morality in conflict resolution and physical danger in the moral society.

I begin with a more detailed examination of elitism. A detailed discussion of conflict resolution is left to Chapter 4.

3.2 The Elitism of the Moral Society

The moral society as it has so far been described is clearly elitist. That is to say, there is a widespread belief throughout the society that some people are morally better than others and there is a widespread desire that these morally better people ought to dominate or actually rule the society. Edmund Burke's pride in British society in his Reflections on the Revolution in France typifies the elitist attitude:

We fear God; we look up with awe to kings; with affection to parliament; with duty to magistrates; with reverence to priests; and with respect to nobility. [1]

People are said to be egalitarian insofar as they wish for an equal sharing of power among members of the society.

In section 2.4 it was claimed that people in a moral society will tend to defer to those whom they regard as better than themselves, because those who are thought to be better will be thought to be more likely to know what is right. People high in the moral hierarchy will want deference from those lower than themselves, because they, too, will want these people to do what is right. If part of what is generaHy believed to be one of the duties of the elite in a moral society is to lead others along the paths of righteousness, then insofar as people are either unwilling or unable to provide this leadership, their place in the moral hierarchy will be degraded by their fellow citizens.

I was once asked by an academic philosopher why I didn't like morality. I replied that for one thing a moral society is elitist. 'Good' he replied, 'what else has the moral society to recommend it?' This was a man who had the philosophic training to know his own mind well.

Most people these days regard themselves as fairly egalitarian or at least democratic. Even if they do not want an equal sharing of power, they do not want what they would regard as excessive power to reside permanently in the hands of a small nobility. For them 'elitist' is a derogatory expression. Nevertheless many of these me people when confronting the ballot box tend to vote not for the person who is ost likely to support legislation that they believe will best suit themselves and othrs, but rather for what they believe to be the best person.

This could explain why conservative parties, representative as they are of the oral elite, and whose candidates therefore tend to be drawn from the upper stratas f society, have

continually polled so well at elections ever since adult suffrage has xisted. It would explain also why labour parties, democratic socialist parties and ther parties of the left desperately try to find political candidates among the moral lite -- lawyers, doctors or academics -- even though such people are far from representative of the stratas of society which such parties try to support.

The only egalitarianism that traditional supporters of left-wing parties have insistd upon to any extent is the equality of power of people in the election of their own adership. Few have suggested that leadership itself be abolished. Thus the political ores of much of the left are not so much egalitarian as Presbyterian. The appointent of elders within the Presbyterian church is based on the asslimption that the eople know best who their moral leaders are, but unlike the Congregationalists of esteryear and members of the Society of Friends, Presbyterians still assume that here is a moral elite to be properly placed in the structure of decision making within he church. The official constitutions of almost all nations, if not their actual olitical practices, reflect this same presbyterianism.

This popularity of presbyterianism would be due, I conjecture, not so much to he proselytising of lowland scotsmen as to the fact that this sort of political strucure mimics so well the unofficial power structure of the moral hierarchy. Thus as a olitical structure, it has the advantage in the popularity stakes of appearing natural o the average moral citizen.

Elitism, then, is very widely accepted throughout society and it is doubtful if one ould tempt any large proportion of the population away from morality by showing hem its elitist aspects. However, one may be able to show those who favour elitism ome implications of moral elitism which might disturb or disgust them.

3.3 The Authoritarianism of the Moral Society [2]

In Section 1.6 it was said that members of the moral elite are often treated as uthorities about moral obligations. Since most members of the society will want hemselves and others to act in accordance with what they believe their obligations to e, they will tend to favour conformity to the injunctions of the moral authorities. his restricts their own freedom and the freedom of others. Since an authoritarian ociety is one in which obedience to authority is preferred to indi,.idual freedom, orality and authoritarianism go hand in hand.

It is commonplace to distinguish between authority in the sense of expertise and uthority in the sense of a right to command. Within moral contexts the two senses become fused because of the prescriptive nature of moral injunctions for moral agents. Those who are thought to know what ought to be done are those who are thought worthy of leadership.

Now paradoxically, authoritarianism is regarded as some sort of evil in most moral societies. So the question arises as to how moral people live and practice within a system which has properties that they regard as so evil. The answer is that they seldom regard their own moral society as authoritarian and they tend correspondingly to be blind to their own authoritarianism. Yet these same people see so readily the authoritarianism in societies other than their own.

An explanation of all this is to be had if we examine the concept of freedom. Frithjof Bergmann has argued in his book On Being Free that 'an act is free if the agent identifies with the elements from which it flows, it is coerced if the agent dissociates himself from the element which generates or prompts the action'.3 Thus the bank teller threatened by the gunman is not free since she would not identify with the 'elements from which' her act of giving money to the gunman 'flows', namely the threat of his shooting her. If, on the other hand, she knows the gunman, knows that he is only bluffing, knows that his wife and children are in need, and gives him the money for that reason, identifying with the compassion within her from which her act 'flows', then she is acting freely.

That is freedom as seen from within the agent. However, when we consider the freedom of others, we usually think of them as coerced if we could not identify with what would be the causes of our behaviour, if we were in their shoes.

Thus, Chinese students, identifying with the injunctions of Maoist propaganda, were

appalled at the thought of two Australian school teachers, who they had come to love , returning to their illiberal capitalist country. But the school teachers with their different moral upbringing did not experience a loss of freedom on their return.

Likewise, it is commonplace to regard Nazi Germany as a paradigm of authoritarianism. Yet most of the Germans outside concentration camps in that period did not experience the society as unduly coercive, identifying as they did with the moral injunctions of the ruling elite.

Thus moral agents, identifying as they do with what they believe to be their moral obligations, do not feel coerced by them, and insofar as these beliefs coincide with the moral propaganda of the society in which they reside, which will usually be the case, that society will not appear unduly authoritarian to them. It is only when we allow ourselves to take an outsider's view of the moral society in which we live that its authoritarianism becomes apparent.

This view of things makes freedom and authoritarianism appear subjective states of affairs, and there is, I think, a subjective sense of freedom which Bergmann has correctly analysed. Bergmann's analysis is of freedom in the performance of an act. But a slightly different idea of freedom is freedom to perform an act. It is the latter notion that is the more objective. I may go through my whole life identifying with all the elemen ts from which my acts flow, whence all my acts are, in Bergmann's sense, free. But I may never be free to fly for all that.

Similarly, morally trained people may identify with the injunctions of their moral elite and hence be free in conforming to these injunctions, without being free to act otherwise. They would be psychologically incapable of acting otherwise. When we look upon other moral societies and see them as authoritarian, we are quite correct and objectively so. Insofar as those within a moral society are blind to its authoritarianism, it is because they do not experience their own lack of freedom.

Finally, note that in a moral society it is not freedom itself which is valued highly. On the contrary, it is a basic function of morality to place restraints on human behaviour. Freedom to do what is right is regarded as holy, but freedom to do what is wrong is regarded as a positive evil and warrants a special label -- 'licence'.

Of course, the very people who most insist on the perpetuation of these attitudes towards freedom to do right and freedom to do wrong are the same people who invent right and wrong in the first place. They enjoin us, not only to do what is right and refrain from doing what is wrong, but also to help them to force others into their moral mould.

Morality, some say, is a relatively recent development in human history. So are legal floggings, exiles, long terms of imprisonment, censorship, official secrets and large-scale warfare. With few exceptions, the anarchist and the non-conformist are the pariahs of the moral society. The foreigner who does not share its values is its enemy.

3.4 Moral Denigration and Guilt

The majority of objects in any pyramid are at or near its base and similarly the majority of members of a moral society have relatively low status in that society. Moral denigration for the bulk of society is the other side of the coin to the honours bestowed on the elite minority.

Nietzsche, in the Genealogy of Morals, First Essay, Section 2, captures the mechanism:

... it was the 'good' themselves, that is to say the noble, mighty, highly placed and high-minded who decreed themselves and their actions to be good, i.e. belonging to the highest rank, in contradistinction to all that was base, low-minded and plebeian.

... The origin of the opposites good and bad is to be found in the pathos of nobility and distance, representing the dominant temper of a higher, ruling class in relation to a lower, dependent one.

If we replace the past tense of Nietzsche's genealogy with the present tense of the mechanism of perpetuation we change doubtful origins into a plausible sociology.

Nietzsche also conjectured that the terminology referring to social classes is etymologically related to moral terminology. Doubtless there are etymological facts of many languages which demonstrate that association of the upper classes with goodness and the lower classes with baseness has been a continuing feature of moral societies. But what is more interesting for our present purposes is the double meaning that so many of our social class words exhibit. Thus, 'noble' means both being a person of high rank or title and also being of lofty and exalted character. The words 'high', 'elevated', 'lofty' can be used to describe both social status and moral character. The same applies to 'low', 'common', 'ordinary', 'vulgar', 'churlish', and 'plebeian' to describe the base of the moral society's pyramid. Again, the political right wing is that which supports the upper classes against the demands of the lower classes. One further example is a word used in the heading for this section -- the word 'denigration'. This means 'the blackening of character' and has common etymological roots with 'negro'. Little wonder that black-skinned people have been such a rarity in the upper strata of English-speaking societies.

Clearly the moral elite have all the advantages and the lower classes all the disadvantages when it comes to fallacies of equivocation. But it is important to realise that these double meanings do not arise by chance. To the extent that a society is a moral society the lower classes are regarded as morally inferior to the upper classes, the nobles are supposed to be noble, the churls churlish, common people common, ordinary people ordinary, and plebeians plebeian. The snobbery inherent in the moral society seems to extend to the very language used to describe it.

Someone may ask why we should worry if most people regard themselves as morally inferior. After all, most people regard themselves and are regarded as inferior at mathematics, tennis, karate, athletics, nuclear physics, medicine and motor car maintainence, but this usually does not worry people. So why worry about their sense of moral inferiority? The reason is that in the moral society people are trained to want above all to be good and noble and to want to be other than vulgar, ignoble and low. Yet the structure of the society destines the majority of them to be regarded as failures in that regard. The situation is similar to the old fashioned present-day competitive education systems within which most children receive a training which urges academic excellence upon them but nevertheless guarantees that only a small minority will make the grade. The majority end their educational career with an inferiority complex with respect to their academic abilities.

At the extreme lower end of the moral pecking order would be those who, believing themselves to be bad if not vile, lose all hope of what they think of as moral betterment and in their despair feel they might as well get what enjoyment and satisfaction they can out of doing what they think is bad. In this way (though perhaps not only in this way) the phenomena of juvenile gangs, vandalism and what commonly passes for criminality could be generated. At higher levels on the social scale, the moral inferiority complex could be characterised by ego-competition, including continual attempts to denigrate the character of others, in order to achieve a higher place in the moral pecking order than would otherwise be believed to be possible.

Moral and evaluative language would provide a useful tool for this exercise, not only because of the inbuilt snobbery of moral language, but also because almost any describable human behaviour and almost any human characteristic can be described in two ways -- derogatively or euphemistically. People who try to boost their ego or image at the expense of others continually make use of this moral parsing, as Bertrand Russell once called it. Here are just a few examples.

I	You
am discreet	are deceitful
am different	are abnormal

am normal	are common
am a rough diamond	are churlish

To return to our theme, even where a sense of moral inferiority is not accompanied by perversions and ego competition, the feeling of continual moral failure, the feeling that for all one's efforts one is still morally inferior, will be a saddening thing for those who bear it.

An associated sadness that morality can render even to those who feel fairly content with their moral status is the feeling of guilt, the feeling of remorse at having done something that they believe to be morally wrong.

People who are amoral may experience regret. They may regret having done something with a consequence they disliked and which they did not foresee, or which they did foresee but did not care about at the time of the act. But they cannot have regrets at having done something wrong. They either do not care about what is right and what is wrong or they do not believe that there are such things as right or wrong acts. Thus, insofar as a society is amoral, there is no possibility of feelings of guilt, guilt complexes or moral inferiority complexes with all the sadness, madness and suffering that these feelings and complexes entail.'

3.5 Economic Inequality and Revolution

In section 2.5, it was explained how the way was wide open for either subconscious or deliberate but morally sanctioned exploitation of the rest of society by the moral elite. But there are limits to the extent to which the gullible can be fooled by the confidence trickster, and likewise there are limits to which there can be an unequal distribution of wealth before someone comes up with the idea that perhaps the wealthy are giving themselves more than they deserve.

