IS 'MORAL' A DIRTY WORD?

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THE WORD *moral* and its derivatives are showing signs of strain. Like a small carpet, designed to fit a room which has been enlarged, they are wrenched this way and that to cover the bare spaces. Perhaps in the end we shall be forced to abandon them altogether, as Nietzsche suggested. But this would be wasteful, and it seems a good idea to examine first the various spaces they can cover, and try to fix them to the one where they are needed most. I shall approach this problem by making very full quotations. It is not an isolated verbal puzzle which can be settled by showing that a particular usage exists; we need to know as well just what it is doing. There are real muddles here, within common-sense, about the relation of thought to life. There is no simple plain-man's usage prepared for us to follow. Anyone who uses *moral* in anything beyond the Daily Mirror sense is no longer a quite plain man anyway, and we had better follow careful writers than casual ones, real ones than imaginary ones. Philosophers, unlike the Erewhonians, do not have to study a hypothetical language. I am sure both that quotations are necessary and that mine are inadequate; I hope other people will supplement them. As for my choice, I can only say that I have tried very hard not to be tendentious. Certainly I have quoted authors who are capable of being silly and perverse, but as far as I can see the remarks I have taken from them are sober and normal. Anyone may disagree with them, but not, I hope, think them oddly worded. My point affects all the derivatives of *moral* and to some extent those of *ethical* too, so I have drawn my illustrations from all of them.

I shall begin with a recent dispute between Warnock and Hare about the characteristic mark of a *moral principle*. Hare put forward the view that a man's moral principles simply are those universal principles he acts on. In reply, Philippa Foot pointed out that not-treading-on-the-lines-of-the-paving-stones would not be a moral principle even if someone always did it and expected other people to do it.[1] She suggested that the distinguishing marks of the moral were: (1) a particular content, namely human good and harm, and (2) seriousness.[2] Suggestion (2) is the starting point of this paper. Suggestion (1), which overlaps it, was vigorously taken up by Warnock in his admirable little book *Contemporary Moral Philosophy*. Warnock went overboard for content:

> There are four possible 'marks' of a moral view; its psychological penumbra, its actual importance in the individual's conduct of his life; its 'universalizability'; and its general topic—human happiness or interests, needs, wants or desires . . . some form or other of the fourth is likely to turn out to be the most centrally important. (C.M.P. pp.55-7).

Warnock suggests that the three other marks are really consequences of

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the fourth. Our belief that a principle has a deep effect on human happiness is, he thinks, the *ground* of our thinking a special awe and respect appropriate to it, of our taking it to direct our lives, and also of our demanding it in others. These marks, if found on their own without such a belief, might be signs of obsession, compulsion or tabu; they need not mark a moral principle. For Warnock, overriding authority is *not* a necessary mark of a moral principle.

> A man might regard considerations of some kind as more important than considerations of morality, and hence might take himself, on occasion, to be *fully justified in not doing what he sincerely recognises to be right from the moral point of view* . . . (so that it is not) . . . a necessary truth that moral considerations are weightier, more important, than considerations of any other kind. (C.M.P. p.52)
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> (My italics here and throughout).

Hare, reviewing the book (*Mind*, July 1968), took a high line. To tie morality to a content, must, he said, be arbitrary and conventional.

> (In his way) . . . we might, in the end, have 'morality' neatly displayed for us in a show-case, with labels saying 'If you disagree with this you can't be making a moral judgement' . . . and yet the passers-by, though still deeply concerned about Plato's question ('how we ought to live') might say, as many of them already do, '*We don't believe in making moral judgements.*' This is the danger to which anybody is exposed who, as Warnock would like to do, founds a moral system upon a definition of morality in terms of its content. (p.437)

(I cannot help remarking straight away that these are rather odd passers-by if they really mean, "we don't believe in making judgements about the effect on human happiness." They sound to me much more like people who object to making conventional judgements, or even universal judgements. However Hare has not said what they prefer, and I shall be dealing with their predicament later).

I think it should be plain at this point that something has gone wrong with the argument. Both parties are over-simplifying a term whose use is really quite complex. Look at the problem in a mirror.

On the planet Arret, philosophers are discussing what distinguishes the Critical Point of View. Erah, who seems behaviouristically inclined, says that to criticise *is* just constantly to flee and avoid. Toof and Kconraw say this is crude; people can avoid electric shocks and rotten cabbage, but can hardly criticise them, and can criticise plays without avoiding them. Kconraw then suggests defining criticism not by its form but its content; perhaps Artistic Failure. Erah retorts that there may be deserving citizens who *do* want to criticise electric shocks; if you say "this is simply not criticism" they will answer "then we are not interested in making critical judgements," and dismiss you as ossified. What I want to suggest is that Erah was right in the first place to concentrate on what criticising *is*— the question *was* so far a formal one—but clearly wrong to think it was

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anything as simple as avoidance, even constant avoidance. Criticism is something both subtler and wider, involving the working out and defining of the principles on which one should choose or avoid things. We can however *use* what we know about content to guide us in this investigation of form. Bad art *is* a suitable thing to criticise and that fact *does* tell us something about criticism. Then we ought to be able to do as Kconraw wants and decide what is and what is not a possible object for the critical attitude, at any rate for such a creature as man (or nam). We might then show *why* it is not sense to talk about criticising electric shocks, any more than about justifying mud or warning people against breathing, and might then approach such interesting questions as how far Job (or Boj), was in order in criticising the Deity.

What then (to return) is the work done by calling a point of view *moral*?

I want to try the hypothesis that the central job the word does, the one for which it is worth preserving, is to mark, as Philippa Foot suggested, a certain sort of seriousness and importance (as in the remark, "we can't just do what we fancy here; there is a moral question involved"), and that its other implications, whether of form or content, flow from this. It follows that I differ from Warnock on the point of overridingness; to my mind, if morality has a link with Human Happiness, it is because Human Happiness is an overwhelmingly important matter. But I am sure he is right to look for some limit on content. I shall have to discuss more fully what "seriousness" means here. But I must first deal with the obvious objection that "moral", far from meaning anything like "serious", may be taken simply as a dismissive word, or at best as a classifier restricting attention to one kind of serious consideration among many.

(1) *Dismissive.*

Macaulay said, "We know of no spectacle so ridiculous as the British people in one of its periodical fits of morality." Compare Mr. Doolittle: "Morals? Can't afford them governor," and Dubedat: "Morality consists in suspecting other people of not being legally married." The sense is strong enough to get a mention in the N.E.D. ("Moral discourse or instruction, a moral lesson or exhortation. Now chiefly in disparaging sense") and is quite old. It is the sense suggested by Hare's passers-by who don't believe in making moral judgements.

