CONSCIENCE, CONSCIENTIOUSNESS AND VIRTUE

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CONTENTS

SUMMARY

This thesis, to which I have given the general title Conscience Conscientiousness and Virtue, is intended primarily to defend the claim that conscientiousness alone is morally good. In order to establish this conclusion, I discuss concepts of virtue and the virtues, and try to show that, while the moral virtues have a vital part to play in the life of the morally good man, they do not stand as rivals to conscientiousness. Virtues possess moral worth precisely in so far as they are pre-dispositions developed and utilised by the morally good, or conscientious, man, in response to the moral demand. Having shown that a virtue can best be understood as a pre-disposition whose value consists in the contribution it makes in the pursuit and maintenance of a good life, I turn to a discussion of the nature and value of conscientiousness. First, it is necessary to deal with various misunderstandings about the nature of conscientiousness. It then becomes possible to put forward a positive theory of its unique value, in terms of its role in the life of the morally good man. Finally, I argue that it is the activity of conscience in the moral agent which confers validity on moral judgments, and that in order to respond to the demands of morality, it is essential to accept and act upon the judgments which are authenticated by this activity.

INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, I intend to explore the relationships between goodness, virtue and conscientiousness, and to defend the proposition that conscientiousness alone is morally good. The discussion falls into two parts. Part I is concerned particularly with problems about the nature and value of virtue, especially moral virtue, while in Part II the argument is directed towards conscientiousness.

The claim that conscientiousness alone is morally good (and in general the Kantian position that nothing but the good will has unconditional worth) is not a popular one. It has been attacked by philosophers and laymen many times, most often on the ground that it is incompatible with ordinary ideas about virtue. Two related objections are made in terms of virtue, and while I think that both objections are ill-founded, it seems to me that they are worth considering in some detail, for on closer consideration it can be seen that an identification of conscientiousness and moral goodness enables us to place the virtues in a framework where they fit, whereas a straightforward defence of the virtues leaves us with a more or less arbitrary scale of values.

The first objection comes from those who prefer to think that conscientiousness is some kind of second-rate substitute for the virtues. It is the (morally) poor man's virtue. Such a man can act as though he possessed the virtue of, say, benevolence, but the truly virutous man is the one who really is benevolent. This objection is, I shall argue, based on a mistaken notion of conscientiousness and also on a mistaken notion of benevolence. And if we examine the assumptions underlying the objection, we shall find a serious confusion of basic concepts, and a dangerously naive view of the nature of virtue. The force possessed by the objection derives, not from argument, but from an unthinking emotional reaction to the suggestion that, say,

conscientious beneficence is morally good. A conscientious man acts from a 'sense of duty' and nobody wants to be helped for duty's sake, but for his own sake. But it can be seen that this view of the motive of conscientiousness is distorted. The conscientious man does, certainly, help someone in trouble because he conceives it to be his duty to do so. But in being aware of his duty to help, he is not unaware of the individual in need of help, but on the contrary must, if he is to act conscientiously, recognize not only that, but why, it is his duty to help. This recognition involves recognition of the status and value, as well as the need, of the person to whom he gives assistance. Accordingly, it will be argued that conscientious action is loving action, and that the truly benevolent or loving agent is the conscientious agent. Conscientiousness is thus not a substitute for the virtues, but could rather be said to inform them.

Secondly, it is sometimes objected that, although conscientiousness is indeed morally good, it is simply one among many virtues, and does not reign supreme over the virtues. This objection can also be shown to rest on a misunderstanding of the nature of both conscientiousness and the virtues. For to object that conscientiousness is not supreme among the virtues is to suppose that it is of the same logical kind as those things such as courage which are normally held to be virtues, but this supposition is mistaken. I shall argue that conscientiousness cannot be evaluated on the same scale as virtues such as courage, for it is a logically different sort of thing, and is itself the source of the moral value of the virtues, in so far as something like courage can be said to possess moral worth only when it is informed by conscientiousness.

In order to answer these objections, it is necessary to examine closely the concepts of virtue and conscientiousness.

In Part I, I shall discuss virtue and the virtues. First, we need a general discussion of virtue, goodness and moral value. This discussion

will be followed by a consideration of various specific virtues, which will be shown to be "pre-dispositions", i.e. dispositions cultivated by the conscientious agent who sets himself to act in the right way at the right time. Finally, I shall turn to the question of the relationship between virtue and such motives as love and conscientiousness.