These are dangerous revolutionary thoughts because it is thought to be ignoble to take more than one's just deserts. The revolutionary, therefore, is in effect crying 'Imposter!', and such imposters deserve to be parted from their power and possessions if not their lives -- or so would go the revolutionary injunctions.

The moral society at this stage may divide like an amoeba, with the rebels attached to a revolutionary moral leadership and the remainder remaining 'loyal'. The situation is then physically dangerous, with the moral leadership of each side denigrating the other with a strong possibility of civil war.5

The danger of rebellion is mitigated by the recently invented so-called 'democratic' elections of the Presbyterian style mentioned in section 3.2. This device is efficient in yielding the minimal change in the power structure to satisfy the feelings of injustice within the community at least to the point where the great majority feel that the fruits of rebellion would not outweigh the dangers of the rebellion itself. The rebellious minority, however, continue to be irked by what they see as the injustices of the usurpers of social power and decry the elections as a 'liberal' device for the retention of the status quo. In this they are right, but where they are wrong is in thinking that the revolution for which they strive would make any fundamental difference to the structure of society.

If the story told in sections 2.3 to 2.5 is somewhere near the truth, such a revolution would merely alter the membership of the power elite and perhaps redistribute rewards and sanctions. Large scale economic inequality would remain as long as the doctrine of moral desert was retained. But if this was discarded, the perpetuation mechanism of morality would be lost and morality itself would rapidly become nonexistent. This is the bloodless but much more significant revolution that 1, for one, would welcome.

3.6 The Theory that Morality Does Not Matter

M Zimmerman has speculated that society would remain virtually unaltered if everyone came to believe that there was no way of finding out what their moral obligations were.6 Everyone, claims Zimmerman, would want to do just what they would want to do if they believed, as many of them now do, that they had certain moral obligations.

Now if the account given in Chapter 2 is something like the truth, Zimmerman's theory is clearly false of those moral agents whose behavioural tendencies are affected by their moral beliefs and whose moral beliefs sometimes run counter to their natural inclinations. Such people will either have different behaviour than they would have if they were amoral, or they will suffer from guilt, which will in turn be likely to affect their subsequent behaviour.

I shall argue that, given the account of Chapter 2, any plausibility that Zimmerman's case may have derives from the examples with which he operates.

The article opens with a discussion of whether a judge would or would not sentence a man found legally guilty of killing his wife and children, and whether there would be any difference in the judge's behaviour in this regard were he to live in an amoral society. Now in this case of course it is plausible to suggest that there may not be any difference. For a judge is paradigmatically a member of the moral elite and, if the story of Section 2.4 is roughly correct, members of the moral elite tend to equate their natural inclinations with what is either morally obligatory or at least morally permissible.

Zimmerman goes on to consider a moralist objection that morality is needed to combat 'contemporary totalitarianism, involving persecution, concentration camps, secret police, executions, destruction of freedom, denial of life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness and all the other things in life that we hold to be of greatest value'. Zimmerman replies quite correctly that it is not correct to suggest 'that Hitler did not believe and say that we "ought" to persecute Jews, that Stalin did not believe and say that we "ought" to destroy burgeois democracy'. Yet having made that important point, he lets it pass, and claims that the real point is that it is implausible to believe that in an amoral society, 'people are less likely to want and fight for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, that they will want and accept concentration camps, persecution, secret police, etc.'

Now that seems to me to be quite correct. However, the point Zimmerman let pass is crucial. In an amoral society, Hitler and Stalin could not have used moral injunctions to lead ordinary people to persecute fellow citizens and the citizens of other countries in such a heartless manner. In an amoral society, moral propaganda is unavailable to the megalomaniac as a tool for mass manipulation.

Tyrants could, of course, still use fear to establish and maintain their position. Nevertheless, fear unaccompanied by moral charisma is a two-edged sword as many tyrants have found to their cost when rebellion has finally broken out. Fear and moral constraints have different social consequences.

Notes for Chapter 3

[1] Burke, Edmund, Reflections on the Revolution in France.

[2] The suggestions made here of the elitism and authoritarianism of (moral societies would not surprise many modern sociologists of morality. (See for example Musgrave, P.W., The Moral Curriculum: A Sociological Analysis, London, Methuen, 1978.)

[3] Bergmann, Frithjof, On Being Free, London, University of Notre Dame Press, 1977.

[4] What I have been describing as a guilt complex would be a special case of a phenomenon that has received close study by the psychologist Carl Rogers, namely, a gap between a person's self-image and what that person would like to be. (See his 'Learning to Be Free.' in Rogers, C.R. and Stevens, B., Person to Person: The Problem of Being Human, New York, Pocket Books, 1971.)

The role of guilt and moral denigration in the moral society has received some attention from criminologists. See Taylor,I., Walton,P., and Young, J., The New Criminology, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973. Of especial interest is their discussion (pp 47-52) of Hans Eysenck's work Fact and Fiction in Psychology (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1965).

[5] R. Dahrendorf in an essay 'On the Origin of Inequality among Men' (in Essays in the Theory of Society, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968, pp. 151-178) claims that a system of reward and punishment for maintaining norms which regulate human conduct is

a necessary feature of any society and argues that this is the origin of material inequality. Whether material rewards and punishments are essential let alone desirable to keep citizens conforming to norms and whether societies need norms in order to remain societies as Dahrendorf claims, seem to me to be moot points. Moreover, even if these things were so, the extent of the material inequality which tends to prevail in moral societies would still need explanation.

Even though Dahrendorf thinks that inequality in power and material wealth are inevitable in society, he claims that 'There is certainly reason to regret that children are ashamed of their parents, that people are anxious and poor, that they suffer and are made unhappy, and many other consequences of inequality. (p.178). He claims also that for such reasons 'every system of social stratification generates protest against its principles and bears the seeds of its own suppression' (p.177). But then he agrees with Kant that although inequality is a 'rich source of much that is evil', it is also the source 'of everything that is good'. He attempts to justify this, quite inconsistently, it seems to me, with the assertion that social inequality is an 'impetus toward liberty' and with the claim that the idea of a perfectly egalitarian society is not just unrealistic, but terrible. Utopia, he claims, is not the home of freedom, but rather the home of total terror or absolute boredom.

Why society would be the home of total terror were it devoid of the conflicts arising from inequality he does not explain. The idea that the only possible escape from boredom is our involvement in such conflicts seems to me bizarre.

P.W. Musgrave also (op.cit., p.122) claims with respect to inequality, that we may suddenly realise ourselves in some sense deprived and say 'it isn't fair' so that we may be driven to action that 'could lead to an attempt to renegotiate the current moral code'. He goes on to claim that any such changes in the moral code are a 'result of conflict between those with power' (p.124), though he does not comment on the physical danger inherent in such conflicts.

[6] Zimmerman, M., 'The "Is-Ought": An Unnecessary Dualism', Mind, 71, 1962, pp53-61. Reprinted in Hudson, W.D. (ed), The Is-Ought Question, London, Papermac, 1969.

Chapter 4 -- The Alleged Usefulness of Morality
4.1 Introduction

It has been suggested in the last chapter that morality as an institution within society brings undesired consequences for many people at many times. It would not follow from that, however, that it would be imprudent to sustain the moral institution. It may have other effects which we desire strongly enough to make it worthwhile for us to put up with the effects we dislike. Negatively valued consequences are never a sufficient condition for the rational rejection of anything any more than positively valued consequences are a sufficient condition for acceptance. A rational person will think about both costs and benefits.

Many people since the times of ancient Greece have conjectured that morality is man-made and is there for some purpose beneficial to all. Included in this tradition are Protagoras, Hobbes, Hume, and more recently, Warnock, Mackie and Rawls. Hobbes claimed that man has motivations which are primarily self-interested and that, in a state of nature, that is, without an artificial morality imposed by a sovereign, man would lead a life that was solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short, in a continual war of all against all. Hume, Warnock and Mackie do not have quite as dim a view of natural man as this, but nevertheless they teach us that the function of morality is to mitigate the bad effects of the limitations on man's generosity and sympathy. The idea is that morality takes society a little closer to what it would be, if, contrary to fact, we were able to sympathise with all the people whom our actions were likely to affect, instead of just those who are nearest and dearest to us.

One of the questions that arises concerning the point, purpose or function of morality is

'Who is it whose purposes we have in mind, if anybody's?'. The authors mentioned above would say 'everybody'. But is it plausible that, for any given person, the moral society is likely to yield that person more satisfaction than an amoral society? We have in sections 2.5 and 3.5 talked of the vested interests of the moral elite in the moral society. But what does morality do for the lower classes besides degrading and impoverishing them? Few would enjoy these consequences. What consequences of being a moral agent in a moral society might they enjoy?

It is true that there could be, or indeed actually are, many cases when an invocation of moral attitudes is conducive to maximal satisfaction -- even for those having low status in society. But that is not the point at issue. One could say as much for the use of draconic legislation, carelessness and war. We do not, for that reason, seek to enshrine these things as social institutions -- on the contrary.

The question here is not whether the moral institution has on some occasions a useful effect. It is whether it is worth preserving given the sum total of its effects on and within society.

In the next five sections I wish to examine a belief, common since at least the days of Hobbes, that morality is useful in the resolution of social conflict. I shall then examine the possibility that morality as an institution may be useful to those who have utilitarian preferences, that is, who wish to maximise human satisfaction. The idea is that they could use the institution to establish utilitarianism as a moral system -- to impose their utilitarian preferences on their fellow citizens as moral imperatives.

Finally I shall examine Mackie's contention that morality is useful in restricting behaviour in order to mitigate the consequences of limited human sympathy.

4.2 Is Morality of any Use in Conflict Resolution?

Conflict is not always distasteful to people. Competition is enjoyed by sadists and ego-maniacs who have the ability to win most of the time, as well as masochists who do not. Even ordinary people enjoy a bit of a tussle now and then. But conflict can very often be annoying to say the least. When people are pulling against one another, neither may get anywhere. If they co-operate both may get what they want quickly. Conflict can be a frustration when it comes to satisfying desire.

However, conflicts can be resolved without satisfaction. A duel may resolve a conflict, but may leave one person dead and the other maimed for life. Both parties could have received more satisfaction from life if the conflict had been left unresolved. So the question is not whether conflicts can be resolved more readily using morality, but rather whether the use of morality leads to optimal satisfaction of the disputing parties. I argue in this section and the following section that morality may not be as effective in this regard as commonly supposed and, indeed, may be a positive hindrance to this end.

For moral considerations to be effective in resolving a dispute in any way at all, satisfactory or otherwise, all parties must agree on what their moral values and obligations are, about how this good has or has not more weight than that, about which obligation over-rides which in which circumstances, or, failing initial agreement on these issues, all parties must possess a common moral leadership. Where these conditions fail to obtain the dispute may develop into mutual denigration leading to one of the disputants feeling morally justified in ignoring the desires of the other party. They may even feel obliged to treat their opponent harshly, by resorting to sanctions including physical violence or even death. In this way a moral agent could have an increased, not a lessened, motive for treating his opponent like a natural disaster.

Of course there is no guarantee that moral agents in conflict will choose the same ,moral leadership or share the same moral ideals. Hence we have the situation in Ireland (unresolved after four hundred years of bloody conflict); the situation in the Lebanon (unresolved after about eight hundred years of conflict between Christian and Moslem); the Palestinian Arabs versus the Zionists; the Vietnamese versus the Khmer, the Chinese,

the French and the Americans; all the wars of religion and all the blood-letting of the two world wars.

Think of any one of these conflicts and think of how the situation would have been if, by a miracle, moral thought could have been eradicated from the minds of all the agents involved. I, for one, find it difficult to conceive of how the conflicts would have proceeded. There would be no sense of duty, no sense of loyalty, no patriotism, no feeling morally obliged to fight for a cause, no sense that the people one is trying to kill or subjugate are less worthy of survival or freedom than oneself or anyone else.

There could be war without morality. But moral propaganda eases the task of those with control of the mass media to get almost all the nation determined to attack, plunder, slaughter and subjugate another group of people. Co-operation has a pleasant sound to it. But people can co-operate to do many things which disgust or endanger others. It would not seem to be unreasonable, then, to conjecture that moral disagreement tends to exacerbate conflict.

Let us turn now to the less bellicose situation in which the contenders agree on their moral values or agree to abide by the moral rulings of some member-of the moral elite whom they both respect. Let us assume they are both moral agents who want above all to do whatever is right. Then the conflict may be quickly and amicably resolved. But will it be resolved in a way that maximises satisfaction?

