USE OF THESES

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THE CORRIGIBILITY OF MORAL JUDGEMENTS

by

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This thesis is my own work, written while I was a research scholar in the Research School of Social Sciences in the Australian National University.

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And it is not only unnecessary but even improper to ask whether great crimes might not evidence more strength of soul than do great virtues. For by strength of soul we mean the strength of resolution in a man as a being endowed with freedom - hence his strength in so far as he is in control of himself (in his senses) and so in the state of health proper to a man. But great crimes are paroxysms, the sight of which makes a man shudder if he is sound of soul.

(Kant, The Doctrine of Virtue, trns. M.J. Gregor, New York, 1964, p.42.)
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PREFACE

It would not be helpful to try to describe in a short introduction the philosophical and historical backgrounds to the issues that I want to discuss, for they are backgrounds which are both too complex and too important to be readily amenable to this sort of treatment. Furthermore, it is also to some extent unnecessary to do this, for I shall be discussing some of the more important aspects of them in the text - though even there my account will be incomplete.

There is, however, one point that is worth mentioning briefly here, if only to anticipate an important objection to the kind of enterprise upon which I shall be engaged. It might be claimed that in Part II I rest certain conclusions about the corrigibility of moral judgements and how moral rules are to be justified upon certain contingent facts about human beings, and I present these facts, moreover, in the form of exemplifications of the concepts in terms of which, I argue, the corrigibility of moral judgements and the justification of moral rules are to be understood. Hence, my conclusions seem to be open to the objection that they lack universality, for, if the conclusions are true, I show them to be true only in the situations described in my examples. This suggests that
the method that I use to establish the conclusions is misconceived. The facts might well be otherwise, and this is not merely a logical possibility but, also (because of the heavy reliance that I place upon the persuasiveness of the actual examples that I give), a real one. Thus it could be argued that while it is a method which might satisfy a moral subjectivist, it can satisfy no one who wants to deny the subjectivist thesis — as I do.

The objection that my method is misconceived is, however, one that itself reflects a view of the nature of morality which is highly questionable. That is, it reflects the view that one can so characterize morality that it is possible to give an account of the corrigibility of moral judgements and the justification of moral rules which does not presuppose one particular way of organizing moral experience rather than another, or a particular picture of the world that may or may not be false or distorted. Since I shall argue in the text\textsuperscript{1} that one cannot characterize morality in this way, there is nothing to be gained in repeating myself here. I simply want to point out that, if I am right, the method that I adopt is the only possible one. That is to say, conclusions about the nature of justification in morals must be in terms of

\textsuperscript{1} Cf. especially Chapter IV.
concepts whose acceptability is dependent upon their capacity to make sense of experience - and this must involve a heavy reliance upon the persuasiveness of exemplifications of these concepts.

This does not mean that my conclusions lack universality. It does mean, however, that their universality can only be established piecemeal, viz. by being successfully defended against an indefinite number of possible counterexamples. In this sense my thesis is fundamentally incomplete. It may be the case that my examples are too selective and that if I try to stretch the concepts to cover other experiences I shall only distort those experiences. But this possibility must be accepted as unavoidable if one does not believe that morality can be neutrally characterized.

I should like to record my gratitude to Mr S.I. Benn for his patient and sympathetic criticism of my arguments, to Professor P.H. Partridge who forced me to clarify my thought on a number of issues, and to staff members and fellow scholars at the Australian National University for much helpful discussion of the topics in this thesis.
SYNOPSIS

PART ONE

I argue that if one allows that the question: 'Why should one be concerned about the interests of people other than oneself or the group of which one is a member?', is one that can properly be asked, then one must admit that the position of any particular selfish person or any particular selfish group is rationally on all fours with any unselfish position.

Chapter I

I discuss the view that if E does to NE something that is contrary to NE's interests, then E is rationally required to justify his action, and that it is possible to determine whether E does justify it (or, at any rate, fails to justify it) without thereby making a moral commitment which is itself in need of justification.

In reply I argue that this argument only works if E and his objector have made the same relevant moral commitments. That is to say, the objector's claim that E's action is not justified, while it may not itself be a moral judgement (e.g. he may simply be saying that E is

\[\text{Cf. Foot-note on page 1 for an explanation of the symbols.}\]
inconsistent), does presuppose a certain moral commitment, and if E has not made the same commitment then the objector's argument will be unsuccessful, (i.e. E is not rationally required to agree with it).

Chapter II

I discuss two arguments.

1) The view of Benn and Peters that if E acts in a manner contrary to NE's interests and refuses to consider NE's interests as relevant to the question of whether he is morally justified in performing the act, then he is refusing to satisfy a necessary condition of the possibility of there being any sort of rational discussion between them. E, that is, does not consider that NE counts morally, and the question of who is to count morally is not one that can be answered by the giving of reasons, i.e. the answer is wholly prescriptive. At this level one makes a choice which is beyond the limits of rational justification. Benn and Peters, in other words, agree that the 'onus of proof' argument does not work in the absence of a prior moral commitment, but claim that the commitment is not one that can be the subject of rational argument for it is a condition of the possibility of such argument.

I argue in reply that E's refusal to consider NE's interests is not wholly prescriptive. That is, I argue that E has reasons for not considering that NE counts
morally. Hence, though it may not be possible to convince E by argument that he ought to consider NE's interests (cf. Chapter III), it is not the case that E's position is a non-rational one.

2) I go on to discuss in detail Hare's argument in Freedom and Reason. This is that if E believes that he is morally justified in acting as he does, then it can be shown a) that he is logically bound to consider NE's interests as if they were his own, and b) that unless E is a 'fanatic' (i.e. someone who is willing to have his own interests frustrated or destroyed for the sake of an 'ideal'), he can be led to be concerned about NE's interests as if they were his own.

My main objection against this argument is that it begs the question that it is intended to answer. For E can only be led (logically) to consider the interests of NE as if they were his own if he believes that NE ought to consider that his (E's) action is morally justified, i.e. if he believes that NE would, if he were sufficiently rational, prescribe the action. This presupposes that E believes that NE's interests are worthy of consideration (though not necessarily worthy of concern). It is only if E believes this that he can be led (logically) to make the singular prescription: 'Let this be done to me if I am NE', upon which Hare's argument depends. But E may
not believe this. On the contrary, he may believe, for instance, that NE is morally justified in preventing him from performing the action. Thus Hare's argument begs the question. What is more, that E believes that NE would, if he were sufficiently rational, prescribe E's action, is not a necessary condition of E's judgement ('I ought to do this') satisfying the conditions of universalizability and prescriptivity which, Hare argues, are essential ingredients in moral judgements.

Chapter III

Though it is not the case that E's lack of consideration for NE's interests involves a choice that is beyond the limits of rational justification, it may, perhaps, be impossible for anyone to convince E by argument that he ought to consider them. It may be argued, however, that this is not a cause for alarm, for E has not given NE any reason why it would be wrong for NE to protect his interests. E, that is, is not the source of any moral problem. Hence, the proper response for NE to make to E is in terms of what it is prudent for E to do. That is, NE can argue that it is not in E's best interests to do to NE what is not in NE's interests.

In reply I argue that once it is admitted that E's position is a rational one, once it is admitted that people have very good reason to be selfish if they can get
away with it, it follows that one must admit that moral exclusivism is rationally on all fours with any non-exclusive morality - which is precisely the point that a moral sceptic would want to make. I examine the view of Baier that the central problem in moral philosophy is to show how people who successfully pursue selfish interests are, nevertheless, bound in some rational way to refrain from pursuing these interests. I reject his solution to the problem. I go on to argue that if one allows, (as Baier does), that the question: 'Why should one be concerned about the interests of people other than oneself or the group of which one is a member?', is one that can properly be asked, then the position of the moral exclusivist becomes morally impeccable.

PART TWO

In Chapters IV and V I give reasons for saying that the question: 'Why should one be concerned about the interests of people other than oneself or the group of which one is a member?', is not one that can be properly asked. In Chapter VI I try to show how my argument in Chapters IV and V can be used to justify rules which state when one is and when one is not justified in causing harm to other people. I also say something about the role that self-interest plays in this.
Chapter IV

In the introductory section I discuss three points about the fact-value distinction which many moral philosophers have felt to be of great moral significance. 1) The relationship that facts alone have to moral judgements is a logically neutral one. 2) The relationship that facts alone have to moral judgements is an evaluatively neutral one. 3) If there are any moral rules at all (i.e. if it is not the case that people are justified in behaving in any way they please), then they must be binding upon people in some logical sense. (1) and 2) have been more universally accepted than 3). But 3), as Hare rightly says, follows if one accepts 1) and 2). Cf. pp.80-1.)

In Section 2) there are two main arguments.

I argue, first of all, against the view that moral phenomena (e.g. moral beliefs, moral ideals, the virtues and vices) can be correctly analysed in terms of descriptive meaning and evaluative meaning. That is, I reject one particular reason for making the assumption to E's question. The reason is that an exclusivist, for instance, can always refuse to consider any moral objection to his position on the grounds that the objection can be analysed into a factual content which is evaluatively neutral and cannot, therefore, be sufficient
in itself to establish the objection, and an evaluative content which is in need of justification. I reject this reason on the grounds that moral judgements are to be properly understood against a point-giving background, and this is something which the fact-value analysis cannot adequately explain. (I can think of no way of helpfully summarizing my argument here, but what I have to say is very much along the lines taken by Mrs Foot.)

The second main argument in Section 2) is that anyone who seeks to understand the point of a moral judgement is faced by questions and problems which he cannot rationally ignore and whose answers he cannot predict. He is caught in a net of argument, self-examination and decision-making, and he may not be able to give sincere answers to the questions which face him without seriously undermining his own original moral outlook.

Chapter V

I discuss a reply that might be made to all this. This is that I have not yet shown how moral judgements are corrigible. It might be argued that an exclusivist need not be required to show that the points of view of his opponents are defective. For example, as I argue in Chapter II against Hare, a Nazi need not say that Jews should recognize that the Nazi position is the correct one. An exclusivist could argue, that is, that he and his
opponents live in different worlds. The Nazi desires a world without Jews, and the Jew desires a world without Nazis. Both can provide extensive and intelligible backing for their different positions. Both use moral words in ways which make perfectly good sense once one understands their outlooks on life. But these outlooks are morally incomparable. Though they conflict, one cannot show that one is better than the other, that one is right and the other wrong.

My reply is somewhat complicated and is partially couched in terms of the concepts of an area of human interest and concern and background, which I introduce in Chapter IV. Briefly, it is as follows: there are limitations upon regarding conflicting areas of human interest and concern as morally incomparable, and to understand what they are is to understand in what sense moral judgements are corrigible. There are limitations because it is often impossible to understand the nature of a particular area and, at the same time, make certain judgements or have certain attitudes which are to be correctly understood in terms of a conflicting area. To understand it, that is to say, means that one cannot continue to make the judgements which one previously made. The reason is that one's understanding corrects the backgrounds which give point to these judgements, i.e. the
judgements cease to have point – consider, for example, the judgements which a child makes in virtue of the symbiotic ties it has with its parents; the judgements cease to have any point when these ties are snapped, and they are snapped to the degree that the child comes to have a clear understanding of the kind of people his parents actually are, i.e. the ways in which they actually experience themselves and others – including him. In Section 4 I defend this view against the objection that I am simply putting into modern dress the Platonic doctrine that virtue is knowledge and that it is a doctrine that is subject to a fatal weakness.

Chapter VI

I defend my thesis against the objection that it does not account for the notions of duty and obligation, i.e. against the objection that nothing that I have said helps one to understand how one can identify and establish moral reasons for acting. A moral reason is a reason, to use Baier's words, that 'requires us often to do things which are not in our best interests and to refrain from doing things which would be in our best interests.' That is, my account seems to ignore the question of how one is to

decide when one is and is not justified in doing to others what is not in the interests of others.

In Section 2) I argue (against Singer and Baier) that it is misleading to say that a necessary condition of an action being a moral one is that it affects other people's interests. The application of the concept of a moral reason cannot be restricted in this way. To do so makes self-interest irrelevant to answering the question of when one is and is not justified in doing to others what is not in their interests. There is, however, nothing sufficiently distinctive about actions that affect other people to make the contrast with actions that affect only oneself. In Section 3) I argue that self-interest is, in fact, a necessary condition of the possibility of answering the question.

As the objection that my argument in Chapters IV and V does not account for the notions of duty and obligation presupposes the view of the nature of morality that I reject in Section 2) (i.e. the view that a necessary condition of an action being a moral one is that it affects other people's interests), I am free in Section 3) to show how the question of when one is and is not justified in doing to others what is not in the interests of others can be answered in terms of this argument.
CHAPTER I

THE 'ONUS OF PROOF' ARGUMENT

Let us suppose that E says to NE: 'I want your money. Why shouldn't I kill you for it?'

An obvious reply which NE might make is: 'It's not your money. I can see no reason why you should have it. Of course, you may kill me and take it, but this does not mean that you are justified in doing so. It simply means that you are more powerful than I am.'

E then gives a reason why he should have NE's money. NE replies that it is not a good reason. It may, for example, involve a mistake of fact: 'You stole it from me, so it isn't your money at all' - when, in fact, NE did not steal it from E. Or it may be that the reason is simply irrelevant to the question of whether E should have the money.

Arguments about whether this or that reason is a

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E stands for 'exclusivist' and NE for 'non-exclusivist'. Who these characters are will become clear in the chapters that follow. But, broadly speaking, an exclusivist is someone who believes that there is no reason why he should be in any way concerned about the interests of anyone other than himself or the group of which he is a member. Others, that is, simply do not count. Actually E is not just an exclusivist, but someone who is speaking in defence of restricted moralities. The importance of this distinction will become evident in Chapter III. Cf., also, the Introduction to Chapter VI.
relevant one are often, of course, very complex. Nevertheless, it sometimes looks as though it is plain commonsense that certain reasons in certain contexts are irrelevant. B. Williams,¹ for instance, in arguing against the view that 'the question whether a certain consideration is relevant to a moral issue is an evaluative question',² i.e. the view that 'to state that a consideration is relevant or irrelevant to a certain moral question is...itself to commit oneself to a certain kind of moral principle or outlook', remarks:

the principle that men should be differentially treated in respect of welfare merely on grounds of their colour is not a special sort of moral principle, but (if anything) a purely arbitrary assertion of will, like that of some Caligulan ruler who decided to execute everyone whose name contained three 'R's.

Thus, if E tells NE that he should have the money because NE is a Negro, NE can reply that this is no reason at all. For how could it possibly follow from the mere fact that a man is black that someone else should have his money? E might then point out that Negros are lazy and do not deserve the money they get. NE replies that some

² It would be better if this read '...is always an evaluative question', for, clearly, it sometimes is. For example, the consideration in question might be a moral principle.
Negros are not lazy, and, even if they were, it does not follow that other people should have their money. And the argument continues in the same vein of objection, explanation, and response.

This form of argument is perfectly familiar. At first sight, at any rate, it offers a convincing illustration of how moral arguments can be lost and won, and it appears to avoid any philosophical problem about what is to count as a good moral argument.

Its essential ingredients are as follows:

1) If a person does not have a good reason for treating someone in a certain way, then he is not justified in treating him in that way.

A 'good reason' here will include 'there is no reason against it'. This might be used to say that the question of justification simply does not arise - e.g. in present giving; or it might be used to rebut a complaint - e.g. 'You are just arguing for the sake of arguing. You've really got nothing to complain about'.

The same point can be expressed in terms of a) the freedom of the individual, and b) claims to equality of treatment.

Hart expresses the first thus:

If there are any moral rights at all, it follows that there is at least one natural right, the equal right of all men to be free. By saying
that there is this right, I mean that...any adult human being capable of choice (1) has the right to forbearance on the part of all others from the use of coercion or restraint against him save to hinder coercion or restraint and (2) is at liberty to do (i.e. is under no obligation to abstain from) any action which is not one coercing or restraining or designed to injure other persons.

And Lucas expresses the second in the following way:

If two people are being treated, or are to be treated, differently, there should be some relevant difference between them. Otherwise, in the absence of some differentiating feature, what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, and it would be wrong to treat them unequally, that is, not the same.2

Lucas calls this the 'Principle of Formal Equality'. It is formal because 'it does not provide, of itself, any criterion of relevance...It gives a line of argument, but not any definite conclusion'.3,4,5

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3 Ibid., p. 297.
4 Just as Hart's Principle of Equal Freedom does not provide any criteria of what counts as 'coercion or restraint'.
5 The principle is formal because it does not contain the criteria of its own application. It is, nevertheless, a moral principle, for Lucas is saying that it is wrong to treat people differently. This sense of 'formal' must be carefully distinguished from another sense in which it is often used, i.e. to qualify principles which apply to any kind of reason-giving.
Benn and Peters\(^1\) call it the 'Principle of Equal Consideration'. No man, they say, 'shall be held to have a claim to better treatment than another, in advance of good grounds being produced' — and people either have reasons for their claims which can be either good or bad, (and it sometimes appears to be obvious that a claim is groundless), or they have no claims at all, in which case there is nothing to argue about.

2) The second ingredient is that it is up to the person who discriminates between people or interferes with them to give a good reason for doing so. It is not always easy to decide, in any particular case, just upon whom the onus does fall, but, very often, it does seem to be a fairly simple matter — some countries declare war on others, the people of one race sometimes discriminate against people of different races, etc. This is an important point because it appears to counter a possible objection to 1). It could be objected, that is, that since the Principle of Equal Freedom and the Principle of Formal Equality are formal principles, they are consistent with anything at all counting as an interference and anything at all counting as discrimination; and, if this is the case, what purpose can the principles possibly serve? However,

if it is possible to establish **onus** of proof, then it would seem that this objection can be avoided. If, for example, it is the Nazi who discriminates against Jews and not the other way round, then we can ask him to give his reasons for doing so. If he does give them, then, to quote Benn and Peters again, he is

vulnerable on the possible grounds: a) that the evidence will not support the claim that all Jews...are in the given respects inferior to non-Jews...b) that the respects in which they do differ are irrelevent to some, if not all, of the forms of discrimination made to rest on them; c) where differences are relevant, the degrees of discrimination are out of all proportion to the degrees of difference.

In other words, whatever might be said to **constitute** interference or discrimination, not **anything** can count as **justifying** interference or discrimination.

3) A necessary condition without which a decision affecting the interests of others would not be justified, is that it can be arrived at\(^2\) on the basis of an **impartial** consideration of the interests of all those affected by it. A decision which affects the interests of others is not impartial if it is affected by considerations which are false or are not relevant to whatever is at issue.

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\(^1\) Ibid., p.117.

\(^2\) I say 'can be arrived at' rather than 'is arrived at' because a decision might be justified even if it is the result of a hunch.
E, however, might reply that the form of argument whose essential ingredients are provided by these points is not one in which everyone who considers that he is justified in performing this or that action needs to become involved. For, he says, one only becomes involved if it is the case that one can deny, without thereby committing oneself to 'a certain kind of moral principle or outlook',¹ that the reason offered as justification for the action is a relevant one. But, if one does not have to accept this, then it follows that there is no onus upon the person who interferes with or discriminates against another to prove that he is justified in doing so.

Consider the following examples taken from the fields of racial, sexual, and welfare discrimination which illustrate E's point.

1) M. Singer² describes a situation in which a person is prevented from getting a job for some apparently irrelevant reason, and makes the following comments:

Any office, job, or position involves certain duties and requires certain abilities and characteristics for the performance of these duties. Thus, given any office or position, it is possible to draw up a list of conditions stating the requirements of that position, so

¹ B. Williams, op. cit., p.113.
² Generalization in Ethics, New York, 1963.
that anyone satisfying these conditions is capable of fulfilling these requirements.

Now A can rightfully be excluded from this position only on the ground that he does not satisfy the specified conditions.1, 2

He asks: 'What would justify excluding some class of persons... from appointment to any sort of position?'3

His answer is that

it would have to be shown that the members of that class have certain characteristics, in virtue of their membership in that class, which are such as to unfit them or make them incompetent to perform the duties of that position.4

Hence, whether or not it is reasonable to regard a person as disqualified for (or, from getting) a certain job will depend on the nature of the job concerned.

Singer goes on to argue that there are certain considerations which disqualify people from getting jobs which are clearly irrelevant as they stand. The first involves identifying people 'in terms of some popular category, as say Negros, or Poles, or Jews'.5 In order to justify excluding from employment people in this kind of category,

1 Ibid., p. 29.
2 Unless, of course, there are more qualified applicants than jobs.
3 Ibid., p. 25.
4 Ibid., p. 27.
5 Ibid., p. 27.
It would have to be shown that because someone is (say) a Negro, or has certain characteristics commonly associated with Negroes, he is incapable of carrying out the requirements of the position in question.\(^1\)

And whether he is capable or not is, of course, an empirical matter.

The second consideration is the fact that an employer does not like people of a certain type. Of this Singer says that it 'would not, by itself, justify him in claiming that they ought to be excluded from some position'.\(^2\) Why? Because anyone can argue in the same way. If there is anyone who does not like the people as does like (himself included), then those people ought to be excluded also. It is possible to maintain on these grounds that no one ought to hold any position, and this is absurd.\(^3\)

It follows that if a Negro who is a competent bus driver applies for a job as a bus driver and is refused because he is a Negro, or because the employer does not like him for reasons which have nothing to do with his driving abilities, then he is being treated in an unjustified manner. For the fact that he is a Negro, or

\(^1\) Ibid., p.27.
\(^2\) Ibid., p.25.
\(^3\) Ibid., p.25.
is not liked, are not considerations which are relevant to
the question of whether he should get the job or not.

However, this argument, though a common one, is, as
it stands, not sufficient to show that a discriminating
employer is not justified in discriminating. For there is
no need for him to get involved in disputes about whether
the fact that a man is a Negro prevents him from being a
competent bus driver, nor need he be disturbed by the
argument that the fact that he has a personal dislike for
someone is not a reason which justifies preventing him from
gaining employment. A discriminating employer can argue
that he does not, and does not have to accept the view that
the ability to do a job well is the only criterion of who
should be given employment. An employer, for example,
might say that he is not obliged in any moral sense to
operate a bus company. So he is not obliged to provide
people with jobs in his company - for he might, being an
eccentric, just like being the head of a company on paper
and not in fact. If he actually operates a company, then,
even though he does so efficiently and employs only
experienced men as bus drivers, he sees no reason why he
should employ Negros. Why, he asks, does it matter whom

1 Though it might, of course, be imprudent for him to
actually admit this.
he employs so long as he runs an efficient service? After all, if there are more qualified applicants than jobs available he is not accused of discrimination if he chooses whom to employ with the aid of a pin. It so happens that he dislikes Negros so he does not employ them. If people accuse him of racial prejudice he replies that whether he is or is not prejudiced is an irrelevant consideration, for he sees no reason why he must justify his refusal to employ Negros. It is, he says, up to those who complain about discrimination to convince him that Negros should have the same opportunity as whites have to gain employment in his company.

Of course, if an employer said that ability alone was the test of whether or not he employed people, he would be behaving inconsistently if he did not employ Negros simply because he did not like them. This is obvious, but it does serve to bring out the point that Singer's argument is no more than a kind of preaching to the converted. One might say that the fact that a person belongs to a particular race or is disliked by an employer is not relevant to the question of whether or not he should get this or that job, if the job is one in which there is no correlation between unsuccessful performance and being of that race or being disliked by one's employer. But this is simply to say that it is wrong to refuse men jobs for
reasons which are irrelevant to the proper performance of the jobs. It is not, that is, to say why it is wrong. It may well be that the fact that a man is a Negro is irrelevant if the problem is one of deciding who is and who is not a good bus driver. But this is not the problem raised by a discriminating employer. The question he raises is, 'Even though there may be no correlation between being a Negro and being a bad bus driver, why is this relevant to the question of whether he should employ Negros or not?' To say that it is relevant is something which needs to be shown, and the discriminating employer is saying that it is up to his opponent to show it.

2) Much the same is true of sexual discrimination. Suppose that women do a particular job as efficiently as men but receive a smaller income. It might then be argued that the women should receive the same income unless the employer can show that they are significantly different from the men in a relevant respect. The employer, however, might reply that he sees no good reason why he should not pay his employees the smallest income he can get away with. As it happens women make far less fuss about the incomes they receive than men. If they did start to complain, then his decision about whether or not to pay them more would depend upon how their complaints affected his business. For this reason, he argues, the fact that men get £30 a
week for doing a certain job and women get £10 a week for doing the same job equally well does not mean that he ought to give them the same income or show in what respects they are significantly different.

Of course, if he believed that income should depend upon work performance, then he would have to provide women with the same income as men if they did a job equally well, or show a relevant difference between them. If, for example, he paid women less than men simply because he did not like women, then it could properly be pointed out to him that this is an irrelevant consideration. But an employer who believes that economic prudence should dictate the distribution of wages would not have to justify his refusal to give women less income than men, even though they do the same job equally well. He could say that it is up to those who believe that he ought to convince him.

3) When people argue that lack of money should not prevent the sick from receiving medical treatment, it could be replied that there is no general obligation on people to help those who suffer from ill health, even upon people such as doctors who are most capable of curing it. Hence, there is nothing wrong with curing only those who can afford the treatment. (Likewise, only our friends, Catholics, whites, etc.)

However, if someone held the general principle 'one
ought to help the sick', then, if he only helped those who could afford the treatment, he could be required to give a good reason for treating people who could not afford it as exceptions to the principle. Indeed, some forms of discrimination appear to be obviously inconsistent with a sincere belief in the principle that the sick ought to be helped, e.g. when a doctor refuses to treat anyone he happens to dislike.

In each of these examples the discriminator is saying that there is no reason why he should accept certain criteria of right conduct held by his opponents, and that it is only if one holds these principles that it becomes necessary to justify discrimination in the manner which his opponents demand. That is, he is denying that he is required to show that the people he discriminates against are exceptions to a rule of conduct which, other things being equal, includes them within its scope — as, for example, in 'one ought to help the sick', 'one' refers, ceteris paribus, to anyone, and 'the sick' refers to anyone who is sick. If it were the case that he regarded the people he discriminated against as exceptions in this sense of the word, then he could be required to show that they differ significantly from other people, and, as I have already said, there seem to be some differences that, granted appropriate criteria, are obviously not sufficient
to show that a case is an exceptional one.

To return to the case of E and NE:

E, it will be remembered, says to NE: 'I want your money. Why shouldn't I kill you for it?' NE replies that the money does not belong to E. If E says that he should have it, then he must give a good reason to justify his claim — and many possible reasons are clearly irrelevant to the question of whether or not he should have the money.