This discussion leads us to Part II, in which I discuss conscience and conscientiousness. First, I deal with some misunderstandings of the nature of conscientiousness, such as those displayed by Nowell-Smith in his Ethics. Through a survey of the mistakes made in this context, we can reach a more positive view of the nature of conscientiousness, which is manifested by a moral agent when and in so far as he does an action which he sincerely, after due consideration, believes to be morally right. This definition of conscientiousness makes it necessary to distinguish between 'objective duty' and 'subjective duty'. The former is that which is objectively demanded by the situation, while the latter is that which the conscientious agent, rightly or wrongly, conceives to be his duty. It will be argued that if the notion of moral worth is to make any sense at all, we must define moral goodness in terms of subjective duty. This leads to a discussion of the possibility of knowledge of right and wrong, since the authority of conscience may more easily be defended if we can also depend on its reliability. I shall therefore consider the status and justification of moral judgments, and argue that on the whole conscience is reliable, but that even when it is mistaken, it still has authority. But a judgment can be called a moral judgment, the offspring of conscience, only when it is reached after due deliberation by the conscientious agent. Moral virtue attaches to conscientious action, but not to action which the agent merely happens to think right.

Finally, in the concluding section, 'conscientiousness and goodness' I draw together the conclusions which have been reached in the arguments

of Parts I and II, and show the identification of moral goodness, or virtue, with conscientiousness.

PART I. VIRTUE AND THE VIRTUES.

Chapter 1

Moral Goodness and Virtue.

Few modern philosophers have concerned themselves with questions about goodness and virtue. One reason for this is, I think, that an adequate account of virtue must be based upon a metaphysic of human nature, and that most philosophers now avoid this kind of account, partly because a grand metaphysic is too sweeping for those with an analytical turn of mind, and partly because the influence of Moore is still sufficiently strong for philosophers to avoid the risk of the 'naturalistic fallacy' which is incurred, it is suspected, by anyone basing an ethical account on a natural concept.

There is, however, one philosopher who has offered an account of virtue in the course of his examination of the various kinds of goodness, viz. von Wright in his Varieties of Goodness[1]. In Chapter VII, 'Virtue', von Wright describes his task as one of 'giving shape to a concept of a virtue'[2]. The concept he shapes is one of a virtue as a trait of character[3] which is needed for right choice[4], where the right choice is one which enables us to avoid harm ('The goodness of the virtues is that they protect us from harm and not that they supply us with some good'[5]). Although I think that this concept is too negative, and will argue below for the view that virtues are positively beneficial, I find von Wright's account illuminating, and useful as a starting-point for my own.

[1] von Wright - Varieties of Goodness.
[2] -do- p.138
[3] -do- p.144
[4] -do- p.145
[5] -do p.151

As he points out, it is necessary to distinguish between two different uses of the word "virtue". 'There is one meaning of "virtue" which admits of a plural, "virtues". This meaning is in question for example, when we call courage a virtue. There is another meaning of "virtue" which lacks the plural. This is (usually) in question when virtue is contrasted with vice, or when - as is sometimes done - to do one's duty is said to be virtue.'[6] He goes on to say that it is not the second meaning with which he is concerned. Rather, he is 'dealing with that meaning of "virtuous" which is the display or practising of virtues, and not (directly) with that which is virtuous as opposed to vicious conduct or character'.

Now, I think it is clear that this kind of distinction has to be made. When we say, for instance, that courage is a virtue, we are not saying the sort of thing which might be expressed by "to do one's duty is virtue". However, although the distinction must be made, it would be dangerous to suppose that the two senses of 'virtue' can be kept apart. I do not think it is possible to deal with 'that meaning of "virtuous" which is the display or practising of virtues' without at the same time dealing with 'that which is virtuous as opposed to vicious conduct or character'. This point is not made in total opposition to von Wright, whose parenthetical use of the adverb 'directly' suggests that he is well aware of the relation between the two. What I do want to argue is that, although it is valuable to distinguish the two meanings, and to provide an analysis of the virtues, I do not think that such an analysis can be regarded as an adequate treatment of "virtue" (the title of the chapter from which I have quoted). What is needed is a discussion which deals with the conceptual relationship between displaying or practising virtues, and possessing a virtuous character.