It may be so resolved if the guiding moral principles enjoin an attempt to maximise satisfaction, that is, if the guiding moral principals are utilitarian. However, there is no guarantee that the guiding moral principles will be utilitarian and in general they are not likely to be utilitarian if one of the disputants thinks that she or he would be better satisfied by some other principle which could be intuited to be overriding in the circumstance.

That way of putting the point may be interpreted as overly cynical. Let me put the point another way. Most systems of moral beliefs are rule inconsistent. That is to say, although the beliefs may not be inconsistent with one another, taken as a set, they may be inconsistent with the facts concerning the prevailing circumstances. For example, a polygamist who has been converted to Christianity and its attendant morality has to choose between what he believes to be the sin of continuing his polygamist ways and what he believes to be the sin of failing to honour family commitments.' Now, although it may seem reasonable to conjecture that many if not most moral agents would have a utilitarian strand or two among their moral beliefs, it seems reasonable to conjecture that most would have non-utilitarian strands also. Further, it often seems to be the case that it is these strands -- the property ethic, the doctrine of deserts, familial duties, patriotic duties and other in-group duties -- that become emphasised in just the sort of conflicts we are considering. In any case, one certainly cannot rely on any sort of utilitarian ethic being over-riding to all parties in a dispute between moral agents.

Of course it remains true that the utilitarian ethic may prevail in the situation and that accordingly the dispute will be settled with a maximum likelihood of optimal satisfaction. But given the multitude of alternative moral principles that could prevail instead, one would be unwise to encourage a moral input to conflict resolution on the basis of the mere possibility of utilitarianism prevailing. One might just as well encourage those who wished to go north to proceed in the direction they are facing -- whatever that may be. After all, its possible that they could be facing north.

If moral desires are an artificiality, the non-moral desires at the root of the conflict may well be left completely dissatisfied by the arbitration. The mere fact that morality can in some cases result in a quick resolution of conflict in no way entails that the resolution involves an optimal satisfaction of desire any more than a non amicable resolution would do. Indeed the moral arbitrator may even rule that both sides have a moral obligation to fight it out. It is not very long ago that men in Europe felt morally obliged to defend their honour by duelling. Even within this century, Hitler's bellicose morality enjoined conflict

between races. But even where the moral elite are opposed to conflict between their disciples, their rulings will probably be contrary to what would otherwise satisfy one of the parties, and often the ruling will be dissatisfying to both parties, except for the artificial satisfaction that both may enjoy in doing what they falsely believe is the right thing to do. .

Again it may be objected that there could be and, indeed, are many cases when the invocation of moral attitudes and considerations yields a maximum of satisfaction in the resolution of a conflict. Again the reply is that that is not at issue. The question is whether the institution is worth preserving given the likelihood or otherwise of moral invocations having greater costs than benefits overall. It is simply invalid to argue that an institution is worth preserving on the basis that its invocation is often beneficial. Its invocation may even more often be disastrous.

4.3 The Alternative -- Conflict Resolution Without Morality

If it turns out that moralising is ill-conducive to rational conflict resolution, should we look for some other tool to do the job done by morality?

At this stage, this question may remind one of the person who suggests to the man who is hitting his mouth with a brick that he stops. 'What is the alternative?' the masochist asks as if stopping were not enough -- as if something else were required.

No-one to my knowledge, least of all myself, has ever suggested that doing without morality would be a positive cure for all the stresses, strains and conflicts within society. The proposal is that doing without it is doing without something that is likely to cause more stress and strain than it alleviates.

I If morality is ill-conducive to satisfaction in situations of conflict, and if morality has the disadvantages to society as outlined in chapter 3, then using morality as a device for the resolution of conflicts is like using a brick as a toothpick. If you want to be rid of the fibre between your teeth and you do not want broken teeth, then throw the brick away, and think of how you can rid yourself of the fibre without it. Likewise, if you want to minimise conflict and you do not want widespread denigration, guilt complexes, elitism, authoritarianism, economic inequality, insecurity, and war, then throw morality away and think about how best you can resolve conflict without it.

Even if morality were of some use in resolving conflicts, it could be used only within a moral society and we should have to put up with all the side effects that perpetuation of the moral society would entail.

So far, I have been talking about rational conflict resolution as if everybody were agreed what that was. In order to consider in more detail the effects of moralising on conflict resolution, we should first consider the kind of conflict resolution we would, in general, wish upon ourselves. The next section is concerned with that issue.

4.4 Rational Resolution of Conflicts

What I shall call a rational resolution of conflict involves the cooperation of the parties involved in:

(a) sorting out any conceptual confusions between them relevant to the conflict, (b) finding out the facts of the case relevant to the conflict, and (c) if it is still necessary, devising ways of solving their mutual problem.

The object of requirements (a) and (b) is to eliminate the possibility of a dispute continuing when there is no conflict of interests, but merely a belief that there is. Step (c) relates to the work to be done when the detective work and conceptual analysis have made it clear that a real conflict of interests is at hand.

In this section I shall say more about the rational resolution of conflicts, amplifying (a), (b) and (c) with some examples -- and I shall give examples also of how the process can be inhibited when morality gets into play. Thus I shall continue to point out ways in which the use of morality within conflicts inhibits rational resolution of the conflict. But I stress that this is not to argue that so long as everyone is amoral, all conflicts are resolved in an amicable. rational manner. There are other passions besides moral feelings which can

engender irrationality in group decision making. In particular, there is the fear of not being able to get, or the fear of losing, something for which one feels a need -- food, clothing, shelter, security, ego-satisfaction, power, the company of other people, loving and being loved in return.

I shall return to this point later. In describing now what I take to be rational resolution of conflict, I simply wish to point out a possibility that can occur within an amoral society or for that matter which occurs very frequently even within our existing moral society. The possibility is that of cooperation in reaching a resolution of the conflict -- a resolution which is satisfying to all parties concerned.

'How can there be cooperation in a situation of conflict?' it may be asked.

Cooperation in conflict situations is commonplace. Any competitive game is an example. More seriously, duelling requires a high degree of cooperation. So does any sort of fighting for that matter. It is very hard to fight someone who runs away. So if cooperation is possible in situations of extreme antipathy, it is certainly possible when people merely think that they may have a conflict of desires.

Let us turn then to requirement (a). The object of this requirement is simply to ensure that the disputants are not at cross-purposes. For example, some woman who styles herself as an anti-socialist may believe herself to be in dispute with another who thinks of herself as a socialist. During discussion it turns out that what the first woman means by 'socialism' is the bureaucratic control of the means of production, distribution and exchange whereas the second means the democratic control of the means of production, distribution and exchange. Both turn out to be in favour of the latter and opposed to the former.

Violations of requirement (a) are commonplace where the disputants are being competitive, especially when the dispute is being adjudicated by some third party or parties. Sometimes the equivocation involved goes unnoticed by everybody if only because they are more concerned about who will 'win' the dispute than with having the patience to understand the issues. But sometimes misunderstanding is deliberately fostered in a dishonest attempt to get the support of a third party. Political propaganda is loaded with deliberate equivocation in both meaning and reference.

Within moral societies, one widespread desideratum will be conformity to moral obligations, including those arising from the doctrine of deserts, namely, that morally good people should be rewarded and morally bad people punished. The equivocations between social status and moral worth, noted in section 3.4, are therefore of especial interest if unnecessary dissatisfaction of those of low social status is to be avoided.

Again, because of the incomplete nature of many sentences used to assert moral propositions, it is important to beware of conflating non-moral considerations, such as social or prudential considerations, with moral considerations -- as we saw in section 1.3. If I can invalidly convince you that what is (prudentially) best (for me) is what is (morally) best, then you may feel morally obliged to satisfy my desires at the expense of your own.

Requirement (b) means the disputants will cooperate in finding out the facts relevant to the dispute. One common cause of contention is that someone may believe falsely that an act of which they disapprove has been committed or is intended to be committed by some other person. The simple expedient of asking what has been done or what the person intends to do is usually sufficient to set fears at rest. However, if someone truly believes that an act of which she or he disapproves has been committed or is intended to be committed, the facts of the matter might not be revealed so easily. People may be less than honest about their behaviour if they fear that the resulting conflict will be competitive or in any case will result in such sanctions as withdrawal of affection, moral denigration or imprisonment. Insecurity begets dishonesty. So if one is concerned about the behaviour of another, and if one wants any resulting dispute resolved amicably, then the approach should be made as a friend, not as a potential enemy bristling with accusation, moral

indignation or threats. Our legal system could hardly be better organised to make liars of those who are unfortunate enough to fall prey to it. One exception to this is the operation of the divorce legislation introduced by the Australian federal government in 1974. Within this legislation, an attempt has been made to render the notion of blame irrelevant to divorce proceedings. It would be a step in the direction towards cooperative relationships between citizens if the 'no blame' idea were extended into other areas of legislation.

Let us return, however, to the business of finding out the facts of the case. The behaviour and intended behaviour of all concerned having been established, the dispute may now hinge on what the consequences of such behaviour are believed to be. For example, grazier A is worried about the plans of grazier B to build a dam on B's property. The area is fairly arid and A's concern is whether B's dam will seriously decrease the water supply for A's own stock. But B has done his homework. He has consulted meteorological statisticians in the Department of Primary Industry and has the facts and figures to prove that with the size, type and position of the dam he is proposing to build, the water supply to A's property will not be appreciably affected. Grazier A rests assured.

Again, people may be uncooperative in having the facts of the matter revealed, or positively deceitful even to themselves let alone to others if the situation is competitive or if they are otherwise insecure about the outcome. For example, wartime propaganda is loaded not only with denigration of the enemy's character and with deliberate falsehoods about war aims, but also with deliberate falsehoods about prevailing conditions and their possible effects. This needs no elaboration for those who remember the propaganda associated with the war in Vietnam or either of the world wars.

The deceit can be as much in omission of truths as well as statements of falsehoods. News media almost invariably emphasise the disruption to public services caused by an industrial strike, yet the consequences for the striking workers and their families of their demands not being met are seldom mentioned let alone emphasised.

Often the consequences of an act are not knowable in advance, and the best that can be done is to estimate probabilities. Again people often deceive themselves and others about the chances involved.

Legislation which can be used to inhibit speech and assembly is often introduced on the pretext that the chances are negligible of its being used to prevent standardly acceptable forms of communication between citizens, despite the fact that, as civil libertarians continually point out, it is almost invariably the case that such legislation comes to be used for exactly that purpose.

Self deceit is notoriously difficult to spot. A case in point would be the mistaken equation of personal desires with moral qualities discussed in section 2.4. This could lead to an equation of the satisfaction of one's personal desires with one's moral deserts, which could nicely bias the resolution of a conflict in one's favour -- unless one's adversary indulged in the same sort of self-deceit in which case things could become dangerous.

If the two parties have different moral intuitions about which moral principle overrides which in the given situation, then there can be an outbreak of moral denigration which can only exacerbate the conflict, resulting in the parties believing of each other that they do not deserve to be treated with the altruism and trust that rational resolution of conflicts demands. This is the standard situation which prevails with respect to industrial, political and international disputes.

It is for such reasons that professionals in conflict resolution such as Nightingale, Sherif and Beal [2] advise keeping morality out of conflicts if possible.

Let us now proceed and assume that any misunderstandings have been cleared up and that the known relevant facts of the case have been determined and still there remains a dispute. What can be done now? The first thing to notice is that in most conflicts of desire, the desires in conflict are secondary. That is to say, the objects of desire are not wanted for their own sake, but rather because it is thought that they are a means to satisfying

some deeper desire. These desires, in turn, may themselves be secondary to still other desires. The fact that secondary desires are in conflict does not entail that there is inconsistency between desires at a deeper level.

Thus workers choose to strike, not because they like being on strike, but because they believe that the strike is in the long term interest of themselves and their dependants. Employers are opposed to strikes because strikes threaten their prestige and power and they want their prestige and power because they are distrustful of the consequences of having their fellow citizens partaking in decisions which may affect the security of themselves and their dependants. But note that although the desire of one set of people to strike is inconsistent with the desire of another set of people that the strike should not occur, there is no inconsistency between the desires of one set of people for security for themselves and their dependants and the desires of another set of people for that same security.

At this stage in the proceedings, then, the job facing the disputants is to devise different means of satisfying their mutually consistent fundamental desires other than via the secondary desires which brought them into conflict in the first place. This is what requirement (c) is all about.