This sense is produced by Humbug, a factor of enormous linguistic power. Any word much used for insincere praise ends up by being used for sincere abuse. In England *moral* etc. have had a depressing history of surfeit in the late eighteenth century, followed by nausea and nemesis in the nineteenth. But so far there is nothing peculiar in the fate of *moral*. We can speak in the same dismissive way of values we entirely accept, when they have been overpraised. ('Don't be so revoltingly fair"; "she's so kind it makes you sick"). This is partly just reported speech; we mean that this is not proper fairness or morality; it is what passes for it with our

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benighted opponents. But we certainly may also be marking out the claims of competitors, noting that there are other virtues as well as fairness, *other points of view as well as the moral*. Here the disparaging use melts into:

(2) The much more general *classifying use*, which treats the moral aspect as one among many. I want to deny that this is the central use: I think it will never bear the weight of much argument, but it is common today and needs careful discussion. It is the sense suggested by my Warnock quotation. Here it is in a review by Angus Wilson:

> When a young student of the novel has been so deeply steeped in the English tradition that he seems wholly given over to the social, the moral, the domestic and the humorous view of life, there are two novels, I think, that may effect a cure.

> (*Observer*, July 1970)

Here the Moral shrinks to a very small province indeed. In the same way, it often finds itself opposed to some form of the Expedient. Thus a typical example from any paper might read:

(Sentence X): "Morally, the case for helping these people is unanswerable; the sad thing is that politically/economically/in practice nothing can be done." I ignore the dull case where nothing *can* be done; if so, the whole thing is just an expression of regret. Barring this, *what sort of a distinction is it that is being made between the provinces?* Is it a true classification, a final, complete division between co-ordinate realms? ("He is not Dutch but Austrian;" "this is not red but green")? Does it allow of no further arbitration procedure? Must we choose our standpoint by an inexpressible leap in the dark, as Sartre or even Hare might suggest? If it turns out to be so, we shall be at a great disadvantage, since thought and discussion will no longer help us. It seems sensible to go on trying arbitration until it is proved not to work (which has certainly not been done yet) rather than insist on waiting till it is proved that it will. The burden of proof is on the divider.[3]

Suppose, then, that there *is* some proper arbitration procedure between viewpoints. If so, Sentence X is not meant to be a final, satisfactory classification, but to mark a dilemma. ("Toads have lungs, and these things seem to be toads, but dammit, where are their lungs?") Warnock, unlike Hare, thinks there *is* a procedure, since he says that the agent *"thinks it best* not to act as his moral principle requires" and, "might take himself to be *fully justified* in not doing what he sincerely recognises to be right from the moral point of view."

What kind of reasoning does he use to do this? We can't call it *moral* reasoning; we must find or invent some other name. We might call it "intersectional reasoning", morality being one of the sections. Or we might say "judicial reasoning", morality being one of the litigants. These terms suggest a neutral standpoint, a supreme position with no bias towards any of the claimants. *Is any such standpoint conceivable?* Federal

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superpowers are awkward enough in politics; their status is puzzling both theoretically and practically; does anyone think it would be easier in psychology?

I may seem to press the spatial or political metaphor of *provinces* and *points of view* too crudely, but my whole project is to investigate these metaphors. They are seldom unpacked. It is ludicrous to assume a final separation between "points of view" when, as we know, dispute between them goes on perpetually both inside us and without, and is quite often fruitful. What actually happens in such cases does not seem to be either external arbitration or (except when we are lazy or time presses) an unspeakable leap in the dark. Instead we develop the two contending forms of reasoning until they turn out to have terms in common. After that, both forms will be altered, and a system formed which to some extent accommodates both. Without this, we cannot choose. With it, we have a further system, and we want to know what to call it. Is there, as things stand a better name than "a morality"? I only ask for information.

The trouble is that, alongside the sectional classifying use of *moral* there already is an inclusive one, for which Morality is either the central province of the Inner Life or the federation, the total system of values inside which the provinces fit. This use may sound less English than the other; here are two striking instances from extraneous sources:

(1) A bill of indemnity . . . for raid by Dr. Jameson and the British South African Company's troops, the account falls under two headings:

First: Material damage, Total claim £577,938 3. 3.

Second: Moral or intellectual damage, Total claim £1,000,000.

Paul Kruger, as reported to the House of Commons by J. Chamberlain.

(2) In war, moral considerations make up three quarters of the game; the relative balance of man-power accounts for the remaining quarter.
Napoleon's correspondence.

But in fact this usage is as English as any other; it is only that in English other uses have lately had more of the philosophical limelight. English writers used it in just this way, without a hint of embarrassment, up to the mid-eighteenth century; even Hume, with his powerful nose for Humbug, never hesitates to speak of Moral Essays, moral sentiments, moral faculties, moral good and evil. It seems to have been the sentimental piety of the late eighteenth century that brought forward the debased complimentary use ("*truly* moral sentiments"), and put off the sensitive. Doctor Johnson had much to do with this sad development, catching the word at its forking point and pinning it firmly to outward observance of simple convential rules (as in the phrase "his morals") and to retributive justice (as in 'the moral of the tale.'). It is worth looking closely into Johnson's treatment of the words to see the climate in which this external, practical, behaviouristic sense, now so popular with philosophers, took shape, and I propose to do so. Those who consider that history is bunk may skip to page 213.

Johnson in his Dictionary gave as the first sense of *moral*, 'Relating to the Practice of men towards each other, as it may be virtuous or criminal, good or bad.' His examples do not really support this sense at all, but it is still his first choice. And what he takes it to say about the Practice of men towards each other, is that it is ruled by Retributive Justice. That is clear from a hundred passages, notably this from the Preface to his Shakespeare:

(Shakespeare's) "first defect is that to which may be imputed most of the evil in books or men. He sacrifices virtue to convenience, *he seems to write without any moral purpose. . . . He makes no just distribution of good and evil*, nor is careful to show in the virtuous a disapprobation of the wicked . . . . This fault the barbarity of his age cannot extenuate for *it is always a writer's duty to make the world better*, and justice is a virtue independent on time and place." Nor was this his last word on the subject. Ten years later, Boswell raised the matter again:

"I objected the great defect of the tragedy of Othello was, that it had not a moral, ... for that no man could resist the circumstances of suspicion which were artfully suggested to Othello's mind."