In order to clarify this relationship, however, it is undoubtedly valuable to consider particular virtues at some length. For it is necessary

[6] von Wright - Varieties of Goodness, p.138.

to make further distinctions between types of virtue, and to determine the nature of 'a virtue' before it is possible to say how goodness, conscientiousness and virtues do, or might, inter-relate in a moral life.

Another important task is to establish in what sense benevolence is to be regarded as a virtue, since benevolence (or love, or sympathy) is put forward as a serious rival to conscientiousness. But when we use the word 'virtue', neither benevolence nor conscientiousness spring immediately to mind as examples of virtue. One reason for this may simply be that 'virtue' is an old-fashioned word, and has come to be associated with the qualities which were praised by those who used the word. Another reason may be that when we do use the word, we tend to do so to name the particular virtues, rather than virtue as such. But whether or not we tend immediately to think of benevolence as a virtue, I think it is normal to say that at least in some sense of 'virtue' benevolence is somehow at least related to virtue. When we undertake an analysis of virtue and the virtues, then, it is essential to leave room in our scheme for such qualities as benevolence.

Now that these preliminary points have been made, the general point and nature of the analysis I propose to make should be reasonably clear. My chief aim is to sort out the relationships between various senses of 'virtue' and various virtues, so that it will be possible to erect a framework in which the virtues will fit comfortably, and to place conscientiousness and also benevolence either in, or in relation to, this framework.

In attempting to erect such a framework, it is very important to keep an open mind. It is all too easy to find certain characteristics common to most of the accepted 'virtues' and then to regard these as defining characteristics, so that some of the accepted virtues are shown, by a tempting but illegitimate move, not really to be 'virtues' at all. If some virtues do not fit into the framework, we must either scrap the framework (and <u>not</u> the virtues), enlarge the framework, or admit that there

is no one framework into which all the virtues will fit. For we must not assume that virtues which could not be assimilated into a single scheme were not, after all, virtues. I stress that it is important to be willing to do this, not because I think it will in fact prove necessary, but because I am struck by the oddness of von Wright's dismissal of what does not fit his framework. For instance, he says, "It is...doubtful whether justice fits the conceptual pattern of a virtue, which I have been outlining, and thus also doubtful whether justice, on our definition, is to be counted as one of the virtues at all".[7] What appears to me to be doubtful here, is not whether justice is to be counted as one of the virtues, but whether a definition which excludes justice is an accurate definition. If we find the definition a satisfactory one up to this point, we should not rule out justice, but it would be open to us to say that perhaps justice is a different type of virtue from those which fall under the definition. At any rate, we must guard against an undue attachment to any tentative definitions of virtue.

Traditionally, the four chief virtues have been listed as wisdom, courage, temperance and justice. In some ways this is, as has been recognized, an odd list. The virtues which are grouped together seem to be different in important ways. Wisdom, for instance, seems to be primarily connected with the intellect, and for that reason is sometimes described as an intellectual virtue. Temperance and justice, on the other hand, are more closely connected with morality as it is generally understood. Courage, again, seems to be a special case. It is not really an intellectual virtue, and yet it seems that sometimes we might not want to say that it is a moral virtue either. Whether or not we describe courage as morally good seems to depend to some extent on the type of situation in which it is displayed.

And yet, on further consideration, it is not surprising that the traditional cardinal virtues should be diverse. Indeed, it would be more

[7] p.149

surprising if there were more similarities than there are - though there are similarities and important ones. In connection with the diversity of the cardinal virtues, we may refer again to von Wright, who says 'The Greek arete...which it has become customary to translate by 'virtue', has a much wider connotation than the English word...when, however, we call courage, generosity, or justice virtues, we are using the word 'virtue' very differently from that meaning of arete, which refers to an excellence of its kind. To see this clearly is, I think, of some importance. Aristotle, I would suggest, did not see quite clearly at this point'.[8]

Now, I think we can say that both Aristotle and von Wright are wrong here, but that Aristotle's insight is more valuable than von Wright's. It might well be that we do not now think of man as having a function in just the sense in which Aristotle thought we had, and that a virtue is not an excellence in quite the way in which Aristotle thought it was. But I think von Wright exaggerates when he says that in calling, say, courage a virtue, we are "using the word 'virtue' very differently from that meaning of arete, which refers to an excellence of its kind."