Competitive resolution of conflicts results in at most one winner. Cooperative resolution of conflicts usually results in everybody being satisfied.

Throughout the process of conflict resolution, insecurities of various kinds, including fear of moral denigration, can introduce an element of dishonesty that inhibits the rational resolution of the dispute.

But it is not only through fear of moral denigration that morality can act as an inhibition to the rational resolution of conflicts. For moral agents engaged in a dispute, the inhibition can be much more direct. If one of the parties can convince the other that his, her, or their aims or means of achieving them are contrary to this or that overriding moral principle, then the dispute is resolved, but at the expense of failing to satisfy one of the disputants in some regard or other, which may have been satisfiable were it not for the moral considerations introduced.

In the next section we shall look at two suggestions that are commonly put forward by moralists for the use of morality with respect to the resolution of conflicts when the rational resolution of such conflicts as outlined in this section fails for whatever reason.

4.5 Morality When Conflict Resolution Fails to be Rational or When Rational Procedures Fail to Resolve the Conflict

People may fail to be rational in the resolution of their conflicts for a variety of reasons including, as we have seen, the introduction of moral considerations in the dispute. The failure may come about in two ways. Firstly, one or both of the disputants may not co-operate in the job of solving the mutual problem at hand. Secondly, it may turn out that, with the maximum co-operative effort of all concerned, a conflict of fundamental interests may remain.

Now some people may be quite agreeable with the tenor of the previous section and may even be of the opinion that it is an abuse of morality to use it within the resolution of conflicts unless all else fails. But that is where morality comes into its own, the claim would be. One could morally enjoin others to try to resolve their conflicts in a rational manner, and one could use morality to reach a decision if the conflict remained at a fundamental level when all the procedures of rational resolution had been exhausted.

Let us first examine the moral injunction to try to resolve conflicts rationally. If the moralist really does accept that any rational resolution of conflict is devoid of moralising, then what she or he is telling us is that in certain circumstances people have a moral obligation to behave amorally.

The position, if not inconsistent, is nevertheless rather strange. Either people will have reason to believe that they have moral obligations other than those to try to resolve

conflicts amorally, or they will not. But if they have such beliefs, is it not rather paradoxical for them also to accept that the corresponding obligations ought not to be invoked -- especially in a situation involving decisions on which those same obligations come to bear?

Alternatively, if people have no good reason to believe in the existence of such obligations, then why should they believe that they have the obligation to resolve their conflicts in a certain way? We could of course give them reasons outlined in the previous section which appeal to the desire of the agent to bring satisfaction to all parties within the dispute. But such reasons are merely an appeal to the altruism of the agent. They are not in themselves reasons to believe that there is a moral obligation to act in this way. One would need the extra premise that there is a moral obligation to satisfy desires as much as possible, and the question again arises as to why one should believe that there is such a moral obligation.

A similar situation prevails with respect to the use of morality to bring about resolution of the conflict in those cases where the conflict remains at a fundamental level after all the procedures of rational conflict resolution have run their course. If the moral obligations that one invokes then have any substance, why should they not be invoked at any stage of the proceedings? Conversely, if there are times when we ought not to invoke them, why should we believe that there are times when we should do so? Why, if one is to believe in moral obligations at all, should one not believe that under these circumstances one has a moral obligation to settle the dispute by drawing straws or tossing coins?

It is a logical truth that one wants to satisfy one's own desires. But it is a matter of psychological fact whether those desires include the desire to satisfy the desires of someone other than oneself, that is, whether one is altruistic. Mutual altruism is sufficient though not necessary for the rational resolution of conflicts.

Contrary to what David Hume surmised in his Treatise Concerning Human Nature, it is not so much a matter of sympathy, of automatically being affected by the feelings of others -- though of course that helps. What is more to the point is to want to satisfy the other person's desires whether or not one sympathises with them. Empathy, the ability to understand what the other person is likely to want even where one does not sympathise with those wants, is more like what is required. Though if one is not particularly empathetic, one can always ask.

Altruism facilitates the rational resolution of conflicts, particularly in those cases where the procedures of rational resolution lead to a stalemate at a fundamental level. Cases of stalemate under such circumstances would, I believe, be rare in comparison to the degree of success offered by the rational resolution procedures. Nevertheless they would be frequent enough to remain a considerable nuisance to society if enough altruism was not present to ensure that the parties in dispute would co-operate in coming to a decision which was optimally satisfying if not absolutely satisfying to all concerned.

Note how very differently altruism would operate in this regard in comparison with the intuition of moral obligations and values. Altruism would tend to optimise satisfaction. Moral intuition could lead to almost any result at all.

'So why not use morality in order to morally enjoin people to be altruistic?' one may ask. But does it make sense to request, let alone morally enjoin, someone to be altruistic? People are either altruistic or they are not. It makes sense to ask someone to stand up or to say that they have a moral obligation to stand up. But it does not make sense to ask them to be taller than they are or to say that they have a moral obligation to be taller. Likewise, it does not make sense to ask someone to have some desire or other or to say that they have a moral obligation to have that desire.

How then, can we get people to be altruistic, if not by asking them to be so or by moralising at them? If some modern psychologists such as Maslow are to be believed, then what one must do is to ensure that the people are fed, clothed, housed, and made to

feel secure. [3] Perhaps Maslow's theories are in need of elucidation and development and doubtless there is a need for much more research in this area. But if we want our society to be rid of useless conflict and if one is correct to be sceptical about the existence of moral obligations, then this is the area within which we should put our intellectual effort, rather than waste our time chasing mirages in the deserts of normative ethics.

Apart from any basic altruistic motivations, there is a more self-interested amoral mechanism which encourages people to want to satisfy the desires of others and which thereby augments the possibility of the rational resolution of conflicts. Everyone soon learns the advantages in receiving the co-operation of others in achieving ends which one desires. But such co-operation is unlikely to be forthcoming from those who do not trust us -- from those who believe for whatever reason that there is a considerable possibility that we may behave in ways which are detrimental to their interests. Such people will want to distance themselves from us -- to put themselves in a position where our actions are less likely to have an effect upon them. If, therefore, we wish to reverse this tendency, it is necessary for us to become trustworthy in the eyes of as many people as possible -- to be thought of as people who are likely to act in the interests of others. It is such mechanisms, rather than any moral injunctions, which encourage us to abide by our promises and contracts, to be open and honest in our dealings with others and to be predictable and co-operative in our own behaviour.

It is true that there are occasions when people can advantage themselves by disadvantaging others or by risking a disadvantage to others, with little likelihood of any adverse reaction. Likelihoods build up with frequency, however, so, on the surface, at least, it would seem imprudent to so behave with any regularity. Sooner or later the reputation of such people for taking others into account in their behaviour is likely to suffer and with it would suffer their ability to gain the cooperation, let alone the friendship and love of others.

Robert Axelrod, in The Evolution of Cooperation [4] reports on a study of so-called iterated prisoner's dilemma situations which indicates that the above conclusion concerning the long term self-interest in co-operative behaviour is not naively optimistic. In the classic prisoner's dilemma, a district attorney presents each of two prisoners, who have been jointly involved in a bank robbery, with the following information. If neither prisoner confesses, then both will receive a sentence of two years. If one confesses and the other does not, then the confessor will be set free, and the prisoner who did not confess gets five years. If both confess, both get four years.

For each prisoner, then, there seems to be an advantage in confessing, regardless of how the other prisoner behaves. If prisoner A has confessed, then prisoner B will receive five years if he does not confess but only four years if he does. If prisoner A has not confessed, then prisoner B receives two years if he does not confess but none if he does. Each therefore, would seem to have an interest in confessing. But if they both confess, they each get four years. If both had behaved to benefit the other, then each would have received only two years.

Many conflict situations seem to be of the same type as the prisoner's dilemma. More than one party may be involved. The essential characteristics involved are that: (a) no matter how the other parties behave, it always pays to defect rather than co operate, and (b) the average pay-off is greater if everyone co-operates than if everyone defects.

Clearly, if one wants to maximise satisfaction, one needs to encourage co-operation in these situations; but how can one do that when every individual is being rewarded for defecting? As Axelrod shows, these rewards for defection are likely to vanish when prisoner's dilemma games are iterated. It would appear that the optimum strategy in many such situations in the long term is a 'tit-for-tat' strategy of reciprocating both cooperation and defection, and never being the first to defect -- as long as the future is sufficiently important to the agent and the society contains enough fellow tit-for-tatters. (The actual

proportion of tit-for-tatters needed to make tit-for-tatting pay is surprisingly small for realistic weights placed on future interactions between agents.) Societies of such strategists will, therefore, be societies of cooperators.

Further, there is happy news regarding the stability and evolution of such societies. 'Invaders' with mutant strategies get a hard time of it in a society of tit-for-tatters, whereas small groups of tit-for-tatters can successfully invade other strategies. Axelrod defines a strategy as nice if and only if the strategy does not allow defection before the other agent has defected. A strategy is defined as provokable if and only if it reacts to a defection with a defection. The forgiveness of a strategy is defined as its propensity to cooperate after other agents have defected. Tit-for-tat is nice, immediately provokable, is unforgiving for the move following a defection by someone else, but thereafter totally forgives the defection. On p177, Axelrod says:

Cooperation can begin with small clusters. It can thrive with rules that are nice, provocable, and somewhat forgiving. And once established in a population, individuals using such discriminating strategies can protect themselves from invasion. The overall level of cooperation tends to go up and not down. In other words, the machinery for the evolution of cooperation contains a ratchet.

The sorts of societies with which Axelrod is concerned, are societies which are populated by people whose interests are primarily self-oriented, even if they may be secondarily other-oriented. In the actual world, primary interests may not all be self-oriented. Sometimes they may be other-oriented, which would favour Axelrod's optimistic results, but they may also be the result of moral training in which case there will be no guarantee that they will be either self-interested or other oriented. Depending on the circumstances, the moral viewpoint may be one from which an Axelrodian defection is seen as morally worthy of reward. From an amoral point of view, the moral elite of a moral society would be seen as a bunch of free riders (if not foul dealers -- to use Philip Pettit's expression for those who disadvantage others in order to advantage themselves [5]) who survive by virtue of the doctrine of deserts, moral parsing and associated arts of good public relations, plus, above all, the fact that it is their moral intuitions which bear weight in social decision making. In effect, the tactic used by a moral elite is to re-define what is to count as a defection and what as societal cooperation.

It is ironic that so many articles written by moral philosophers about free riding are concerned about that doubtless rare, but, of course, logically possible case of the amoral free rider in an otherwise moral society and the reasons, if any, that such people might have for mending their ways. In such articles we are invited to cogitate on the paradox of the possibility of there being such free riders with no good reason to change their life-style. But there is no paradox for moral nihilists or others who would accept the moral sociology of section 2.5. For what is being claimed there is that the moral society is loaded with the free riders of the moral elite. The moral society not only harbours the mere possibility of the free rider. It positively generates an entire class of them. I digress. The point of this section is that there is reason to believe that, for those who are not of the moral elite, and even on most occasions for those who are, long term self interest would encourage them to resolve conflicts rationally without appeal to morality, if they were given the opportunity to do so.

4.6 Is Utilitarianism of any Utility?

Some people have suggested that since I seem to want to maximise happiness and the satisfaction of desire, then I should be content to live in a moral society in which everybody (or more realistically, almost everybody) thinks that they have a moral obligation to maximise happiness or the satisfaction of desire. That is, I should be content to live in a society which lives by what is called utilitarianism.

The prime internal problem of utilitarianism is how to sum up individual states of happiness and satisfaction. Is suffering to be taken into account at all, except insofar as its

relief will bring happiness? Is the happiness arising from the satisfaction of passions like revenge, drug addiction, greed or a taste for punk rock to be downgraded with respect to the happiness arising from the satisfaction of dispositions such as loving your enemy, a love of good health, generosity or a taste for the music of Mozart? How is the quiet satisfaction of a job well done to be compared with the more lively joys of, say, sexual gratification?

Assuming that there is some agreed solution to these problems, there still remain problems concerned with the distribution of happiness. Should the happiness of a lot of people be downgraded a little bit in order to generate great happiness in a few? Some may regard this as 'unfair' or they may regard it as desirable as in the organisation of a lottery or they may even regard it as necessary as in what elitist educationalists tend to refer to as the pursuit of excellence.