One can now see how E might reply to this. He might reply that if it were the case that he (E) respected NE's ownership of the money, then he (E) would have to prove that he should have it, and it would be the case that many possible reasons would be irrelevant. If, for example, he says that he should have it because NE is a Negro, he would have to show that this is a good reason why he should have it, for, on the face of it, it clearly is not. But, says E, this does not follow if he does not respect NE's ownership of the money. Why should the fact that NE owns the money matter to him (E)? If NE believes that others should respect his ownership, then it is up to him to provide a justification for the belief.
CHAPTER II

THE THESIS OF PRESCRIPTIVE UNIVERSALIZABILITY

The argument so far is as follows:

E (to NE): "I want your money. Why shouldn't I kill you for it?"

NE: "The money is mine. I see no reason why you should have it. If you kill me, this only shows that you are more powerful than I am. It does not mean that you are justified in killing me. If you think that you should have the money, you must give your reasons - and not any reason will do."

E: "But I do not respect your ownership of the money. So why shouldn't I take it from you? If you think that I should not, then it is up to you to give me reasons why I should not."

NE, however, might well remain unconvinced that it is up to him to offer further argument. He might be willing to discuss the concept of property, or the concept of justice as it is and ought to be applied to the distribution of property, i.e. he might be willing to discuss whether he (NE) has a right to the money, but, he argues, there is no reason why he has to do this because of anything that E has said. E, that is, says that he wants NE's money but this is not a reason why he should have it."
If E, he argues, cannot see this distinction there is simply no point in taking the discussion any further. Of course, 'I want it' may in some circumstances be a good reason why the person who says it should have it, but it is obviously, says NE, not a good reason per se. Though one can imagine a society in which whenever anyone says 'I want it' there is a rule that it ought to be given, even here the rule would have to be limited by other rules which determine the circumstances in which the rule is and is not applicable. Otherwise it would be a ruleless society, i.e. in the practical sense that there would be no means of arbitrating between conflicting interests. NE does have a reason for giving E the money, for E has threatened to kill him if he does not. But NE says, and rightly, that this is not a reason why E should have it. E, that is, has no claim to it. Likewise, if E had said that he should have the money because his left eye-lid kept twitching, because he enjoyed scratching himself, or because NE was a Negro or a woman, NE could properly reject them as reasons why he should give him the money—unless, of course, E could show that they are relevant considerations. Having pointed this out what else can NE say? It looks very much as though E, by refusing to accept NE's objection, is showing that he is unwilling to engage in rational argument at all. For E, that is, NE
does not count, for he refuses to consider NE's perfectly reasonable objections as relevant to the question, 'Why shouldn't I kill you for your money if I want it?'

Consider what Benn and Peters say on this point:

Where 'inferiority' is wholly prescriptive, it implies a simple refusal to extend the principle of equal consideration to the class in question. The Nazi who asserts that Jews are an inferior race may be saying simply that they are not to count, that they should not be considered.... A limitation in the scope of the basic moral principle cannot in a strict sense be refuted.... Impartiality, as a criterion of morality, implies only that all those who are the proper objects of moral consideration be considered equally; but since it is the most general or the ultimate criterion, we cannot go behind it to show who are the proper objects of moral consideration.... When discussion reveals disagreements at the very root of morality, rational moral argument must give way to the persuasive methods of preacher and prophet. At this level, to adopt a moral position is to make an ultimate choice - i.e. one in its nature beyond the limits of rational justification, where appeals must necessarily lie to the sympathetic emotions. 1

On this view, E, in refusing to accept that NE's interests count, is refusing to satisfy a necessary condition of the possibility of there being any sort of rational discussion between them. This is his privilege, for there is no reason why he should accept that NE does count - equally, there is no reason why he should accept

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that NE does not count. If NE wants to change E's position, then he must do so by means other than the offering of reasons. 1

E, however, may refuse to accept the charge that he is making a choice which is 'beyond the limits of rational justification'. It is not the case, he may argue, that to answer the question: 'Who counts?', or: 'Who are the proper objects of moral consideration?', is to make an ultimate non-rational choice. For he has a reason for saying that he counts and NE does not count. If he has, then it follows that E can sensibly ask NE why he should consider NE's objections, and NE can be required to answer. That is, when E asks NE: 'Why shouldn't I kill you for your money if I want it?', he is asking: 'Why should it matter to me that the money is yours and you can see no reason why you should give it to me?' The rest of this chapter is partly intended to examine the meaning and force of this objection.

What is E's reason for taking the money? Well, simply that he wants the money. The discriminators

I fail to see why an appeal to the 'sympathetic emotions' or 'the sentiment of brotherhood' (op. cit., p.116) is 'beyond reason'. It could be argued that these are appeals to the best of all possible reasons. What, for example, would be a better reason for saving someone from death than a 'sentiment by brotherhood'? Hope of a reward?
discussed in Chapter I also had reasons for saying that they could see no reason why they should not discriminate. And, generally speaking, people who see no reason why they should consider the interests of some or all of the people who are affected by their actions, may all have reasons for their belief.

Now it could be argued here, perhaps, that what E calls 'reasons' are not reasons at all. For example, it could be said that reasons for acting, properly so called, are to be distinguished from impulses, inclinations, desires, feelings and the like, and that E's 'reasons' fall within the latter category. However, even if E's 'reasons' are of this order, people do, very often, give as their reasons for acting that they 'felt like it', 'wanted to do it', 'desired it' etc., and, very often, they are accepted as good reasons. They may not be good reasons in the E-NE situation but this does not mean that they are not reasons at all. Moreover, E might add that, though 'I want it' seems to him to be a good reason for taking the money, he in fact wants it for a certain purpose, e.g. perhaps in order to secure the happiness of his family or to provide funds for his party – and surely these are reasons.

Suppose that NE accepts that E has reasons, what then? Well, he could argue that a reason is not always everything
it appears to be to the person who has it, for he may be unaware of the implications of holding it, i.e. implications which it would be self-contradictory to deny. And it may be the case that once he is aware of these implications, he will be unwilling to regard it as a good reason for acting at all. This is essentially the kind of reply which Hare would make to E, and it is one which I shall now consider in some detail. It is important because, though I shall argue that it misses the point of E's question, a detailed discussion of it will help to clarify just what the point of E's question is.

Hare defines morality as 'a way of arbitrating between conflicting interests'. If the interests of two people conflict, then they may put their own interests first without bothering to argue that they are justified in doing so. On the other hand, they may give reasons to show that they are right to put their own interest first even though it means that, if they are successful, the interest of the other will be frustrated. Hare's thesis is that a correct analysis of what it means to give a reason for acting of this sort, (i.e. a correct analysis of concepts like 'ought' and 'right') shows that a person who offers justificatory reasons is constrained 'to accord equal

weight to the interests of all persons'\(^1\) who are affected by his action. He is, says Hare, 'compelled to give weight to his neighbour's desires - the same weight as he is willing to give to his own hypothetical desires, were he to have those which his neighbour now has'.\(^2\) And again, 'we have to allow our choices to be circumscribed by the desires of other people. This is the logical consequence of universalizability, when coupled with prescriptivity'.\(^3\) He is 'constrained to do it under penalty of being said not to be thinking morally or evaluatively',\(^4\) i.e. not to be offering justificatory reasons for acting at all.

Suppose, then, that a man says that he ought to do \(X\) or that it is right for him to do \(X\).\(^5\) If he is sincere, then he is commending the action to himself, i.e. his

\(^1\) Ibid., p.177.
\(^2\) Ibid., p.195.
\(^3\) Ibid., p.195. Universalizability and prescriptivity are essential ingredients of judgements of the 'ought' 'right' sort.
\(^4\) Ibid., p.177.
\(^5\) Obviously, one can make these judgements for other than self-interested reasons. Though Hare's thesis is that a self-interested man can be led to consider the interests of others, his analysis of 'ought' and 'right' is presented as being true of all moral judgements, self-interested or otherwise.
judgement is a practical one.¹ But by sincerely commending the action to himself he is committed, logically, to commending it to others who are in a similar situation as himself. That is to say, to prescribe to person A an action X in situation S for reason R entails prescribing the action to B for the same reason in situation S', unless there is some relevant difference between A and B or S and S'. To deny this would be self-contradictory for, if there is no relevant difference between A and B and their situation, it would be equivalent to saying 'A ought to do X and it is not the case that A ought to do X'. The reason why it would be self-contradictory is due to the meaning of the word 'ought' and not simply the meaning of the word 'reason', i.e. the contradiction consists in contradictory prescriptions and is made possible by the fact that the proper use of 'ought' involves giving reasons. Reasons establish the universalizability of the judgement 'I ought to do...', but it is the element of prescriptivity which makes the judgement a practical one. It would, indeed, be self-contradictory to say that A has a reason for doing X but that B could not have a similar reason even though A

¹ If he expressed it in words he would say something like 'Let me do...'. This, says Hare, is like 'Let me try moving Q to KB4' which a man might say to himself in a game of chess. (Ibid., p.55.)
and B are relevantly the same. But to say that A has a reason for doing X is not to say that A should do X — though, perhaps to say that A has a good reason for doing X might be ordinarily understood as involving a prescription¹ — and it is only the latter which gets a moral argument going.² Likewise, a moral argument cannot be grounded simply on prescriptions. A man who does not offer reasons for his actions is not attempting to justify them but is simply asserting what he is or is not going to do. A moral argument, however, is about whether he ought or ought not to do them. Thus, if a man uses words like 'ought' and 'right' properly — or, at any rate, in a way which is sufficient to start a moral argument — he must use them prescriptively and universalizably. He must, that is, be saying that he is justified in doing a certain action. And this means that he is logically committed to prescribing for others what he prescribes for himself.

A dialogue which appears in Hare's article 'Universalizability' might make this argument clearer:

E.: 'You oughtn't to do that.'
K.: 'So you think that one oughtn't to do

¹ This is my point, not Hare's.
² Presumably because if no one ever did anything to frustrate the interests of others, there would be no conflict of interests, hence no need to arbitrate between conflicting interests.
that kind of thing?'
E.: 'I think nothing of the kind; I say only that you oughtn't to do that.'
K.: 'Don't you even imply that a person like me in circumstances of this kind oughtn't to do that kind of thing when the other people involved are the sort of people that they are?'
E.: 'No; I say only that you oughtn't to do that.'
K.: 'Are you making a moral judgement?'
E.: 'Yes.'
K.: 'In that case I fail to understand your use of the word "moral".'

In Freedom and Reason Hare does not deny that E. can use 'ought' in the way he does. What he does deny is that he is using it prescriptively and universalizably, i.e. he denies that he is using it 'morally', in a way which can get a moral argument going. It is K. in the above dialogue who uses the word properly. He is saying that if one person ought to do X, then similar persons in similar circumstances ought to do X. That it would be self-contradictory to deny this is the foundation of the argument of Freedom and Reason, i.e. the argument that people who use words like 'ought' and 'right' properly are constrained to give as much weight to the interests of others as they give to their own.

The following argument¹ illustrates these points:

² Freedom and Reason, p.90 f.
A owes money to B, and B owes money to C. According to the law it is permissible to imprison one's debtors. B asks himself whether he should imprison A. If he decides that he should, then he is logically bound to imprison anyone relevantly similar to A. He himself is relevantly similar to A, for he owes money to C. Therefore, he is committed to saying that C ought to put him in prison. Since all moral judgements are prescriptive, he must accept the singular prescription 'Let C put me in prison'. If he is not prepared to accept it then he must abandon his original judgement that he ought to put A in prison.

The success of this argument, Hare argues, does not depend upon A and B having the same disinclination to go to prison. If it were the case that B happened to like prison life, this is not directly relevant to the question of whether he ought to put A in prison. For the judgement 'I ought to put A in prison' entails 'Let me be put in prison if I am in A's situation with A's likes and dislikes'. B prescribes that he put A in prison because A has not paid his debts. It is objected that A does not

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It would be relevant if B wanted to argue that A was exaggerating the unpleasantness of prison life. That is, he might say that he ought not put A in prison if life in prison is as disagreeable as A says it is. But it is not. So A's objection is rebutted.
want to go to prison because he finds prison life physically disagreeable. If B is not prepared to allow this to count as a relevant objection, (though he admits that prison life really is disagreeable as far as A is concerned — cf. foot-note 1 on preceding page), then he must not be prepared to allow it even if he were A, i.e. even if he did not want to go to prison for the same reason as A does not want to go. Thus, A's interests are relevant to B's question, 'Ought I put A in prison?', for, if B decides that he ought, then he must accept the singular prescription: 'Let me be put in prison even if I have A's likes and dislikes'.

However, though B cannot say both 'I ought to put A in prison' and 'The interests of A are irrelevant to the question of whether I ought to do so',— and it is in this sense that B is constrained to consider the interests of A as if they were his own—it does not follow that B must give any actual weight to A's interests, i.e. must allow A's objections to affect his (B's) judgement. Though B is constrained to consider A's interests as relevant, he is not constrained to be concerned about them. B, that is, can say that he ought to put A in prison, and accept the singular prescription: 'Let this be done to me even if I have A's likes and dislikes'. Hare argues, however, that people will be led to be concerned about the interests of
others once they have carefully considered their interests - unless they are what he calls 'fanatics', i.e. people who want so much to see a certain ideal realized that they do not care whose interests suffer as a result (including their own). Most people will be led to be concerned about the interests of others because they are unwilling to have their own interests ignored. For example, if B thinks that it is right to put A in prison for debt and not himself because A is black while he is white, then, when he considers his action from the point of view of A in the sense discussed above, it is very unlikely that he will be willing to accept being put in prison simply because he is black.

Of course, it does not follow from B's acceptance of the singular prescription: 'Let this be done to me if I am relevantly similar to A', that B is or is not a fanatic. Whether he is or not depends upon whether his grounds for imprisoning A are what Hare calls 'utilitarian' or 'idealistic'. Briefly, utilitarian grounds involve a balancing of the interests of the people affected by the action, while idealistic grounds involve ignoring the interests of those affected by the action if they conflict with the realization of the ideal. If B's grounds are utilitarian, this means that he is willing to give equal weight to the interests of each and every person who would
be affected if people like A were not imprisoned for debt, and to balance them against the interests of those affected by the imprisonment of A.

For if my action is going to affect the interests of a number of people, and I ask myself what course of action I can prescribe universally for people in just this situation, then what I shall have to do, in order to answer this question, is to put myself imaginatively in the place of the other parties (or, if there are many, a representative sample of them) and ask the same sort of questions as we made the creditor ask when he had imagined himself in the situation of his debtor. And the considerations that weigh with me in this inquiry can only be, How much (as I imagine myself in the place of each man in turn) do I want to have this, or to avoid that? But when I have been the round of all the affected parties, and come back, in my own person, to make an impartial moral judgement giving equal weight to the interests of all parties, what can I possibly do except advocate that course which will, taken all in all, least frustrate the desires which I have imagined myself having?

But this way is not open to those who are willing to frustrate or destroy the interests of people for the sake of their ideals. If B's ground for putting A in prison is, say, a belief in abstract justice, then he must accept the frustration of his own interests for the sake of the ideal.

Thus, people can become fanatics without self-
contradiction. But, Hare argues, there is no reason why one should be disturbed by this possibility. In the first place, few people will become fanatics once they realize what they are thereby committed to accept. Secondly, 'If someone...says "I am going to pursue such and such an ideal regardless of everybody's interest; convince me by argument that I ought not to" the right answer is that adumbrated in LM 4.4: "Let him try".¹

Thus, the logic or moral concepts, Hare argues, presents one with a three-fold choice:²

1) One does not engage in moral discourse at all. That is, one does not use words like 'ought' and 'right' prescriptively and universalizably.

2) One engages in moral discourse but one is a fanatic.

3) One can be concerned about the interests of others as if they were one's own.

Applying Hare's reasoning to the E-NE case, E either gives a reason for taking NE's money or he does not. If he does not, then there is nothing to argue about. If he does, then he is subject to a form of argument which will reveal consequences that he will be unwilling to accept,

¹ Ibid., p.199. In the following chapter I discuss this response in some detail.
² Ibid., pp.197-8.
for they involve the frustration of his interests. If he does accept them, then he will not be merely a self-interested person but a fanatical idealist. If he is the latter, then this does not give rise to any moral problems (in a philosophical sense).

Hare's argument, however, is defective. It is defective because it assumes what it purports to prove. What it purports to prove is that people will be led to consider the interests of others as if they were their own, provided they understand the meanings of moral words and use them properly; and, provided they are not fanatics, they will be led from considering the interests of others to being concerned about them as if they were their own. However, as I shall argue, a man can use moral words with precisely the same meaning as Hare gives to them without becoming subject to the singular prescription: 'Let this be done to me if...'. What he cannot do is to avoid the singular prescription if he also considers the interests of others as if they were his own - or if he does not consider that the interests of others do not matter morally. B, for example, might say that A ought to be imprisoned for debt, without having properly considered what the effect of imprisonment upon A will be, though it is not the case that he believes that the effect of imprisonment on A is irrelevant to the question whether he ought to be put in
prison. B can now be led to consider A's interests as if they were his own, i.e. be led to reflect upon the effect on A of imprisonment, but only because he does not believe that A's interests are irrelevant. Hare's argument, that is to say, is back to front. A person cannot be led from a denial that the interests of others matter to him, to consider them as if they were his own (let alone to be concerned about them), if he uses moral words properly. For he will not accept the singular prescription: 'Let this be done to me if...', if he denies that the interests of others are relevant considerations.

The reasons why a self-interested man need not be disturbed by Hare's argument are as follows:

Consider an argument which Hare gives on p. 170:

The Nazi is desiring that Jews should be exterminated; and, because the desire is a universal one corresponding to an ideal, he desires that anyone having the characteristics which make him want to exterminate Jews should likewise be exterminated. And from this it follows that, if he is sincere and clear-headed, he desires that he himself should be exterminated if he were to come to have the characteristics of Jews.

Thus, the Nazi's ideal is a world without Jews, and so, if a Nazi discovers that he himself is a Jew, he must want his own extermination. But this argument is subject to a fatal weakness. The weakness is that when a Nazi says that a world without Jews is an ideal world in which
to live, he is not saying — unless he is completely insane — and, what is more important, is not committed to saying, that Jews ought to regard it as an ideal world also. What he might say is that if Jews were sufficiently rational they would recognize that, from a Nazi's point of view, a Jewless world is an ideal place. But he is certainly not committed to saying that because he has good reason for desiring a Jewless world, that Jews, if they were sufficiently rational, would also have good reason for desiring a Jewless world. In other words, the Nazi says that he has his interests and Jews have their interests and the two are incompatible. The Nazi pursues his idea of the good life and the Jew is justified in trying to stop him — if he can. It follows from this that if the Nazi discovers that he himself is a Jew, in no sense must he want to be exterminated. That is, it is not the case that he must accept the singular prescription: 'Let this be done to me if I am a Jew'. But Hare's whole thesis depends upon the Nazi having to accept the singular prescription. Hence, it follows that the thesis is fundamentally unsound.

Let us now consider this counter argument in detail.

Suppose someone says that he is going to give priority
in all things to members of his own family. His reason, he says, is that he only feels secure when he is with members of his own family, that association with them provides him with a sense of identity, of belonging, of fellowship. He regards the world outside his family as cold and meaningless, and the people who inhabit it as alien and dangerous. His concern for his family is not, however, one of cool self-interest, for he experiences himself essentially as a member of his family, as playing a particular role in the family nexus, as providing it with certain benefits and receiving certain benefits from it. He talks about the duties which members of the family have to one another, what it is right and wrong for them to do, what is good for the family and what is bad for it etc. He considers members of the family who have left it and broken the bonds as traitors, renegades, fellow travellers and the like.

He may hold the view that other people can do as they

1 I discuss a particular case of an exclusive morality for the sake of convenience. The following account of it could, though the content of each morality might differ, equally well apply to racism, fanatical patriotism, tribalism and the like.

2 With a little imagination, we can understand how a racist, for example, can feel that anything to do with any other race is a threat. Their very existence can depress and disturb him.
please. They may or may not consider that security and family ties are a matter of importance. Different people, he might say, find different things worthwhile. What he is concerned with is his family and the life he shares with its other members. In other words, he prescribes actions for himself and other members of his family, but not for people outside the family. All this commits him to is that if people outside his family prescribe similar actions for themselves, he cannot deny that they are right to do so - and this is very different from saying that they must do so. Likewise, a man might believe that for him book collecting is the most satisfying of all pursuits. The difference between this man and the family man, is that the latter can speak of his rights and duties as a member of his family while the former would be unlikely to use the language of rights and duties; and, secondly, the family man gives priority in all things to his family.¹

Alternatively, the family man might believe that family life as such is the most worthwhile sort of life,

¹ A book collector might have an exclusive morality. He might speak of the pre-eminent duty he has to himself; and he might believe that the interests of others do not count when they conflict with his interest in collecting books. Cf., for example, the character of Kien in Canetti's Auto da Fe, Penguin Books, 1965.
that people who are not members of families as he understands them must lead unsatisfactory lives. If someone asks him what sort of life it is best to lead, this is the answer he gives him. He may even show annoyance or contempt if others refuse to accept his advice. But, though he gives people advice, he is not in any way concerned about their interests. On the contrary, he believes that in order to live a worthwhile family life it is necessary to put one's family first in all things. (Consider, for instance, the advice a business man might give to people who are thinking of going into business: 'The fruits of success in business are the tastiest of all, but you have to be completely ruthless in order to get them.') Thus, the family man prescribes actions both for himself and people outside his family but he is not committed to accept the singular prescription: 'Let this be done to me if...'.

The family man does not claim that his family is superior to any other family, nor that the members of his family are, qua family members, superior to anyone else, nor that other people should give priority to his family. If he did he would have to give reasons why other people ought to give priority to his family or regard it as superior, and he would be wide open to the form of argument discussed by Hare. However, he may treat people who are
not members of his family as if they were inferior, and as if their inferiority entitled him to ignore their interests, without having to argue that they are inferior. That is to say, he believes that he has very good reasons for giving priority in all things to his family, but this does not mean that he must try to show that other people ought to give the same priority to his family.

Now it could be argued here that one thing which the family man cannot do is protest if others do to him and his family what he and his family do to them. That is, if he is not willing to say that others ought to give priority to his family, he cannot complain if they do not. This, of course, is true enough. But what turns on it?

1) There may be no need for him to protest. His family may be more powerful than any other family. It may maintain its power by force¹ or diplomacy. Others may be in some way emotionally dependent on it - as on a Royal House. There may, indeed, be innumerable ways in which his family can get its own way without having any need to protest about what others do to it. The question which some philosophers (M. Singer, for example), have considered to be significant, i.e. 'What would happen if

¹ Just as an overwhelmingly powerful state need not bother about the protests of other states.
everybody did what you are doing?', is of hypothetical interest only - for not everybody does do what he does. And even if they try to do so, they may not be successful.

2) A ruthless business man might say: 'If I am bankrupted, I shall simply look for another job'; or: 'If others treat me as I treat others, I shall try to fight my way out of it; and, if I fail, that's just the way of the world'; or: 'There are laws against unfair business practices. I don't keep them, but if other people don't keep them and my business is adversely affected, I shall take them to court'.

Depending, therefore, on the circumstances and the kind of lack of consideration for others which is actually practised, there are innumerable ways in which an exclusivist can get what he wants without sincerely protesting that others ought to treat him in a certain sort of way: for example, he can fight them off, make peace terms, go to law. If he fails to get what he wants, he can accept his failure and try again: for example, get a divorce, change his job, go to another country. Or he can accept his failure fatalistically.

Thus, one can imagine the family man cheating, robbing and killing people in order to benefit his family. He feels very strongly that in doing so he is doing his duty. He says, for example, 'I really don't want to kill him but...
I ought to for the sake of my family. It cannot be denied that he is using 'ought' here prescriptively and universalizably, for he both gives a justification for his action and sincerely commends it to himself. He may or may not, as I said above, prescribe that other people do as he does. But, whether he does or not, he is not committed to accepting the singular prescription: 'Let this be done to me if...', for he does not claim that others should accept what he does to them as being right.

For the same reason a fanatic is not logically bound to admit that he is willing to sacrifice his interest for the sake of his ideals. There may be some fanatics who are willing to sacrifice themselves, but they do not have to do so, (i.e. accept the singular prescription: 'Let this be done to me if...'). For, if he does not claim that others should accept what he does to them as being right, then he is not committed to the sacrifice of his own interests if he is in a similar position. If he were in a similar position he would do his utmost to get out of it.

Finally, depending on the kind of exclusive morality a man has, there may or may not be people outside the

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This is precisely the position of the patriotic statesman acting strictly for the national interest.
morality whom he can come to include within it. Racists might include people whose colour, though different from their own, is similar to it, savage tribes might come to treat the missionary as one of them, the family might come to accept the lodger. What is more, an exclusivist might go about persuading people outside his morality to join it. A Nazi, for example, might try to persuade certain people to join the party. He can point to the benefits of doing so and the disadvantages involved in staying outside it. He can go further and persuade people to collude, to accept what he does to them even though it is not in their interests — in the way that very possessive people get other people to run about after them and ruin their lives in doing so.

The points which I have been trying to make can be summarized as follows:

1) It is clear now why it is not the case, as Berm and Peters argue, that decisions about who is to count morally are not — or are not always — 'beyond the limits of rational justification'. The family man, for example, argues that people outside his family do not count morally and can give a great many reasons for saying so.

2) It is not the case that people who deny that the

\[\text{Cf. p.18 above.}\]
interests of others, or the interests of those outside the
exclusivist group, count, can be 'led', in Hare's sense,
to consider their interests as if they were their own.
And this does not mean that they are not using words like
'ought', 'right', and 'duty', either prescriptively or
universalizably. For they can give reasons to justify
their actions, and they are actions which they can
sincerely commend to themselves — or even to others.
They are not, however, committed to accepting the singular
prescription: 'Let this be done to me if...', because they
do not argue that other people ought to accept that what
they do to them is right.

One last point. My argument against Hare's thesis
shows that he runs together two quite different senses of
the word 'universalization'. These two senses are
expressed by Hare1 in the following way:

1) Any judgment which involves giving reasons is
universalizable in virtue of the meaning of the word
'reason'.

2) Moral judgements are universalizable in virtue
of the meaning of the word 'moral'.

No one, to my knowledge, has ever denied 1). All it
says is that if R is a reason for one man in a certain

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situation, it is self-contradictory to deny that it could be a reason for a similar person in a similar situation. (Though, perhaps, it could not be as a matter of fact.)