Without adopting a functional theory of man, we can nevertheless make sense, and use, of Aristotle's idea of excellence of its kind. In discussing the particular virtues[9], I shall argue that it is some idea like this which underlies our use of the term 'virtue'. In order to see this, we may briefly consider the virtue of courage.[10]

Part of what we imply when we describe courage as a virtue, is that when we describe a man as courageous we mean that this man is, in so far as he is courageous, admirable as a man. Courage is an admirable quality for human beings to possess, and when we judge that someone is a coward, we judge that he is poorer as a human being than those people who are brave.

[8] p.137

[9] see Chapter 2 below

[10] for a full treatment of courage, see chapter 2.

This point, it will be seen, can be generalized to cover the rest of the traditional virtues, and indeed may seem to have more force with regard to other virtues than with regard to courage. With regard to courage, it may be objected that we consider it to be very much a physical, and consequently an animal, virtue. Our use of similes like 'as brave as a lion' suggests that when we praise a brave man we do not praise him so much as a human animal, but rather as a human animal.

In reply to this objection, two points may be made. First, the objection loses a great deal of its force unless we accept an Aristotelian view of human virtue as connected with the differentiating characteristics of man. The attack on my modification of the Aristotelian view therefore carries little weight as an attack on Aristotle's own account. But in any case, it is this part of Aristotle's account which I want to reject. I do not want to say that a man is admirable as a man in so far as he possesses good characteristics peculiar to human beings, but rather in so far as he possesses good human characteristics. Something is a human characteristic if it is characteristically found among human beings, regardless of whether it is also found among other beings. (For instance, the backbone is no less a human characteristic for being common to all vertebrates, a class wider than that of human beings). Thus, if something is a good quality, we may regard it as a human virtue, even though other animals may also possess that quality. Consequently, a man may be described as 'good as a man' if he possesses courage, a good human quality, even though courage is not peculiarly a virtue of the human animal.

Secondly, even if this account of physical courage is rejected, it does not follow that courage cannot be an admirable human quality. Even if it is insisted that a quality is a human one only if it is peculiar to human beings, we can still speak of courage as a virtue, with the implication that a brave man is admirable as a man. For although, as I

have argued, we do regard the characteristics which human beings qua animals possess, as human characteristics, we also do, in our assessments of human beings, consider that where rationality can come into play, it should do so. And of course, in some situations where courage can be displayed, rationality can come into play. In these situations, we do not expect a man to behave merely like an animal, albeit a brave one. We expect him to behave like a rational animal. Becauseof this, we counterbalance our terms of praise such as 'brave as a lion' by such terms of disparagement as 'mere animal courage'. Thus, when we feel that the situation is such that reason has something to offer, we do not admire the type of courage which does not involve reason.

I think then, that it is safe to assume that the possible objection to describing a virtue as a property whose possession leads us to regard a man as admirable qua man, cannot be sustained. Whether we accept that a basically animal virtue may count as a human virtue, or whether we maintain that human virtues are peculiar to human beihgs and connected with their differentiating characteristic of rationality, it is still open to us to say that Aristotle's account of virtue as an excellence is acceptable, in so far as it is interpreted in terms of admirable qualities of human beings qua human beings. (Of course, the fact that this objection can be answered does not prove the case. A defence of the view will be put forward in chapter 2 below, in the course of a detailed consideration of the virtues).

It is therefore established at least that the view that a virtue is an admirable human quality is at least logically tenable. However, this is not enough to differentiate virtues from various other qualities. Physical strength, intelligence, or artistic ability, may all be regarded as admirable human qualities, in the sense I have outlined so far, but we would hesitate to describe them as virtues. One way to draw a distinction

between virtues and other admirable human qualities is to show that virtues are not merely admirable but praiseworthy, whereas such qualities as strength or intelligence are not (at least not typically) regarded as praiseworthy.