Johnson: "In the first place, Sir, we learn from Othello this very useful moral, not to make an unequal match, in the second, we learn not to yield too readily to suspicion. . . . No Sir, I think Othello has more moral than almost any play."[4]

Taking one thing with another, this seems to be one of the worst missed opportunities in the history of criticism. Johnson drove a quite unnecessary wedge between the Moral and the Aesthetic Standpoint, and did all he could to make it seem impenetrable. He thought very highly of Shakespeare; he praised him soundly for his truth to nature, yet he could not see that a moral defence too was available.[5] For instance—that a dramatist's moral stature or purpose does not depend on enforcing a prefabricated rule, much less on enforcing it by telling lies about retributive justice. The dramatist's business is to use moral insight, to see, not only how people think and act, but how good and bad such thoughts and actions can be. He points out to us certain splendours and miseries; in general it is for us to make any practical applications that may follow. Sometimes, if we believe him, certain practical applications plainly *will* follow; then we call him a moralist as well as a dramatist or novelist. But there is no guarantee that the moral drawn will agree with existing moral views; it may or may not. He may turn out (tiresome fellow) to be an unacknowledged legislator of mankind, in which case it is no use asking him to police the laws he is replacing. And even where the practical application is plain, the core of the moralist's business will be something beyond it. This is the change he makes in our inner lives, in the way that we see things. Thus:—What makes Aeschylus a moralist is his attack on the savage traditional Greek vendetta theory of Justice, an attack on its spirit as well as its practice; what makes him a *great* moralist is his immense courageous

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insight into the whole problem of suffering and its place in human life. You could have learnt Aeschylus' lesson even if you never had the least occasion to adjudicate a blood-feud, you could have learnt it even if, from some chance or other, you never *did* anything you would not in any case have done, but only viewed everything differently. And you certainly would *not* have learnt it if you had only imbibed (say by aversion therapy) the practical precept—"Avoid vendettas", even supported by the belief "vendettas do not pay".

Thus a writer's moral significance is quite independent of the sort of thing Johnson pegged it to: unless you take moral in the narrow sense he preferred. Why should you do so? Johnson himself had excellent reasons. Johnson was no hypocrite; he was a man haunted, terrified, obsessed by the fear of Hell. Morality for him was a fixed code of practice imposed from without by God; it was our only safeguard against eternal torture, and it was made effective, not by being understood, but *only* by the threat of punishment, temporal and eternal. He did not believe any other persuasion could in the least be relied on. Again and again he insists that the character of an infidel is more detestable than that of a man guilty of an atrocious crime, "for the infidel would be guilty of any crime if he were inclined to it."[6] Nothing withholds us but fear, first of the jail, then of damnation. Puzzled by this, someone once asked him "what he meant by being damned?" Johnson broke out in agony, "Sent to Hell, Sir, and punished everlastingly."[7] This was the fear he lived in; he was occupied with his own sin, not other people's, which is what gives such dreadful force to his insistence on the autonomy of morals as he understood it.... He had no confidence in any general moral enquiry, any psychological or metaphysical quest for the roots of moral practice. There could be no such roots. This is what made it impossible for us to improve on existing rules by a better understanding of human nature, and determined the comment drawn from him by Boswell's piteous case-history of the ill-treated lady: "My dear Sir, never accustom your mind to mingle virtue and vice. The woman's a whore, and there's an end on't".[8] This is what makes it impossible to trust the most respectable agnostic (such as Hume).

I do not say that Johnson thought like this all the time. Nobody does; you could hardly stay sane if you did. Nor do I claim to have compressed the very complex history of the word into this one example. I use Johnson, this official Johnson, as a sad example of the motives for overstressing the practical sense of the word, and of what happens when you do. His actual usage, of course, is inconsistent. He has the word in all sorts of other senses, including Kant's,[9] and he is sometimes willing to give quite subtle reasons for the practices he approves. He uses blunderbusses like "there's an end on't", just as the rest of us do, to mean, "I can't be bothered to argue that with *you*" or "to argue it this evening", or, very often "you know that as well as I do." Nevertheless, to treat most sorts

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of argument as actually irrevelant is his official line, and, for someone with his beliefs, official lines do have a particular importance. If conformity is what we need for salvation, standing up to be counted for the right may actually be more important than living up to it. So Johnson, much though he hated humbug, could praise Savage for recommending in his writings the virtues that he never practised.[10]   This is a pretty sophisticated point. Yet Johnson is always thought of as a champion of common-sense against sophistication. Echoes of him are heard whenever Moore and Prichard are in their common-sense plain-man mood. ("Good is good and there is an end of the matter").[11]   And Johnson's line *is* common-sense—provided you happen to believe in eternal damnation without explanation. In the context of that sort of Protestantism, all other sorts of reasons for adopting principles do pale into insignificance beside their effect on our own and other people's salvation. In that con-text, the ingenious speculations of the Enlightenment about the found-ations of morals do become, not only irrelevant, but maddening. ("Truth, Sir is a cow that will yield such people no more milk, so they are gone to milk the bull").[12]   But of course explanation as such is not abandoned; it is only that one sort of explanation is preferred to all others. No-one before Prichard ever suggested doing without explanation altogether. No man, however plain, who can think at all, really thinks that morality consists *only* in practice. To mention practice apart from spirit, intention and belief is meaningless abstraction.

It was in this way that Johnson, and the men of his age, pegged the word *moral* to the narrow sense of Outside Regularity, moved by a distrust of (non-religious) thought and a powerful fear of damnation. Just at the same time, Kant pegged it to Intention, and not to isolated intention either, but to a man's whole framework of principles. Only when an agent's motive is the right one "*would his conduct first acquire full moral worth*"[13] for Kant. For him "*imitation has nothing to do with morality.*"[14] (Yet of course Imitation—the speciality of the Convential Man, the Wily Hypo-crite and the Zombie—can produce faultless Outside Regularity. You don't find *them* smoking in the wrong railway carriage.) The two usages are almost exactly opposite.

In English philosophy, the Johnsonian one prevailed. Mill, marking out the liberty of the individual conscience, did not say, as he might have done, "Society had no right to interfere in moral affairs". He said that the moral sphere, meaning that of Society, must not interfere in private affairs. It is only when there is danger of damage to others that "the case is taken *out of the province of liberty and placed in that of morality or law.*"[15] And for Mill, too, punishment is a sure mark of the moral. "We do not call anything wrong unless we mean that a person ought to be punished in some way for doing it. . . . This seems the real rurning-point of the dis-tinction between morality and simple expediency."[16]   This is a most confusing use. But where Mill left the term, there, as though Nietzsche

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had never lived, Moore picked it up. As it has turned out, this decision has surely been disastrous, because both Punishment and Outward Regularity are ideas which have taken a terrible beating in the hundred years since Mill, and so far as "moral" is bound to them, it cannot help becoming a dirty word. It has in fact become far more discredited, far harder to use in English as a result of this debasement than it seems to have on the Continent as a result of Nietzsche's direct attacks on it.

1) To deal first briefly with Punishment and its relation to Morality. Here, most of us now, I take it, would agree with Wittgenstein (I quote Wittgenstein, though the point was first made by Glaucon and Adeimantus[17]);

> When an ethical law of the form of "Thou shalt...." is laid down, one's first thought is, "And what if I do not do it?" It is clear however that *ethics has nothing to do with punishment or reward* in the usual sense of the terms. So our question about the consequences of an action must be unimportant. At least those consequences should not be events. For there must be something right about the question we posed. There must indeed be some sort of ethical reward and ethical punishment, but they must reside in the action itself.
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> (And it is also clear that the reward must be something pleasant and the punishment something unpleasant). *Tractatus* 6.422

Wittgenstein here attempts what Johnson refused to attempt, namely to make punishment intelligible by internalizing it. The punishment for doing X is perhaps becoming the sort of person who does things like X— perhaps simply becoming the person who *did* do X and has to live with the memory. (In the same way some Christians now regard Hell as simply the state of separation from God). Punishment does not lose its importance if you look at things in this way, but it does become a secondary and dependent moral concept, needing for its sense an independent understanding of what it is to do wrong. It cannot possibly be used to *define* the moral sphere, as Mill suggested.