Further problems arise with the business of just whose happiness or satisfaction is to be considered. Is it the happiness only of people or of all animals? Is it only those animals and people which exist at the time of the action or should the happiness of future sentient beings be taken into account? Should we worry about satisfying the desires of dead people, as when we take account of their last will and testament? If we have to take account of future people and animals, problems arise because our present actions can determine the very existence of such people. Should we aim for a heavily populated world of mildly contented people, or a sparsely populated world of very happy people?

The possibility of there being many different ways of maximising satisfaction is not in itself an objection. There are many different ways of doing anything at all. No matter what our moral obligations were, there would always be an indefinite number of ways of satisfying them. The point about the sort of differences alluded to above is that these differences are just the kind about which many people feel the need for moral guidance. Insofar as that is the case, people tend to feel that utilitarianism is an incomplete moral theory, even if it is true. They feel that there is more to morality than utilitarians would have us believe.

It has been objected that since my motives, if not my ethics, seem to be utilitarian, then I should be in the same difficulties with respect to the incompleteness of those utilitarian motivations as the normative utilitarian is with her normative theory. But this is not the case. I do not claim that any utilitarian motivations I may have are my only motivations, any more than a moral person need claim utilitarianism to be her only moral principle. The objection raised above could only be to a theory that normative utilitarianism is the only moral principle from which all moral obligations are derived -- and then only if it is granted that the dilemmas do demonstrate a need for extra moral guidance.

There is much literature devoted to the problems of utilitarianism, [6] but I do not wish to dwell further on those problems here. What I do wish to emphasise are the difficulties with the suggestion that I should try to create a society which practices a utilitarian morality. The first difficulty is that this course of action is not open to the majority of those who would suggest it, let alone open to me. It would be open only to those who control the media of moral propaganda -- the moral elite -- and the moral elite, on past performance, is most unlikely to adopt a utilitarianism unsullied by appeals to would-be overriding virtues such as loyalty and patriotism, the sanctity of work and property, and the doctrine of deserts. Even if they did so there would be no guarantee that they would not begin to propagandise an alternative ethic at a later date. Indeed in any particular case where utilitarianism or any other moral doctrine was seen to undermine their status, it is likely that there would be swift 'intuitions' of the overriding nature of conflicting moral principles which did not. This happens now as it has always happened in the past. There is no reason to believe that it would not happen in any future society that was by and large utilitarian.

The second difficulty is that even if it were possible to use the morality within society to make it a utilitarian society, the idea that one should do so in order to maximise happiness

or the satisfaction of desire, though initially plausible, runs into practical inconsistencies. For if it were a moral society, and if it were to be kept that way, the society would have to indulge in the perpetuation mechanisms described in Chapter 2, with all the sadness, moral denigration, guilt complexes, ego-competition, moral perversion, elitism, authoritarianism and inequality that such a mechanism entailed. One way of describing normative utilitarianism is as the doctrine that we have a moral obligation to behave towards others as if we were kindly disposed towards them. What I suggest is that it would be far more conducive to human happiness to work towards a society in which people were actually kind, than to work towards a society in which people behaved as if they were kind out of a sense of duty. So we reach again the point made in section 4.5. If it is altruism we want, let us aim directly for that. Let us not aim at a society which at best moralises its citizens into a pretence of the real thing.

4.7 Mitigating the Consequences of Limited Sympathy

Given our results so far, there appears to be only one practical alternative to the existing moral society -- the amoral society. However, there are those who feel that some compromise is possible; that it is possible to salvage certain aspects of the moral society which we should like to conserve whilst relinquishing other aspects which we should wish to see eliminated. The idea is that while it may not be important for any human purposes whether or not anyone believes in the existence of moral obligations, it is important for them to act as if they did so: they place upon themselves certain constraints on conduct, 'ones whose central task is to protect the interests of persons other than the agent and which present themselves to an agent as constraints on his natural inclinations or spontaneous tendencies to act. In this narrow sense, moral considerations would be considerations from some limited range, and would not necessarily include everything that a man allowed to determine what he did.'

The quote is from John Mackie's book Ethics. Inventing Right and Wrong. [7] There is a doctrine called rule utilitarianism which is the doctrine that we ought to act in accordance with that set of rules which yields more happiness or satisfaction than any other set of rules which we would be able to follow. Now the sort of society in which Mackie wanted to live, if I understand him correctly, indeed the sort of society in which he believed himself to be living, was a society in which people acted in accordance with some sort of rule utilitarianism. Mackie did not believe that there are moral obligations in the strict sense of those words, and he specifically rejected any sort of utilitarianism in the standard sense of that word because he did not believe that there is any 'such common measure of all interests and purposes as happiness or utility is supposed to be'. (Ethics, p.139). However, he believed that we can reach agreement about 'certain specifiable evils', and he wrote of morality in a 'narrow sense' as a device for countering such specific evils.

Warnock in his book The Object of Morality (London: Methuen, 1971) claims that the object of morality is to help ameliorate the human predicament which suffers from conflicting desires, limited sympathy and active malevolence, among other things. Warnock sees morality as a business of weighing reasons rather than following rules and hence argues that it is a set of virtues that a society has to generate for itself rather than a set of rules. In Section 2.7 it was claimed that virtues and prima facie obligations arising from moral rules or principles are interchangeable. In any case, when rules conflict, there is room for the weighting of reasons just as readily as there is if injunctions to pursue a virtuous path lead to dilemmas when more than one such path presents itself. So what Warnock calls morality appears to be, as Mackie would have said, a species of morality 'in the narrow sense'.

I take it that Mackie believed that any moral society will exhibit such a 'morality'. Certainly he claimed that such moral sentiment, widespread within a society, will give that society an evolutionary edge on its competitors and gave this as an explanation of why such sentiments are widespread (Ethics, p. 113). Perhaps this is true. Certainly it is

consistent with the story told in Chapter I of the perpetuation of the moral society. Yet what survives as a result of evolution be it animal, vegetable or sociological, depends on the environment, and one of the surviving species, the human being, has the capacity to alter environments, and so is in a position to choose, at least in some cases, whether or not particular individuals, species or societies will survive. So if we can do so, and I see no reason why we cannot, the decision still remains for us whether or not to eliminate morality in any form, narrow or otherwise.

Our self-directed interests may dictate that we maximise the survival chances of the honey bee, and our altruism may dictate that we maximise the survival chances of the useless koala or even the deadly taipan. But I guess that the altruistic sentiments of very few people indeed would reach out to the malarial mosquito, the staphylococcus or an influenza virus. It is not just that these organisms are dangerous to us if we happen to come across them, rather it is the fact that the very mechanisms which allow them to survive are detrimental to the operation of our own survival mechanisms. The fact that these species are ecologically healthy does not encourage us to allow them to remain so. Likewise the fact that moral societies have a high survival rating is in itself no reason why we should allow them to survive.

Survival of a society is not to be equated with the survival of the people who make up that society. Nations at war, through the patriotic fervour of their citizens, have readily survived the most devastating inroads on their populations.. Conversely, to eliminate a sort of society, it is not necessary to annihilate any of the people who form such a society. A society is a group of people who relate to one another in specific ways. To eliminate the society, it suffices merely to eliminate those ways of relating and perhaps to substitute new ways for the people involved to relate to one another and maybe to others as well. Ways that people have of relating to one another can be as physically and psychologically dangerous to individual human beings as any microbe or virus. So it appears to be, for all our investigations so far have shown us, with the moral society.

Someone may argue that the costs of living in a moral society so far enumerated are the costs of living in a moral society of the sort we live in today. Perhaps the introduction of new mechanisms for the perpetuation of morality would reduce some of these costs, if not eliminate them altogether.

Now would any morality in the 'narrow' sense do the job? If the moral sceptic is correct, it would not. There are two possible ways in which people might continue to act as if in accordance with moral obligations. The first way is that the widespread belief in moral obligations continues and that people are conditioned to behave in accordance with what they believe their obligations to be. That is, they are conditioned to want to be good. This entails that someone does the conditioning and this in turn entails the existence of a moral hierarchy. In short, we are back to the sort of society described in Chapter 2 with all the consequences described in Chapter 3, with the possible exception that at least part of the moral elite would know they were perpetrating a hoax.

The second possibility is that people continue to act as if they are moral despite the fact that they are amoral. That is, despite the fact that they no longer believe in moral obligations, they act as if there are such things and as if they wish to conform to these fictitious moral injunctions. The reader may find it difficult to believe that whole populations could agree to live lives of continual conscious pretence in this way. So do 1. What reasons could they have for such behaviour? The only possible rational reasons they could have would be that they believed such a pretence was in their interests -- either their self-regarding interests or their altruistic interests -- at least in the long term.

Now Mackie claimed (Ethics, p.190) that if a society were to adopt in this way a set of 'moral' constraints on behaviour to protect the interests of persons other than the agent, there would still be times when it was in one's selfish interests to take advantage of the fact that everyone else was acting 'morally' by not fulfilling the 'moral' requirements of the

society oneself. This is reminiscent of a point made in section 4.5, where it was agreed that even if most people behaved with the interests of others in mind, there would still be times when we could advantage ourselves to the disadvantage of others and when there would be little likelihood of being found out. It was argued there that, because of our desire for cooperation from others, together with the laws of probability, most of us would have a long-term self-interest in taking the desires of other people into account even in such cases.

Mackie's explanation for our usually conformist behaviour in these circumstances was that we have 'moral feelings'. Why we have them is 'a psychological question, a sociological question, a biological question to be answered by an evolutionary explanation. (Ethics, p.192) He went on to claim that for people with fairly strong moral tendencies, the prudential course will almost certainly coincide with what they see as the moral one, simply because they will have to live with their conscience.

We are, all will agree, creatures of habit. Doubtless our continual altruistic behaviour leads, in the great majority of cases, to knee-jerk altruism that is untutored by cost-benefit analyses. It would lead us to be the sort of person Hume described as 'virtuous' -- people who's immediate tendency was to act in a way that increased the pleasure and decreased the suffering of others, without recourse to considerations of any moral duty. But all this is a long way from having moral feelings and 'living with our conscience'. Such feelings and attitudes would occur, I suggest, only in a full-blooded moral society where people had received the appropriate moral training. How would it apply in a society where people did not even believe in moral obligations?

In view of Mackie's reference to biological evolution, one might be tempted to suggest that his 'moral feelings' and 'conscience' are to be read simply as altruistic feelings towards other humans generally, where the evolutionary antecedents of such altruism were the self-interests of people in ensuring long-term trust, respect and love from others with the cooperative actions that all of that facilitated. This interpretation of Mackie's 'moral feelings' and 'conscience' cannot be correct, however, for the object of morality in the narrow sense is supposed to cater for a widespread lack of altruism. What Mackie was referring to with the words 'moral feelings' and 'conscience' must presumably be something to do with the tendency of people to conform to societal taboos or mores regardless of their altruistic sentiments or the lack of them. He wanted us to recognise our tendencies so to conform and to tailor our mores to prevailing conditions in order to optimise whatever advantages to us there would be in such conformity.

Even if this is what the 'narrow sense' of morality amounts to, there need be nothing particularly moral about it. Conforming to mores is not necessarily acting morally. One can consistently believe that one is immoral to so conform, or that one has a moral obligation to do so or that the matter is morally indifferent. Even if the mores were of the sort that would be invented or perpetuated for altruistic reasons, one would not necessarily be acting morally in conforming to such mores. To believe otherwise is to adopt a subjectivist account of morality. So if, as Mackie himself claimed, subjectivist theories about the meaning of moral terms are mistaken, then Mackie would be using moral terminology in an extended sense in describing 'the narrow sense of morality' as a morality.. The 'narrow sense of morality' would be, strictly speaking, quite consistent with an amoral way of carrying on.

However, the question before us is whether a society in which one's behaviour is constrained in such a way as to protect the interests of people other than the agent can serve our interests better than the full-blooded moral society that we live in now. To answer this question we have to know which of our interests would be better served and which would not. Also we have to know whose interests would be better served.

The use of the first person plural in 'our interests' is misleading, for clearly any such set of constraints which can be devised will be likely to serve some people's interests more

than other's. Thus the injunction 'Thou shalt not steal' is more in the interest of those that have rather than those that have not. The injunction to be patriotically loyal is clearly more in the interests of those citizens who are in positions of power rather than those who are already powerless and exploited and for whom the invasion by some foreign power, though dangerous, may feature as a welcome release in the long term. The injunction to keep one's promises clearly favours those who have the power to elicit promises by either covert or overt threat -- those who are top dog when the contract is being signed.