As Hare remarks:

(Though, perhaps, it could not be as a matter of fact.)

As Hare remarks:

\[
\text{reason cannot be a reason on just this occasion, and not on other similar occasions}
\]

...If there is some other case in which

\[
\text{it is not a reason, there must be a difference between the two cases to account for its not being a reason.}
\]

Now it is obvious that, at the very least, moral judgements are universalizable in virtue of the meaning of the word 'reason'. (Assuming, of course, that moral judgements involve giving reasons.) It would be self-contradictory to deny that an action which is morally right for one man in a certain situation could also be morally right for similar persons in similar situations. But Hare wants to say a lot more than this. He argues that a man who makes moral judgements is logically bound to consider the interests of people affected by his actions as if they were his own, (though, of course, he may not in fact do so). The reason for this is that moral judgements do not simply involve giving reasons, but, also, making prescriptions. To give reasons without making prescriptions, and vice-versa, is not to make moral

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\text{Ibid., p.297.}
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judgements at all. But to give both entails accepting the singular prescription: 'Let this be done to me if...', i.e. considering the interests of others as if they were one's own.

Now, I have argued that exclusivists offer justifications for their actions. Hence, it follows that they cannot deny without self-contradiction that what is a reason for them could be a reason for anyone else. I have also argued that exclusivists prescribe actions for themselves. Hence, it follows that it would be self-contradictory for them to deny that similar persons in similar circumstances would be quite justified in making similar prescriptions. What I have denied is that exclusivists are logically required to consider the interests of others as if they were their own. Hare argues that logically people are required to do this or they are not making moral judgements at all. Thus, if my argument is right, 'moral' in 'moral judgements are universalizable in virtue of the meaning of the word "moral"', must be contrasted with 'immoral'. That is to say, the principle which Benn and Peters call 'the equal consideration of interests', is not a principle which a person who uses moral (v. non-moral) words properly is logically committed to, but, qua moral principle, one which is held by the morally good and not held by, at any rate,
some of the morally bad. (Some moralists might argue, of course, that it is held by the morally bad and not held by the morally good.) That moral (v. non-moral) judgements must possess the ingredients of universalizability and prescriptivity if there is to be any moral argument at all, can be shown by morally neutral analysis. That one must consider the interests of others as if they were one's own, is a moral (v. immoral) opinion. All moral judgements are universalizable in sense 1). Only some moral judgements are universalizable in sense 2).

However, it is, perhaps, not surprising that Hare runs the two senses of the word 'universalization' together. Though I have objected that if he wishes to argue that moral judgements are universalizable in virtue of the meaning of the word 'moral', then 'moral' here must be contrasted with 'immoral', he does not, of course, want to make this contrast. That is, he wants to say that the principle of the equal consideration of interests is a moral (v. non-moral) principle, otherwise there would, he argues, be no room for the fanatic. The fanatic, he says, considers the interests of people affected by his actions, but he is not concerned about them. He makes moral (v. non-moral) judgements which are immoral. If there were no room for the fanatic, then this would offend against the view that moral judgements are not derivable
from statements of fact – in this case, facts about the interests of people affected by the fanatic's actions. That is, it would imply that one could not consider the interests of others without becoming concerned about them. But fanatics, he argues are

people so wedded to some fanatical ideal that they are able to imagine, in their full vividness, the sufferings of the persecuted, and who...prescribe universally that this persecution should go on in the service of their ideals, even if it were they themselves who had to suffer thus.¹

This raises important issues to which I shall return in later chapters. However, even if the principle of equal consideration of interests is not a moral (v. immoral) principle, neither is it a moral (v. non-moral) principle. That is to say, it cannot be regarded as a defining characteristic, even by implication, of morality.²

I conclude, therefore, that NE has failed to show that there are logical consequences of E's having reasons for acting which E will be unwilling to accept; and he has failed for reasons which have nothing to do with whether E is or is not a fanatic in Hare's sense of the word.

¹ Freedom and Reason, p.184.
² That is, it is not a defining characteristic which anyone must accept, or be accused of making judgements which cannot get a moral argument going – as Hare argues.
An obvious reply that NE might now make to E is that while there is no logical way of bridging the gap between them, this is not a reason why he should be disturbed by E's question. NE has been trying to convince E that he ought not take his money, i.e. he has been trying to show E that he should consider his (NE's) interests as relevant to the question of whether E should take his money. E, however, has given reasons why he is justified in not considering NE's interests. This being the case, NE might now argue that there is a sense in which Benn and Peters are right in their view that the answer to the question 'Who counts?' is 'beyond the limits of rational justification'. The reason is not that the answer involves an ultimate non-rational choice, but that it is impossible to argue with someone who discounts one's interests as relevant, i.e. it is impossible to convince E by argument that he ought to consider NE's interests - which is not to say that E does not have good reasons for discounting NE's interests. But if there is no room for argument, in what sense does E pose NE with a problem? What more can NE say in reply to E? Surely only: 'You can
try to take it but you will not succeed - or some equivalent?

Certainly, a number of philosophers have thought so. This is the reply that Hare makes to the fanatic - though E, I have argued, need not be a fanatic in Hare's sense of the word. And E. Medlin says,

If the good fellow wants to know how he should justify conventional morality to an individual egoist, the answer is that he shouldn't and can't. Buy your car elsewhere, blackguard him whenever you meet, and let it go at that.

Now this kind of response may indeed be the only kind that it is possible to make to an exclusivist. For an exclusivist may refuse to accept as a reason for changing his point of view one that is different from the reason that he already has for living the kind of life that he does. If, for example, the exclusivist is a family man, then he may refuse to consider the interests of others in any way except in terms of their benefit or harm to the interests of his own family. Or, if the exclusivist is a

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1 This is, also, precisely the view that is taken of international politics by many contemporary political scientists. Cf. Judith Shklar, 'Decisionism', in C.J. Friedrich (ed.), Rational Decision, Nomos VII, New York, 1964, pp.3-17.
2 Freedom and Reason, p.194.
patriotic statesman, then he may refuse to consider the interests of any nation other than his own except in terms of its benefit or danger to his nation. In other words, it may be impossible to argue with an exclusivist simply because he refuses to consider anything other than what is in his own interests. In this case, all that one can say to him is: 'Just try it...'.

But need E's question be understood in this way? E knows that there is no good reason why NE ought to give him the money, but what he wants to know is why he (E) should care about this. Why should he not pursue an end that conflicts with NE's interests? By asking this question he is not implying that he refuses to listen to what NE has to say. What he is doing is pointing out that NE has not said enough to convince him that there is no room for further argument and that it is NE's fault that this is so.

NE might then admit that E is not asking an unanswerable question in the sense that he is demanding only exclusive reasons why people should not be exclusivists. But, he says, the question remains unanswerable nevertheless. For there is no reason why E ought to have the money. NE, that is, is saying that he cannot answer E because there is no case to answer, and it is not up to him (NE) to make one out. E must see, therefore, that
from his (NE's) point of view E can only be regarded as a threat against which he is justified in taking appropriate defensive measures.

E now asks NE if this does not mean that NE is admitting that morally exclusive positions are rationally on all fours with any other kind of morality. For might not anything rationally be regarded as constituting a threat to a man? The Nazis, after all, considered that the very existence of the Jews threatened the ideal of pure Aryanism. How can one decide, if at all, what is to count as a 'reasonable' threat, i.e. a threat to interests that it is reasonable to have, and an 'unreasonable' threat, i.e. a threat to interests that one should not have? Is it not the case that NE's reply prevents one from answering these questions? And is it not the case that if NE's reply is generally accepted as being true, then it would tend to bring about a war of all against all?

NE's answer to these questions is that they are somewhat fanciful. Why? Because human nature is what it is.

Consider the following account of the matter.¹

Suppose a man asks himself,

'Should I pursue a selfish policy or should I consider others as well even when in my best judgement it doesn't profit me? Will I really be happy if I act without regard for others?'

He might reflect,

'If I am thoroughly and consistently selfish and get caught people will treat me badly. I will be an outcast, I will be unloved, all hands will be on guard against me. I may even be retaliated against and punished as an "irredeemable moral beast". All of this will obviously make me suffer. Thus I better not take up such a selfish policy or I will surely be unhappy.'

Then he corrects himself; what he should have said is, 'I will surely be unhappy if I am found out, if my selfishness is detected by people who can harm me'.

However, it could be objected that even if no one capable of harming him found out that he was selfish he would still not be happy.

'You will regret acting this way. The pangs of conscience will be severe, your superego will punish you. Like Plato's tyrant you will be a miserable, disordered man. Your very mental health will be endangered.'

It is at this stage that the rational egoist is likely to use his visa to Desert Island. He might say,

1 Ibid., p.294.
2 Ibid., p.295.
3 Ibid., p.296.
'But if I had the power of Gyges and that power included the power to still the nagging voice of my superego, would it not then be reasonable for me always to act in my own self-interest no matter what the effect on others?'

Nielsen argues that if the desert island situation did obtain, then

we would have to say that whether it would or would not be in your 'true interests' to be moral or non-moral would depend on the sort of person you are....In certain circumstances a person of one temperament would find it in his interest to act one way and a person of another temperament to act in another.

He concludes that

"...in the situation in which an individual is 1) very unlikely to be caught, 2) so rationally in control that he will be very unlikely to develop habits which would lead to his punishment, and 3) is free from the power of his conscience, it might, just might, (if he were a certain kind of person), make him happier to be non-moral than moral. But this is not the usual type of bad fellow we meet on the street and the situation is anything but typical."

Nielsen is arguing, then, that individual exclusivism, at any rate, is difficult to practise. If a man is openly selfish, then he is likely to be punished,

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1 Ibid., p.297.
2 Ibid., pp.297-8.
3 Ibid., p.299.
hated, treated with contempt. If he is covertly selfish, he is likely to suffer guilt feelings and, one might add, it is difficult, if not impossible, to hide from others one's real opinion of them. Thus a selfish man is very likely to be distrusted and disliked. Most human beings, however, want 'companionship, love, approval, comfort, security and recognition'. Perhaps there are some people who do not want these things, but they are few in number. The possibility of their existence, Nielsen argues, does not affect the truth of the proposition that men have good reason not to be selfish, i.e. it is not in their interests to be selfish.

Much the same sort of argument, he goes on, can be used to show the inadvisability of specific acts of selfishness, (as opposed to a policy of selfishness.) Whether it is rational for a man to commit a selfish act will depend on the sort of person he is and the particular circumstances in which he finds himself. But as most people are concerned about the effective protection of their interests, it is usually not easy to commit even specific selfish acts. What is more, the more selfish a man is, the more effectively do people protect themselves, the more difficult it becomes to be selfish, the less it

\[\text{Ibid., p. 301.}\]
Thus, Nielsen's argument is that it is rational to be selfish if one can get away with it, but that it is very difficult, if not completely impossible, to be successful. Selfishness is something that most people are opposed to in others, and, consequently, it is usually not in a man's interests to be selfish.

NE, therefore, can reply to E that most people have a healthy regard for their own interests, that it is not usually in their interest to be selfish, hence his reply to E (i.e. 'Just try it') is very unlikely to open the doors to a war of all against all.

Two objections which can be brought against Nielsen's argument are:

1) His account of human nature and interests is superficial. Selfishness can take many forms and the very application of the concept often expresses a certain outlook on life;¹ i.e. it is not always obvious that a man is simply unconcerned about the interests of others. Hence, it is misleading to say that selfishness usually involves unhappiness, unless the generalization is based on a highly detailed account of human affairs.

¹ For example, Nietzsche argued that what the majority of people considered to be unselfish behaviour was, in fact, selfish.
2) Nielsen is far too optimistic about the ability of people to protect their own interests. Historically, the interests of the few seem to have been successfully satisfied at the expense of the interests of the majority.

However, from a philosophical point of view, there is a more important objection that can be made against Nielsen's argument. This is that he completely fails to answer the question that E put to NE, i.e. is it not the case that if 'Just try it' is the only appropriate response that NE can make to E, then it follows that moral exclusivism is rationally on all fours with any other kind of morality?


But need we despair of the rationality of the moral life...? Perhaps some will despair but since it is not the job of a philosopher to be a kind of universal Nannie I don't think he need concern himself to relieve this despair. But, I think, if he will remind people of the exact point on the logical map where... subjectivism correctly enters and make them once more aware of the map as a whole they will...be less inclined to despair about the rationality of their acting morally. If one is willing to reason morally, nothing we have said here need upset the objectivity and rationality of moral grading criteria.

Most people, that is, have very good reason to be concerned about the interests of people other than themselves. The fact that there may be people who do not
want the things that most people want is a contingent matter and raises no philosophical issues concerning moral scepticism. In the E-NE situation, NE sees no reason why he ought to give his money to E, and neither is it the case that E is saying that NE ought to give him his money. E, in other words, is not questioning the reasons that NE has for saying that E ought not have the money. He is not questioning the justification of ought claims: hence, his question is not a moral sceptic's question in any philosophical sense. Hence, it follows that the 'Just try it' response is not one which brings into question the objectivity and rationality of moral reasoning.

Unfortunately, however, E's question cannot be dismissed in this way. E argues that though NE sees no reason why E ought to have the money, this is not a reason why he (E) is not justified in taking it. Now if NE accepts that E has a good reason for taking the money, then he is admitting that E's reason is on all fours with his own. He is admitting that both reasons are equally sound. He is agreeing that his own 'Just try it' is no more no less rationally justified than E's 'Just try and stop me'. But is not this precisely the point which a moral sceptic would want to make?

This argument is an exceedingly strong one. There
are plenty of people who cause misery and suffering to others and who do not consider themselves accountable to others for what they do to them. These people are very often not as happy as they might expect themselves to be, but they are, nevertheless, usually much happier than their victims. Goering, for example, committed suicide, but was his life less happy than the lives of most of the people who died in concentration camps? What is one to say about this? If, as Nielsen does, one says that there are no reasons for condemning the behaviour of selfish men that they ought to accept as overriding for them, then he does seem to be allowing the moral sceptic the last, and most important, word.

The central problem of moral philosophy, as many philosophers have conceived it,1 is to show how people who successfully pursue selfish interests are, nevertheless, bound in some rational way to refrain from pursuing these interests. That is, they are concerned with showing that selfish people (or exclusivists) must, in some sense of 'must', recognize that other people have claims on them,

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and that they cannot, in some sense of 'cannot', rationally ignore these claims. They must recognize, in other words, that they have duties and obligations to other people, that they are rationally bound to respect certain of their interests even though it might not be in their own interests to do so.

Consider what Baier has to say about this:

'Morality requires us often to do things which are not in our best interests and to refrain from doing things which would be in our best interests.'

Acting in our best interests involves working out for ourselves in the light of our knowledge, our predilections, preferences, likes and dislikes, our capacities, talents, energies, and skills, our opportunities and resources, a life plan whose realization would make our life as rich and worthwhile as possible, and that we then plan the steps necessary for its realization... As we grow older and wiser, we may have to modify this plan in the light of our changed insights or the changed circumstances...

Rational Egoism can give a plausible answer to questions of the form, 'What ought I to do?' For it can answer not merely questions about what is a possible, the only possible, or the best way of attaining an end someone happens to have, but also to the question of which of the many ends he might pursue would be the

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1 'Moral Obligation', p.12.
2 Ibid., p.11.
Moral theory, however, is essentially a theory of obligation, and this is something for which Rational Egoism cannot make room, i.e. Rational Egoism cannot provide a basis for morality. That something is in one's best interests is a good reason for pursuing it, but one is not 

\[\text{obliged}\] to pursue it. A man, says Baier, who does pursue his best interests is not doing something morally wrong. But an action that one is obliged to perform is one that one ought to perform even though one may not be inclined to do it, and even though it may not be conducive to one's best interests. It is morally wrong not to do what one is obliged to do even though one can successfully refrain from doing it (e.g. escape punishment), and even though by not doing it one may be furthering one's best interests.

He refers with approval to Kant's view that all practical reasoning that is based on self-interest 'lacks the peculiar force of obligation-claims which are categorical.' He goes on to say that

\[\text{'A directive has moral binding force'}\] means, 'It is not solely the addressee's business to decide whether or not to

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1 Ibid., p.12.
2 Ibid., p.13.
follow the directive. What gives directives moral binding force is the fact that they concern themselves with issues and problems whose solution is not solely the agent's business but also that of others who have a legitimate concern about whether or not the person to whom such a directive applies follows it or not.¹

Now, clearly, if Baier wants to show that there is something distinctive about moral reasoning as contrasted with self-interested reasoning, then he must show that the legitimate concerns of others are legitimate in the sense that one ought to respect them even if it is not in one's interests to do so. But this Baier fails to do.

The point of morality, he says, is to provide reasons for acting 'which override the reason of self-interest in those cases when everyone following self-interest would be harmful to everyone'.² The difference between self-interest and the point of view of morality is that the former ignores the interests of others, whereas to adopt the moral point of view involves looking at the world from the point of view of anyone. We are not, he says, examining particular courses of action before this or that person; we are examining two alternative worlds; one in which moral reasons are always treated by everyone as superior to

¹ Ibid., p.14.
² The Moral Point of View, p.309.
reasons of self-interest and one in which the reverse is the practice. And we can see that the first world is the better world, because we can see that the second world is the one which Hobbes describes as the state of nature.¹

The purpose of moral directives, he says, is to state what is to be done when

two people, following directives of self-interest, could not both attain their ends and would be driven into mutually harmful and wasteful efforts to attain their own end while preventing the other from attaining his, and where such efforts would be undesirable, at any rate if prosecuted with 'no holds barred'. The content of the directives must indicate which one of the interests is to give way or what compromise is to be made.²

Now Baier is right in saying that if people pursue ends in complete disregard for anyone else's interests, then what he calls 'the climate of life' would be generally unpleasant. But this does not mean that people cannot pursue their interests successfully at the expense of the interests of others. The question is, 'Why shouldn't they?' In order to answer this question it is simply irrelevant to describe a situation in which no one can satisfy their interests. What is more, if upon the

¹ The Moral Point of View, p.310.
² 'Moral Obligation', p.17. Cf. also Moral Point of View, p.190.
following of moral directives depends 'the general climate of life which is the springboard from which an individual can, in accordance with his abilities and tastes, build a worthwhile life for himself', in what way does this involve the denial that self-interest can provide a basis for morality? One would suppose rather that it confirms it.

Now, of course, this attempt of Baier's to explain the notion of moral binding force is only one possible way of doing it. It fails, but might not some other explanation succeed? If there were space I would describe and discuss different explanations that have been given. But, though this would be useful for the sake of completeness, it is not, I think, necessary. It is not necessary because once one allows that E's question (why should one be concerned about the interests of people other than oneself or the group of which one is a member?) is a proper one, then the position of the moral exclusivist becomes logically impeccable. The reason for this is that E's question assumes a great deal that, once accepted, makes it impossible to answer it.

Clearly, there are restricted moralities. It is also clear that the people who hold them can ask why they should

1 'Moral Obligation', p.17.
be bothered about people outside them. That is, they are simply confessing their ignorance. These questions leave completely open the problem of how to approach them. E, however, is a different matter altogether. If one allows that E's question is a proper one, then one is assuming that the actual content of particular exclusive moralities is not relevant to the philosophical issues that these moralities raise. E's question, that is, is a general one, one that any exclusivist might ask. This permits the actual content of the dispute between E and NE to be an exceedingly simple one. In the last three chapters it has consisted in E wanting NE's money, and NE replying that there is no reason why he should give it to E. Because of the simplicity of this situation there was little room to question E's claim that he fully understood NE's point of view. What could he fail to understand? This reinforces what E's question assumes, i.e. that any exclusivist might understand the point of view of the people whose interests he harms without ceasing to be an exclusivist. In other words, E's question assumes that an exclusivist can understand and describe the interests of others while keeping his own interests and concerns uninvolved. It assumes that an exclusivist can always say: 'Yes, these are your interests, but what have they got to do with me
In the following chapter I shall examine these assumptions in some detail. The point I want to make here is that if these assumptions are allowed, then I can see no way in which E's question can possibly be answered—apart from the reply that it is not in any exclusivist's interests to harm the interests of others. This reply may very often be false, but what else can one say? For, after all, the exclusivist is being assumed to understand fully his opponent's point of view without this affecting his own position at all. If one accepts this, then it seems to me that one must admit that exclusive moralities are rationally on all fours with other moralities, and that the only limitation upon their rationality is a prudential one.

The question I want to ask now is: 'Are these assumptions correct?'
PART TWO
CHAPTER IV

MORAL CONCEPTS AND THE DOCTRINE OF THE NEUTRALITY OF FACTS

1) INTRODUCTION

God and the Devil have at least one thing in common: both are omniscient. This is a graphic and crude but, nevertheless, a useful way of expressing what is, perhaps, the most fundamental, and certainly the most tenaciously held belief of very many English-speaking moral philosophers, especially since the period when moral theory was strongly influenced by Logical Positivism. This belief is in what I shall henceforth refer to as the 'neutrality of facts'.

In the introductory remarks which follow I shall try to state briefly what the belief is, and to indicate how it has influenced the way in which these philosophers have conceived what, for want of a better expression, can be called the 'moral problem', the statement of which answers the question: 'What are you doing when you do moral philosophy?'. In Section 2), I shall criticize the doctrine on the grounds that it distorts, rather than illuminates, the nature of moral phenomena. I shall also attempt to give a positive account of what I think
are some of the main features of these phenomena.

The Devil knows everything that God knows, and both know everything that men know about themselves and about each other. Both know, for example, that people suffer great physical pain, that life is very difficult for a Jew living under the Nazis and a coloured person in South Africa, and that lunatics are very unhappy people. But, whereas God is sympathetic, tries to help, compensates them, and the like, the Devil, on the other hand, delights in all this misery and, whenever he has the opportunity, intensifies it.

This myth serves to bring out three points which many moral philosophers have felt to be of great moral significance. 1) The relationship that facts alone have to moral judgements is a logically neutral one. 2) The relationship that facts alone have to moral judgements is an evaluatively neutral one. 3) If there are any moral rules at all (i.e. if it is not the case that people are justified in behaving in any way they please), then they must be binding upon people in some logical sense.1

1) If God and the Devil are omniscient, then, it might be said, they respond in different ways to the same

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1) and 2) have been more universally accepted than 3). But 3), as Hare rightly says, follows if one accepts 1) and 2). Cf. below pp. 80-1.
facts. If this is the case, how are the differences between them to be characterized? If one asserts that what God says and does is morally right and justified and good, and that what the Devil says and does is morally wrong and unjustified and evil, what precisely does one mean? Whatever one means, one thing would seem to be certain - if both are omniscient, then the differences between them cannot be characterized as a disagreement about what the facts are. If this is so, then it will be pointless to try (as some people have often been accused of trying), to deduce moral judgements from statements of fact alone. The reason why is as follows:

Consider the following:

In all systems of morality we start with certain statements of fact that are not judgements of value or commands; they contain no moral words. They are usually statements about God or about human nature, that is to say about what men are and in fact do. We are then told that because these things are so we ought to act in such and such a way; the answers to practical questions are deduced or in some other way derived from statements about what is the case. This must be illegitimate reasoning, since the conclusion of an argument can contain nothing which is not in the premises, and there are no 'oughts' in the premises....I may know that a certain action will please God or maximize my own pleasure or produce the greatest number; but this is all knowledge of what is or will be the case. It still makes
sense to ask whether I ought to do the action.2

There is, however, one way in which moral conclusions can be deduced from factual premises alone. One could, as Hare puts it, 'so...characterize the meanings of the key moral terms that, given certain factual premises, not themselves moral judgements, moral conclusions can be deduced from them'.3 It follows from this that one could say: "If you understand the meaning of such and such a moral word, you cannot deny such and such a moral assertion".4

Now, certainly, it is always possible to define moral words in this way, i.e. define moral words by means of factual words.5 But what is the point of doing this?

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1 That is to say, 'I am not contradicting myself if I ask...'
3 Freedom and Reason, p.86.
5 On pp.187-8, Hare describes a form of naturalism which, he says, is 'typical of recent naturalists', but which, according to Hare's account, is different from the naturalism that Moore had in mind (i.e. which gives to moral terms precisely the same meaning as certain factual terms). The view of the 'recent naturalists' is, he says, 'that...the more specialized moral words like "courageous"...are tied by their meaning to certain evaluations and to certain descriptions - thus firmly tying the evaluations to the descriptions. If, they say, one does not evaluate highly a certain kind of acts, (Cont'd over page)
If a man refuses to accept a certain definition, in what sense is he mistaken, except in possibly having made a mistake of fact? If moral terms are defined by factual terms, then there is no other sense. Hence, there seems (Foot-note 5 Cont'd)

then one will just have to give up using the word "courageous". Conversely, if one continues to use the word, that commits one to certain evaluations... "Courageous" is, by its very meaning, a term of commendation; therefore, by using it, one expresses a favourable evaluation of the act. So, once we have this word or concept in use, we are led ineluctably, despite Hume, from a description to an evaluation. This thesis, as Hare states it, seems to me to be either unintelligible or not a form of naturalism. It is unintelligible if it is saying that certain evaluations are 'tied to' certain descriptions in a sense other than that of identity of meaning, and yet in such a way that the evaluations are entailed by the descriptions. It is not a form of naturalism if it is saying, as Hare takes it to be, that certain concepts incapsulate certain attitudes. This tells us nothing about the relationship between factual statements and moral judgements.

Hare does not say who the 'recent naturalists' are, but I think that it is clear that he has Mrs Foot in mind. Now, Mrs Foot does say that what she wants to do is show how 'the logical gap between factual premises and moral conclusions disappears'. ('Moral Beliefs', Aristotelian Society Proceedings, 1958-9, p.95.) And, at the beginning of the same paper, she openly admits that she is a naturalist. She gives the impression, that is, that she is arguing that moral conclusions are deducible from statements of fact alone. Hence, it is not surprising that her critics have understood her to be doing just this and have objected accordingly. (Cf. e.g. 'On Morality's Having a Point', by D.Z. Phillips and H.O. Mounce, Philosophy, 1965, vol.XL, pp.308-19.) However, as I shall argue in the following section, she does not define moral words in terms of factual ones, and she is not a naturalist in the sense in which Hare implies that she is. She is, in fact, engaged on a very different sort of enterprise.
to be no point in defining moral terms in this way. That
is, granted the assumption that people can know the same
facts and yet disagree about how to evaluate them or about
the right course of action to be taken, defining moral
terms by factual terms does not help one to understand the
nature of the disagreement or how it is to be settled.
On the contrary, it suggests that, if all the facts are
known there can be no disagreement, i.e. that the
different judgements are just 'empty words'.