2) As for the notion of morality as outward observance, its current form is the view that moral principles deal with classes of overt acts, "One ought never to smoke in compartments where there is a No Smoking notice" or "Never say what is false, except in war-time to deceive the enemy."[18] This is the Tabu sense, the sense in which Nietzsche understood and attacked the concept of morality.

It is not my business here to ask whether this behaviouristic formula is ever a possible form for a moral principle, but simply to point out that it is not the only possible form. Moral principles take innumerable other forms, not reducible to this one; for instance, "Honour thy father and thy mother"; "People are more important than things", "Charity is more important than Faith or Hope"; "a man's life is not his own". Or with Langland:

> Chastity without Charity lieth chained in Hell
> It is a lamp with no light in it.

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That being so, I want to ask why the word 'moral' got pegged so easily to the external imperative formula. And the melancholy answer lies in the tradition I have traced. Where Mill put down the word *moral*, there, in its Johnsonian pigeon-hole, Moore picked it up, and where Moore put it, there, regardless of intelligent usage, it has stayed. Moore always uses it for external regularities of this kind, though he dropped the interest in punishment which gave a sense to this externality. He often uses it with a shade of impatience, because he rightly thinks that external regularity is not the whole duty of man, but with a wholly unjustified air of being the first to say so.

> Everybody knows that moral teachers are largely concerned in laying down moral rules, and in disputing the truth of rules which have been previously asserted. And moral rules seem to consist, to a very large extent, in assertions to the effect that it is always wrong to do certain actions, or to refrain from doing certain others. [19]

Does everyone know that? Which moral teachers are these? Moore says explicitly that they rule on *external* actions. Is there any set of moral teachers *largely* concerned with ordering or forbidding these? None of the Ten Commandments does it, though Moore thought they did. Stealing and murder are not defined in at all the same external way as smoking in railway carriages; they depend on the very complicated concepts of property and intention, and they cover a vast variety of external acts.[20] In fact, pulpit moralists and popular sages alike, and certainly all moral philosophers, have been far more interested in dozens of other questions; in *why* the things already known to be wrong or right were so; in the different ways and degrees of their rightness, in questions about the nature of the world and the soul, in arguments for settling disputes about what was right, in destiny and individuality, in human motivation, in temptation, effort and choice, in ideals and purposes, in God, freedom and immortality. That is, of course, they have always been what Moore forbade them to be, psychologists and metaphysicians. They have dealt in thought as well as action. They have to. People will not obey orders without explanations. Even if a moralist himself were only interested in reform, he would have to enter into his hearer's natural curiosity about the background and reasons for it, if he wanted to be obeyed. I can only think that Moore came to the view quoted by ignoring in his predecessors' work all he thought had no business to be there. Or possibly he himself was using *moral* in a contemptuous or dismissive sense, meaning "crudely moralistic or pulpit-bashing." He makes another very strange remark in the same paper, saying of the "central idea of Aristotle's Ethics"—the Good at which all things Aim— that it is "not a moral idea at all" though it is still "an idea which it is the business of moral philosophy to discuss". (*Philosophical Studies* p.326). Ambiguities of this sort never bothered Moore, but it is time they bothered the rest of us.

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Official British philosophy, then, has stuck to the narrow external be-haviouristic sense of *moral*. But alongside this narrow sense, the old, useful general one has persisted. It is very common in such quiet, un-emphatic phrases as; moral courage, moral feebleness, moral commitment, moral obtuseness, moral support. It is much like *spiritual*, but without the ontology. The main antithesis—moral versus material—has been enriched by several others—moral versus legal, intellectual, supernatural, conventional—and in these cases *moral* appears on the inward, the more central and personal side of the dividing line (not on the outer, as it does when opposed to "faith" or "emotion"). It means more, however, than just *inner* because it conveys that these qualities—the moral courage, ob-tuseness or what not belong to the whole man; they are not just chancy, they connect with his principles and his system of values. The nearest synonyms are phrases like "strength or weakness *of character.*" (*Moral* in this sense has in fact much closer connexions with *mores*=character than with *mos*=custom—which is the favourite sense of British academic dis-cussions.) In this way it actually comes to mean "comprehensive, affect-ing the whole man"; an emphatic sense, nearly opposite to the sectional, dismissive one. The word "moralist" generally follows this sense, leaving "morals" and "immorality" as the strongholds of the other.

Examples

1). J. L. Borges, in *The Lottery at Babylon*, is explaining the failure of the earlier Babylonian lotteries, which dealt only in money. "Naturally, these lotteries failed. *Their moral virtue was nil.* They were not directed at all of men's faculties, but only at hope." The promoters meet this difficulty by setting up lotteries in *every* aspect of human destiny, bad as well as good, active as well as passive, and are then highly successful. (Borges, *Laby-rinths* p.58).

2) (Girls who married one man when they loved another deceived them-selves about it) "so that they became incapable of distinguishing between truth and untruth, *lost their moral weight*, and flickered in life without any foothold in reality". (Isak Dinesen, *Winter's Tales* p.115.)

If anyone is tempted to dismiss this usage on patriotic grounds, they will find themselves in difficulties. It is not only that translators find *moral* a suitable word, not only that it is (as I shall show) still an established English usage; it is that the job it does is an essential job. *If one talks of prov-inces there must be a name for the whole country, if one talks of points of view there must be a way to walk between them.* Could another word than *moral* be used? There are reasons for wishing so, particularly the assoc-iation with humbug. But it is useless changing the world while the amb-ivalence remains. If you call rat-catchers 'rodent officers' to dispel prejudice, you will soon have to call rodent officers 'Pest Control Oper-atives' and be no further forward.

Let us try and see how it is that the *Moral*, like *Art* and *America*, is the name both of a part and of the whole.