It is true that there are some 'specific evils' that nobody would want to happen to them and which would not happen to them if everybody obeyed a corresponding rule. Take stealing for example. Eliminating the moral connotations from this word, what we are left with is being unwillingly deprived of a possession. It is tautologous to say that nobody is willing to be unwillingly deprived of some possession. From this it does not follow that it would be in everybody's interest to see such activity wholly eliminated by virtue of everybody being inhibited from uninvitedly taking away other people's possessions. There are many people who see such behaviour as necessary in producing an egalitarian society whose introduction would clearly be in the interests of those most disadvantaged. Wealth taxes and the socialisation of industry are clearly steps in this direction. From the fact, then, that some treatment or other is distasteful to anyone who is on the receiving end, it does not follow that it is in everyone's interest that such treatment never occurs. Other interests, self-regarding or other-regarding, of the agent or of others, may be in conflict with the desire of the recipient of the treatment not to be so treated.

The effect, then, of giving extra pseudo-moral weight to 'certain specifiable evils' about which we all concur, as opposed to other interests which some of us may have wherein there may or may not be universal concurrence, serves to bias the business of rationally resolving conflicts. If two people, P and Q, have conflicting interests, the effect of societal taboos, insofar as they affect the situation at all, win in general favour P's interests over Q's or vice versa. The issue will be automatically prejudged and the conflict, though resolved, will be resolved irrationally. All the criticisms of morality as a means of resolving conflict that were made in sections 4.2 to 4.5 will apply equally well to any set of taboos which inhibit the rational resolution of conflict. In rational decision making, all relevant criteria are given weight insofar as they generate concern in the decision makers. Where taboos are effective, they serve only to distort, if not to sabotage, such procedures.

We have seen that the promulgation of specific taboos can serve the interests C)f some more than others. This raises the question as to who selects the taboos to be promulgated. To say 'we' do is once again to obscure the issue. In practice, some people, the newspaper proprietors, the lecturers, teachers, ministers of religion, those who control the mass media, the education processes and the pulpits, will have much more power in this regard than others. Perhaps this power would be considerably reduced if people were to give up their beliefs in the moral myths, including the belief that there are people who are in a better position than others to know what we all ought to do. Nevertheless, so long as the taboos remained, the power to emphasise some taboos at the expense of others would remain also, and it is unlikely that those who sought and attained this power would not use it to advantage themselves over their fellow citizens. It is doubtful, to say the least, whether this power could ever successfully be democratised. The only defence against it for the majority of people would be to have a healthy cynicism for any moralising or pseudo-moralising emanating from the mass media and the education system, and to do one's best to induce such a cynicism in others.

Nothing has been said in this section to deny the usefulness of keeping in mind the preferences of others, including those preferences that are widespread or universal, when one's actions are likely to affect others. Nor has it been denied that conformity to rules is often conducive to or even necessary for the achievement of certain ends. For example, road traffic regulations allow us to drive with some degree of safety. Again, the playing of

games and our indulgence in other group activities often entail rule-governed behaviour. These are rules which are in the interest of the agent as well as people other than the agent.

However, if it is altruism we are after, it may not be at all altruistic to constrain people's behaviour with a view always to the protection of people other than the agent. Although it is altruistic to constrain one's behaviour in the light of other people's preferences, it is not always altruistic to constrain the behaviour of other agents regardless of their preferences. So if it is altruism that one wishes to encourage, the universal restriction of certain sorts of behaviour seems to be a rather biased affair. If some agent, P, wishes to do something for some reason A in some particular circumstance, and some other person, Q, wishes that P refrains from his act in view of some consideration B, then why should we give more weight to B rather than A simply because A is the agent's relevant consideration in the circumstance and B is someone else's consideration? Again why should we give more weight to consideration B if we all know that we would feel about B as Q does were we in his circumstance? The fact that we all, including P, regard consideration B with disfavour does nothing to militate against the fact that P regards A as an important reason to commit his act in these circumstances. To write off or to degrade A as a reason simply because it is the reason of an agent is bizarre enough. To do so, because it would not be a reason for everyone else or even anyone else in P's situation to do what P proposes to do, is to arbitrarily discount P's personal preference s.

Notes for Chapter 4

[1] 1 owe this example to Ian Mavor.
[2] Many modern sociologists stress the disadvantages of moralising within conflict situations. Thus Donald Nightingale in his article 'Conflict and Conflict Resolution' (in Strauss, G., Miles, R.E., Snow, C.C., and Tannenbaum, A.S. (eds) Organisational Behaviour. Research and Issues, Belmont, Wadsworth, 1976) writes:
When a conflict situation is defined in terms of absolutistic values or in terms of ideological principles, parties have little room to manoeuvre. Beliefs about human rights, moral precepts, and ideology cannot be sacrificed piecemeal to an opponent. There is an 'all-or-nothing' quality to such conflict situations which makes resolution difficult.

Nightingale's article is a useful summary of various modern accounts of, and attitudes towards, conflict resolution. He distinguishes between two approaches which he calls the pluralist approach and the human relations approach. The pluralists are those who believe that conflict is an inevitable and, if managed properly , desirable part of human interaction and the human relationists are those who believe that conflict signifies the breakdown of normal and 'healthy' interaction among individuals and groups.

I wonder if there is not a slide here from the business of having conflicting desires to the business of arriving at social decisions competitively. Pluralists claim that conflict is inevitable -- which is plausible if conflicts are merely conflicting desires, but not if conflicts are competitive struggles. Human relationists are clearly thinking of competition involving threat and aggression when they are claiming that conflict is ill-conducive to the overall satisfaction of desire.

Muzafer Sherif in Group Conflict and Cooperation: Their Social Psychology (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967) stresses the counterproductiveness of casting blame in conflict situations. As a solution to inter-group conflict, he says, 'the assessment of blame is never more than a first step. Without mutual agreement on this step, the query "Who's to blame?" invariably leads to a vicious circle of recriminations that intensify conflict'. (p.109). Sherif also stresses the importance of finding 'superordinate goals' which both parties to the conflict may cooperate in achieving. Clearly the discovery of such goals is not a panacea for conflict, for, as Blake, Shepard and Mouton (Managing Intergroup Conflict in

Industry, Houston, Gulf, 1964) have pointed out, the differences that are set aside for the achievement of the superordinate goal may readily return once this goal has been achieved. Nevertheless, as Nightingale replies (op. cit. p. 149), the attitudes and behaviour of the opposing parties towards each other may well be changed by such cooperation, enabling them to 'seriously explore the underlying causes for their conflict and attempt to deal with them directly'.

The very title of Blake, Shepard and Mouton's book -- Managing Intergroup Conflict in Industry -- unfortunately typifies the approach of many researchers engaged in conflict resolution. They write as if conflict resolution techniques were tools of management designed to minimise squabbles between employees with a view to having those employees concentrate all their efforts on the would-be superordinate goals of maximising the profits of the organisation. Of course, that does not impugn the usefulness of such research for purposes other than those for which it was intended. Nevertheless, one has to take with a pinch of salt statements about social necessity and impossibility that pervade such literature, often in a way that is not easy to detect. Thus Charles Handy in his Understanding Organisations (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1976) claims, like Hobbes, that leadership is necessary for conflict-free co-operation in society. He says that whether you 'call him chairman or co-ordinator, representative or organiser, there is a need in all organisations for individual linking-pins who will bind groups together ...' (p.87). Now this seems to me to be an exaggeration, certainly with respect to small organisations. Even with respect to large organisations, the statement seems to display some lack of imagination. For example, it seems quite conceivable that the 'linking-pin' may be something as impersonal as a communal notice board. Even if the 'linking-pin' is human, that person may be regarded as a servant of the other people in the organisation rather than as their leader. Thus a club's honorary secretary may (or may not) be regarded as a leader, but a club's paid secretary may be, and usually is, regarded as a factotum. One may think that Handy is using the notion of leader in some broader and more useful sense or at least is trying to encourage the reader to do so, but on pages 88 and 89 in a section entitled 'The Findings' it is alleged that research has revealed that good leaders, successful leaders, are intelligent, display initiative, are self-assured and have an ability to perceive a situation 'in its relations to the overall environment'. One may wonder whether the researchers who came up with such findings were considering the secretarial factotum, let alone the communal notice-board.

One would expect large cultural differences in the ways that conflicts and conflict resolution procedures are viewed. R.W. Benjamin has studied such differences between Japanese and Americans. See his 'Images of Conflict Resolution and Social Control: American System' (Journal of Conflict Resolution, 19, 1, March, 1975 pp. 123-137)

Cultural differences would appear also to have their effect on research in the area, especially by limiting perceived possibilities. For example, S. La Tour, P. Houlden, L. Walker and J. Thibaut studied the preferences of local citizens for modes of conflict resolution. ('Some Determinants of Preference for Modes of Conflict Resolution', Journal of Conflict Resolution 20, 1976, pp. 319-356.) The subjects were asked to state their preference among five different methods of conflict resolution involving various degrees of participation by a disinterested third party. The five methods were:

A -- the autocratic method, in which the third party made the decision without reference to arguments for or against by the disputants,

B -- the arbitration method, in which the third party made the decisions after hearing arguments from the disputants,

C -- the moot, in which the decision is made by the third party together with the disputants after all three have discussed the matter,

D -- the mediation method, in which the third party enters into discussion on the issue, but where the final decision is left to the disputants, and

E -- the bargaining method, where there is no third party involved, and the disputants are required to settle the matter between themselves.

It is of interest that the researchers called method E, the bargaining method. This seems to indicate that the only possibility they could envisage for two people settling a dispute between themselves was via the competitive sort of give and take at the market place. Interestingly, arbitration proved to be the most popular method for settling disputes.

Kurt Lewin's sociological research is relevant to the importance of cultural differences in conflict resolution. See his Resolving Social Conflicts (ed Gertrude Weiss Lewin, New York, Harper, 1948). Lewin was one of the early leaders of research in this area. His work was stimulated by the rise in Fascism together with the persecution of Jews in Germany and the discrimination against minority groups in America. Lewin believed that satisfaction of needs was not sufficient for the avoidance of aggressive conflict. He felt that within certain cultural backgrounds, aggressiveness could increase rather than diminish with increased security.

The two major journals which publish the results of research into conflicts are the Journal of Conflict Resolution, already mentioned, published by the Centre for Research on Conflict Resolution at the University of Michigan, and the Journal of Peace Research published by the International Peace Research Institute in Oslo.

Techniques for rational conflict resolution similar to those described in this chapter were used by Gary Malinas, Nicholas Szoreni-Reischl, myself and others in an attempt to resolve conflicts arising from the detention of the South Vietnamese Ambassador to Australia by students at the University of Queensland in 1970. Whilst engaged on this project, we met the late Joan Tully of the Faculty of Agriculture at the University of Queensland, who, it turned out, had been using and teaching the use of similar techniques for many years. Joan called her techniques 'change modelling'. Joan Tully's work has been carried on since her untimely death by Bruce Crouch and Charmala Shankariah who are the editors of the book Extension Education and Rural Development, (2 Volumes, Brisbane, Queensland, University of Queensland Press, 1981), in which an article by Joan Tully, 'Changing Practices: A Case Study' first published in the Journal of Co-operative Extension 14, 3, (1966) pp. 143-152, illustrates superbly how the expert can relate to less expert people without assuming the role of a leader in the sense of a decision-making authority.

George M. Beal's article, 'The Change Agent and Change-Agent Roles', also in Crouch and Shankariah's book, examines a variety of possible roles for third parties in conflict situations. The 'change agent' is someone who is trying to bring about a change in a social situation. In this case the change would be from a situation of conflict to a situation of cooperation or at least a lack of conflict. The change agent could be acting on behalf of some other person or organisation which desires the change (the change agency) or may be acting on his own behalf or at the behest of the disputants.

Beal credits Lippett with the introduction of the concept of 'change-agent'. Change-agent roles include social worker, marriage counsellor, group dynamics specialist, labour-relations consultants, and agricultural extension workers. The work of most such change-agents involves conflict resolution: sometimes between two individuals as in a conflict within a marriage, sometimes between two or more groups of, people as between a government anxious to improve farm production by the introduction of agricultural innovations and a conservative farming community anxious to retain their relationships with the land, with one another, and the remainder of society.