The relationship, therefore, that facts alone have to
moral judgements is a logically neutral one. Hence, one
can say that people are logically free, i.e. not
logically bound to accept the conclusions of any moral
arguments in which facts alone are offered as reasons for
these conclusions.

2) But, if moral judgements cannot be deduced from
statements of fact alone, there seems to be no other way
in which they can be justified by facts alone. For, if
one says that they can be justified by facts alone, then
it seems that one is committed to saying that it is
impossible to show that either of any two conflicting
judgements based on the same facts is justified and the
other not justified. Therefore, granted the assumption
that it is always possible for A to know the same facts
as B but make a different moral judgement, moral judgements
can never be confirmed or disconfirmed. This means that people are not only logically free, but also evaluatively free - i.e. justified in behaving in any way they please. Morality, therefore, is not worth discussing. God and the Devil must simply agree to differ.

However, before going on to look at the conclusions that some philosophers have drawn from this, it is necessary to examine more closely the view that facts alone cannot justify (not merely cannot entail) moral judgements, for this is both a much discussed and exceedingly murky area of moral theory.

Consider a remark that Nowell-Smith makes apropos of the argument in the passage quoted above: 'A "link" is required to connect the statements of fact with an injunction to do or not to do something'. He illustrates the argument with a passage from Bishop Mortimer's Christian Ethics:

The first foundation is the doctrine of God the Creator. God made us and all the world. Because of that He has an absolute claim to our obedience. We do not exist in our own right, but only as His creatures, who ought therefore to do and be what He requires.

He provides the 'link' in the following comment on this:

1 Point 3), p.80.
This argument requires the premise that a creature ought to obey his creator, which is itself a moral judgement. So that Christian ethics is not founded solely on the doctrine that God created us.

In what sense is a 'link' required? Presumably, Mortimer's argument 'requires the premise that a creature ought to obey his creator' because it is possible ('makes sense') to deny, without self-contradiction, that we ought to obey God because He created us. But one can imagine Mortimer make the following reply: 'It is quite true that one can deny this without self-contradiction. But I am not claiming that one can deduce the judgement from the fact. The "therefore" has an altogether different connotation. What I am saying is that the fact that God created us is a good, indeed overriding, reason for obeying Him. I admit that, in the passage you quote, it is not at all obvious why it is a good reason. But this does not mean that I cannot substantiate my claim by means of a detailed account of the concept of "God the creator". You, however, seem to be denying that I can do this. But you have not proved that I cannot. Though I am not claiming that the judgement is deduced from the fact, I do not deny that the judgement can be regarded as

Ibid., pp.37-8.
the conclusion of a deductive argument. But this does not show that the fact alone that God created us is not a good reason for obeying Him. If, to use an analogy, I say that a certain brand of cheese is good because it is tasty

One can imagine circumstances in which one might say: 'This is tasty, therefore it is good'. It might be claimed that 'tasty' is already, in some sense, evaluative, and that my argument would be less question-begging if I substituted a word like 'yellow'. But in what sense is 'tasty' evaluative? Is it not the case that 'this cheese is tasty', unlike 'this cheese is good' (for I am not defining 'good' in terms of 'tasty'), can be verified by ordinary empirical methods, i.e. by tasting it, or by tasting it under certain conditions - e.g. when I do not have the taste of bitter almonds in my mouth? The real difference, in the present context, between 'yellow' and 'tasty' is that, in the absence of an explanatory background, one would not understand the point of the judgement that the cheese is good because it is yellow, whereas this is not the case with the judgement that it is good because it is tasty. If it is claimed that 'yellow' is 'ethically neutral' and 'tasty' is not, this seems to mean that 'ethically neutral' facts are facts in which no one has any interest, and that when people do have an interest in them they cease to be 'ethically neutral'. One may define 'ethically neutral' in this way, but it seems to be something of a red herring. For, clearly, the answer to the question: 'Can facts alone justify moral judgements?' will always be no if 'the facts', in any given situation, are so described that the judgements that people make on them cease to be intelligible (i.e. cease to have any point). On the other hand, if one considers that 'ethically neutral' facts include facts which give point to evaluative judgements (and in this sense are good reasons for making the judgements - consider, for example, 'It is understandable why he said that it is good'), then what is the point of calling them 'ethically neutral'? The answer is that what has point for A might not have point for B (i.e. it is 'ethically neutral' from B's point of view - perhaps, for example, he does not like any sort of cheese); or, perhaps, B, though he understands the point (Cont'd over page)
(i.e. its being tasty is a good reason for commending it),
then it is possible to give a valid syllogistic form to
what I say, viz. "Cheese which is tasty is good; this
cheese is tasty; therefore, it is good". But this does
not mean that my reason for calling the cheese good is not
simply the fact that it is tasty. Perhaps you would not
want to deny this. But the fact that you say that
"Christian ethics is not founded solely on the doctrine
that God created us" certainly suggests that you deny it'.

The point that Mortimer is making in this imagined
reply to Nowell-Smith's criticism, seems to have much in
common with the view expressed in a passage in Toulmin's
An Examination of the Place of Reason in Ethics1 which is
quoted and criticized by Hare in his review of the book.2

Of course 'This practice would involve the
least conflict of interests attainable
under the circumstances' does not mean the
same as 'This would be the right practice';
nor does 'This way of life would be more
harmoniously satisfying' mean the same as
'This would be better'. But in each case,
the first statement is a good reason for
the second: the 'ethically neutral' fact

(Foot-note 1 Cont'd)
of A's judgement, might, nevertheless, think that A ought
not make it — e.g. he might think that it is not really
good, that A's standards are low.
(I shall be discussing these points in detail in the
following section.)

1 Cambridge, 1950, p.224.
is a good reason for the 'gerundive' moral judgement. If the adoption of the practice would genuinely reduce conflicts of interest, it is a practice worthy of adoption, and if the way of life would genuinely lead to a deeper and more consistent happiness, it is one worthy of pursuit. And this seems so natural and intelligible... that, if anyone asks me why they are 'good reasons', I can only reply by asking in return 'What better kinds of reason could you want?'

Hare then asks the following question: 'In the sentence "But in each case the first statement is a good reason for the second", is Mr Toulmin himself making a moral judgement, or is he not?' He then puts to Toulmin the following dilemma:

If he thinks he is not making a moral judgement, then what are we to make of the relation between the sentence in question and the one that follows it? For the second sentence, unlike the first, is unambiguously the expression of a moral judgement ("If the adoption of this practice would genuinely reduce conflicts of interest, it is a practice worthy of adoption"). But the second sentence seems to be inserted by Mr Toulmin as an explication of the first, which (on the horn of the dilemma which we are now taking) does not express a moral judgement. And the second sentence does indeed seem to be an explication of the first; which makes it strange to say that the first is not also a moral judgement.

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1 Ibid., p.373.
2 Ibid., p.373.
3 Ibid., p.374.
But if the first *does* express a moral judgement, then Toulmin is wrong to suggest, as Hare claims he does, that he is doing 'what logic cannot do...namely infer a moral conclusion without having a moral premiss'. On this horn of the dilemma, Hare comments:

Thus we might represent his view of moral reasoning by means of the following schema:

\[
\frac{F}{E}
\]

where \( F \) is a conjunction of statements of 'ethically neutral' fact, and \( E \) is a moral conclusion. If this is to be a valid inference, there must be a rule of inference (say \( R \)) to the effect that inferences of this form are valid.

\( R \) might be "This practice would involve the least conflict of interest attainable under the circumstances" is a good reason for "This would be the right practice". Now I have given reasons for holding that \( R \) expresses a moral judgement. But if it does, then it is in the nature of a general moral rule, and the inference consists in nothing more novel than the subsumption of a particular set of circumstances under this rule...This type of inference requires no special rule of inference beyond those familiar in deductive logic.¹

Thus, in reply to Mortimer's (imagined) claim that he is not trying to deduce a moral judgement from a statement of fact but is simply saying that the fact alone is a good reason for making the judgement, Hare would say that

one cannot explicate the concept of a 'good reason' without making a moral judgement. Thus, Nowell-Smith's claim that 'Christian ethics is not founded solely on the doctrine that God created us' seems to be vindicated.

Consider, however, Hare's argument applied in the following analogous case. Suppose one says: "This cheese is tasty" is a good reason for "This cheese is good",
and adds: 'If this cheese is tasty, then it is worthy of commendation'. This second sentence is unambiguously the expression of an evaluative judgement. It is an explication of the first sentence. Therefore, the first sentence is an evaluative judgement. So far, then, Hare is right. However, I completely fail to see why this should mean that it is not the case that the cheese is good simply because it is tasty. For, the sentence: 'If this cheese is tasty, then I commend it for that reason and that reason alone', expresses an evaluative judgement which is entirely consistent with the second sentence - though I do not deny that other conflicting evaluative judgements might be consistent with the same sentence. Hence, it must be entirely consistent with the first sentence, for the second sentence is an explication of the first sentence. Analogously, the fact that the sentence: 'That this practice would involve the least conflict of interests attainable under the
circumstances, is a good reason for calling it a right practice', expresses a moral judgement, does not show that it is not a right practice solely because it is a practice of this particular kind.

It would appear from this that the dilemma which Hare claims that Toulmin is in, is not one about which Toulmin need be concerned. This, however, is not the whole of Hare's criticism. That is, his objection does not rest solely on the charge that Toulmin, while suggesting that he is showing how one can infer a moral conclusion from a non-moral premise, is, in fact, smuggling in an evaluative major premise. It also rests on the claim that Toulmin's view cannot explain moral disagreement. What, Hare asks, can Toulmin reply to the man who says: 'Without conflict, the full development of manhood is impossible; therefore it is a bad reason for calling a practice right to say that it would involve the least conflict of interests'? This man is not disputing the truth of any of Toulmin's factual statements. And Toulmin cannot simply say: 'What better kinds of reason could you want?', for this is no answer to the claim that 'the development of manhood... provides the only good reason for any moral conclusion'.

However, one might reply that this does not show

\[\text{Ibid., p.374.}\]
that it is not the case that the practice is right practice solely because it leads to a reduction in the conflict of interests. To use the same analogy as before, if someone says that though this cheese is tasty, it is not good, this does not mean that one cannot say that the cheese is good because it is tasty. To say that it is good solely for this reason, is quite consistent with saying that it is bad because, for example, it is radioactive, or because tasty food seduces one from the ways of God.

To this, however, it might be replied that in the Hare-Toulmin example there appears to be a conflict of moral views. For Toulmin is saying that some action is right because it leads to a reduction of conflict, while his objector is saying that the action ought not be done because conflict is desirable. This dispute, Hare argues, cannot be settled by an appeal to fact, i.e. neither judgement can be established by facts alone.

This point of Hare's is blurred somewhat by his argument that Toulmin is in a dilemma. For Hare could quite well admit that a very wide range of practical and evaluative judgements do rest on factual considerations alone (i.e. he could admit that factual considerations alone are good reasons for making certain practical and evaluative judgements), and still deny that moral disputes
can be settled by appeal to matters of fact. He could, for instance, agree with the following remarks:

Aristotle's examples of practical syllogisms typically have a premise which includes some such terms as 'suits' or 'pleases'. We could give a long list of the concepts which can form such bridge notions between 'is' and 'ought': wanting, needing, desiring, pleasure, happiness, health - and these are only a few.

But he could argue that these 'bridge notions' cannot be appealed to alone in order to settle a conflict of interests. Sadistic behaviour, for example, might be very pleasant for those who engage in it, and, hence, one might say that one has good reason to engage in it. But one cannot simply appeal to the fact that it is pleasant if one wants to convince someone who says that sadistic behaviour is wrong even though it is pleasant, that he is mistaken.

But is it really the case that moral disputes cannot be settled by an appeal to facts alone? In Chapters V and VI I shall argue that it is not. In the following section I shall preface the argument with an account of what I mean by a 'fact', and of the relationship between 'facts' and moral judgements. For the description of

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2. This is also the substance of Baier's objection to Rational Egoism. Cf. Chapter III.
the nature of moral phenomena that I want to give is, I think, very different from the one that Hare gives.

3) If one believes that moral disputes cannot be settled by appeals to facts alone (i.e., if one finds the God-Satan myth to be compelling), and if one wants, nevertheless, to deny that people are evaluatively free, then what kind of account is one to give of the concept of justification in morals?\(^1\) As I argued in Chapter III,\(^2\) one cannot answer this question in terms of self-interest. For the problem is a problem precisely in those situations in which people can successfully pursue their own interests at the expense of others. What one wants to say is that they should not pursue them. But if one cannot, either by an appeal to fact or to his self-interest, give the selfish man a reason for changing his point of view, what is the alternative to saying that one cannot give him a reason at all?

The answer, says Hare (and, I think, rightly),\(^3\) is to give him a reason whose relevance he cannot deny without

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1 This is what I referred to, on page 65, as the 'moral problem', the statement of which answers the question: 'What are you doing when you do moral philosophy?'
2 Cf., also, Chapter VI, Section Three.
3 That is, it is the only alternative granted the assumption that moral disputes cannot be settled by appeal to facts alone.
self-contradiction, i.e. a logically compelling reason. Hare argues, that is, that if one could not be logically compelled to consider the interests of others as if they were one's own, then one would have to deny the rationality of morals. One would have to deny it because the only alternative way of justifying moral judgements is by appealing directly to facts - and this is unsuccessful.

However, as I argue in Chapter II, Hare's argument is also unsuccessful. Hence, the position of the moral exclusivist appears, as I suggested at the end of Chapter III, to be rationally on all fours with the position of anyone else. That is, it appears to be a logically impeccable position. In the following section and in Chapters V and VI, I shall try to describe a way in which this position can be rationally undermined.

2) THE NATURE OF MORAL PHENOMENA

1) Let me try to make somewhat clearer the position I want to reject.

Most philosophers who have argued that moral phenomena are analysable in terms of a factual content and an evaluative content and that the main problem of moral philosophy is to show how they are related, have made moral
judgements of the form 'X is good' and 'Y ought to be done' the centre of their interest. Now it is clear that there is a distinction to be drawn between moral judgements and statements of fact. For to state is not to judge. When one judges one is advising, commending, urging, praising, recommending, condemning and the like. And when one states something then, qua stating, one is doing none of these things. Also, given any moral judgement, one can distinguish between the act of judging and what is judged, between commending and what is commended etc. What is judged can be neutrally expressed, i.e. by means of a description which could be agreed by all parties to a dispute. For example, it is 'rescuing people from burning buildings' which is praised, despised, indifferently regarded. It is the Prime Minister, the employer, the parent who is commended, condemned, ignored.

Now, if this were all that the fact-value distinction amounted to it would, I think, be quite unexceptionable. The trouble arises because the philosophers in question have treated this particular form of moral judgement as an analytical model of the nature of moral phenomena - moral beliefs, the virtues and vices, moral ideals, etc; and their account of the nature of moral disagreement and justification in morals has been largely dependent upon this analysis.
At first sight the analysis appears to be clearly correct. Suppose that I jot down some factual statements at random on a piece of paper and hand it to someone. I might write, for example, 'Tomorrow is Tuesday', 'Sierra Leone is in the monsoon belt', 'Most people have ten toes'. Suppose, too, that there is no explanatory background which makes my action a significant one. The person looks at what I have written and says: 'So what? This is simply a list of facts'. He does not deny that they can have significance for some people. But he is saying that they have none for him. They are merely facts.

Suppose that I had written down more factual statements than I did. Or suppose that I had written in more detail about the same facts – such as giving the origin of the word 'Tuesday'. Or suppose that instead of writing down unconnected facts I had linked them together in some way. Would doing any of these things affect the distinction between something being a fact and its being a significant fact? There seems to be no reason why they should. For facts as such do not contain any inherent significance, such that anyone who knows them must consider them to be important. If someone considers this or that fact to be important it is not simply because the facts are what they are. Otherwise it would be impossible to distinguish between this person and someone
who knows the same facts but does not consider them to be significant.

What we have here, it is argued, is an analytical model which is true of all moral phenomena. No matter how complex, for instance, a moral belief might be, it can be analysed in the same way as any other. For all moral beliefs possess the same formal structure - factual meaning and evaluative meaning. One can always draw a line between the factual content of a belief and its evaluative content. The factual content is open to public inspection and is quite independent of the moral outlooks of the inspectors. That is, it is always possible to say of the facts, and say without distorting the beliefs in which they are an essential ingredient, 'So what? These are merely facts'. 'So what?', in other words, uttered on any particular occasion, is not a way of expressing indifference towards or disagreement with another person's beliefs - though it may do so incidentally. It is quite independent of the character, interests, emotions, etc. of the speaker. It is neither an evaluative utterance nor context-dependent in some non-evaluative sense. In this sense, the factual contents of moral beliefs are like tables and chairs and colours. The difference is that they consist in actions, motives, personal qualities, dispositions and the like. The only issue which the
objects of moral judgements raise in moral disputes is, 'What are they?'. This is not always an easy question to answer. But, at least, the nature of the question seems to raise no philosophical or moral issues. Thus, if part of the factual content of the concept of courage, for example, is 'disregarding one's own safety in order to preserve that of others', then one need not have this or that or, indeed, any moral outlook in order to understand what this means. And one need not have any particular moral outlook in order to give it an application, i.e. identify acts of courage which are described in this way. In other words, one can understand and apply this description in the same way that one can understand and apply 'Tomorrow is Tuesday'.

On this analysis, a moral dispute will consist in conflicting judgements about the same object. That is to say, given that any moral dispute is taking place, the elements of the dispute will consist in the facts - which are fully understood by all disputants - and the different evaluations they make - one commends, another condemns, etc.

If this is the case, if the objects of moral judgements are neutral facts or sets of facts, where is their goodness, their 'oughtness', etc. to be located? One might praise someone for saving a child from burning,
but where does the goodness of the act come in? How is the goodness related to the facts? How, in other words, is the 'gap' between descriptive meaning and evaluative meaning to be bridged?

What is more, if facts are neutral, if they are what they are for the just and unjust alike, then one is presented with the puzzling problem of the nature of justification in morals which I mentioned earlier. For, if it is always possible for a man to disengage himself from this or that moral belief by isolating its factual content, in what sense is it wrong for him to do this? In what sense is he not evaluatively free? The sceptical position here is, as I argued in Chapters I to III, an exceedingly strong one. For, once the doctrine of the neutrality of facts is accepted, it becomes very difficult to see just what is to count as justification in morals. The only thing to do, it seems, is to try to show how the principle of non-self-contradiction can be used to bring about substantial answers to moral disputes. But this, I have argued, does not work.

But is it really the case that one can, without distortion, analyse phenomena in which people's emotions, interests, etc. are already involved in terms of neutral factual descriptions and evaluative meaning? I shall argue that it is not. I shall then go on to discuss some
of the implications of this denial.

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2) At least part of the reason why a fact-value analysis of the kind just mentioned is mistaken is given by Mrs Foot in a well-known series of articles.¹ It is as follows:²

If one analyses moral judgements solely in terms of what is judged and the act of judging, then one is ignoring what is most important about them - their point. Suppose someone says 'that no one should run round trees left-handed, or look at hedgehogs in the light of the moon';³ or he might say that 'a man was a good man because he clasped and unclasped his hands, and never turned N.N.E. after turning S.S.W.'⁴ Now, clearly, in

¹ 'When is a Principle a Moral Principle?', Aristotelian Society, Suppl. vol. XXVIII, 1954, pp. 95-110.
² I omit her important discussion of functional concepts in 'Goodness and Choice' as I think that the point I want to get across can be made without the help of it. It would, however, play a major part in a complete account of the deficiencies of the fact-value analysis.
³ 'Moral Arguments', p. 512.
⁴ 'Moral Beliefs', p. 84.
the absence of some explanatory background, one does not understand what he means, one does not understand the point of clasping and unclasping one's hands, etc. This being the case, what sense can be given to notions such as 'evaluative meaning', 'moral principle' and the like which, according to the view under discussion, form an essential ingredient in the analysis of these judgements? What does a person mean when he says that he disapproves of people who run round trees left-handed? What does he mean when he says that it is a moral principle that one ought not hunt hedgehogs in the light of the moon?

Consider, first of all, approving and disapproving. If 'X is good' is analysable in terms of X and the commendation of X, then the judgement: 'People who refrain from running round trees left handed are good', means: 'I commend people who refrain [etc.]'. But how can it? To say that they mean the same is like saying that pride can be understood apart from the object of pride. But what would it mean to say that someone is proud 'because he has laid one of his hands on the other, three times in an hour'? How is 'pride' to be described unless the object of pride is seen '(a) as in some way a man's own, and (b)

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'Moral Beliefs', p.84.
as some sort of achievement or advantage? One might say that pride is perhaps something to do with smiling and walking with a jaunty air, and holding an object up where other people can see it; or perhaps...a kind of internal sensation, so that one might naturally beat one's breast and say 'pride is something I feel here'. Of course, a man may define 'pride' in this way, but he would not be defining pride. For pride is not something related externally to its object. One cannot understand what pride is if one defines it in this way.

The same is true of approval and disapproval. It is possible to define 'approval' and 'disapproval' in terms of external criteria, but this does not help one to understand what is meant by calling something good. A man might jump up and down, and cheer, and shout 'marvellous' when he sees something of which he approves. We understand what he is doing. He is commending something in a certain

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1 Ibid., p.87.
2 Ibid., p.86.
3 A point which Foot does not bring out is that one can understand what it is to commend something, one can identify commendatory judgements. What one cannot understand is 'People who refrain from running round trees left handed are good' just as it stands. Thus, if moral beliefs have meaning in two different ways, and if 'evaluative meaning' is identified with the act of judgement, and since acts of judgement are intelligible, (Cont'd over page)
sort of way. But it does not follow that one understands the meaning of his judgement, i.e. what he means by calling this or that thing 'good'. 'Good' here is not being defined by statements of fact. To say that one understands the point of a judgement is not to say that the judgement and the point of the judgement have the same meaning. But it is to deny that the meaning of 'good' can be given solely in terms of acts of judgement, i.e. expressions of pro-attitudes.

The same is true of moral principles. What, for example, does it mean to say that the rule that one ought not walk on the lines in pavements is a moral principle? To say that there are people who observe the rule, exhort others to follow it, follow it consistently, and are upset when they or others break it, does not help one to make any sense of it. What, that is, is the person who follows the rule up to? What is he doing? Obviously there is a sense in which one does know what he is doing - he consistently avoids treading on lines in pavements. But what is the point of doing so? And why should anyone else

(Foot-note 3 Cont'd)
then 'People who refrain from running round trees left handed are good' should also be intelligible. But it is not intelligible. Therefore the analysis cannot be correct. Indeed she does seem to be saying in places that the act of judgement itself is unintelligible. But this would be a mistake.
do it? Unless these questions are answered, then one will not understand what is meant by saying that it is a moral principle that one ought not walk on lines in pavements.

What, then, are the explanatory backgrounds which give a meaning to moral judgements? Philosophers often speak as though they consisted in something called 'moral codes'. These codes are supposed to be made up of general principles of action and rules governing the distribution of rewards and punishments. They then view these principles in terms of the model of particular judgements, i.e. as having meaning in two different ways - evaluative and descriptive. Since the descriptive content of particular judgements does not help one to answer the question of how these judgements are to be justified, then, they argue, neither does the descriptive content of the fundamental principles of any code. And this suggests that the understanding of moral codes is something which can be left to the cultural anthropologist, for understanding them seems to provide no solution to the philosophically puzzling features of moral theory.

But this is an incorrect line of approach. In the first place, the backings to moral judgements are exceedingly varied and, more often than not, resist any subscription under a heading like 'moral codes'. In the second place, (and I shall discuss this in detail in
Chapter V), moral theory possesses no puzzling features which exist independently of the particular explanatory backings to particular moral judgements.

As illustrations of the variety of possible backgrounds, consider the following:

It might be a religious one. Thus, the judgement: 'It is good to bow three times at these hours in an easterly direction', would have point given a background of the religion of Islam. Or one might need to understand what a person has to say about concepts like respect, courage, ostentation, honesty, treachery, dignity, degradation, and humiliation. And, in order to understand what he says, one might need to understand much else besides. One might need to inquire into a person's view of life - he might, for example, be profoundly pessimistic and this will very much affect the kinds of moral judgements he makes. One might, (taking the notion of background further than Mrs Foot does), need to understand a man's experience of his status as a member of a tribe, church, country, town or village community, as a father, a member of a political party, etc. One might need to find out what sort of a person he is, the kind of relationships he has with others, his view of the way in which other people experience him. What does his life mean to him? Does he feel it to be genuinely satisfactory?
Or is he deceiving himself? Does he feel at bottom that his actions and activities have lost their point? Or are his loins perpetually girded?

The point which I, and I think Mrs Foot, want to make is that if backgrounds are necessary for judgements of the form 'X is good' and 'One ought to do this act' to have any point, then it follows that no general distinction can be drawn between descriptive meaning and evaluative meaning within moral phenomena - i.e. total areas of judgements and their point-giving backgrounds. These areas have, as it were, 'significance' built into them. Something is 'significant' if it makes an area one of human interest and concern, if it gives point or meaning to a person's judgements, if it makes a person's judgements intelligible ones for him to make, if it is something that goes into making a man the person he is. For example, traditions, cultures, visions, complex patterns of relationships, emotions, ideals. And, more particularly, enjoying a glass of cold beer on a warm day, fear of the dark, love of one's country, immersion in tribal life, seducing a woman, absorption in one's work. The backgrounds to moral judgements, that is, are not made up of facts whose relevance to the judgements is determined by

'Significant', that is, to the people involved in the areas.
principles which, like the judgements, are in need of support. This is the wrong sort of picture. There is no 'gap' between moral judgements and their backgrounds, because the backgrounds determine the sense or point of the judgements. The 'gap', one might say, is bridged by intelligibility. Any attempt to analyse these areas in terms of a neutral factual content and something called 'evaluative meaning' is ignoring this and, hence, distorting the areas. It is, as Mrs Foot says, like driving a wedge between pride and the object of pride - the result is that one fails to understand what pride is. If there is any 'gap', it is between particular backgrounds to particular judgements. The relationship, for instance, might be a muddled or obscure one. That is, there is a 'gap' between a judgement and its point-giving background if the point is not a clear one.