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The great reason is that *moral* when used merely to classify, to mark off one aspect among others, sounds paradoxical and inadequate the moment you really think about it. An isolationist morality is a bad morality. We certainly do distinguish a man's moral principles from (say) his aesthetic, sporting or religious principles. But if that distinction is final, if there is no relation between them, we think the worse (in a general way) of him and them; we have a *moral* objection to the arrangement. This is crystal clear in the case of the oldest and commonest of these distinctions, the sense to which *moral* would certainly be confined if we went by Common Language and the Plain Man; namely, the distinction between sexual and other kinds of vice and virtue. Euphemism is responsible for this one. People would rather say *moral* than *sexual*; they would rather say *sin* or *immorality* than mention whatever special variety of the unmentionable is on hand at the time. This narrow use is highly distorting, and conflicts with the wider sense which is more useful and quite as natural. George Eliot devoted a whole essay to shooting it down. (*Impressions of Theophrastus Such, ch.* 16, *Moral Swindlers*):

> Yet I find even respectable historians of our own and of foreign countries, after showing that a king was treacherous, rapacious, and ready to sanction gross breaches of the administration of justice, end by praising him for his pure moral character.... And since we are often told of such maleficent kings that they were also religious, *we arrive at the curious result that the most serious, wide-reaching duties of man lie quite outside both morality and religion*—the one of these consisting in not keeping mistresses (and perhaps in not drinking too much) and the other in certain ritual and spiritual transactions with God, which can be carried on equally well side by side with the basest conduct towards men.

I have italicised the point I want to stress here; there is really something *curious*, something paradoxical, about treating morality as an isolated province. Once the point is raised, we can hardly go on saying, 'from the moral point of view, good; from the humane point of view, abominable' and leave it at that. Partial moral systems must expand or die. There is an interesting asymmetry here among the various alleged provinces of value. If you want to say that a man is wholly given over to any one of them, you can do it by saying that:

Art,
Sport,
Finance,
Politics,
Psycho-analysis, ⎬ is his Religion or Morality, but I do not think you
Fashion,
Medicine,
The Stage,
Research etc. etc.,
can say that Religion or Morality is any of the others. You sometimes

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get an intelligible proposition if you try, but it is a different one. (Of course there have been various attempts at a reverse takeover, for instance by Sport in Newbolt's *Vitai Lampada* ("Play up, play up and play the Game") etc., but they fail). The nearest alternative might be to say that Art etc. was his Whole Life, which is significant enough. But even this states a fact rather than a claim. Only Morality and Religion carry the connexion with justification, suggesting "that by which he thinks he ought to test everything else." (I can say nothing here about the gap between Morality and Religion; obviously they are sometimes opposed, but used in the way I have just mentioned they run parallel.) The two of them differ from other partial systems in that they cannot be put into subordinate positions without degrading them entirely. (This is where I disagree with Warnock). If X admits that smearing his opponent with a false charge is immoral, but justifies it on political grounds, you cannot (to my mind) say that he has a perfectly good morality, which isn't relevant to this purely political question. You can either say that his morality turns out to be idle tabu and convention, or that his real morality is a political one (which need not be an insult). Just so, if we take Religion in the sense it now bears in Western life, it is hardly possible to say that a brutal traitor is, from the religious point of view, completely admirable. Empire-building, which is an inclination of all systems, is of the definition of these two. They cannot accept a minor position and survive. Morality has no alternative but to make Butler's terrifying claim: "Had it strength, as it has right; had it power, as it has manifest authority, it would absolutely govern the world." (Sermon 2). It demands in all cases to govern such a creature as man. Hence the puzzle, hence the ambivalence, hence the impression of humbug. People who revolt against existing moral terms cannot, if they want to be positive, abandon moral terms entirely. Time and again they hurl the name in the mud, only to pick it up, wash it carefully, and lay claim to it, along with its peculiar tone and its apparatus of virtue, merit, sin, conscience and responsibility, as a perquisite of their own higher principles. Immoralists are after all only a species of moralists.

Examples

> (1) There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written or badly written ... The moral life of man forms part of the subject matter of the artist; but the *morality of art* consists in the perfect use of an imperfect medium. (Oscar Wilde, Introduction to *Dorian Gray*).

The useful phrase "the morality of X" deserves attention. It means, "X taken as a system of values"; "X taken as binding." It is a perfectly sensible phrase, not like "the red of green." If one spoke, conversely, of "the art of morality", one might also be intelligible, but one would not convey the binding element.

> (2) *Tanner*: Morality can go to its father the devil ... (later, describing his own adolescence), No; the change that came to me was the birth of

moral passion; and I declare that according to my experience moral passion is the only real passion.

Ann: All passions ought to be moral, Jack.

Tanner: Ought! Do you think that anything is strong enough to impose oughts on a passion except a stronger passion still?

Ann: Our moral sense controls passion Jack. Don't be stupid.

Tanner: Our moral sense! And is not that a passion? . . . the mightiest of the passions. It is the birth of that passion that turns a child into a man . . . That passion dignified [his other passions], gave them conscience and meaning, found them a mob of appetites and organized them into an army of purposes and principles. My soul was born of that passion.

(Shaw: *Man and Superman* Act 1)

(3) *Don Juan*: The confusion of marriage with morality has done more to destroy the conscience of the human race than any other error . . . (To the devil) Your friends are the dullest dogs I know . . . They are not religious, they are only pewrenters. They are *not moral, they are only conventional*. They are not virtuous; they are only cowardly . . . To be in hell is to drift; to be in heaven is to steer. Ibid: Act 3.

That whole scene is devoted to the distinction between "True Morality" and the conventional code. There could have been no better chance for Shaw to have discarded the *term* morality with the rest of the lumber if he had wanted to—he had already shied several tomatoes at it. But how was he to get on without it? What else could he use? He still had a system of values to defend, "an army of purposes and principles." (I have actually heard an anarchist remark indignantly "Well it's *always* wrong to make moral judgements", but there are difficulties in following up this move.) Even Nietzsche performed the same sort of manoeuvres, though he was much quicker on his feet.

(4) We immoralists! . . . We are spun into a strict network and hairshirt of duties: we cannot get out. In this we are men of duty, even we.

Beyond Good and Evil, Sec. 226
(Cf. Sec. 228—"Isn't moralising . . . immoral?")

Without a comprehensive morality you are not only unable to direct other people—one might put up with that—you are unable to direct yourself; it is not only that others can't understand you; you can't understand yourself. And Shaw's morality is certainly meant to be a comprehensive one; what offends him about the conventional code is exactly its patchy, parochial, sectional character. *A morality that accepts a subordinate place is dead and will soon stink;* let Michael Frayn's computer-man pronounce its epitaph;

"Let's accept . . . that all ethical systems are ossified, in which case all operations within an ethical system can be performed by computer. I should be designing circuits to demonstrate what happens when one ossified system, say a Christian one, comes in contact with another ossified system, say a liberal agnostic one. And what happens when two

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computers with incompatible systems try to programme a third between them . . . The vast, petrified forests are our rightful domain. They are waiting helplessly to be brought under the efficient, benevolent rule of the kindly computer."

(*The Tin Men*)

But the need for a live morality still remains.

So far I have shown examples where what is at first opposed to morality and later absorbed into it is a personal standard—psychological, aesthetic, spiritual; something more intimate than the conventional code. What about standards which are more public?