As Beal points out, one does not have to be a professional to be a change-agent. Almost everyone is a change-agent now and then, if only in a minor capacity. Beal's notion of change agent is wider than the sort of person I want to talk of here which is merely a person outside a conflict who is of use to those within it in helping them to a resolution. Nevertheless. his typology for change agents serves as a typology for a typology for such

third persons also. It includes what he calls researchers, educators, consultants, facilitators, enablers, brokers, advocates, organisers, administrators and arbitrators.

Beal says of arbitration that it 'does not allow the change agent to introduce a new course of action, but rather to mediate among courses of action that are the issue over which arbitration is needed'. If this is so, then arbitration would place the dead hand of external authoritative valuation on an issue and would act as a preventative for imaginative and creative group problem solving.

Of the remaining categories mentioned by Beal, there is considerable overlap in the group decision-making process. Researchers, educators and consultants tend to take a detached role, providing information and ideas, but leaving the decision-making mechanisms of the disputants untouched. Facilitators and enablers facilitate group process in decision-making bringing into the dispute their expertise in 'group dynamics, group processes, organisational structure, role definitions and relations, problem definition and diagnosis, communication and decision-making'. (p. 119) However the final decisions rest with the disputants and no values are introduced into the dispute by the facilitator or enabler.

In the same book, Napier and Gershenfeld also stress the importance of keeping value judgements out of the decision-making processes. Among conditions 'ideally present in a problem-solving group' they include the condition that 'Ideas are explored in a nonevaluative climate. (p. 217)

[3] A.H.Maslow's theories concerning human motivation are to be found in his Motivation and Personality, New York, Harper and Brothers, 1954.

[4] Axelrod, Robert, The Evolution of Cooperation, New York, Basic Books, 1984.

[5] Pettit, Philip, 'The Prisoner's Dilemma and Social Theory: An Overview of Some Issues', Politics, 20, 1, May, 1985, ppl-11.

[6] J.J.C.Smart is perhaps the most well known defender of normative utilitarianism. See Smart, J.J.C., and Williams, Bernard, Utilitarianism: For and Against, Cambridge University Press, 1973. This book contains an extensive bibliography on the subject.

[7] Mackie, J.L., Ethics. Inventing Right and Wrong, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1977, p. 106.

Chapter 5 -- Conclusion

It is a widespread belief that morality is perpetuated because we all see the usefulness of morality in the amelioration of what would otherwise be the human condition. It has been the object of this book to bring this belief into question. Given fairly plausible assumptions about the perpetuation of the moral aspects of society, it would appear that these perpetuation mechanisms are likely to engender consequences for society that most people do not desire. Further, we have not been able to find any aspect of the moral society which guarantees or makes it likely that there would be more satisfaction with morality than without.

Now whether morality engenders satisfaction or otherwise is a contingent matter and the question arises as to what extent one can justify or refute such theories by empirical research. The difficulties are not to be underestimated. Sociology is a complex science in which the variables are extremely hard to identify, isolate and evaluate. Given the fact that moral language is in so many contexts indiscernible from the language of behavioural restriction generally, how does one identify some particular speech act such as:

'They ought to be at school'

as a statement about moral obligation as opposed to a prudential restriction or some other restriction which is a function of the physics of the situation, for example, the speed of the school bus? How does one measure the extent to which a society is a moral society? Given that elitism, authoritarianism, inequality and violent conflict can have

multiple causes, how does one measure the extent to which morality was the cause? How does one accurately survey a population on the moral upbringing of their children? The matter is so laden with emotion that the answers of respondents are likely to differ markedly from their practice. The beliefs and attitudes of the researchers are bound to influence considerably the interpretation of the responses and, again, such research is itself a social interaction of a sort wherein conformity and giving a 'good' account of oneself is paramount. This is bound to disturb the variables to a considerable degree and to distort any measurement of them.

These sorts of problem are common to most research in sociology if sociology is to be thought of as the science of human interaction. Interaction involves mental attitudes, beliefs and feelings -- including beliefs about what is going on in the minds of others and what is likely to go on in their minds given certain behaviour on the part of others. As Derek Phillips has pointed out in his excellent book Knowledge from What: Theories and Methods in Social Research [1] this involves more than knowing that people have or are likely to have certain beliefs and behaviour. For to understand this behaviour, we have to experience the emotions engendering the motivations of the agents we are studying. In the case under consideration, this entails experiencing the feelings of guilt, ego deprivation, ego satisfaction and self-righteousness that the average moral agent experiences from time to time and to do this the observer has to participate in the society being studied, and further, has to be able to communicate the content of such feelings to others. This is not easy. Good autobiographical literature is useful in this area and of this there is a growing abundance. Research into moral societies requires a study of this literature by people who are willing to step back for a time from their own participation in such a society, with the object of generating an overview of the society, with a first hand experience of the moral training they have undergone.

Such a programme lies beyond the scope of this book, which is merely an account of one participant's view of the moral society. However, some of the beliefs expressed here would enjoy a modicum of scientific respectability. Sociologists seem to be largely agreed about the elitism of the moral society, and many accept that such a society is also authoritarian and inegalitarian both in power and in material rewards. Again, the early moral training of the child as explained here seems to be fairly widely accepted among psychologists and sociologists. (For references here see the notes for chapters 2 and 3.) On the other hand, there are many aspects of this description of the moral state of affairs that would be controversial and in need of further research. Nevertheless, I feel it is useful to put these views forward, not only because they seem to me to be eminently plausible, but also because they are an alternative to the conventional wisdom. We seldom feel the need to investigate a commonly held theory unless an alternative has been proposed. So I make no apologies for proposing an alternative view.

One further remark needs to be made about the standard theory that we all see the usefulness of morality (rather than just believe it to be useful). If this usefulness was so obvious, one wonders why such philosophers as Protagoras, Hobbes, Hume, Warnock and Mackie would be bothering to go to such lengths to explain these advantages to us. In the concluding chapter of his Hume's Moral Theory Mackie expressed some doubts about these advantages:

even if morality fulfils a social function, it also has side-effects some of which benefit some people at the expense of others, while others do more harm than good to almost everyone. But could we do without it? What would work, in its place? The obvious answer is, what I have called the basic practices without the moral overlay, supplemented by the social psychologist's techniques of conflict resolution. [2]

As was pointed out in the previous section, Mackie took an evolutionary approach to the explanation of our moral feelings. But sometimes evolutionary explanations in themselves explain very little. It is tautologous to say that the fittest species are the ones most likely to

survive if what we mean by 'fittest' is 'most likely to survive'. Even if some god were to take a hand in deciding what survives and what does not, that god would simply become a significant ecological factor against which a particular species' fitness to survive would have to be calculated. What would be explanatory is the god's entering or failing to enter into the ecology as the case may be. Similarly, to explain the survival value of the moral society it is necessary to describe the mechanism whereby its survival value is maintained. It is essential that we understand these mechanisms, not only if we are to come to know their actual and possible consequences, but also if we are to know how to sabotage these mechanisms, should we choose to live without morality in the future.

This book is the expression of thoughts about my own experiences as a participant in a moral society. But it is more than that. If I am somewhere near correct in my depiction of that society, then my hope is that this book will encourage others to re-examine their beliefs and attitudes towards society. Perhaps more people will then share my own attitudes and beliefs regarding the moral society, and will also wish to work towards a new altruistic society in which guilt, denigration and self-deception are replaced by understanding, both of oneself and of others, and the peace, contentment and satisfaction that such understanding can bring.

Notes for Chapter 5

[1] Phillips, Derek, Knowledge from What: Theories and Methods in Social Research, Chicago, Rand McNally, 1971.
[2] Mackie, J.L., Hume's Moral Theory, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980, pp. 154-5

Appendix

The idea that some moral obligations arise out of those sorts of human interaction known as promising or entering into contracts is not new. It can be found in Hobbes' Leviathan and more recently in E.F. Caritt's Ethical and Political Thinking. [1] More recently again, John Searle [2] has argued that it is logically true that the act of promising places the agent under a prima facie moral obligation to keep the promise. Hence, since there exist many cases of people promising it would follow that there are correspondingly many prima facie moral obligations. Further, since it is empirically determinable whether or not a promise is being made, there would be at least some moral obligations whose existence is empirically determinable.

One of the consequences of the publication of Searle's article is that reaction to it has revealed differences between people in what they mean by 'promise'. Many would accept that it is logically true that the act of promising places the agent under a prima facie moral obligation.

Others would argue that though it may be true that promising places the agent under a prima facie moral obligation, it is not logically true that it does so. This truth, if it were a truth, would be a contingent truth -- contingent, not necessarily on how the world happens to be, but rather on what is right and what is wrong. Such people would claim that one would not be contradicting oneself if one were to say that someone had made a promise and were to deny that there was a corresponding prima facie moral obligation. This would be my own position. Indeed I would go further and claim that although promising occurs very often, there are no moral obligations, prima facie or otherwise. One might wish, of course, that people would by and large fulfil their promises, but that is another matter.

However, if one were to accept the idea that it is logically true that promises generate a prima facie moral obligation, then if one believed that there were no moral obligations, one would have to conclude in all rationality that there were no promises in that sense of

'promise'. But one would not have to deny the existence of many cases of people deliberately engendering expectations by the 'promising' ritual. The same sort of argument would apply to any term which had both moral and non-moral implications, 'murder' and 'traitor' for example. The fact that the non-moral implications of such terms are frequently exemplified would not entail that the moral implications of those terms are also exemplified.

Assume that two people disagree with respect to the entailment of the existence of moral obligations from acts of promising. There are a number of possible reasons for the difference. It may be that they differ in what they would count as a promise. It may be that they mean different things by 'moral obligation'. It may be that one or both of them are confused. The meaning of 'promise' for Searle, as far as I can gather, is close enough to my own. A promise is a certain ritualised act of engendering an expectation in someone. Searle, then, must be using 'moral obligation' in a sense different to that used in this book, or he is conceptually confused about moral obligation. I shall argue that the latter position obtains.

In an article replying to objections, [3] Searle considers an objection to the effect that he seems 'to be saying that it is logically inconsistent for anyone to think that one ought never to keep promises, or that the whole institution of promising is evil'. He replies that this is a misunderstanding. He says that someone who believes that the whole institution of promising is evil is simply attacking the institution of promising itself. Such a person, he claims, would be saying that the obligation to keep a promise is always overridden because of the evil character of the institution. But this does not deny the point that promises obligate. Searle is saying, then, that the obligation engendered by a promise is at best a prima facie obligation -- one that may never be realised. He goes on:

'The point is merely that when one enters an institutional activity by invoking the rules of the institution one necessarily commits oneself in such and such ways, regardless of whether one approves or disapproves of the institution.'

Now this latter point of Searle's seems to be quite correct. Further, to commit oneself is to bind oneself to a course of action. Let us, for the purposes of the argument, also grant the rather moot point that promising is a social institution having a set of associated rules. Then it would follow that to give a promise is to render oneself obliged to act in accordance with the rules of promising, that is, to keep one's promise. Let all this be allowed. The question which then arises is whether such an institutional obligation (let us call it) is also a moral obligation. As we have seen in Section 1.3, an obligation need not be a moral obligation. An obligation is merely some sort of constraint on behaviour.

The word 'committed' is similarly associated with restriction of choice, though again the restriction need not arise from any moral beliefs. Although the word can occur in moral and evaluative contexts, examples (9) and (10) below clearly show that this need not be the case.

(9) 1 understand you are committed to marrying the lady, but is that commitment the result of social pressure, or an outcome of your love for her?

(10) The horse rider is committed to the jump.

Thus Searle is wrong when he regards R.M. Hare as tacitly accepting the derivation of an evaluative statement from a descriptive one when Hare says:

'If a person says that a thing is red, he is committed to the view that anything which was like it in the relevant respects would likewise be red.'

But as Hare points out in reply [4] the commitment involved here is one that arises simply from the business of sticking to the meaning of the word 'red'. It may be true that that is something we want people to do and that, in a sense, may be evaluative and it may be true that Hare is presupposing that this preference is held by his readers. But being constrained by a particular aim is a different matter from having other people preferring that you are so constrained or even from having that preference yourself. The two are

quite logically distinct.

Note in passing that although all moral statements may be described as evaluative, not all evaluative statements are moral. Statements concerning personal preferences are evaluative but not necessarily moral. 'I prefer sex to golf' is an evaluative statement but it is not a moral one. 'You should prefer golf to sex' may be a moral statement depending on whether the constraint being commended is presupposed to be a moral constraint rather than, say, a constraint imposed by the heart condition of the person being advised together with the presupposed desire of that person to avoid a heart attack. Non-moral evaluative statements concerning preferences and desires are statements concerning the psychology of individuals -- not what they have a moral obligation to do or to prefer.