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3) But what, it might be asked, of the relationship, not between a moral judgement and its background, but between a total area of judgement and background and the points of view that others might have of the area? Cannot other people regard the area as one that is 'ethically neutral'? Cannot the area be regarded by others as 'merely a fact'? Cannot the fact-value distinction be reintroduced in this
way? And, if so, does not this bring back the problem of how to bridge the 'gap' between them? That is, if one believes that others should agree with the moral judgements one makes, is it not impossible to show that they should simply by appealing to the areas that give point to the judgements? Is there not an 'unbridgeable gap' between the 'fact' of one area and the 'significance' of another? Is it not the case that, with respect to other areas, people are evaluatively free? That is, is it not always possible to fully understand any area without one's own interests and concerns being disturbed in any way? Is it not always possible for one to say, 'Yes, I fully understand what your interests and concerns are, but this has nothing whatsoever to do with me and my interests'? Is it not always possible for an exclusivist, for instance, to say correctly that if others want to convince him that he ought to change his position, then they cannot do so simply by appealing to the contents of other areas?

Now there are two very different sorts of argument that can be used to establish the claim that there is an 'unbridgeable gap' between different areas of human interest and concern. The first is that it is always possible to regard an area as being 'merely a fact'. That is, it is always possible, whatever the content of an area might be, to both fully understand the nature of the area
and yet maintain correctly that this has nothing whatever to do with one's own position. On this view, if A wants to convince B that B ought to change his position, then he cannot simply appeal to the content of a different area. What he must do is provide a 'link' which is introduced from outside, as it were. That is, a 'link' which is not 'merely factual'. The second argument is that, while there is no necessity for such a 'link' (i.e. while an appeal to the content of an area is not always something that an opponent can properly ignore), there are many insoluble conflicts between areas and as far as ethics is concerned they are of a serious nature.

I shall discuss the first argument in the remaining part of this chapter, and the second argument in Chapter V.

A neutral fact is a fact that can simply be believed. That is, the meaning of the expression that describes the fact can be fully understood quite independently of what could, in any sense of the word, be called one's evaluative position. Nothing, for instance, of emotion or feeling or desire or need, or of one's moral or aesthetic or political opinions, is required in order to understand it. As I mentioned earlier, the remark 'So what?' made with
respect to a neutral description is one that anyone can properly make. That is, it indicates nothing about the speaker's state of mind or character or moral views etc. The speaker's position here is a neutral one.

Now it is certainly possible to regard areas of interest and concern as neutral facts, i.e. it is possible to give a neutral description of them. One can, for instance, read and understand reports of suicides, assassinations, famines, devastating floods and earthquakes, and declarations of war, in precisely the same way that one reads and understands a list of neutral sentences - e.g. 'Tomorrow is Tuesday', 'Sierra Leone is in the monsoon belt', 'Most people have ten toes'. In both cases the descriptions are either true or false and one's psychological state is the same. The questions I want to ask are: 'Is it really the case that the position is neutral and not evaluative or, at any rate, relative to the person who holds the position, (e.g. perhaps he is someone who is simply ignorant of the true nature of the areas which are neutrally described)? And can the facts which are neutrally described be extended to include a detailed account of the areas as areas of human interest and concern, without any change in the neutrality (if it is neutral) of the position?'
Now, as I said above,¹ in order to understand the nature of an area of human interest and concern, one must understand the points of view of the people involved in the area, one must understand what involvement in the area means to them, one must understand what it is like. But, when one has achieved this understanding, is it always possible for one to see the area as 'merely a fact'? Is it always possible to maintain a position of neutrality with respect to it, to keep it under the microscope, as it were?

The answer is that it is not. The reason is that areas of human interest and concern raise, both directly and indirectly, questions and problems which cannot rationally be ignored by anyone who seeks to understand the areas, or who says that he understands them, or who expresses indifference about them - i.e. says that they do not matter. They are questions and problems which rationally compel one to engage in a discussion or investigation in which the criteria are not solely one's own, in which one cannot simply refuse to question a settled position on the grounds that the opposition is 'merely factual', in which one cannot argue solely in terms of the views that one has as someone involved in a

¹ Sub-section 2).
different area.

Consider, for example, love-making.

Suppose that someone says that making love is a good thing or that people ought to learn how to make love. In order to understand what he means, one must try to see what he finds in love, what he thinks making love is all about. When one asks him he replies that it is something that gives one a feeling of well-being, that it gets rid of inhibiting fears, that it creates a general interest in life. Some obvious questions which this reply raises are: 'Don't you agree? If you disagree, why do you disagree? Don't you think that these things matter? Do you regard yourself as 'above' this sort of thing? Do you think one could be doing more worthwhile things? If so, what are they, and why are they more worthwhile? Or do you think that these are superficial reasons for commending love-making? Do you think that it is a much more complex phenomenon than these reasons indicate?'

And so on.

These questions, and many more, are ones that face anyone who asks the person what he means when he says that love-making is a good thing. This does not mean that everyone who asks must try to answer them. One might, for example, be interested solely in statistical aspects of the reply. But there are many occasions when one must
try to answer them or stand accused either of failing to understand the reply, or of an unwillingness to engage in rational discourse (i.e. of backing out of an argument which has arisen in consequence of the fact that one holds certain views). And it is one of these occasions when someone says that the reply of the man who says that love-making is good is 'merely a fact', that there is nothing in love-making which touches on his own life and, hence, that he is always justified in pursuing his own interests whatever the consequences this has for people engaged in love-making, and that if people want to convince him that he is not justified they cannot do so simply by appealing to the facts of love-making. The person who says this is not adopting a neutral position with respect to love, but an evaluative one. He is, whether he likes it or not, open to a host of questions about what he thinks love is and about its importance in people's lives - including his own. He cannot answer these questions in any way he pleases. He cannot set out to answer them from a fixed position and predict that the position will remain unchanged. He might, for instance, come to believe that a life without love is one that lacks any real point. Or, again, he might not. But, certainly, there is no way in which he can tell in advance just what his final position will be. As Mrs Foot rightly asks, how can one know
without consulting the details of each argument, that there is always an impregnable position both for the man who says that X is right, or good, or what he ought to do, and for the man who denies it? How do we know that each is able to deal with every argument the other may bring?¹

Moral phenomena, that is to say, possess no common formal structure, either internally (for they are areas of human interest and concern), or in virtue of the fact that they are all areas of interest and concern. There is, as P. Winch says, no way of showing that 'what is characteristic of the ways in which we express our moral concerns can be examined quite apart from any consideration of what it is about these concerns which makes them important to us'.² As he rightly remarks, 'The seriousness of such issues is not something that we can add, or not, after the explanation of what those issues are... It is something that "shows itself"... in the explanation of the issues'.³

As I pointed out in foot-note 1 on pp. 72-3 and argued in sub-section 2), it is a mistake to analyse moral beliefs

¹ 'Moral Arguments', Mind, vol. LXVIII, 1958, p. 503. If 'X' is an area of human interest and concern, this applies also to the man who regards it as 'merely a fact'.
³ Ibid., p. 200.
partially in terms of a factual or 'ethically neutral' content from which is missing the point of the belief. If this is where the line between facts and values is drawn, then it results in the distortion of the beliefs of which it purports to be an analysis. If, on the other hand, one tries to draw a similar line between areas of interest and concern and the points of view of people outside these areas (i.e. argue that it is possible to regard an area as 'merely a fact', and that the question of how it is to be evaluated is one that cannot be answered in terms of the content of the area), then one will be completely misrepresenting the relationship between the areas and people on the outside of them. For there is no truly neutral position which one can adopt with respect to these areas. One may be ignorant of the existence or the

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1 One may be 'disinterested' or 'impartial' but this is a totally different thing. I am not saying that if an activity, for instance, is a matter of interest and concern for A, then so long as B is neither for nor against it, but sees it as a disinterested observer, B cannot have understood it. To be disinterested is - in a minimal sense - to have made no commitments either for or against possible answers to the various questions that one is faced by when one tries to understand an area of interest and concern. It is, for example, to doubt (or, perhaps, believe that there is not sufficient evidence to decide) whether some activity claimed to be worthwhile really is worthwhile. A disinterested position, in other words, is a committed position, i.e. a commitment to a position of rational indecision.
nature of an area, or one may be too lazy or otherwise disinclined to pay any attention to an area. And there are other possibilities. But none of these positions is a neutral one. For an area of human interest and concern, unlike a neutral fact, raises questions which prevent one from regarding it correctly as 'merely a fact'. Some people may regard the fact that tomorrow is Tuesday to be a matter of importance. But its importance is not something that follows in any sense from the mere fact that tomorrow is Tuesday. It is something introduced, as it were, from outside. The case is different, however, with areas of human interest and concern. Here 'significance', as I called it, is built in. The areas are not 'significant' only in the sense of having point for the people involved in them, but also in the sense that they catch in a net of argument, self-examination and decision-making, all those who seek to understand them.

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4)

Let me now give two illustrations of the points I have been making.

Consider, first of all, football.

Suppose someone who knows nothing about football asks me what football is and I tell him what the rules of the game are. He then goes to football matches and notes that
the game is played in accordance with the rules. He then comes to me, tells me what he saw, and remarks that there were a lot of other people who were watching the matches. These people, he says, were shouting and booing and cheering and groaning. He asks me why they were doing these things. For he himself can see no relationship between the behaviour of the crowd and what is happening on the field. He knows, of course, that they are reacting in these ways to the games, but he does not understand what they see in it. As far as he is concerned football consists in 22 men chasing a little ball about in accordance with certain rules.

What do I say about this? The answer is simple - here is a man who does not understand football. He is not aware of what people who do understand the game are aware of. And he never will be unless he comes to look at the game in a new way. For football is not simply an activity performed in accordance with certain rules. This activity could be performed by robots.¹ But football is a game which can only be played by men. In order to understand it one must be able to recognize in it such qualities and emotions as courage, endurance, anguish, despair, fear,

¹ Some of the excitement of football can pass over into robot play, but this kind of play is still lacking in most of what makes football a meaningful activity.
timidity, confidence, pride, honour cruelty, hate, contempt, hope and humiliation. One must understand how all these things are displayed both by teams and by the individual members of teams. One must understand the players' experience of physical pain. For against the background of the game it is rather different from other sorts of experience of it. For an Englishman to be kicked on the shin by a passionate Italian during a World Cup match is not at all like being kicked on the shin by another Englishman during a League game - and it is not because one kicks harder than the other. In some games the players are more aware of pain than in others. Sometimes it matters and sometimes it does not. It all depends on how the game is being played and against whom, the occasion, the nature of the crowd, who caused it and why. The crowd, too, is an important part of the game and one will not understand football until one has understood the contribution which the crowd makes to it. One must understand, for example, what it means to support a certain team and share that support with other people. It is the crowd which creates the heros, the splendour of the great occasion, which can destroy those players who fall short of its ideals, whose passion can turn a mediocre team into a great one and cause a good team to lose its nerve.

If it is granted that this brief account indicates
something of the nature of football and what people find in it, I think it is fairly obvious that there is no neutral set of facts which exists as such within this area of human activity, and there is nothing which can be described as 'evaluative meaning' which is also part of the activity. That is, there is nothing which is significantly common (i.e. neutral facts) both to people who understand football and people who do not. The difference between them is that whereas for some people football is, as Wisdom puts it in another context, something in which 'human personality finds expression', for others it consists in 22 people kicking a little ball around in accordance with certain rules.

It is for this reason that understanding football is very different from knowing the meaning of a neutral description. For football is an area that raises questions which face anyone who seriously tries to understand it - whether or not one tries to answer them. Football, like every other area of human interest and concern, is open-ended. It is not something that is isolated from the rest of life (though, of course, it may be in a practical sense, for not everyone has an interest in football). One cannot take a serious interest in it

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(i.e. try to understand the nature of the area), without realizing that it has implications which go far beyond the actual game; implications, that is to say, for people other than those who participate in the game. One cannot, in other words, both seriously try to understand the area and remain, as it were, completely detached from it - or, rather, completely detached from possible answers to the questions the area raises. Consequently, if one pursues a course of action which involves, for instance, treating the area as one that is unimportant, as if it were thoroughly neutral like the mere fact that tomorrow is Tuesday, one is open to a host of questions arising out of the area which one cannot rationally ignore, and whose answers, as I pointed out in sub-section 3), one cannot predict.

That this is so is, I think, while it may appear to be fairly obvious, a matter of some importance. It is something that Hare\(^2\) tries to show (or something like it), though I argued that he does not succeed. And E, it will be remembered, argued that he does not need to pay any attention to (or 'consider', to use Hare's term,) the interests of people other than himself or the members of

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1 One would not if it was a neutral area.

2 Cf. Chapter II.
the group of which he is a member - and, indeed, given the kinds of argument that were directed against him, he was right to argue thus. But E was, nevertheless, mistaken. For he is either a member of a species which has no connection with things that are a matter of interest and concern to humans - in which case he is not in a position to say that he does not need to consider them, for he simply does not understand them; or he is open to a host of possible questions which he is rationally compelled to answer, questions which may put him into a very uncomfortable position indeed.

Consider, now, not an activity, but a concept which finds expression in many activities - courage.

On Hare's view of the matter, the moral concept 'courage' is analysable in terms of descriptive meaning and evaluative meaning. Its descriptive meaning may be very complex. But, however complex it happens to be, it is morally neutral. It is something which can be fully understood by anyone quite independently of the feelings, emotions, interests, moral opinions, etc. one happens to have. The evaluative (or 'prescriptive') meaning of 'courage' is, on the other hand, dependent upon the attitude one has to acts which are described as courageous.

- upon whether, for instance, one commends these acts or whether one condemns them.

This analysis, however, is mistaken. For courage is a quality of the experience of people in those situations in which they act courageously. It is the experience which gives point to their acts of courage, it is the experience in terms of which their acts of courage are to be properly understood. Consider, for instance, the courage of mountain climbers. To understand this one must understand something of why people climb mountains, the nature of the urge to get to the top and the willingness of people to risk their lives in the attempt. One must understand something about what it is like to get frostbite, to break or lose one's limbs, to have one's friend killed by an avalanche, or die because his feet slipped, or because the rope broke, or because someone was careless. One must know something about the experienced contrast of highly individual efforts and intentions and being part of a team with the same intentions and interests. And much else besides. That is, to understand the courage of mountain climbers is to understand it as something inseparable from a human activity of great complexity. The more one understands the activity, the more one understands the courage which is part of it, i.e. the more one understands the point of the acts of courage performed
by mountain climbers (understands courage, that is, as a quality of experience). The 'facts' of courage, in other words, cannot be separated off from the interests, the personality, and the experience of the person who displays it.

Acts of courage, therefore, are not merely facts. One cannot properly regard them as acts of no importance, for to do so is to imply that they have no point. But they do have point. Hence, if one regards acts of courage with indifference, if one treats them as if they were 'merely facts', then one is open to a host of possible questions which one is rationally compelled to answer, and whose answers are not ones that one can predict.

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5) Finally, a word about the nature of moral disagreement. It is obvious that if one cannot understand particular moral judgements apart from setting them against their respective backgrounds, then neither can one understand conflicting judgements unless one does the same. It is not the case that moral disagreements are reducible to what Mrs Foot calls 'an opposition which is merely an expression of attitude or will'. Some disagreements might be of

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this kind but they are of minor, if any, importance.\footnote{Disagreements about the tastiness of food might be of this kind. But, even here, disagreements often have a complex backing. A gourmet, for instance, might believe that most people do not really taste the food they eat, and, hence, that they are not in a position to say whether or not the food they eat is tasty.}

Conflicting expressions of attitude or will may well be the way in which many arguments start, but this usually seems to be the only place in which they can legitimately enter. If they do enter elsewhere, then this tells one something about the nature of the disputants rather than about the argument. Perhaps the disputants have from the start been unwilling to listen to what each other is saying. Perhaps they are unable to explain clearly what they mean and so give the impression that they have nothing to say. Perhaps they are too lazy to be bothered taking the argument further. Perhaps they lack the information or intelligence required to take it further.

The real difficulty with arguments, however, is not the possibility that they are reducible to expressions of attitude or will, but the possibility that they are too complex to control. Consider, for example, a point of view which many people do regard as being merely an expression of will, i.e. a racialist outlook. This is an enormously complex phenomenon. To understand it one needs
to understand the sort of people that racialists are. How do they experience themselves and others, and what is their view of the ways in which others experience themselves and them? What is the nature of the social, cultural and family backgrounds to the racialist outlook? That is, what sort of world does the racialist inhabit? What is it like to be such a person? In this area it is, clearly, very easy to lose one's way.

Of course, B. Williams¹ and others who believe that racialism is simply an arbitrary assertion of will, also believe that there is a distinction to be drawn between reasons and explanations, and that racialism is arbitrary because it is not based on reasons. That is, they would argue that explanatory backgrounds are irrelevant to the question of whether racialists are justified in treating other races in the way they do. However, I do not think that explanatory backgrounds — unless by this is meant some sort of unconscious causal influences — can be dismissed in this way. In the first place, as I have already argued, acts and appraisals cannot be properly understood in the absence of these backgrounds. In the second place, as I shall argue in the following chapters, it is only by

showing what is defective in the backgrounds that one is able to show what is defective in the acts and appraisals. Racialists do, after all, have a certain outlook on life. They have a point of view. They have their likes and dislikes, loves and hatreds, fears and hopes. Why shouldn't they yearn for a utopia whose members are all of the same race? Why shouldn't they try to realize it? In my defence of the position of the moral exclusivist in the first three chapters I showed that it is a position that cannot easily be shaken. The exclusivist does have his reasons for acting in the way he does, and one cannot show that there is something wrong with his position simply by pointing out that they are not reasons which are acceptable to people who do not adopt the same position. He does not consider the interests of others outside his exclusive group. He is not at all concerned about them. Why should he be? If one tries, as Williams does, to make any sort of rigid distinction between reasons and explanations, then one is in danger of overlooking all this. One might come to believe that reasons which could not be acceptable to people who suffer as a result of them being acted upon are not reasons at all, but something else — i.e. explanations — which are of no particular moral or philosophical interest. If this belief is true, then one can properly say of, for instance, a white racist: 'This
man cannot give me any reasons for the way in which he behaves. He cannot justify his position. I understand why he has this particular outlook on life, but what is this to me? He hates Negros, but so what? He cannot give me a reason why one is justified in hating Negros. He is simply emoting'. But if one takes this line, then one is merely stating one's own moral outlook and contrasting it with the outlook of the racialist. One is simply saying that reasons for acting should take account of the interests of other people, that one should be concerned about their interests. The racialist's position, on the other hand, is one which discounts the interests of people outside his particular race. The two positions are, therefore, on all fours with each other. So what is wrong about being a racialist? What does 'wrong' mean here? The answer, I suggest, is to be found in the explanatory background to the racialist's acts and appraisals. I shall try to show what I mean by this in Chapters V and VI.
CHAPTER V

MORAL PHANTASY AND THE CORRIGIBILITY
OF MORAL JUDGEMENTS

1) INTRODUCTION

In Chapter IV I tried to show that an analysis of moral phenomena in terms of descriptive meaning and evaluative meaning leaves out of account the fact that the phenomena are areas of human interest and concern, and, in order to understand the nature of people's involvement in any particular area, one may need to know a very great deal about them, about their outlooks on life, the kind of life they share, their traditions, cultures, etc. I argued that, on this view of the matter, there are no significantly neutral areas which constitute the content of moral phenomena, i.e. areas which can be described by neutrally situated inspectors. To give a neutral description of something is one thing, to understand what people find in it is something altogether different. I then went on to argue that because of this one cannot insulate one's own moral views from all need of defence. One cannot, in other words, predict the outcome of attempts to understand the nature of conflicting areas - which one could do if these areas were 'merely facts', or if they
consisted in conflicting moral judgements of common neutral areas. Thus, if someone says that some area of human interest and concern 'does not matter' (meaning that he is entirely justified in pursuing his own interests at the expense of this area), he is faced by a host of questions which he is rationally compelled to answer, questions to which he may not be able to give an honest answer without undermining his own position.

However, it could be replied here that this argument does not show that there are no insoluble conflicts, which are of a serious nature as far as ethics is concerned, between different areas of human interest and concern. For one cannot assume that whenever someone believes that a conflicting area is one that 'does not matter', he must try to show that the people who believe that it does matter are mistaken. For example, if a person says that love-making is a matter of no importance, then this does not mean that he must show that people who disagree are deluded, are pitching their standards too low, etc. If he did have to show this before he was justified in treating the area of love as a matter of no importance, then, clearly, he would find himself in difficulties. But, it could be argued, he can avoid these difficulties by arguing that there are no standards by means of which one can compare the area of love-making with what he considers to be a matter of
interest and concern to him. If, for instance, he is a sadist, he can argue that one cannot compare the different values of love and sadism, i.e. they cannot be placed on the same scale. Some people prefer love-making, others prefer sadism. The fact that these different preferences are at odds is neither here nor there. Why should inherently satisfying experiences be compatible with other inherently satisfying experiences? Why shouldn't some of them be satisfying precisely because they prevent others from having satisfying experiences?

It should be noticed that he is not saying that there is any fundamental moral disagreement between himself and those who believe that love-making is good, for he denies that there is a common area about which there can be disagreement. He is not taking issue with the belief that love-making is good. He is not saying that sadism is equally good. He is saying rather that 'good' has incomparable meanings in the two cases. That love-making is good is one thing, that sadism is good is another. Thus, this is a form of scepticism which is not based on the possibility of people adopting different attitudes towards neutral areas, but on the existence of incomparable non-neutral areas.

This, of course, is the position of the moral exclusivist which I discussed in Chapters I to III. The
exclusivist, I said, does not argue that the points of view of his opponents are defective - the Nazi, for example, need not say that Jews should recognize that the Nazi position is the correct one. What the exclusivist does say is that he and his opponents live in different worlds. The Nazi, for instance, desires a world without Jews, and the Jew desires a world without Nazis. Both can provide extensive and intelligible backing for their different positions. Both use moral words in ways which make perfectly good sense once one understands their outlooks on life. But these outlooks are morally incomparable. Though they conflict, one cannot show that one is better than the other, that one is right and the other wrong.

Now, though one may want to argue that morally exclusive positions are wrong, there is a sense in which I, at any rate, would not want to disagree with what the exclusivist is saying. For people do live in different worlds. For example, the world of an old man is unlike that of a young girl, the world of a Vietnamese peasant is unlike that of an American business executive, Spanish culture and traditions are unlike Russian culture and traditions, etc. Everyone to some extent is on the inside of something, each has its satisfactions and its miseries. The areas may be radically different from each other, or they may overlap. Very often, too, there may be
a conflict between these different outlooks, ways of life etc. to which a rational solution may be impossible. These are situations in which people have what Sartre calls 'dirty hands'. A young woman, for example, loves and cares for her aged parents. The old people are incapable of looking after their own needs and they have no relatives or intimates who will care for them other than their daughter. Because their needs are great the daughter is unable to live a life of her own choosing. She knows full well that if she remains with her parents she is likely to be middle-aged before she is free, and by this time she realizes that, as a person, she will be a ruin. It is not possible for her parents and herself to reach a compromise. If she wants to live her own life she must send them to a home for the elderly. The old people realize the burden they are placing on their daughter. They also feel that an old folks home is not a suitable place for people to end their lives, for no matter how often their daughter visits them, no matter how kind are the staff and other residents, it really is like being tucked out of the way because one is no further use to anyone.

The daughter does send them to a home. Both she and her parents feel that she has made the right decision. Nevertheless, the fact that her decision is the right one
to make does not solve the conflict. The needs and interests of the daughter and her parents are morally incomparable. It is unfortunate for all concerned that they happen to conflict.

A person has dirty hands, therefore, when, no matter which of the possible choices before him that he makes, his action will frustrate or harm legitimate interests or destroy or damage things which are good. Now, an exclusivist might claim that the conflict between his interests and values and the interests and values of others is of the same type. That is to say, he might argue that a thorough understanding of the situation of conflict shows that his values and interests and the values and interests of others are incomparable. If, for instance, he is a sadist, he might argue that both love-making and sadism are good, for both are deeply satisfying activities. But it so happens that some people prefer to engage in one of the areas rather than the other. Sadism does not satisfy some people, love-making does not satisfy others. Hence, the first group are right to engage in love-making, and the second group are right to engage in sadism. The conflict is an insoluble one.

Thus, the exclusivist has the alternative of showing either that his and his opponent's positions are morally incomparable, or that his opponent's position is in some
way defective (i.e. that it is a position that his opponent ought to give up). And the former seems to provide the exclusivist with fewer problems.

How far, however, can one regard conflicting areas of interest and concern as morally incomparable? And, if there are limitations, what relevance do they have to the question of justification in morals? In this chapter I want to argue that there are limitations, and that to understand what they are is also to understand in what sense moral judgements are corrigible. To state my argument in a very general way: there are limitations because it is often impossible both to understand the nature of some particular area, and, at the same time, make certain judgements or have certain attitudes which are correctly understood in terms of a conflicting area. To understand it, that is to say, means that one cannot continue to make the judgements which one previously made. One's judgements have been corrected because the area with respect to which they have been made has been correctly understood, and this understanding changes the background to one's judgements. For instance, a child's view of his parents can be radically altered when he comes to understand the sort of people his parents are, why they treat him in the way they do, the kind of relationship they have with each other, etc. Indeed, understanding these
things is part of the reason why a person ceases to be a child and becomes an adult. This does not mean that he comes to agree with his parents, or like them, or even sympathize with them. His parents may be scoundrels. But it does mean that his symbiotic ties with them are snapped. Of course, the business of growing up, of becoming an adult, is complex, and understanding the position of one's parents is only a part, though an important part, of it. The difference between childhood and adulthood can be broadly stated in the following way:

In the eyes of the child

human inventions, words, customs and values are given facts, as inevitable as the sky and the trees. This means that the world in which he lives is a serious world, since the characteristic of the spirit of seriousness is to consider values as ready-made things....Rewards, punishments, prizes, words of praise or blame instill in him the conviction that there exist a good and an evil which like a sun and a moon exist as ends in themselves.¹

But the child comes to notice flaws in the world he has so far inhabited.

With astonishment, revolt and disrespect the child little by little asks himself, 'Why must I act that way? What good is it? And what will happen if I act in another way?' He discovers his subjectivity; he discovers that of others.