I return now to Sentence X ("Morally the case for helping these people is unanswerable; the sad thing is that politically/economically/in practice nothing can be done.") Will anyone at this time of day claim that the Moral has no link with these branches of the Expedient? Is anyone a Political or Economic Man all the time? Of course the different aspects sometimes *strike* us separately, so that we call them different points of view, but it is no harder to find one's way between them than it is between geographical viewpoints. What looks round from the north and south, but oblong from the east and west, is not some monstrous enigma, fragmenting our concepts of space; it is a cylinder, perhaps a large drain-pipe. Mill showed how to deal with Sentence X. He didn't use the word *moral*, because he had confined it to the narrow sense, but that doesn't affect his argument; "The Expedient, in the sense in which it is opposed to the Right, generally means that which is expedient to the particular interest of the agent himself . . . When it means anything better than this, it means that which is expedient for some immediate object, some temporary purpose, but which violates a rule whose observance is expedient in a much higher degree."[21] So when we say that political or economic considerations forbid us to help these people, though morality commands it, we may simply mean (1) that we ought to do it, but we are not going to because it would cost too much. This is intelligible and honest, but it is not a justification.   Or (2) we may mean that our duty to our own citizens actually overrides our duty to help the foreign claimants. This *is* a justification (successful or not) and it is a moral one. So now the moral case is not given up as unanswerable. In the same way, if we happen here to be dealing with one of the moral ideals which cannot be stated in utilitarian terms as easily as Mill supposed, it is still a moral dispute that is going forward, because that ideal is set against the moral ideal of promoting happiness. Economic and political considerations are only partial, abstract purposes, waiting to be set against the others, they only make sense as part of a wider system, and that system only makes sense when it includes them. The Right is not an isolated property, object of an unaccountable tabu, not a peculiar colour effect visible only from a peculiar viewpoint. Nor is the Expedient something only visible from a peculiar viewpoint. (Not unless one does mean by it "expedient to the

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Barnacles".) To call something either right *or* expedient is already to say that one has visited the relevant viewpoints and made a calculation which allows for their divergence. It is not a bit like saying it glimmers or looks pink from the house; it is much more like saying it is round or square.[22] And having got that far, one can calculate some more and account for the apparent divergence. Compare this (*Guardian*, July 23, 1970): "Mr. Hain added, 'The time for sterile, violent confrontations—bumping policemen in Grosvenor Square—is over. They were seen to be *not only politically but morally sterile*. I have sufficient belief in non-violent militancy to believe it can be carried out in a non-violent fashion." I take it this means, "not only did they make us enemies; they were out of tune with what we were trying to do." Mr. Hain's "not only" marks his view of the hierarchy of values. He means that it is *worse* to be doing something incompatible with your main purpose than merely to find obstacles in your way. This is the sort of priority system which Mill suggested for dealing with conflicts of right and interests, and whatever may be wrong with Mill's own list of priorities, something of the sort is indispensable. If one takes up the alternative of a meaning for Right (or for Moral) so autonomous as to say nothing about Advantage, the term is degraded at once into mere Musical Bank currency, talked of and displayed on Sundays, but known not to be the slightest use for paying anybody (no good, as Sentence X so oddly has it, "in practice"). No serious moral philosopher has ever proposed such a morality. Kant is sometimes accused of doing so by people who have skipped through the *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals;* a glance at the *Critique of Practical Reason* would dispel the idea. If it follows from the above remarks that Prichard was not a serious moral philosopher, I have no objection.

My main suggestion should now be becoming clear. I said that the central job done by "moral", the job for which it was worth preserving, was to mark a certain sort of seriousness and importance, as in the remark, "we can't just do what we fancy here; there is a moral question involved." I have now tried to show how the word becomes fitted for this job, how it can mean "belonging to a man's character, to his central system of purposes", and I have argued that the job is an essential one. I have suggested that Johnson's alternative of pinning it to certain recognized practices is a dead end. I have said that I do not at all mind another word being substituted for "moral" if anyone can find a better one, but that I suspect any other word will at present run into the same sort of problems. To develop the suggested meaning further, I shall now ask, *what is this special kind of seriousness or importance?*

What is a serious matter?

A Serious Matter is one that affects us deeply. This is not the same as giving us a strong sensation; a sudden violent toothache which never recurs is not a serious matter, nor is the taste of pepper, whereas a persistent apathy, an absence of all strong sensations, would be a very

serious matter indeed. Not everything with lasting effects will qualify; a chronic complaint need not be serious. This is interesting; we can say, "Yes, his rheumatism is bad, it would be serious for some people but it really isn't for him." If his purposes in life do not involve much moving around, rheumatism is not serious; if he is a dancer, a sore toe may be. What is serious affects something central among his system of purposes and it is that system we need to know about. Its variation, however, has limits. Any approach to total paralysis, total solitude, total destitution, total monotony, total confusion, universal hostility, is serious for anybody. You cannot claim that it is not so for a particular person simply as an odd fact, without giving an explanation, and it will have to be a good one. It is no use for instance simply saying, "he chooses not to care about it." Explanation will have to move by describing an exceptional history, exceptional tastes, exceptional alternatives, and thereby a readiness to use an exceptional substitute for normal needs. ("He needs no human company because he talks with God /he lives in the past /he prefers seagulls /he is off his head anyway and can only talk to himself.") All this will be met with justified scepticism at first, melting only when we have grasped the complete picture of an accepted way of life. The same thing, of course, will be true if we are told that what *is* serious for him is the behaviour of a spider. Unless we are told *how* spiders come to matter so much (he is an entomologist, he is a spider-worshipper, he is Robert the Bruce) this is simply unintelligible, because seriousness involves connections with what is *naturally important for a human being*. This point seems needlessly complicated because many people, such as some sociologists[23] and existentialists,[24] like to claim officially that there is no such thing as human nature, so that nothing is naturally any more important than anything else. This means that (for instance) total immobility or total solitude would be as good ways of life as any other, provided you either were brought up to them or decided to choose them. Man is supposed to be infinitely plastic. I think this aspiration towards total openness is at the back of Hare's refusal to tie morality to a content.

I find this contention so obscure (even a piece of plasticine is not *infinitely* plastic; everything has *some* internal structure) that I propose simply to wait till I find someone living by it; i.e. choosing such things, refraining from ever mentioning or appealing to human nature or instinct, not treating anything as naturally more important than anything else, avoiding Freudian argument, and (in particular) finding a way to reconcile their views with the actual behaviour of babies, before I start taking trouble about it. The fashion for infinite plasticity seems in fact to be on the way out in the social sciences; animal behaviour studies, whatever their own excesses, cannot fail to torpedo it,[25] and it seems to be becoming clear by now that nobody can actually live for half-an-hour as a consistent behaviourist or existentialist. Meanwhile, I propose to take it that we *are* so constituted as to mind more about some things than about others.

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That these distinctions can to some extent be traced, however much they are overlaid by training. That it is only among these things that we can make an intelligible choice. That an unintelligible choice is no choice at all. And that a connexion with these things is of the essence of seriousness.