Those philosophers who call themselves naturalists, by virtue of being able to argue from statements about the way the world is to what people ought to do have missed the point of Hume's famous dictum to the effect that it is invalid to argue from what is or is not the case to what ought or ought not to be the case. It is quite clear from the context of Hume's discussion that by 'what ought or ought not to be the case' he was referring to moral judgements. That matter is quite a different one from the matter of being able to argue from propositions truly descriptive of the world or aspects thereof, to propositions expressed with sentences containing words like 'ought', 'should', 'must', 'committed' and 'obliged' which can occur both in sentences expressing moral judgements as well as sentences which do not.

With these thoughts in mind, let us return to Searle's claim that the existence of moral obligations is a logical consequence of the fact that people sometimes commit themselves to rule-governed institutionalised relationships with other people and that promising is such an institution. If this claim is correct then it should apply equally to other rule-governed institutionalised relationships between people -- playing soccer for example. However, it is far from clear that this is the case. If one is committed to playing a game of soccer and one is subsequently in breach of the rules of soccer, then one has provided evidence towards one's lack of ability as a soccer player, but one has not necessarily thereby provided evidence of one's bad moral character. It does not follow that one has been naughty or has sinned.

Hare [5] comes close to the point. He considers an example of Searle's, namely that whenever a player (of baseball) satisfies conditions E (where conditions E are the conditions under which, according to the rules of baseball, a batsman is out) he is obliged to leave the field.

Hare claims that this is not a tautology nor a statement about English word usage nor a prescription about word- usage in English. He claims that this is a rule of the game of baseball and that it is not therefore a rule about how we speak correctly but rather how we play baseball correctly. He goes on to claim that it is, or implicitly contains 'a synthetic evaluation or prescription not necessarily about word-usage'.

Hare gives too much away here. The rule of the game is not that the batsman is obliged to leave the field under conditions E, but rather that he does leave the field under conditions E. The obligation or constraint on the batsman's behaviour under conditions E, arises out of his commitment to playing baseball.

That is, he can't both act as baseball batsman under condition E and not leave the field. If he does not leave the field under those conditions, he is not playing baseball. Now, if the person who has been batting refuses to leave the field under conditions E, the onlookers may hiss and boo and cry out that the batsman ought to leave the field. There are several different possible obligations to which the onlookers could be referring. They may believe that the batsman, although committed to acting in accordance with the rules of baseball, does not know the rules, and they are telling him just what those constraints amount to. More likely, however, they believe that he is perfectly aware of the rules and is aware of the fact that conditions E applies and has reneged on his commitment to play the game

thus frustrating the desires of the other players and the onlookers. Thus they may be reminding him of the social constraints in the situation on the assumption that he would wish to act in accordance with the wishes of the other players and onlookers. Alternatively, and especially if the batsman has made a rude gesture at the onlookers indicating that he does not care about their desires in this regard, they may be referring to what they believe are moral constraints on his behaviour to (say) minimise the frustration of other people.

There may be multiple constraints on one's behaviour. In the baseball situation mentioned above, there could be at least three quite distinct constraints on the batman's behaviour, all of which are obliging him to leave the field. Both Hare and Searle seem to be treating these quite disparate obligations as identical.

Similarly in the 'promising game' -- assuming that there is such a thing -- an obligation to keep one's promise could arise in a number of ways including the one of committing oneself to the game, the one of not wishing to disappoint the expectations of the person promised, and finally the one (if it existed) of having a moral obligation not to renege on one's promising obligations. These are quite distinct constraints on behaviour and neither the existence of the second constraint nor the existence of the third constraint is deducible from the presence of the first.

Some may still insist that the second and third constraints are identical to the first, that is, that social constraints arising out of altruism or fear of sanctions are identical to moral constraints which are in turn identical to the constraints arising out of commitments to institutionalised rule-governed procedures. That this identification is a mistake becomes clear if we consider a case where the third sort of constraint is present without the other two. The case I have in mind is the case whereby people commit themselves to a game of solitaire patience. Insofar as one is so committed, one is obliged to place a black seven on a red eight. Yet even if this commitment held, it would be absurd to say that the player was thereby socially obliged by altruism or fear of reprisals to put a black seven on a red eight. Likewise it would be absurd to say that the player thereby had a moral obligation to do so. However Searle's argument from 'is' to 'ought' is no less applicable in the case of solitaire patience, than it is to any other case of commitment to rule-governed behaviour.

So as an example of an argument from empirically testable statements to moral statements, Searle's argument fails. From the fact that one has committed oneself to keeping a promise, it follows only that there is a commitment to oneself. It does not follow, without further premises, that there is a commitment to another person let alone society at large. Nor does it follow that there is any social, let alone moral, commitment involved. It is logically possible of course, that both the latter sorts of commitment also obtain, but they would not have to obtain.

In deductive logic one cannot get something for nothing. As many critics of Searle have pointed out, if there is evaluative or moral information in the conclusion of argument, then that information must be there in the premises -- otherwise the argument is deductively invalid. Searle would not deny this. His argument is to the effect that paradigmatically descriptive statements involving just psychological and sociological facts about people do contain paradigmatically moral information concerning what we are morally obliged to do or what is a morally good act. Most of Searle's critics have been concerned to examine the premises of his argument for hidden moral connotations. This has at least served to clarify Searle's position. However it turns out not that there are moral implications in the premises, but rather that there are none in the conclusion.

Philippa Foot's case for naturalism is contained in her article 'Moral Beliefs' [6]. The first half of this article is an attempt to argue a conclusion which most people would readily accept, namely that many moral assertions have empirically testable entailments. Let me short-circuit discussion of Foot's reasoning here to say that I for one would agree with this conclusion for reasons to be given in section 1.8.

It is the second half of Foot's article which is more relevant to naturalism. She begins by

arguing to the conclusion that it is a bad thing to injure oneself.

Now if by 'bad' she means morally bad, and if by something's being an injury she means something which is wholly determined by the way the world or aspects thereof happen to be, then her case for naturalism is established. But can 'bad' here mean 'morally bad'?

Moral descriptions correctly apply only to acts, agents, the tools or products of agents, certain items called 'goods' that we are morally obliged to promote, and others called 'evils' that we are morally obliged to avoid or perhaps eradicate. So if we accept that necessarily injuries are morally bad, then any injury would necessarily fall into one of these categories. The obvious candidate is an evil that we are morally obliged to avoid. But why should we believe that we are morally obliged to avoid injuries?

What is this badness that injuries necessarily have, according to Foot? Recall from Section 1.3 that words like 'good', 'bad', 'ought', 'right' and so on can properly be used in contexts other than moral contexts, and let us ask 'What sort of a context entails the sort of badness that Foot associates necessarily with injuries?'.

It seems clear that the sort of badness she has in mind is prudential. Now it is true as Foot herself claims in her article 'Goodness and Choice' [7] that goodness may have nothing logically to do with the choices of the person who speaks of it. However the sort of 'badness' associated with her idea of 'injury' certainly has. The premises of her argument seem to be:

(i) that injuries are necessarily damage causing a malfunction of some part of the body,
(ii) that necessarily such damage is a harmful thing to the body, and
(iii) that necessarily all people want to avoid harm to their bodies.

The last premise is not meant to deny that people may have other desires which may override their desire to avoid harm. D.Z. Phillips and H.O. Mounce [8] have objected to the last premise, and the first, too, is dubious. But let those objections pass. What follows from the premises is that necessarily all people wish to avoid injuries to themselves. So at the most what Foot has shown is that it is necessarily imprudent to allow oneself to be injured. Further it is clear from her discussion of the nature of injuries, that this is all she takes herself to be arguing for.

Now of course it is true that good and bad are used in prudential contexts. Thus we can call people good liars, meaning that when they wish it they can produce speech acts that are good for deceiving others, that is, that are likely to produce the desired result. Again, we can call a high bridge a good place for a suicide, or we can even talk of a good suicide meaning one which was achieved in such a way that success was highly probable. But we do not for those reasons believe that such places and such suicides are morally good. On the other hand there are many things such as masturbation, extra-marital sex, and homosexual acts, which are thought or have been thought by many to be morally wrong, even by those who thought such acts would not run afoul of any desire of those who committed them. Again Kant believed that we had a moral obligation to punish the last murderer, even if no useful consequences were to accrue from such punishment. Further, the very notion of an evil person is one whose aims are morally bad. If such be an evil person's aims, wherein lies his or her imprudence in trying to achieve them? If some desires can override others, a desire to act immorally may override any desire to avoid any inconvenience arising out of doing so, and if it is prima facie imprudent to act in such a way as to run into things one wishes to avoid, it is even more imprudent to act in a way that is contrary even to one's greater preferences. So even if Foot is right in believing that prudential goodness and badness arise out of situations to be found in the world about us (and I grant that she is, despite her questionable arguments for it), and although she claims that prudence is a virtue, she has yet to show that prudence is necessarily a moral virtue.

In her essay 'Virtues and Vices', [9] Foot seems to renege on these arguments. She claims that her mistake was in believing that 'moral judgements give reasons for acting to

each and every man'. But this is irrelevant to the invalidity of her arguments in 'Moral Beliefs'. Even if moral judgements gave reasons for acting to each and every man it would not follow that these were prudential reasons. Even with extra premises such as 'God punishes all sinners with a punishment more to their disadvantage than any advantage they could reap from their sins' or some such, all that would follow would be that it was always prudent to act morally well -- not that it is always morally good to act prudently. These attempts by Searle and Foot to leap Hume's 'Is-Ought' gap were not the first such attempts nor, I conjecture, will they be the last. Moral knowledge, if there were such a thing, could not be gained merely from a study of events that have already happened. As I claim in Section 1.7, moral knowledge can be gleaned only via moral intuition.

Notes for the Appendix

[1] Caritt, E.F., Ethical and Political Thinking, O.U.P., 1947. There is a criticism of Caritt's theory in Chapter 5 of Arthur Prior's Logic and the Basis of Ethics, O.U.P.,1949. The first chapter of Prior's book contains an excellent account of the fallacy of naturalism.

Jonathan Harrison's essay on 'Ethical Naturalism' in The Encyclopedia of Philosophy (ed. Paul Edwards, New York, Macmillan, 1967) is relatively soft on naturalists compared with the treatment here. The recent resurgence of naturalism and subjectivism is something of an anomaly, such theories having already been thoroughly debunked by G.E. Moore in Principia Ethica, (C.U.P., 1903) and in his 'Reply to my Critics' in P.A. Schilpp (ed), The Philosophy of G.E. Moore, (New York: Tudor, 1952). The same debunking occurred a century earlier in Richard Price's A Review of the Principle Questions in Morals. The easiest source for the relevant writings of Price is to be found in D.D. Raphael (ed) British Moralists 1650 - 1800, Vol II (O.U.P., 1969). The debunking of naturalism is clearly a job which needs doing at least once a century.

[2] Searle, John, 'How to Derive "Ought" from "Is".' Philosophical Review, LXIII, 1964. Reprinted in Hudson, W.D., (ed) The Is-Ought Question, London, Macmillan, 1972.

[3] Searle, J., 'Deriving Ought from Is - Objections and Replies' in Hudson, W.D. (ed) The Is-Ought Question. op cit.

[4] The quotation is from Hare's Freedom and Reason, O.U.P., 1963, p1l. Hare's reply to Searle is in Hudson, W.D. (ed) The Is-Ought Question. op cit

[5] Hare, R.M., 'The Promising Game', Revue Internationale de Philosophie, No. 70, 1964, pp. 398-412. Reprinted in Hudson, W.D. (ed) The Is-Ought Question. op cit.

[6] Foot Philippa, 'Moral Beliefs', Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, LIX, 1958, pp. 83-104. Reprinted in Virtues and Vices. See note 9 below.

[7] Foot Philippa, 'Goodness and Choice', Proceedings of the Aristotelean Society Supplementary Vol. XXXV, 1961, pp. 45-60.

[8] Phillips, D.Z. and Mounce, H.O., 'On Morality's Having a Point', Philosophy, XL, 1965, pp308-319.

[9] Foot, Philippa, Virtues and Vices, and other Essays in Moral Philosophy, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1978, p. 130.

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