And when he arrives at the age of adolescence he begins to vacillate because he notices the contradictions among adults as well as their hesitations and weakness. Men stop appearing as if they were gods, and at the same time the adolescent discovers the human character of the reality about him. Language, customs, ethics and values have their source in these uncertain creatures. The moment has come when he too is going to be called upon to participate in their operation; his acts weigh upon the earth as much as those of other men. \(^1\)

This account illustrates in a rough sort of way what I mean when I say that it is often impossible to understand the nature of a particular area and, at the same time, make certain judgements about it or have certain attitudes towards it. It also illustrates what I mean by the corrigibility of moral judgements. For it shows how the understanding of the true nature of the area can correct these judgements and attitudes if they are ones which one has previously made or had. By understanding the area one becomes, as it were, a different person.

In what follows I shall discuss these points in some detail.

2) **SANITY AND MADNESS**

Moral philosophers have, on the whole, paid little

\(^1\) Ibid., pp.38-9.
attention to the subject of insanity. When they have discussed it, it has usually been in the context of what is and what is not a good excuse for moral failure. For instance, if a certain action is the morally right one to perform in certain circumstances, and if a person fails to perform the action, then, if he is mad, he has a good excuse for failing to perform it. A person cannot be blamed for doing a wrong act if he cannot help doing it, and to say that he is mad is to give one sort of reason why he could not help doing it. A person cannot be blamed for doing a wrong act if he did not know that it was wrong, and to say that he is mad is to give one sort of reason why he did not know it was wrong. Thus, madness has been discussed mainly in a context in which answers to questions about what is right and wrong have been presupposed. From this point of view, studies in the nature of madness can be regarded as peripheral to moral theory. Madness as such is of no particular moral interest. It is relevant only because it provides certain sorts of excuses for moral failure.

No doubt there are many reasons for this very limited interest, but one in particular is worth mentioning.

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1 By 'moral philosophers' I mean those philosophers who are discussed in books on the history of ethics that are first published in English-speaking countries.
briefly.¹ This is the view that for an act to count as a moral act, it must, for good or for bad, affect other people. Self-regarding behaviour, for good or for bad, is, so long as it does not affect other people's interests and concerns, of no moral significance - there are, for example, no such things as duties to oneself. Morality, in other words, has to do with behaviour that is, in Baier's words, 'other people's business'. It has, that is, to do with the effects of behaviour on other people. Thus, the criteria of which actions are morally right and wrong will include descriptions of the consequences² of these actions upon the interests of others. On this view of the nature of morality, the question of whether or not a man is mad has nothing to do with the question of which acts are morally right and wrong. For madness seems to describe a state of mind rather than a quality of acts.

Now I do not want to say that the view I mentioned above of the relevance of studies of madness to moral discourse is defective. But it is, I think, questionable

¹ I shall be discussing it in detail in Chapter VI.
² Not all of the moral philosophers referred to above have considered that the consequences of action on other people's interests constitute essential criteria of which actions are morally right and wrong. Kant, for example, did not. But enough of them have believed it to make the generalization true.
whether this is the only reason why it is of moral interest. It has often been pointed out, and rightly, that studies of insanity can be a major contribution to the understanding of human nature, for they can illuminate great areas of non-psychotic life which might otherwise remain obscure. However, this is not the place to engage in any sort of general discussion of the various advantages of such studies. What I want to do is describe one essential characteristic of insane experience that is of special importance for moral theory. As I shall be discussing it in detail in later sections, my initial remarks about it will be brief.

In order to be able to understand this characteristic, it is necessary to regard psychosis in terms of the worlds inhabited by the insane. This will involve understanding the ways in which they experience themselves and others, their views of the ways in which others experience

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I must point out here that even if it is the case that what I shall have to say about insane experience is unsatisfactory, this will not affect the truth of the thesis that I want to argue. My purpose in talking about psychosis is illustrative, and there are other illustrations which would do just as well - some of them are briefly discussed in Sections 3) and 4). My main reason for choosing to discuss insanity is in order to be able to introduce material from R.D. Laing's book on schizophrenia, The Divided Self, Penguin Books, 1965. Cf. Section 3). This provides the clearest illustration I know of the argument of this chapter.
themselves and them, their accounts of the situations they share with other people, their views of the relationships they have with people, animals, and objects. If one regards insanity in this way, then it becomes evident that an essential feature of it is the almost total disjunction - and the fact that the insane are unaware of it - between the ways in which other people, who may or may not be mad themselves, actually experience themselves and others and the way in which the insane person thinks they experience themselves and others - including himself. This disjunction is an essential feature of insanity in the sense that if there were no disjunction, or if the disjunction were less extreme, there would be no insanity. That is to say, there is a certain sense of the word in which the worlds inhabited by the

To indicate a little of what is involved in understanding these areas, consider the background to the decisions and appraisals of a schizoid person. (To be distinguished from a schizophrenic. Schizoids are not psychotic.) He uses the language of love and hate. He uses words like selfish, ungrateful, kind, neglectful, generous, sympathetic, fair, unjust, mean, capricious, unscrupulous, humiliating. What does he mean when he uses these words? To understand, one must understand much else that he says. One must understand what he means by words like meaningless, futile, worthless, impotent, empty, dead. One has to get at the sense of a great deal of metaphorical language. One must understand his basic language, i.e. the language in terms of which his other languages are to be properly understood. For instance, one must find out what he means by words like I, self, it, real.
insane are 'mistaken', and it is this that makes it possible to say that the decisions, choices, evaluations, and actions of the insane are corrigible.¹

The sense of the word 'mistake' that I have in mind here, is what is sometimes meant by some writers about sanity and madness when they use the word 'phantasy'. I define 'phantasy' as follows: A decision, evaluation, choice, conflict, action, ascription, or emotion is phantasaical, if (making allowances for weakness of will) the agent would have acted (or decided or felt, etc.) differently had he been able to give a correct description of the background which gives point or sense to the act (etc.), and in terms of which it is to be understood. An incorrect background is one in which there is an absence of an awareness of the ways in which other people, (or people outside the group in which one is a member),

¹ The existence of the disjunction is not a defining characteristic of insanity, even though one cannot be insane if there is no disjunction. For the disjunction is common to other, non-psychotic areas. The differences between the various areas, as will become apparent in what follows, is due to their contents, i.e. to whatever answers questions about what a person is like. That is to say, questions such as: 'What is his experience of himself, of others, and the situations he shares with others? What does he like and dislike? What does he fear? What goals and values and interests does he have? What does he get out of life?' If the disjunction was a feature of insane areas alone, then my discussion of insanity would cease to have point. Cf. Foot-note 1 on page 126.
actually experience themselves and others. It is incorrect in the sense that when a man does become aware of these things, the background which gives point or sense to his acts, evaluations, etc. loses its point-giving function. It loses its point-giving function because the agent's experience of others and his beliefs about the ways in which others experience themselves and him form a fundamental part of this background. Once these beliefs and this experience are corrected the background ceases to be a background.

A phantasy is something in which a man is immersed. A phantasmical judgement, act, decision, etc. is something which is to be properly understood against a background which has closed boundaries. Life beyond the boundaries is understood in terms of the life within them, and not as it is - as it is experienced and understood by the people who live the life. That is to say, the judgements, acts, decisions, etc. of people on the outside are not understood in terms of their relevant backgrounds, but in terms of the backgrounds to the judgements and acts of those on the inside. For example, the behaviour of an explorer is understood in terms of tribal taboos; the enthusiasm of lovers is understood in terms of the non-lover's rationalization of his own fear and impotence; the actions and judgements of an employer are understood
in terms of the employee's timidity and envy; the behaviour of a wayward wife is understood in terms of the husband's emotional dependency.

What the person in phantasy lacks is what might be called a 'sense of contrast'. There is an absence of the experience of others as they actually are. There is no awareness of the differences between people, i.e. of differences in which the content is actual rather than phantasical. For instance, some people are unaware of the polarity of the sexes. They either regard the opposite sex as a species so alien that it falls into the categories of useful and useless, or as so similar that they themselves are of it. But the latter, however much they may experience themselves as otherwise, are simply men (or women) who are pretending to be women (or men); and the former look upon the members of the opposite sex not as independent centres of consciousness but as if they were hammers and chisels.

Likewise, in the Nazi's experience of the Jew a sense of contrast is lacking. The Jew in the Nazi's world is a symbol, an abstraction, a shadow, a fictional product. The Nazi's world is not inhabited by Jewish men and women. For the latter are their experience of themselves and others, and of this the Nazi is ignorant. The Nazi does not know any Jews. He only knows phantasy
creatures going by the same name. He is unaware, that is, of the otherness of the people whom he persecutes. These others do not fit into his phantasy world for they are independent centres of consciousness - and this is also true of those Jews who colluded in their own destruction.

In the old injunction 'see yourself as others see you', the operative word is others. For what they see may be something untrue. They might be in phantasy. But what is important is that the mistake is their mistake, the phantasy is their phantasy. When one reflects on these mistakes, when one tries to understand the background to their phantasy judgements, then, if one's reflections and one's understanding are accurate, one is not experiencing these others in terms of one's own phantasies but as they actually are. The contrast lies between, on the one hand, one's phantasy experience of others and the experience which others have of themselves and one's self, and, on the other hand, the actual experience which others have of themselves and one's self - phantasy or otherwise. It is the latter, I want to argue, which mainly corrects the judgements, decisions, ascriptions, choices etc. that one makes.

I shall now offer some illustrations of these points.

3) ILLUSTRATIONS

A man's experience of himself is not something which
can be properly understood independently of his experience of others and his beliefs about the ways in which they experience themselves and him. However, for the sake of tidiness, I shall divide my illustrations of phantasy into two groups - a group which consists in phantasies of oneself, and a group which consists in phantasies of others.¹

1) Self-phantasies

An obvious candidate is the psychotic's experience of himself as, for example, Napoleon, an animal, or a robot.² These experiences are very real for the people concerned. Napoleon, an animal, or a robot is what they feel themselves to be. Now, clearly, no one is Napoleon but Napoleon. A person who says that he is Napoleon and is not the person who lost the battle of Waterloo is obviously not Napoleon. However, when a psychotic says that he is Napoleon he is not simply making this kind of mistake. What he means - though he may also mean that

¹'Phantasies of oneself' and 'phantasies of others' are contents of experience in which there is an absence of experience of others as they actually are. 'Phantasy', properly speaking, describes the mode rather than the content of an area, though, of course, an area is one of phantasy because it has a certain kind of content.

²I shall devote a disproportionate amount of space to a discussion of psychotic phantasies for the reason given in Foot-note 1 on page 126.
he is the historical person who lost the battle of Waterloo - is that he experiences himself as (or feels himself to be) Napoleon. It would be plainly silly to say that he cannot do this because he is not Napoleon - just as it would be silly to say that an actor cannot experience himself as King John because King John is dead. Likewise, a man can experience himself as a robot even though robots do not have sensations: he might feel, for example, that all his movements and behaviour are under the control of someone other than himself, he might walk in a jerky fashion with stiff legs; and he might experience himself as an animal even though he does not look like an animal.

Now, if a psychotic is not simply making a mistake when he says that he experiences himself as Napoleon or an animal or a robot, how are his experiences to be properly understood? Can one say anything else about these experiences as such other than that he has them? Or is psychotic experience not everything it might seem to be? Do psychotics experience themselves simply in unusual ways? Or are the ways in which they experience themselves unusual ways of doing or expressing something which other people do or express in different ways?
R.D. Laing in his book *The Divided Self*\(^1\) has given a persuasive and, to my mind, convincing account of the kind of world inhabited by schizoid persons. Space does not permit me to give more than a very general summary of it here:

The psychotic is not a man who is having an unusual sort of experience, but a man who provides himself with a certain sort of identity. The psychotic, in other words, is doing something. He is maintaining himself in existence in a certain sort of way - just as a person huddled behind a tree, trembling, feeling sick, breathless, is more than these set of characteristics, i.e. he is hiding from something that frightens him. And this is true even if the man has forgotten what he is doing, i.e. even if he is petrified. For the forgetting is all part of the game - from fear, he has put out of his mind the fearful object. The psychotic, too, is playing this kind of game. He is running away from danger. It is as if he were an ostrich which buries its head in sand and imagines that it is a bush. If the psychotic is hiding, what is he hiding from? What kind of story is it which ends with the main character going mad?

According to Laing, the story is above everything else, a story in the most usual sense of the word. To be able to understand it, to be able to see how different events are related, one requires no technical language, no knowledge of unconscious functions and dynamic processes and the nature and relationships of Id, Superego, and Ego, etc. The development of psychosis is no more esoteric than is the breakdown of a marriage. If the expression was not so misleading one might say that understanding it is a matter of 'common sense'. People who are attacked by grizzly bears usually feel afraid. There is no difficulty in understanding why. If they do not feel fear, then, again, there is usually an obvious explanation why they do not. One understands the behaviour of such people - whether they run away, try to shoot the bear, stand immobile, welcome the attacker, or whatever. The case is the same with the psychotics. Their behaviour and their psychotic experience of themselves may be very unusual, but the explanation for the behaviour and experiences is comprehensible - as comprehensible as stories of the lives of characters in good novels.

Of course, understanding schizoid experience and the development of psychosis in any particular case is an enormously difficult business. It is necessary, as I
pointed out above,¹ to understand what the schizoid is saying when he uses words like selfish, ungrateful, neglectful etc.; when he uses words like meaningless, futile, worthless, unreal etc.; when he describes himself as a dead man, as made of glass, as being weightless and without substance. It is necessary, that is, to find out the way in which he experiences himself and others, his beliefs about the nature of the relationships he has with others - especially those with whom he is in closest contact - his beliefs about other people's experience of themselves, his descriptions of the attitudes of others towards him, and so on. But the complexity of these areas, the difficulties involved in understanding them, are the same in kind as the complexities of, say, sane marital relationships and the difficulties involved in understanding them.

In spite of the difficulties and complexities involved in each individual case of schizoid experience, the stories have a common theme. The schizoid individual is someone who,

in the ordinary circumstances of living may feel more unreal than real; in a literal sense, more dead than alive; precariously differentiated from the rest of the world, so that his identity and

¹ Page 127.
autonomy are always in question. He may lack the experience of his own temporal continuity. He may not possess an over-riding sense of personal consistency or cohesiveness. He may feel more insubstantial than substantial, and unable to assume that the stuff he is made of is genuine, good, valuable. And he may feel his self as partially divorced from his body.¹

He is someone for whom 'the ordinary circumstances of everyday life constitute a continual and deadly threat'.²

If he cannot take the realness, aliveness, autonomy and identity of himself and others for granted, then he has to become absorbed in contriving ways of trying to be real, of keeping himself or others alive, of preserving his identity, in efforts, as he will often put it, to prevent himself losing his self. What are to most people everyday happenings, which are hardly noticed because they have no special significance, may become deeply significant in so far as they either contribute to the sustenance of the individual's being or threaten him with non-being.³

A schizoid person, then, is someone who partially or totally experiences the loss of his identity. The experience of loss is like the experience of self-consciousness in the sense of being 'an object of someone

¹ The Divided Self, p.42
² Ibid., p.42.
³ Ibid., pp.42-3.
else's observation. Indeed, self-consciousness is schizoid experience though, of course, not everyone who is self-conscious is schizophrenic. People's self-consciousness can differ in intensity, in extent and in kind. In people who can be essentially characterized as schizoid, self-consciousness is very intense, includes all kinds, and is that in terms of which his behaviour, his judgements and evaluations of himself and others is to be properly understood.

One form the experience takes is what Laing calls 'engulfment'.

Any and every relationship threatens the individual with loss of identity... The individual dreads relatedness as such, with anyone or anything or, indeed, even with himself, because his uncertainty about the stability of his autonomy lays him open to the dread lest in any relationship he will lose his autonomy and identity... Engulfment is felt as a risk in being understood (thus grasped, comprehended), in being loved, or even simply in being seen... To be understood correctly is to be engulfed, to be enclosed, swallowed up, drowned, eaten up, smothered, stifled in or by another person's supposed all-embracing comprehension.2

Another form of self-consciousness he describes is the experience of 'implosion'. This is

1 Ibid., p.106.
2 Ibid., pp.44-5.
the experience of the world as liable at any moment to crash in and obliterate all identity as a gas will rush in and obliterate a vacuum. The individual feels that, like the vacuum, he is empty. But this emptiness is him. Although in other ways he longs for the emptiness to be filled, he dreads the possibility of this happening because he has come to feel that all he can be is the awful nothingness of just this very vacuum. Any 'contact' with reality is then in itself experienced as a dreadful threat because reality, as experienced from this position, is necessarily implosive and thus, as was relatedness in engulfment, in itself a threat to what identity the individual is able to suppose himself to have.¹

Yet a third form is the fear of petrifaction. This is

the dread...of the possibility of turning, or being turned, from a live person into a dead thing, into a stone, into a robot, an automaton, without personal autonomy of action, an it without subjectivity.²

Thus, the schizoid person

is frightened of the world, afraid that any impingement will be total, will be implosive, penetrative, fragmenting, and engulfing. He is afraid of letting anything of himself 'go', of coming out of himself, of losing himself in any experience, etc., because he will be depleted, exhausted, emptied, robbed, sucked dry.³

¹ Ibid., pp.45-6.
² Ibid., p.46.
³ Ibid., p.83.
The most important aspect of these experiences for an understanding of the schizoid person, is the schizoid's experience of himself as partially or totally disembodied. This, indeed, is the basic 'split' in his personality, i.e. his real self is experienced as divorced from his body. His body can be experienced as an object 'possessed' by others. He comes to regard it as 'a thing that the self looks at, regarding it at times as though it were just another thing in the world'. That is, he experiences his body as something that has been taken away from him, as not belonging to him, as something behind which he hides, as a false front.

Such a divorce of self from body deprives the unembodied self from direct participation in any aspect of the life of the world, which is mediated exclusively through the body's perceptions, feelings and movements (expressions, gestures, words, actions, etc.). The unembodied self, as onlooker at all the body does, engages in nothing directly. Its functions come to be observation, control, and criticism vis-a-vis what the body is experiencing and doing, and these operations are usually spoken of as being purely 'mental'.

The central split is between what David [one of Laing's patients] called his 'own' self and what he called his 'personality'. This dichotomy is encountered again and

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1 Ibid., p.162.
2 Ibid., p.69.
again. What the individual variously terms his 'own', 'inner', 'true', 'real', self is experienced as divorced from all activity that is observable by another, what David called his 'personality'. One may conveniently call this 'personality' the individual's 'false self' or a 'false-self system'.

The 'self' in such a schizoid organization is usually more or less disembodied. It is experienced as a mental entity. It enters the condition called by Kierkegaard 'shutupness'. The individual's actions are not felt as expressions of his self. His actions... become disassociated and partly autonomous. The self is not felt to participate in the doings of the false self or selves, and all its or their actions are felt to be increasingly false and futile.2

The greater part of Laing's book is designed to show how schizoids become schizophrenic. The story is a complex one and he discusses it in detail. Though it is important I won't describe it here. For I think that enough has been said already to show how psychotic experience is intelligible. For example, how a person can come to experience himself (his false self) as a robot. As Laing puts it:

1. Ibid., p.73.
2. Ibid., pp.73-4.
a robot, dead), can be regarded as an
alien presence or person in possession
of the individual... The false-self
system becomes enemy-occupied
territory, felt to be controlled and
directed by an alien, hostile, a
destructive agency.¹

A man who experiences himself as Napoleon is simply
someone who is protecting himself. He is providing
himself with significance. He is making himself somebody.
Such a person can sincerely believe that he is Napoleon
for the obvious reason that his 'self' is, as Laing says:

unqualified...by reality, necessity;
the conditioned and the finite...²
The 'self' can be anyone, be
anywhere, and live at any time...²
The self, being transcendent, empty,
omnipotent, free in its own way, comes
to be anybody in phantasy, and nobody
in reality.³

Thus, psychotic self-phantasies can be understood in
terms of a background of anxiety about identity. What
is true of these experiences is also true of a schizoid's
judgements, appraisals, actions, prescriptions, etc.
All can be understood in the same way.

¹ Ibld., p.168.
² Ibld., p.141. Karen Horney has discussed in detail
how sane (non-psychotic) people experience themselves in
this way. Cf. Our Inner Conflicts, London, 1949;
³ The Divided Self, p.142.
It is clear, too, what it is that makes schizoid and schizophrenic experience phantasmaical.\footnote{The discussion that follows skirts an important issue which I shall return to later, i.e. the old Socratic problem of virtue being knowledge, or the problem of the so-called 'gap' between understanding and action.} The schizoid self is, as Laing says, 'related primarily to the objects of its own phantasies'.\footnote{Ibid., p.142.} This self 'never actually "meets" reality'.\footnote{Ibid., p.137.} On page 40 Laing quotes something that L. Trilling wrote about Kafka's K.\footnote{He remarks on page 142 that, though 'he individual may now no longer be experiencing the world as other people experience it...he may still know how it is for others if not for him'. If one takes this too literally, one would have to say that Laing is denying his own thesis. For a schizoid cannot know 'how it is for others' in an experiential sense. He cannot know how it is by acquaintance. For, if he did, he would no longer be schizoid. I take it then that Laing simply means that the schizoid may know that salvation lies elsewhere.}"

\textit{He has been stripped of all that is becoming to a man...He is without parents, home, wife, child, commitment, or appetite; he has no connection with power, beauty, love, wit, courage, loyalty, or fame, and the pride that may be taken in these.}\footnote{Trilling, of course, does not mean that K as a matter of fact does not have children, a wife, etc. Though K is without all these, what is important is that these things have no meaning for him. He is not aware of what people find in them. Cf. Chapter IV, Section 2).}"

All this is true enough. If the schizoid possessed these
things and had these connections, he would not be schizoid. But there is something else, something more general, that is lacking in schizoid experience.

Above everything else, the schizoid does not live in a world populated by independent centres of consciousness, i.e. by other people in the fullest sense of the word. His experience of others is not of independent others. His experience of others is radically different from their experience of themselves, whether they are in phantasy or otherwise, and of him. He does not know what others are like. He lacks what I described above as a sense of contrast, an awareness of the differences between people qua people, i.e. different 'I's'. The content of the differences consists in what I described in Chapter IV as areas of human interest and concern. Another way of saying this is that it consists in backgrounds which give point to the overt acts, judgements, ascriptions, etc. of the persons concerned. Accounts of these areas will include descriptions of how the people concerned actually experience themselves and others, and what they find in this or that activity. Hence, in order to understand any particular area, one is required to 'step out of oneself', as it were, and it is precisely this that the schizoid does not do. A schizoid is pre-eminently someone who does not step out of himself but withdraws into himself.
What makes his position a phantasmagorical one is that he cannot be aware of others as they actually are without ceasing to be the sort of person he is. For, by 'stepping out of himself', he necessarily ceases to be what he experiences himself as being, i.e. on the one hand, 'possessed' or controlled by others, and, on the other hand, a pure subjectivity that is hidden, and hence entirely alone, in a world of objects. He ceases to experience himself as pure subjectivity because, in seeing others as they actually are, he sees them as different from himself, as independent centres of consciousness. He sees himself, that is, as one person among others. He becomes aware of a kind of equality of persons — an awareness that may even extend so far as to include animals. He also ceases to feel 'possessed' by others because he comes to discriminate between what is his and what 'belongs' to other individuals and groups. Or, as I put it earlier, he comes to regard the behaviour, the judgements, the actions, etc. of others in terms of the ways in which they experience themselves and others rather than in terms of his own experience. That is, as a result of 'stepping out of himself' he becomes a different sort of person. He ceases to make the judgements, perform the actions, etc. that he made when he was schizoid, for all these things have lost their point.
Schizoid experience is, I suspect, far more common than is sometimes thought. But, even if it is not, it would not affect the illustrative use that I have made of it. For I am not trying to argue that people in general are schizoid, or even that they are like people who are schizoid in the sense that they share with them some common experiences. My purpose has been to illustrate phantasy experience, i.e., experience, and hence the judgements, actions, etc., which are to be properly understood in terms of it, which is eradicable because its very existence depends upon ignorance of the ways in which other people actually experience themselves and others. Schizoid experience is the best illustration that I know of this. It is the best because a) the disjunction between self and others is writ large, and b) because the numerous studies of the area provide one with a wealth of detail of how a knowledge by the schizoid person of the ways in which others actually experience themselves and others necessarily destroys the world which he inhabits.

Another form of self-phantasy is to be found in the shared life of closed societies. A society — e.g., a village, church, tribe or family — is closed when there is a disjunction between the ways in which its members experience non-members, and the ways in which non-members
actually experience themselves and those who are members. Consider, for example, a cannibal's view of an explorer or a missionary, the way in which many villagers view townspeople, John Bull's view of people who live south of Calais. These areas are, of course, very complex. But they have two things in common. First, members of closed societies experience their common life wholly from the inside, as it were. For them it is a totality, all that significantly is. Everything on the outside is alien and remote. There is nothing in what is out there. It is seen solely in terms of the life of the society. It may be seen, for example, as dangerous, as harmless, as comical. But, however it is regarded, it is with a total lack of understanding of what life on the outside is like for the people who live it. Secondly, these societies cease to exist once their members become aware of what life on the outside is like, i.e. once they become aware of a reality independent of themselves. It is impossible, that is, for a member to know how people on the outside experience themselves and him and his society,

Of course, actual transitions are complex and very difficult to make. All I am saying is that one cannot have it both ways. That is, one cannot be aware of a reality independent of oneself and, at the same time, live a life that is dependent for its very existence upon the absence of such an awareness. All one can do is pretend to live this life.
and still be a member of the society. He may look back nostalgically to his life as a member of the society, he may view aspects of this life with affection, he may even embrace them. But what he cannot do is remain a fully paid up member of it. For example, once a man realizes that the faith, the shared life, of members of other churches, is just as intense, just as strongly adhered to, just as meaningful to them as is the faith and shared life of the members of his church is to them, then he will come to regard his own church in a different way. The claims of his church will no longer seem to have the obvious rightness which they had when he regarded them in terms of the background of the shared life of a closed society. The reason is that his belief in the obvious rightness of the claims is dependent upon him being ignorant of life on the outside. If his church is authoritarian in the sense that it has a pope or elders who make prescriptions which the members of the church are expected to accept and follow unquestioningly, then he will come to regard the authority in isolation from the context in which he previously regarded it, i.e. the context of a certain kind of common life and outlook. He will feel that if he is going to accept the authority's prescriptions, then it must be for reasons other than the fact that the authority has a traditional role in the
church, that its prescriptions 'fit' the common life and outlook of the members in the way that the dogma of the Assumption of the Virgin 'fits' the life shared by many Catholics, e.g. those of the Mediterranean variety. Also, he will no longer be able to take the church for granted as a necessary part of his life - as though life without it is unimaginable, something to be dreaded.