Now what happens if we ask; *is it not only a serious but a moral matter?* My short and wild answer is that *moral* is simply the superlative of *serious.* Provided we are talking practically—talking about what people choose to do, think and be, not just about what happens to them—anything that affects their central purposes deeply is a moral matter, any choice of central purpose is a moral choice, because it involves what can only be called moral thinking. To move house need hardly affect one's central purposes at all; to move from country to town may affect them quite a lot, because it means giving priority to different friends and occupations; to pass the rest of one's life in solitude in a space craft would certainly do so. Doing that would therefore be a moral decision. I do not think there is, outside the text-books, a hard and fast line fixed round the moral. Seriousness is a matter of degree, and if a thing is certainly very serious, however little connexion it may seem to have with the conventional code, we rightly call it a *moral matter.* But of course this is not the end of the matter, because a morality cannot be private whatever else can, and if anybody claims that some unexpected thing is either *very serious* or *a moral question* to him, he has got to explain what his system of purposes is and how this comes into it, otherwise we shall not understand him. *The claims an art seems to have on an artist, or a science on a scientist* have been made explicit by now—my quotations from Wilde show the early stages of the process. *Are they moral claims?* If the claimant makes good sense of the system of purposes put forward, yes. Suppose the Dancer, the Violinist, the Astronomer or the Mathematician are poor; they are faced with the choice of abandoning their art, debasing it, or asking someone else for money. Suppose the Philistine pours scorn on the idea that they could have a moral problem: his line will be that these matters fall outside morality. To reach this point I suggest that he will naturally argue that they are *unimportant, trivial, not serious.* (He may well put this in the form "they do not affect the general happiness", but this will only work if we know first that only what affects the general happiness is important.) Can he be answered? He *must* be; he is inside us as well as outside. Various answers are possible, and they too all take the route through the concept of seriousnessness to show a moral claim. We may say for instance: *This matters because what matters most for everybody is the exercise of his faculties.* We can argue, with Aristotle[26] and Mill,[27] that this exercise is at the root of the concept of happiness itself, and therefore of the general happiness. A man who betrays his central talent loses his soul:

> To thine own self be true
> And it shall follow as the night the day
> Thou canst not then be false to any man.

This point is often put in terms of Integrity, and Integrity is clearly a traditional moral virtue. (See nearly all of Angus Wilson's novels, and particularly *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes*, where everything revolves round the Integrity of the Scholar). Again, we can point out that *the arts and sciences have a public*, so that watching or learning dancing etc. might really form part of the general happiness. But we shall then have to show that they form an important, a serious part, and are not just replaceable candy-floss. This again we may do by Aristotelian arguments about the importance of developing people's latent sensibilities. (We shall need a psychological theory to back this). We can speak in religious terms of the Parable of the Talents, of Mary and Martha and of Our Lady's Juggler etc.—but that will only work if we can make plausible on its own the view which we are attributing to God—namely that the use of people's central talents is an important matter. And so on. I do not at all want to suggest that these arguments about Integrity must always be successful. I think in fact that they have been over-inflated by fashion and need to be brought back into relation with plenty of others. Integrity is certainly not the whole of virtue. What I do say is that they call on a perfectly workable set of concepts, *which have become continuous with the concepts of traditional morality, by making out their claim to be serious. After that, morality excludes them at its peril.* In the same way, a choice between Homeric and modern ideals would be a moral choice, and Nietzsche when he recommended the Homeric set[28] was forced in spite of himself to present it as such. He could not simply impose Bronze Age standards on his contemporaries; he had to justify and defend them in modern terms, and to use one modern ideal to upset another, all of which is moral argument. But for the Homeric Greeks themselves no problem arose. They pursued the only things they thought could possibly be important. I think it is this, not, as Warnock suggests (CMP 54) the content of their ideals, which makes us hesitate to call them moral. (Hector, if he is taken to argue with Andromache,[29] might possibly be an exception . . ?) Any modern writer recommending a return to the primitive runs into Nietzsche's problem— the deliberately revived ideal differs *formally* from its model just because it is consciously chosen and defended, however closely it may imitate the content.

So I do not see how to follow Warnock's suggestion and,

regard, say Nietzsche—as of course he from time to time regarded himself—not as propounding an unusual system of moral principles, but rather as abandoning moral attitudes altogether, and as preaching "beyond good and evil" an ideal of conduct and character of an entirely different kind. (CMP 50).

Nietzsche's gestures this way are part of the consistent and quite deliberate policy of exaggeration by which he tries to startle us out of our grooves. To this end he uses every kind of unexpected argument—metaphors, analogies, paradoxes of every kind—to such effect that he has blinded his

public to the essential point—he is still arguing. Zarathustra descends from the mountain. Much as he might admire Achilles, or Attila, or Lucky Luciano, his methods are not theirs, nor are his aims. As Warnock says, he *preaches*. His arguments sometimes counter those of received morality—which suggests that they belong to the same subject anyway— but of course sometimes they reinforce them. He attacks altruism by exalting courage and honesty; if we did not honour those virtues we could not follow him. He does not just tempt, he claims to sting our consciences to follow him in the painful duty of nonconformity. To abandon moral attitudes altogether you would have to stop talking; to put your disregard for other people consistently into practice, you would give up formulating your ideals in their terms, as when you hypnotize them, or silently throw your sword into the scales. (A mentally active person finds this very hard; even Callicles could not resist an argument.) Nietzsche's questions are those of the moralist, because he stands at the moral point of view, asking "how are we to live; what are the central things in life?" Are his answers such as to exclude him? Warnock suggests evicting from the moral sphere:

such ideals as are openly destructive, or damaging, or pointless, or insane.

Destructive of what? All ideals involve destruction and damage to *some-thing*; if only to contrary life-styles. Normally they promise compensation. Savonarola offers us Heaven in return for a ravaged earth; the Nazis set the glory of the master-race against the destruction of their servants. If we think what is offered has *some* value, we can say they are bad moralists, who have got their values wrong. If not, or *if no intelligible compensation is offered at all*, then indeed moral argument stops. (Danny the Red, saying "you must not ask what will happen after the Revolution" seems to approach this point—but *if* he succeeds in showing that Revolution itself has a value, he will not reach it). "Pointless" or "insane" seems to mark the real frontier. What stays outside is tabu, obsession, egoism, prejudice etc. so far as they are really mindless and uncommunicating. There are also cases kept outside temporarily by our ignorance; until we know what makes people tick we may not understand what compensation they think there will be for the destruction they propose. But where we can and do actually talk to people such things are rare, because the motives for comparing values intelligibly are so strong. Content and form converge here: it is barely possible to communicate ideals with no element of altruism, or to make an ideal clear to oneself which is wholly unaccept-able to everybody else. What is seriously held must in the end be intelligibly defended. It looks as if there is a link between form and content, which would enable my point to be combined with Warnock's. But I cannot chase it now.

What, then, have we achieved if we say that there is a close link between Morality and Seriousness? Not, obviously, the elimination of humbug.