Thus, as was the case with the schizoid, it is possible to see how knowledge of certain relevant areas can undermine certain positions a man might hold and certain outlooks and experiences he might have - in the present illustration, positions, outlooks, and experiences he shares with other people. It is not the case, (and I shall return to this point below), that the outlooks and experiences are simply incomparable. For the people who are members of closed societies cannot describe correctly the outlooks and experiences of people on the outside without ceasing to be members of these societies. Also, it does not simply happen to be the case that a member of a closed society cannot correctly describe life on the outside without losing his membership. No sort of mysterious transmutation is going on here. For life within closed societies necessarily depends upon ignorance.

\[\text{Cf. the Introduction to this chapter.}\]
of other kinds of life. That is, 'ignorant' is an essential part of a correct description of life within closed societies. It is what this kind of life is. The members of these societies literally are people who do not understand themselves. They do not realize that they live in a world populated by independent centres of consciousness, that they are merely some among many. And just as a man cannot both believe that he is God and know that he is just a man who believes that he is God, so a member of a closed society cannot know that it is closed and still remain a member.

2) Phantasies of others

There are innumerable ways in which people can appraise others. For example, they can say that they are egotistical, callous, unscrupulous, neglectful, unjust, rude, mean, loving, generous, unselfish, kind, fair, respectful, ungrateful, possessive, submissive, sadistic, and the like. The backgrounds which give point to particular uses of these and similar words will, of course, be enormously varied. The question is: 'Under what conditions are they used correctly?'. Or, perhaps better: 'Under what conditions are they used incorrectly?'. The simple answer to the latter question is: 'When the judgements and the backgrounds which give point to them are phantasmical'. One can construct an
indefinitely large number of situations - for example, of relationships between husband and wife, parent and child, villager and townsman - in which phantasical judgements are made. One can show, for instance, how servility can be thought to be gratitude, friendliness thought to be charity, advice thought to be domination, submissiveness thought to be love, aloofness taken to be wisdom, a strong desire to dominate equated with the possession of superior gifts, etc. In each case one can show how the phantasy is destroyed once the person making the judgement understands the way in which the other person experiences himself and others.

The psychotic's experience of others is phantasical for the reason that his self-experience is. When he describes others as they actually are he ceases to be psychotic. That this is so should be clear from the previous discussion.

When a child realizes that his father is, say, someone who has a deep sense of his failure as a husband, of his ineffectualness in social relationships, of his inability to do his job properly, and understands how this causes him to constantly alternate between extreme anger and affectionate behaviour towards him, then he will no longer be a child. For his relationship with his parent will no longer be of the emotionally dependent
childish sort, i.e. he will no longer regard his father's behaviour in terms of his (the child's) own self-involvement.

Consider someone who says that adultery is always wrong. One then describes to him the following sort of situation. A woman is married to a man who pays no attention at all to her desires and interests. He regards her as a piece of personal property. For her to collude with him would clearly be self-destructive. So she has an affair with someone else. What does the man who says that adultery is always wrong say about this situation? If he condemns this woman, what does he mean? His answer, if it is to be at all persuasive, must take into account the woman's point of view. That is, though he disagrees with what she does he must sympathize with her, he must understand what it must be like to be this woman in this situation. If he does not understand then he will be ignoring the most important objection to the reason he has for making the judgement, whatever the reason happens to be. If he does understand the position of the woman but discounts it, then he can properly be accused of playing some sort of secret game. For instance, he might be a timid man who is throwing up a smoke-screen.

In the world of the Nazi, the Jew, as I pointed out above, is not any actual Jew but someone who is given a
role in the Nazi's phantasy life. What sort of phantasy life? There is, of course, no simple answer to this question. However, there is, I think, little doubt that a good many Nazis were schizoid, and that their attitudes towards and their treatment of Jews is to be properly understood in terms of the characteristic schizoid concern about self-identity.

A child murderer evokes horrific images in the minds of some people. He is a monster, a mad beast, etc. But these people are in phantasy. Actually the child murderer is just a man who lives a certain sort of phantasy life. One can understand why he is as he is. Of course, one must not allow him to go about killing children. But finding him intelligible does rule out regarding him as a monster, a remote and alien being. One cannot have it both ways.

Many people in the seventeenth century regarded the inmates of Bedlam as comic turns. But once one understands the nature of madness, what it is like to be mad, one sees them differently. (Any comic element would be seen against a tragic background. It would hurt.) One cannot both understand the insane and regard them in the way that people in the seventeenth century did. To regard them as comic turns presupposes a background of ignorance of what they are really like.
Each of these cases is an illustration of phantasy. That is, in each case a way of looking at something is dependent upon ignorance of the way that relevant others actually experience themselves and others, and the people concerned necessarily cease to look at things in these ways once they become aware of the reality of others.

4) CONCLUSIONS

In the Introduction to this chapter I discussed the possibility that there might be conflicts between different areas of human interest and concern which are insoluble due to the incomparability of the areas. That is, given conflicting areas, there is no way of showing that one should give way to the other if there is no common matter of interest and concern to which the conflicting areas can be subordinated. In reply, I have been arguing that there are some areas (phantasy areas) which depend for their very existence upon the people concerned being ignorant of other areas. When someone in phantasy seeks to understand other areas, he brings to the areas into which he is inquiring, a certain type of character, a certain outlook on life, a certain way of experiencing himself and others, a certain sort of history, etc. But he cannot conduct the inquiry properly and remain the person he is. For the knowledge that he gains necessarily results in his redescribing himself, in
a new way of looking at himself. This redescription is not simply a different way of describing himself. Rather is it a redescription made in the light of a greater understanding of himself. He now sees the person that he was against a very different background, and realizes that he was not what he thought he was. He realizes, that is, that he was what he was precisely because he was ignorant of that of which he is now aware.

To give yet another illustration of this: a servile person is someone who, broadly speaking, tries to please in all circumstances. He is not simply out to save his skin. He is protecting his self. He only feels that he exists at all when other people regard him favourably — independently of whether or not he merits their approval. In fact, however, he can only be the person he is, i.e. servile, by ignoring the truth about others. For others come in all colours, though he does not distinguish between them; or, if he does, his criteria have nothing much to do with the way others actually are. That is, others are simply men. They experience themselves and each other in an indefinite number of different ways. They have these and those fears and hopes, loves and hatreds. Some are perceptive and sympathetic. Others live phantasy lives. Some feel sorry for the servile man. Others are contemptuous. Yet others are indifferent. The trouble
with the servile man is that he does not realize that he is a certain sort of man in a world full of all sorts of men. He experiences himself as someone special, as one centre of consciousness in a world of dangerous objects. But the reality is that he is simply one of many. Once the servile man knows where he stands, once he starts to pay attention to others, to see them as they actually are, he can no longer be servile — unless he self-consciously pretends to be servile. He will no longer be servile because he will now see servility for what it really is — a kind of cowardice. But if he sees it for what it really is then he will already have eliminated the cause of the cowardice, i.e. his view of others as powerful gods whom he must placate. For others are not gods at all but men, or men pretending to be gods.

It is in this way that limits are set upon the evaluative freedom of everyone who makes judgements, performs actions, makes decisions, etc. One cannot be a child and understand the way men are, or the way children are. One cannot be a member of a closed society and understand life outside it, or within it. In one sense of the word, to the extent that a person is not in phantasy, the less free he is, i.e. the less able is he to speak with conviction of incomparable values, have idiosyncratic points of view, keep his pleasures separate
from those of others — or their absence in others — adopt the kinds of ideals that Hare calls 'fanatical', and, in general, ignore or avoid other people and their interests and concerns. His evaluative freedom will be limited in these ways because he cannot both not be in phantasy and, at the same time, be the sort of person who has these interests and values or does these things. For example, as I have shown, he cannot be a child, a primitive tribesman, a member of a closed village, town or family, a xenophobe, a racist; he cannot be self-conscious or self-engrossed, or, in general, experience himself as a single centre of consciousness in a world of objects; and he can possess none of the characteristics which depend for their existence upon his being any of these types of person.¹

In another sense, however, the man who moves out of phantasy becomes more free. For a man in phantasy is,

¹ If space permitted, it would be worthwhile describing some phantasy areas and discussing possible criteria for applying certain words which, if applied correctly, restrict evaluative freedom. These are words in the critical vocabulary that is developed by persons who strive to move out of phantasy; words like 'unrealistic', 'superficial', 'insincere', 'utopian', 'illusory', 'out of touch', 'capricious', 'unreasonable', 'over-simplified', 'ill-founded', 'unperceptive', 'evasive'. How these words are used correctly will depend upon the circumstances in any particular case and these may be indefinitely varied.
as I said above, 'immersed' in something or 'possessed' by it. He is in a false position because he does not understand others as they actually are or himself as he actually is.¹

It is now possible to see how an objection which might be raised against the sort of approach to the nature of moral issues which I have been outlining might be answered. The objection is that I am simply putting into modern dress the old Platonic doctrine that virtue is knowledge, and that this is a doctrine which has a fatal flaw. Phantasy, clearly, is a kind of ignorance. But is it really the case that knowledge of the ways that other people actually experience themselves and others have the bearing upon a person's acts and judgements that I say it has? Surely, knowing that something is the case is one thing, and acting or judging in this or that way is another? Surely it is sometimes possible to be aware of the content of reality, the way things are, and still make the judgements and perform the actions which would normally be made and done in phantasy.

¹ It is best in this place to refer to the concept of freedom briefly and in an oblique fashion. The topic is one that is both complex and difficult, and requires a full length separate study if it is to receive adequate treatment. An excellent account is given by Leing, The Self and Others, London, 1951, Chapters VI-XIII.
without being in phantasy?

This objection, of course, is one which has frequently been brought against the Intuitionists. For example, it has often been asked how knowing that something is good, on Moore's account of goodness, provides one with a reason for action. As Nowell-Smith remarks of Intuitionist theories generally:

A new world is revealed for our inspection; it contains such and such objects, phenomena, and characteristics; it is mapped and described in elaborate detail. No doubt it is all very interesting. If I happen to have a thirst for knowledge, I shall read on to satisfy my curiosity, much as I should read about new discoveries in astronomy or geography. Learning about 'values' or 'duties' might well be as exciting as learning about spiral nebulae or waterspouts. But what if I am not interested? Why should I do anything about these newly-revealed objects? Some things, I have now learnt, are right and others wrong; but why should I do what is right and eschew what is wrong?

But this 'intelligibility gap' only exists if one regards the areas which are to be understood as neutral areas and the knowledge of them as what Nowell-Smith calls 'theoretical knowledge'. However, as I have argued, a) areas of human interest and concern are not neutral areas, and b) they are not morally incomparable —

_Ethics, Penguin Books, 1956, p. 41._
or not always. If one seriously tries to understand the nature of a particular area, if one engages in the discourse relevant to this area, then the judgements one makes about it must take account of what people find in it. Neither is it always possible to argue that it is morally incomparable with the area with which it conflicts. For in order to make such a claim, one must understand the nature of the areas involved. But understanding is, I have argued, not simply learning what is the case. What is understood is not something which is passively contemplated, but something which changes the sort of person one is by destroying the backgrounds to one's acts and appraisals, and by becoming itself a background to one's future acts and appraisals.

But doesn't this have, perhaps, the odour of an elaborate confidence trick? What about the objection that it might be possible to know the content of reality yet still perform many of the acts and make many of the judgements made and done by people in phantasy without being in phantasy oneself?

But what precisely does this question mean? After all, a person's acts and appraisals are not made in a vacuum, independently of a point-making background. They are to be properly understood in terms of the sort of person he is - the way he experiences himself and
others, the kind of relationships he has with people, and the like. For instance, as I said above, I think that it is evident that very many of the people who persecute Jews are of the type I described as 'schizoid'. Broadly, by treating Jews in the way they do, they provide themselves with a sense of identity. But schizoid experience is phantasy experience. It depends for its existence upon the people who have it being in a state of a certain sort of ignorance. When this ignorance is removed, then the point which these people found in persecuting Jews is also removed. That is, when the schizoid anti-Semite understands Jews as they actually are — as they experience themselves and others etc. — (if I may be allowed to express this exceedingly complex state of affairs in this very general way), then the cause of his anti-Semitism ceases to exist. For it loses its point. What would it mean, then, to say that this man could still perform the actions and make the appraisals that he made when he was in phantasy? What is it to behave like an anti-Semite without being one? Of course, he might become a different sort of anti-Semite. But what sort? What kind of point-making background to his judgements and acts would there be now? Is it possible to be an anti-Semite without being in phantasy? To answer these questions would obviously require a detailed
study of the nature of anti-Semitism. But, speaking for myself, I cannot even conceive what it might be like to be an anti-Semite who does not play an elaborate sort of game in which Jews are given a phantasy role: a game which is abandoned when the players understand the way things are. This may be due to a lack of imagination on my part, but it is as inconceivable to me as is the possibility of someone understanding the sorts of people his parents actually are and, at the same time, being emotionally dependent upon them in the way that children are dependent upon their parents. One cannot, as I have said before, have it both ways—though many people seem to want to.

I shall pick up the threads of this line of argument in the second half of Chapter VI. Before doing so I want to discuss an important objection to the argument as developed so far.
CHAPTER VI

THE JUSTIFICATION OF MORAL RULES

1) INTRODUCTION

Towards the end of Chapter III I suggested that E appeared to have a logically impeccable position. I also said that any attempt to answer E's question (why should one be concerned about the interests of people other than oneself or the group of which one is a member?) seemed doomed to failure so long as one allowed the question to be asked at all in that particular form. If it can be properly asked, then there seems to be no way of rebutting the claim that the position of a moral exclusivist is rationally on all fours with the position of anyone else - which is precisely what the moral sceptic says.

I said, however, that E's question assumes a great deal that perhaps ought not to be assumed. It assumes a whole way of thinking about people and their affairs. It assumes that people's interests can always be correctly identified and fully described without the interests and concerns of the people who do this becoming involved in any way. Thus, it is always possible for someone to say:

By 'moral rules' I mean those rules which state when it is right and when it is wrong to cause harm to other people.
'Yes, I know what your interests are, but what have they got to do with me and my interests?' The people who hold restricted moralities are not exceptional. They too can have a full understanding of the positions of their opponents while maintaining their own positions intact. If this is the case, then E's question is a proper one to ask. And it will follow from this that the contents of actual restricted moralities can properly be regarded as not relevant to the philosophical issues raised by them.

In Chapter IV I examined this assumption in some detail, and argued that it should not be made. I argued, first of all, against the view that moral phenomena (e.g. moral beliefs, moral ideals, the virtues and vices) can be correctly analysed in terms of descriptive meaning and evaluative meaning. That is to say, I rejected one particular reason for making the assumption to E's question. The reason is that an exclusivist, for instance, can always refuse to consider any moral objection to his position on the grounds that the objection can be analysed into a factual content which is evaluatively neutral and cannot, therefore, be sufficient in itself to establish the objection, and an evaluative content which, however it might be characterized, is in need of justification. I rejected this reason on the
grounds that it ignores the fact that moral judgements are to be properly understood against a point-giving background. But the fact-value analysis of moral phenomena is applicable to all moral phenomena, even those that lack any sort of point — for example: 'Running round trees left handed is wrong', 'Why?', 'It just is good'. Thus, on this analysis, the answers to the questions: 'What does "good" mean?', 'What is meant by "ought"?', are different from the answers to the same questions when the purpose of asking them is to find out the point of calling this or that action 'good' or 'right'.

I went on to argue that if one approaches moral phenomena in the second way, then a picture emerges that is very different from the one provided by an analysis of the phenomena in terms of descriptive meaning and evaluative meaning. It becomes evident that one does not live in a world that provides a neutral content to different moral judgements. There are, on the contrary, many different worlds, worlds that differ both in kind and in complexity. When moral judgements conflict, looking for common ground is, of course, a necessary means of settling the disagreement. But it would be wrong to suppose that what is common is a neutral area. For example, the different judgements about the war in Vietnam made by, say, a Vietnamese peasant and a Daughter of the American
Revolution, are, of course, about the same war. But their differences cannot be properly understood unless one sees them as involving a conflict of two different worlds, two different areas of interest and concern, two different traditions and outlooks on life, two different ideas of what constitutes a meaningful and satisfactory life and an empty or wasted life. To each, the other is foreign, alien, and more remote than the animals they keep. Of course, there are aspects of the two worlds that are common to both, but the content of what is common consists in, as I put it, what they find in things, what they see as important and worthwhile and a reason for despair. And to the extent that each becomes aware of this common ground their differences will be minimized.

The second point that I wanted to make in Chapter IV was that understanding the point of a moral judgement is not like having knowledge of a neutral area. One can have knowledge of a neutral area without one's own interests and concerns becoming involved in any way. One can correctly say of it: 'I understand it but what has it got to do with me?'. But to understand the point of a judgement involves a recognition of limitations upon the judgements one might make on the area in question. If, for example, someone says that a certain activity is worthwhile, then this raises the question of what he means
by 'worthwhile', and also the question of whether or not he is right to say that the activity is worthwhile - for, perhaps, his experience is very limited, or perhaps he is deluded in some way. If one denies that the activity is worthwhile, then one must explain oneself. One must show, that is, that the person who says that it is, is mistaken, that he does not find in the activity what he says he finds in it, that he is misdescribing the activity, etc. If a man claims that some area has nothing to do with him and his interests and concerns, he may be saying all sorts of things. For example, he may be saying that he does not consider that there is much in the area in question and that people who say that there is are mistaken; or he may be showing that he is too lazy or too self-interested to be bothered about examining the area; or he may be saying that although there is no doubt that the area is one of importance, it is not important to him - as a person who has no interest in art, but is aware of his own ignorance of it, might say of art. Thus, if a person says of love-making: 'So what? What has this got to do with me?'; his position is unlike that of a person who says the same of a neutral area, e.g. 'Sierra Leone is in the monsoon belt'. If one believes that there is a lot in love-making, one will want to know what the 'So what?' means - is the person saying that he will be wasting his
time if he engages in love-making? Is he denying that it is a worthwhile activity? Or what? To say 'So what?' of a neutral area, on the other hand, raises no further questions - unless, of course, the reasons for giving the description of the area in the first place make it so.

In Chapter V I discussed a reply that might be made to all this. This was that it might be possible for a man who holds a restricted morality to explore other areas and show that they cannot be compared morally with his own. That is, he might be able to show that different people find different things worthwhile, and that, though different areas collide with each other, there is no way of showing that one must give way to another. In order for him to prove this point he must, of course, show that what he says is true of existing areas. Logical possibilities have no place in the present context. If, for example, he wants to show that the 'good' of sadistic activities cannot be compared morally with the 'good' of, say, love-making, then he must first of all understand what is actually involved in love-making.

I then went on to argue that it is often impossible for people to understand what other people find in other areas without giving up their own positions or, at least, greatly modifying them. The reason for this is that very many people are, to a greater or lesser degree, in that
state of ignorance that I called 'phantasy', and the characteristic of phantasy areas is that they depend for their very existence upon ignorance of other areas.

These, then, broadly speaking, are the ways in which E's question (why should one be concerned about the interests of people other than oneself or the group of which one is a member?) can be undermined. The question, that is, is not, as was assumed in Chapter III, one that can properly be asked. If it is asked, then it is by particular individuals in particular circumstances. Its meaning, in other words, is situation-bound, i.e. it is to be properly understood in terms of the contexts in which it occurs. As these contexts are of very great variety, so too will the points that the question will have. It is a question that, for example, can be asked by lazy men, muddled men, stupid men, servile men, schizoid men, men in closed societies, etc. Thus, there is no E-type question as such, and, hence, there is no general problem of moral scepticism.

But if E's question is an improper one, then what does moral scepticism amount to? My account of the nature of moral phenomena and the corrigibility of moral judgements leaves plenty of room for sceptical experience - for example, people who feel that their lives lack any point, who feel that nothing is permanently worthwhile, who have
in various ways deeply pessimistic outlooks on life. But it leaves no room for moral scepticism of the philosophical kind, the kind that is associated with E-type questions and certain types of analysis of moral phenomena.

The question that arises now is: 'What is the relationship between the account of moral phenomena and of how moral judgements are corrigible that I offered in Chapters IV and V, and what I referred to in Chapter III as "the central problem of moral philosophy"?' This problem, it will be remembered, was that of finding moral reasons for acting. A moral reason is something that, to use Baier's words, 'requires us often to do things which are not in our best interests and to refrain from doing things which would be in our best interests'. That is, it is a reason for acting that people, if they are fully rational, will accept as a reason for them, in spite of the fact that it is not in their interests to act on it.

The context in which this problem arose was that of finding a way in which to answer E's question. Now, if the argument of Chapters IV and V is correct, then it is possible to reject moral scepticism without introducing the notions of duty and obligation. If this is the case, do these concepts cease to have any raison d'être?

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'Moral Obligation', p.12.
The answer would seem to be no. It can be argued that the account that I have given of phantasy puts all forms of phantasy on an equal footing. But a distinction should surely be drawn between, say, the phantasy of childhood and the phantasy of the Nazi. After all, one would not normally say that children qua children are immoral, but the Nazi is, if anyone is, immoral. Or again, a tribesman who quietly and peacefully lives his life immersed in tribal phantasy is surely not immoral, but he is immoral when he kills explorers who wish him no harm. It is one thing to be a savage, and another thing to be an immoral savage. In other words, my account does not seem to solve the 'moral problem' for it seems to ignore the question of how one is to decide when one is and is not justified in doing to others what is not in the interests of others.

Now, the question of when one is and when one is not justified in causing harm to other people is, if it is to be answered at all, one that assumes that another question has been answered. This is: 'Why be concerned about other people at all?'. I have argued that if one allows that this question is one that can properly be asked, then

Whether the immoral savage is blameworthy is a different matter.
one cannot answer the moral sceptic, and, hence, one will not be able to answer the first question. I have also argued that the question: 'Why be concerned about other people at all?', is not one that can be properly asked. If this is the case, in what way do the reasons I gave for saying that it is not a proper one to ask, themselves provide a background in terms of which the question: 'When is one and when is one not justified in causing harm to other people?', can be properly understood?

I shall discuss this question in Section 3). But, before doing so, it is necessary to examine the way in which the question was raised. For the claim was not simply that my account of phantasy omitted any reference to it, but that it failed to distinguish between what is immoral and what is not immoral. On this view, a condition of saying that an action is immoral is that it causes harm to other people that one is not justified in causing; and, in so far as actions do not cause harm to other people they are not immoral, i.e., they are non-moral.

What is meant by 'moral' here? What does it mean to say that actions that harm only oneself are non-moral? Perhaps what is meant is that no one is justified in stopping people from harming themselves, or no one is justified in punishing people who harm only themselves, or only particular people in special circumstances are
justified in punishing people who harm themselves; but that one is always justified in preventing people from harming other people unless they can give a good reason for causing them harm. Many philosophers, however, have tried to make more of the distinction than this. They argue that moral reasons for acting have a 'binding force' that other reasons for acting do not have, and actions that affect only oneself lack this 'binding force', i.e. they are non-moral. This belief is, of course, one that is held by many philosophers and non-philosophers alike. It is the belief that there is something special about actions that cause harm to other people, and that anyone who denies this is attacking the very concept of morality itself, i.e. is adopting a position of moral scepticism.

In the following section I shall argue that it is not the case that 'moral' and 'non-moral' can be defined in this way. It will become clear in Section 3) that any attempt to do so makes it impossible to answer the question that it is trying to answer, i.e. when is one justified, and when is one not justified in causing harm to other people? For the definitions make self-interest irrelevant to answering the question, when, in fact, it is a necessary condition of the possibility of answering it.

2) **OBLIGATION AND DUTIES TO ONESELF**

A typical contemporary exposition of the view that
the core of a rational ethical theory is to be found in
the concepts of obligation and social answerability, is to
be found in W. Singer's Generalization in Ethics.¹ Like
Baier, Singer distinguishes sharply between self-
interested reasons (which he calls 'prudential'² reasons);

¹ New York, 1961, Chapter X.

² Cf. W.D. Palk, 'Morality, Self, and Others', in
H.-N. Castenada and G. Nakhnikian (eds.), Morality and the
Language of Conduct, Detroit, 1963. Palk rightly remarks
that it is a mistake to assume 'that everything that one
ever does for one's own sake, one does as a matter of
prudence or expediency'. (P.34.) Prudence is only one
way of looking after oneself. It is to play safe. But
there are many things that are worth pursuing that involve
taking risks. For example, 'that someone ought to stick
to his vocation when his heart is in it enough to make it
worth risking security or health or life itself is not a
precept of prudence, but of courage'. (P.34.) It is
also a mistake to equate prudence and expediency.

To save may be prudent; but whether
it is expedient...to start now is
another matter. With a lot of
money to spare at the moment it
will be expedient; otherwise it
will not. But it may be prudent
all the same...³ Reasons of
expediency are...Reasons for doing
something on the ground that it is
incidentally at hand to serve one's
purpose, or because it serves a
purpose quite incidental to the
purpose for which one would normally
be doing this thing. One marries
for reasons of expediency when one
marries for money, but not when in
hope of finding happiness. (P.36.)

As I shall show below, that there are different ways of
caring for oneself is a matter of importance.
and moral reasons.

Prudence always involves reference to one's own interest, one's own needs, wishes, or desires. The meaning of prudence has been well brought out by Whately: 'Whatever is done wholly and solely from motives of personal expediency — from calculations of individual loss or gain — is always accounted a matter of prudence and not of virtue.' The two concepts (i.e., prudence and morality) are distinct, and we can distinguish prudential from moral reasons, prudential from moral judgements, and prudential from moral actions — as well as imprudent from immoral actions. In evaluating the prudence of an action, we must consider its effects on the agent. But its morality depends on its effects on others. The fact that an act would tend to harm oneself is a reason for regarding it as imprudent, but not a reason for regarding it as immoral; the fact that an act would tend to harm others is a reason for regarding it as immoral, but not a reason for regarding it as imprudent.  

Thus, prudence is an area that does not itself give rise to moral (as contrasted with non-moral) questions. In themselves, neither prudence nor imprudence are moral or immoral. For a necessary condition of moral questions arising is that a person's behaviour affects other people. This means that the criteria of the morality, the

1 Generalization in Ethics, pp. 302-3.  
2 Ibid., p. 302.  
3 Ibid., p. 303.
immorality, or the moral indifference of prudential behaviour are not prudential criteria. Imprudence is only immoral when it causes harm to others. Prudence is only morally obligatory when failing to be prudent means failing to do one's duty to others. For example, when

one has undertaken to represent or to act in the interest of another, or is acting as a representative or as an official of some group or organization. With respect to the interest one is representing, one is morally bound to be prudent.!

And prudent and imprudent behaviour is morally indifferent when it does not affect the interests of others, or when it affects others in a morally permissible way. However, the latter point, particularly, creates difficulties for Singer's argument. For if decisions about when it is morally permissible to act prudently are made to rest upon considerations about the effect of prudent action upon other people, then the distinction between morality and prudence that Singer wants to draw would not seem to be the metaethical one that he believes it to be. Prudential behaviour, he says, is morally permissible when there is no moral reason against it. But one might reply to this that there are many occasions when a person is entirely justified in choosing to do the prudent thing in spite of

\[\text{Ibid., p. 309.}\]
the effects of his action upon other people. It could be objected that this simply means that it is permissible for him to act in this way because he has no duty to others, or, though there normally is a duty for him to act otherwise, there are, nevertheless, exceptional cases. But on what grounds can one decide that a particular prudential action is permissible in this sense? How can one make room for prudence as an overriding consideration in spite of the effect the prudential act has on others, if the answer to the question of what is and what is not a moral reason depends upon the effect of the action upon others? If, say, actions are said to be morally wrong if they cause harm to others, how, if this is one's moral criterion, can one decide which cases are exceptional? Surely exceptional cases are those in which others, in spite of the harm that befalls them, ought to admit that a person has a right to choose the prudent course? The decision to grant such a right would, of course, involve considerations of the effect of the prudential act upon other people. But it could not involve only these considerations. To argue that it does, as Singer seems to do, is to deny that there is any room for overriding prudential considerations in spite of the effect of prudential actions upon others. One can deny it - as Calvin did - but this means that the distinction between
prudence and morality is not a metaethical one.

This objection against the prudence-morality distinction is, as I shall show below, an important one. Singer, however, does not discuss it. The reason, probably, is not that he did not consider it but that he did not consider it relevant to the thesis he tries to argue. He does not deny that prudential reasons are good reasons for acting. He does not deny that they can be overriding reasons. What he does deny is that they are moral reasons. What he means by this is that whereas people are, in a sense, 'free' to be prudent or imprudent, they are not 'free' to perform or refrain from performing any acts that affect other people's interests. For there are many acts that one has a duty to perform or refrain from performing. If an act is a duty then it has a stringency or binding force attached to it that self-regarding acts do not in themselves possess.

What he means by this and the argument he gives to justify it is as follows:

People, he claims, often speak of men having duties to themselves. For example, the duty of not committing suicide or of wasting one's time. But the idea of

1 Cf., also, Baier, 'Moral Obligation', p.13.
2 Cf. cit., pp.311-318.
duties to oneself involves a contradiction. So-called
duties to oneself are, in fact, 'either not genuine moral
duties, or, if they are, they are not duties to oneself'.

His argument falls into two main parts:

1) If one has a duty to a person, then that person
has a right against oneself.

Thus, if I owe you a certain sum of
money, then you have a right to
receive and demand that money from me
....But it follows from this that to
have a duty to oneself would be to
have a right against oneself, and this
is surely nonsense. What could it
mean to have a right or a claim
against oneself? (Could one sue
oneself in a court of law for return
of the money one owes oneself?)

2) If a person has an obligation, then he cannot
release himself from it. All he can do is break it.
However, the person to whom he has the obligation can
release him from it by giving up his right or by deciding
not to exercise it.

[A duty to oneself, then, would be a
duty from which one could release
oneself at will, and this is self-
contradictory. A 'duty' from which
one could release oneself at will is
not, in any literal sense, a duty at
all.]

1 Ibid., p. 312.
2 Ibid., pp. 312-3.
3 Ibid., p. 313.
Analogously, one cannot make genuine promises to oneself, for a promise to oneself is something 'from which one could release oneself at will'.\footnote{Ibid., p.314.} 'I promise myself' is metaphorical. It expresses a resolution, a determination to do the act. But a genuine promise is a promise even though one is not resolved to keep it, i.e. if it is a lying promise.

Neither can one literally owe something to oneself or be in debt to oneself. To say that one can is to use the words metaphorically. They express one's right to do something, or one's determination to do it, or one's view that it would be imprudent to do otherwise.

Thus, to say that one has a duty to oneself is one way of saying that one has a right to do it, that there is no moral consideration against it.

He considers the objection\footnote{Ibid., p.315f.} that, though one may be released from duties arising out of a contractual relationship, one cannot be released from duties in every case, and perhaps duties to oneself are of this kind. He replies that in every case when one has a duty to someone then one can be released from the duty. Hence, if there are duties to oneself, then one can release oneself from
them. What is more, all duties are either duties to someone or to some group, or they presuppose such duties. In the latter case there are persons to whom one is under an obligation, and persons regarding whom one is under the obligation. A person regarding whom one is under an obligation is someone who stands to benefit by its performance. One can, therefore, have duties regarding oneself, though not duties to oneself. That is, oneself is the person who stands to benefit from the performance of duties to others.

One of the main difficulties with this account is raised by the expression 'can release oneself at will'. It is certainly not the case that doing what is in one's best interests is always easier than doing what is in other people's interests. There is no reason to suppose, for example, that a drug addict finds it easier to give up his addiction than it is for most people to pay their debts. ¹ Nor is it always easier for people to refrain from pursuing their best interests than it is for them to refrain from doing what is in the interests of others.

Nor is it the case that reasons of self-interest are always inferior in some sense to other sorts of reasons. They are not always less good and they do not always cease

to be good if people cease to care about their own interests. A man, for example, may not be interested in looking after his health, but it does not follow that health is not a good, that there are no good reasons why people ought to look after their health, or that there is no good reason why he ought to look after his health.

Consider, also, those other ways of caring for oneself which fall under general descriptions like 'concern for one's integrity and honour and self-respect', 'being honest with oneself or true to oneself'. As Falk puts it:

One's own good comprises not only one's states but also the possession of oneself as a mind. One cannot earnestly wish to lose hold of oneself, to be reduced to a shaky mass when in trouble; one needs to be in control and to be able to cope with whatever may come. And this preservation of oneself as a capable ego is also something that one may find that one ought to care for when one is too driven or despondent to be inclined to care for it. Here is a type of concern for oneself for which one has reasonable ground though one is not always ready for it by inclination. Among the duties of self-perfection is the conscientious man's commitment to live without evading any issue - to seek out and weigh what cogent reasons would lead him to do, and to submit himself without self deception or evasion to their determination. All principled conduct which is reasoned practice and not just well-bred habit turns on this commitment as its pivot. It involves the acceptance of the principle of non-escapism as the overall rule of life. And this commitment
has the most intimately personal reason. It rests on an individual's inmost concern to preserve himself intact as a living and functioning self: mentally in possession of himself and of his world, able to look at himself and what he is doing without having to hide himself from himself. The penalty of alighting this need is his undoing as a person.¹

Furthermore, as I have already said, a man is, surely, often justified in putting his own interests first even though, by doing so, he causes harm to other people. It could be argued that it is not the best interests of others that are harmed in such cases. But this is certainly not always true. It is not true, for instance, when people, for the sake of their own sanity, are compelled to abandon those who are dependent upon them.

For these reasons I can find no absurdity in the notion of a right against oneself.² Just as another can have good reason for making a claim upon one, so one can have good reason for making a claim upon oneself. One can regard oneself as a person whose will is weak and tell oneself to snap out of it. One cannot, of course, sue oneself in a court of law, but there are other ways of

¹ Ibid., pp. 50-1.
forcing oneself to do what one is not inclined to do.\footnote{But one can conceive a court of law ordering that people be prevented from harming themselves. And one can envisage people going to court to request an order restraining themselves, or to be punished because they are weak-willed.}

Granted all this, in what sense can one 'release oneself at will', or, indeed, simply 'release oneself'? Is there a sense which does not lay the person who holds this view open to the charge that he is simply someone who believes that people who put their interests first are being selfish? That is, someone who holds the view that the individual self is insignificant, degraded through and through, or something of the sort? And on what grounds is there a distinction to be drawn between morality and self-interest if it is the case that many self-interested reasons for acting are good reasons, and are good reasons even if people do not want to act on them?

Baier,\footnote{Moral Obligation.} while he agrees that many self-interested reasons are good reasons for acting whether or not people want to act on them, nevertheless argues that there are no duties to oneself because one is not obliged to do what is in one's own interests. Self-interested reasons for acting lack what he calls 'moral binding force'.

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\footnote{but one can conceive a court of law ordering that people be prevented from harming themselves. And one can envisage people going to court to request an order restraining themselves, or to be punished because they are weak-willed.}

\footnote{Moral Obligation.}
What...gives directives moral binding force...is...the fact that they concern themselves with issues and problems whose solution is not solely the agent's business but also that of others who have a legitimate concern about whether or not the person to whom such a directive applies follows it or not.¹

Does Baier's view help to clarify Singer's position? That is, can a distinction between morality and prudence be properly drawn if for 'one can release oneself' one reads: 'It is not other people's business if one fails to do what is in one's own best interests', and if for 'one cannot release oneself' one reads: 'It is not solely one's own business what one decides to do, because other people have a legitimate interest in what one decides to do'?

The answer is no. For it does not follow from an explication of the notion of 'moral binding force' in terms of the legitimate interests of others that one has no duties to oneself. The legitimate interests of others are, clearly, not simply those interests that others happen to have in what one does. There is nothing 'binding' about these. They must, therefore, be those interests which one ought to recognize as being worthy of consideration or those interests to whose satisfaction one ought to give priority. But, if this is the case, then

¹ Ibid., p.14.
to say that it is not solely one's own business what one decides to do because other people have a legitimate interest in what one does, is to say no more than that if one has a duty to others one cannot release oneself from it. Hence, to say that one can release oneself is simply to say that one has no duty to others; it does not mean that one has no duty.

Neither Baier nor Singer, therefore, have shown that a necessary condition of an action being a moral one is that it affects other people's interests. And, if one also bears in mind the positive arguments in defence of self-interest that I gave earlier, then it would appear to be false (or, at any rate, grossly misleading) to say that it is a necessary condition, for there is nothing sufficiently distinctive about actions that affect other people to make the contrast with actions that affect only oneself.

3) THE JUSTIFICATION OF MORAL RULES

In the Introduction to this chapter I said that it

These were: 1) It is often harder to do what is in one's own interests than it is to do what is in the interests of others; 2) many reasons for performing self-interested actions are not, in any sense, inferior to reasons for performing other sorts of actions; 3) one is often justified in doing what is in one's own interests in spite of its effect on the interests of others. Cf. 12, 181-3 above.
could be argued that the account that I gave of phantasy in Chapter V puts all forms of phantasy on an equal footing, but that a distinction should surely be drawn between, say, a tribesman who quietly and peacefully lives his life immersed in tribal phantasy and a tribesman who kills harmless explorers. For the first is not behaving immorally while the second is behaving immorally. In Section 2) I argued that it is wrong to treat this distinction as illustrating a thesis about the nature of morality, for one cannot limit in this way the area of what is to count as 'morality'. The judgement, however, may well be true if it is regarded as an application of a moral rule that it is wrong to interfere with people when they do no harm to other people, but that one is justified in taking steps to prevent them when they do cause harm to other people. Thus, if an explorer discovers a primitive tribe and wishes them no harm, they would be wrong to kill him; but if his purpose is to make the members of the tribe into slaves, then they might be justified in killing him.

But how is this rule, and, hence, the judgement, to be justified? To a primitive man there might be no such thing as a 'harmless' explorer - just as to an anti-Semite there is no such thing as an 'innocent' Jew. The tribesman might well admit that it is not in the interests
of the explorer to be killed, but argue that it is in the interests of the tribe that he be killed. Equally, the slave-trader might well admit that it is not good for people to be slaves, but that it is in his interests to provide slaves for people who want them.

The difficulty here, to put the point more generally, is the possibility of very many different criteria of what is to count as 'harmful' - or, to put it more generally still, of what is to count as 'not being in one's interests'. To a Nazi, for example, the very existence of Jews is 'harmful', i.e. a barrier in the way of the realization of the ideal of racial purity. Now, perhaps the most central dogma in liberal moral thought has been the view that what an individual (or group) considers to be good or bad is his business alone, and that what the individual does only matters morally when he tries to compel other people either to accept or conform to his criteria of good and bad, or when he pursues what he considers to be good at the expense of what other people consider to be good. On this view, one is morally justified in causing harm to other people when they cause, or threaten to cause, harm to oneself.¹ This doctrine,

¹ Unless, of course, one is able to restrain them without harming them.
however, is not one that can, in any sense, be regarded as morally basic. That is to say, it is not a doctrine that can be formulated in terms of a principle or set of principles that can be applied independently of what any particular individual rightly considers to be good or harmful. For what one man considers harmful - and, hence, what he feels justified in doing in order to prevent the harm - might be very different from what another man considers to be harmful. If this is the case, then the principles formulated in terms of the doctrine cannot themselves settle conflicts of interests. The doctrine, in other words, is vacuous unless it is shown that one is justified in adopting certain values but one is not justified in adopting certain others.

How, then, are conflicts of interests to be settled?

Consider, again, the case of a tribesman who kills an explorer who wishes neither him nor his tribe any harm. The view of the tribesman is that the explorer is harmful. The explorer might, for example, have walked on ground that is taboo, or he might have looked at the women of the tribe - a very serious offence when done by a stranger - or his very foreignness might be regarded as profoundly disturbing, or they might feel that the gods will be angry if he is not sacrificed to them.

On what grounds can one say that the killing of the
explorer is wrong? First, one must understand the nature of the background to the act in terms of which the act is to be properly understood. The tribesman who kills the explorer kills him because he is a tribesman, because of the kind of life and outlook and tradition that he shares with other members of his tribe. The tribe is a closed society. It is, in other words, a society which is characterized by ignorance of its own true nature. Its true nature is that it is a small group of people who know little or nothing of the world outside the tribe yet make global judgements; who have no experience of the ways in which people outside the tribe experience themselves and others — including the members of the tribe — and who see others solely in terms of tribal values and experiences, i.e. independently of the way others actually are; who live their lives within the context of a highly complex and rigid system of rules that they regard as unquestionable; who have numerous beliefs about God and nature for which they have no, or only coincidental, evidence; who have only a very limited vision of what is a worthwhile life, and who have no awareness of the existence of anything better. One could go on, but I think that enough has been said, both here and in the last

1 Cf. Chapter V, p.145f.
chapter, to justify my making the following claim. This is that any primitive tribesman who correctly describes himself, i.e. what he is qua primitive tribesman, will no longer be a primitive tribesman. For to be such a person it is necessary to regard certain questionable things as unquestionable, it is to be ignorant of the ways in which others experience themselves and others, to have a very limited view of the good life, etc. But if he is no longer a primitive tribesman, then his killing of the explorer who wishes neither himself nor his tribe any harm will have lost its point — or, rather, there may be a point, but it will not be the same point. One cannot kill a man because he has caused offence to the gods if one is an atheist.

It might be objected here that the killing of the explorer is morally wrong whether or not the person who kills him happens to be immersed in tribal phantasy. What is more, surely right actions can be performed by people in phantasy as well as by people who are not? That is to say, is it not the case that I am trying to make the morality of an action depend in some way on the interests of the agent?

Now, of course, many rules are of the form, 'one ought not (morally) to do X', and the rules are rightly considered to hold whatever the state of mind of the
person who does do X. But the problem that I am concerned with is the justification of these rules, and here the case is different. When one applies a rule - when one says: 'You ought not do X' - one is saying, obviously, that the reason that the person has for doing X is not one that he is justified in acting upon. Thus, if, for example, one says of the primitive tribesmen that he ought not to kill the explorer, one is saying that the tribesman's reasons for killing him are not good reasons. This means that if one holds that it is wrong to kill people who wish one no harm, and if one believes that the explorer is harmless, then one will not be seeing things in the way that the primitive tribesman sees things, one will not have the concept of harm that is peculiar to the tribe; one will believe that the tribe should not have the interests it does have - those interests which explain why the members of the tribe regard the explorer as harmful. If one cannot show that they should not have these interests, then one will not be able to establish the judgement that it is wrong to kill the explorer. Putting this generally, given any moral rule, one cannot justify the claim that it ought not to be broken, even though the person who breaks it thinks that he is justified in doing so, unless one can show that the background which gives point to the rule-breaking action is defective. Otherwise,
one will be forced to admit that there are no limitations upon what is to count as 'harmful-to-me', and, hence, no limitation, other than a prudential one, on what steps one is justified in taking in order to prevent others from harming oneself. In order to avoid this, one must be able to say correctly, that once the reasons for saying that the rule-breaking actions are morally wrong are properly understood by the people who perform them, then the actions will lose the point that they had for these people - for they will no longer be seen things in the same way. And how is one to proceed here except in the way that I have indicated?

It is now possible to see why it is a mistake to ignore questions of self-interest in discussing the problem of when one is and is not justified in causing harm to other people.

If it were possible to justify rules which state when it is wrong and when it is permissible to harm people, without presupposing an account of interests that ought not to be pursued and values that should not be held whether or not they cause harm to others, then questions about what is in one's own best interests would have no place in determining what one ought to do or refrain from doing. But, clearly, this is not the case. At the same time, it is a mistake to base answers to the question of
when one is end is not justified in causing harm to other people or what is in a person’s best interests. I do not mean that it is a mistake in any particular case; for, as I pointed out in Section 2), I see no reason to deny that one is often justified in putting one’s own interests first, even though doing so causes harm to others. But it is a mistake as a philosophical enterprise. The reason is that the notion of an ‘interest’ is not strong enough to prevent the sceptic from getting a foot in the door. It may well be that, as Baier1 puts it, acting in one’s best interests involves working out for ourselves ‘a life plan whose realization would make our life as rich and worthwhile as possible’, and that ‘as we grow older and wiser, we may have to modify this plan in the light of our changed circumstances’. But this does not rule out the possibility that what is in some person’s best interests can only be realized at the cost of a great deal of misery and suffering to others. Of course, one can deny this, arguing that those interests that make other people happy, or, at least, do not harm them, are the most deeply satisfying. But it is not easy to see how one could substantiate this as a general thesis. If, for example, a man robs a bank, is in no danger of

being caught, and is not at all disturbed by the
unhappiness this causes the depositors, then his state of
mind is as if he had come by the money honestly. If one
denies that it is in his best interests to rob the bank,
then one will be saying, perhaps, that it is not in his
best interests to have a lot of money. This may be true.
On the other hand, it may not be true. Or one may be
saying that a person who causes harm to others is, even
though it does not disturb him, someone who is cut off
from the good things in life, i.e. is someone who cannot
satisfy what is in his best interests. This again may be
true, for such a person might be lonely, suspicious of
others, unable to love anyone, etc. But it is not
obviously always true. Perhaps the harm caused is only
slight and temporary, perhaps the depositors have plenty
of money deposited elsewhere, perhaps the thief gives all
the money that he has stolen to charity, perhaps he uses
it to cure his sick children. There are an indefinite
number of possibilities here that go counter to the charge
that it cannot be in his best interests to steal the
money. What is more, while it may not be in a man's best
interests to do X, doing X might be the best thing for him
to do in the circumstances. Having a guilty conscience
might be better than being tortured to death, servility
might be better than starvation, it might be better to
have corrupt officials than to have no officials at all.

A further argument against basing the answer to the question of when one is and is not justified in causing harm to other people solely on self-interest, rests on the fact that the condition of being able to answer the question correctly is the absence of phantasy. As I put it in Chapter V, it rests on a knowledge of the way things are. But this knowledge is only sometimes a source of happiness, for the truth is very often unpleasant, and, sometimes, for some people, unbearable. For example, a man might come to see that the group of which he is a member is made up of people who are arrogant, selfish, and bigoted. But circumstances might be such that it is impossible for him to leave it. This means that he has to spend his life with people with whom he has nothing in common and whom he cannot help but despise. The most that he can hope for out of life is that he gets by, i.e. does not become too unhappy.

However, in spite of this, there is an important relationship between self-interest and the answer to the question of when one is and is not justified in causing harm to other people. I have argued that the absence of phantasy is a sufficient condition of correctly answering the question on any particular occasion of its being asked. But escaping from phantasy is only possible if
one allows it to be possible, i.e. if one does not turn one's back on the possibility of one's becoming a different sort of person. For instance, a person who experiences himself as weak and helpless, who always believes himself to be what he feels others take him to be, who is filled with a compulsive need to appease others, and who always represses all feelings of hostility that he has towards others (in which he might include all criticism of others), might well be terrified of the possibility of any kind of threat to his way of life. Hence, he might avoid all those situations in which there is a possibility that he or others might do something that would constitute such a threat. If, therefore, this person is to become aware of the actual attitudes of other people towards him, if he is to come to realize that there is a wide disjunction between the way he experiences others and the ways in which others actually experience themselves and others, then he must a) face the fact that he is afraid of other people and also afraid of doing anything to overcome this fear, and b), be willing to make an effort to find out the true nature of what he fears.

Generalizing, one can say that necessary conditions of escaping from a state of phantasy are a) that one is honest with oneself. A man must, as Falk puts it, be able to look at himself and what he is doing without
having to hide himself from himself'. ¹ For instance, one might be accustomed to looking at oneself through rose-coloured spectacles. Thus, a person might believe that he respects other people, is concerned about their interests, is benevolent, etc., when, in fact, he is engaged in exploiting them for the sake of his own prestige. Or one might have a strong interest in not thinking about what one is really like. For example, a person might despise himself and, in order to avoid thinking about himself, immerse himself in an activity the value of which, in consequence of the motive he has for engaging in it, he does not question. And b), one must be willing to make an effort to discover the true nature of the constituents of what one can, for want of a better word, call one's 'world', e.g. the people with whom one has relationships, the society of which one is a member, the authorities whom one obeys, and, of course, oneself. This, clearly, is a general condition of moving out of phantasy. But, given that one is willing, it is necessary, if one's efforts are not to be abortive, to care for oneself, to be a 'man of practical wisdom' in the Aristotelian sense. One needs, that is, to keep oneself

¹ 'Morality, Self, and Others', p. 51.
'in good shape as a sane and self-possessed being',¹ and this will involve considerations of health and self-respect, concern that one does not allow intemperance to become a habit or one's interests to become too narrowly specialized. Practical wisdom is, of course, a topic in itself. It falls, however, in the field of morals proper rather than moral philosophy and, hence, any sort of detailed discussion of it lies outside the scope of this thesis. My sole concern here is to indicate the place on the map that it is partly the function of moral philosophy to construct, that such a discussion can properly enter. I am claiming that self-knowledge and practical wisdom, though they may also enter elsewhere, are necessary conditions of answering correctly the question: 'When is one justified, and when is one not justified in causing harm to other people?'. They are necessary because, given that a man is in that state of ignorance that I called 'phantasy' (the absence of which is a sufficient condition of answering the question), he will not be able to escape the phantasy if he does not satisfy both conditions. If he does not understand himself, he will not be in a position to understand others, for self-deceit

¹ Ibid., p.28. Cf., also, the passage quoted on pp.182-3.
and phantasy accounts of others are interrelated. And if he does not care for himself, he will not be able to make the necessary effort to discover the true nature of the constituents of his world. What is more, if he does not care for himself, he will not be in a position to care for anyone else; and if he does not leave the latter possibility open, then he will be unable to experience others as they actually are, i.e. as they actually experience themselves and others.†

* * *

This account of how moral rules are to be justified is, admittedly, sketchy. However, as I indicated in the Preface, this is, to some extent at least, unavoidable. It is unavoidable because the thesis that I have been arguing is, in a fundamental sense, incomplete. I have tried to give an account of moral judgements, of the corrigibility of moral judgements, and of how moral rules are to be justified, in terms of a number of concepts of the way in which moral phenomena are fundamentally

† As I argued in Chapter IV, one cannot predict the outcome of an effort to understand the nature of an area of human interest and concern. It may or may not result in one coming to care for other people. But if the possibility that one might come to care for others is closed (and, also, if the possibility that one might come to despise them is closed), then the possibility of coming to understand them as they actually are will also be closed.
structured, (e.g. area of human interest and concern, background, phantasy¹). That is to say, the concepts reflect one possible way of looking at the world, one way of organizing experience rather than another. For this reason, the persuasiveness of my account is very much dependent upon whether it is believed that the examples of the various points that I have been trying to make are good examples, i.e. whether it is believed that the subject matter of the examples can be correctly thought about in the way that I have described. It is also dependent upon whether my concepts can be stretched to make sense of experience that I have not considered. It may be the case that the concepts actually distort many areas of experience - and this will be fatal to the universality of the concepts and, hence, to the account that I have given of moral judgements, the corrigibility of moral judgements, and how moral rules are to be justified. Hence, if it is claimed that my account of how moral rules are to be justified is unconvincing, the consequent dispute will involve a more detailed discussion of the examples that I have given and a detailed discussion of further examples. But if this

¹ No doubt there are other related concepts of the same fundamental type that I have not considered. Indeed, it is almost certainly the case that there are. This is another sense in which my argument is incomplete.
in the case, then I am faced by a difficulty, and it is in virtue of this difficulty that my argument is incomplete. The difficulty is that one can imagine so many possible reasons for objecting to my argument as it is illustrated in my examples, that there seems to be no systematic way in which they can be raised and answered.

Suppose, for example, that someone claims that a man might believe that he is morally justified in performing the same action (i.e. killing the explorer) as the tribesman in my illustration, even though he is not a tribesman. This, of course, is possible. But what turns on it? Who is this man and why does he believe that he is right to kill the explorer? Whatever the answer, (and there are, of course, many possible answers), what is certain is that there is an open field for possible discussion.\footnote{Cf. Chapter IV.} Even if the killer is someone who believes that he is justified simply because he finds it pleasurable, he is not immune. But precisely what he is not immune from, just how the discussion might go, is not a question that I can answer. For I am not acquainted with this person. I do not know what he is like, and I do not know what he might say. All that I could do, in the absence of an actual person, would be to write a novel.
or construct a dialogue — though even here there would be questions that people not mentioned in the novel or the dialogue might want to ask. Likewise, if someone found my illustration unconvincing because it serves simply to display my ignorance of what primitive tribes are like, this would give rise to a detailed investigation and discussion of the nature of tribal life. This, however, is certainly not the place to engage in any of these activities.

This, therefore, is one important reason why my argument must be regarded as unsatisfactory. The difficulty, however, is one that is inherent in the kind of view of the nature of morality that I hold. It may be the case that the view is false and that my thesis is, from the outset, misconceived. This, however, is another story.
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