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(Seriousness too is a notion which can very easily be made to stink, and I should guess that for some French writers it has collected the same sort of ambivalent response that *moral* has in English. So long as we are all hypocrites, all moral terms will be subject to this corruption.) But I think *serious* has never gathered the suggestion which is so disastrous to *moral*, namely isolation. An unarguable, isolated tabu on a class of external acts, indefensible, behaviouristic, quite pure from all psychological or social justification, *must* involve humbug. Calling something serious implies that it is not isolated, that it is connected with other matters of undoubted importance. Argument is always in order. Humbug therefore is not endemic to the concept, which it is to Moral in the sense named.

Suppose then we say that *the moral point of view is the one where we consider priorities, where we ask, "what are the most important, the central things in life?"* Then, when we oppose it to other points of view, say to the aesthetic or political, we are not comparing two separate and co-ordinate systems. We are stepping back from all the partial systems and looking at their relation to each other. If a musician must choose between the interests of his family and the interests of his work, what he has got is a moral problem, not because music conflicts with morality, but because finding the priority of music or anything else in the total scheme of things just is moral thinking. Music is one of the things which can constitute human good and harm, and it is those things which we have to relate, because we have to choose amongst them. Outside that range we cannot go anyway, which takes care of Hare's worry that people might want to invent entirely new values. And within it, the familiar considerations about other people's happiness etc. are bound to play a central part while homo sapiens remains the intensely social, vulnerable, communicative creature that he genetically is. This should take care of Warnock's point about the content. See his excellent remark that "we have no understanding of the evaluations of hypothetical Martians" (CMP 67), simply because they are hypothetical; we could never be in this situation towards human beings, nor towards any other species, alien or otherwise, with whom we had actually to deal.

Just a word in conclusion. The main dispute in Ethics these days lies between people who stress the *autonomy* of morals to avoid debasing them, and those who stress the *continuity of morals with other topics* in order to make them intelligible. What I have said here mainly supports the drive for intelligibility, but this is not because I think the other side unimportant. I believe a vigorous dialectic from both sides is called for, and now that we are getting out of the siding into which the Intuitionists' odd notion of autonomy shunted us, we should be free to achieve it. The notion of autonomy itself is due for a shake-up. It was invented to free morality from excessive dependence on certain concepts which were becoming too powerful within it. It was not invented to cut it off from connexion with *all* other topics, nor could it possibly do so. Kant, for instance, wanted to

loosen the connexion of morality with happiness, not so as to sterilize it in a vacuum, but so as to tighten its connexion with rationality and freedom. Moore, whose practice was much better than his theory, wanted a looser connexion with the sciences, but a closer one with the arts.[30] Both of them, as much as Butler or Aristotle, set it in the context of a quite definite view of what a human being is. Nietzsche, stressing in his turn the importance of Freedom as against Custom, uses the term for a different emphasis:

> In the end comes the sovereign individual, that resembles only himself, that has got loose from the morality of custom; the autonomous, super-moral individual (for autonomous and moral are mutually exclusive terms) . . .[31]

But the effect of this is merely a new kind of psychological and metaphysical morality; we are to break the chains of custom in order to follow our own nature, which Nietzsche is ready to explain to us. (If he were not, the whole thing would be vacuous. As it is, the only vacuous phrase is "resembles only himself"). This is a very powerful view today, and the surface revulsion I spoke of against the notion of human nature does not at all stop people reinforcing it with the ideas of Freud. I believe that some such preference is always understood, that the drive for autonomy in morals always means favouring one set of connexions at the expense of another. The aim is never total autonomy, total purity, which is clearly nonsense, but to resist certain particular systems (Freudian, Marxist, Christian etc.) which want to take over morality, by pointing to important elements in life that they miss. This is entirely laudable. Beyond that, I think, there exists a less honourable, more masochistic idea that the more obscure solution is *always* the better in ethics; that the man who believes he has good grounds for the principles he acts on is a less noble character than the man who, whatever the arguments, is still gnawed for ever by agonized uncertainty. The idle scepticism behind this would be shown up soon enough today in any other branch of philosophy. There is always a space between the monster of Complacency and the whirlpool of Neurotic Dither, and our dialectic will somehow have to find it.

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[1]P. Foot, 'When is a Principle a Moral Principle?' *Proc. Arist. Society*, Supplementary Vol. 1954.

[2]P. Foot. 'The Philosopher's Defence of Morality', *Philosophy* 1952.

[3]P. Foot. 'Moral Arguments', *Mind* 1958.

[4]Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, Everyman Edition Vol. II p. 28.

[5]Shelley in his *Defence of Poetry* made such a defence, using the word 'Moral' in an entirely natural sense.

[6]Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, Vol. II p. 37.

[7]Ibid, Vol. II p. 526.

[8]Ibid, Vol. I p. 477.

[9]Ibid, Vol. I p. 246.

[10]Johnson, *Life of Savage.*

[11]Moore, *Principia Ethica* Ch. 1 Sec. 6.

[12]Boswell   Vol. 1 p. 275.   The offenders are Hume and Rousseau.

[13]Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals* Ch. 1 Sec. 11.

[14]Kant, Ibid. Ch. 11, Sec. 29.

[15]Mill, *Essay on Liberty* Ch. IV.

[16]Mill, *Utilitarianism* Ch. 2.

[17]Plato, *Republic* 357a-368a

[18]Hare, *Language of Morals*, pp.52 and 176.   Cf. Hampshire, *Thought and Action* passim, and the criticisms of Hampshire's views made by Iris Murdoch in *The Sovereignty of Good* (Routledge, 1970).

[19]Moore, The Nature of Moral Philosophy.   *Philosophical Studies*, p. 314.

[20]See a most interesting discussion of this point in Kovesi, *Moral Notions* Ch. I, Sec.4.

[21]Mill, *Utilitarianism* Ch. 2.

[22]See Kovesi, Moral Notions, Ch. I, Sec. I.

[23]See for instance any work of Ashley Montague, or the essays collected by him under the title *Man and Aggression* (Oxford, 1968) in opposition to ethological views on that topic.   Or, for that matter, almost any issue of *New Society*.

[24]E.g. Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism* pp. 27-8 and 46.   (Mairet's translation).

[25]For an excellent discussion of the problem of Instinct and its applicability to man, see Konrad Lorenz, *On Aggression*, chs. VI and XIII, also W. H. Thorpe's introduction to Lorenz's book *King Solomon's Ring*, and George Schaller, *The year of the Gorilla*, ch. 9.

[26]*Nicomachean Ethics* book X, ch. 6.

[27]*Liberty* ch. III.

[28]Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, ch. 1.

[29]Iliad VI 440-494.   But for the general difficulty of comparing Homeric with modern ideals, see A. W. H. Adkins, *Merit and Responsibility; A Study of Greek Values*.

[30]Moore, *Principia Ethica*, ch. 6.

[31]Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, ch. 2, opening.