Normally, praise is conferred on those qualities for which we hold the agent responsible. We do not praise him for being strong or intelligent, because we do not think of strength and intelligence as things which the agent has acquired for himself. If, by some effort, he has overcome some handicap, we might praise him, but then we are not praising him for possessing e.g. strength, but for his effort in developing strength. A quality is thus (as well as admirable) ~praiseworthy if it is one for whose development the agent is responsible. (Similarly, weakness may be balmeworthy if the agent has failed to develop potential strength). So, in saying that a virtue is not merely admirable but also praiseworthy, we are suggesting that a virtue is something which has been developed by its possessor. He does not merely happen to be brave or just, but has developed the quality of courage or justice in himself.

This gives rise to two distinct, though related, questions. First, why do we praise an agent for developing virtues? And secondly, why does the agent develop various qualities, and in what circumstances is such development good? The answers to these two questions will enable us to show the relationships between virtues and goodness, and we shall see that virtues possess value in two different ways, or rather two different (though again related) sorts of value, viz. moral and non-moral.

Briefly, my answer to the first question is that we praise an agent for developing virtues because we regard virtues as contributing factors in the living of a good or complete life. Secondly, the agent develops various qualities which he sees himself as contributing to a good life, and insofar as he is motivated by his belief that certain qualities have

value in this way, we may regard him as good, because of his motivation.

These answers must be considered in rather more detail. A full answer cannot be given until the discussion of the various virtues is completed, and until types of motivation have been discussed (see chapters 2 and 3 below), but enough can be said to indicate the lines which the answer will follow.

First, then, I am suggesting that our reason for regarding virtues as praiseworthy is that we value them as contributing factors in a good life. Their value can be explained by reference to the part that they play in such a life, which is itself regarded as valuable. At this stage, it is not possible to elucidate fully the concept of a good or complete life, since the interaction between this concept and the concept of various virtues is such that it can be understood only in terms of the virtue-concepts. However, it is possible at least to give a rough formal definition of a complete life as a human life in which various potentialities are actualized harmoniously. Human beings are, as I have pointed out, animals, but that is not all. They also possess rationality, and what might best be termed sensibility. This term 'sensibility' is intended to cover the human capacity for feeling and emotion of every kind, and encompasses not only such things as sympathy and affection for other living beings, but also various capacities which can be called artistic. Artistic capacities are not confined to the creation of works of art, but include capacities for reacting or responding to beauty or ugliness in any context, natural or artificial. Rational capacities include ability to think, make judgements and decisions, put forward and follow arguments of various kinds, to conceptualize, and in general to perform types of reasoning. There is no sharp dividing line between rational and sensible capacities - rational capacities may well involve feeling, and sensible capacities reason - but it is useful to distinguish

them since they are in principle different sorts of things. Catching one's breath before a painting is different from, say, working out an algebraic problem, though there is an area where we may not be able to distinguish sharply between, for instance, writing a novel and writing philosophy.

Thus, the significant facts about human beings, as far as a concept of a complete life is concerned, are that they are sentient (capable of feeling pleasure and pain), sensible (capable of various types of emotion), and rational (capable of performing reasoning operations). A human being may therefore be said to live a good or complete life when he exercises his capacities of sentience, sensibility and rationality, and exercises them harmoniously, by which I mean that one type of capacity is not developed and exercised to the exclusion of other types. In general terms, then, the complete life is definable in terms of the harmonious actualization of potentialities which can roughly be categorised as potentialities of feeling, emotion and reason. A more specific explanation of the concept will be offered later (see chapters 2 and 3 below).

However, it need not be supposed that the concept is a closed one. Scope for individuality must be allowed, and ultimately each individual is responsible for his concrete interpretation of the general concept.

Now, if a good life, or a complete life, is one in which various human potentialities are harmoniously actualized, the concept of a good life need not be a specifically moral concept. For someone may lead a complete life and yet not be regarded as living a morally good life. So, in so far as virtues contribute to the attainment of a life which is admirable but not morally praiseworthy, those virtues are not, as such, moral ones. How, then, are we to distinguish moral from non-moral virtues?

To start with, it should be pointed out that the distinction is in some sense one of form and not of content. That is to say, we cannot take

a couple of virtues such as courage and justice, and categorize the latter as a moral virtue and the former as non-moral. Any virtue qua virtue is admirable and praiseworthy. Thus, in so far as courage is a virtue, it is admirable and praiseworthy - admirable, or valuable, because it contributes to the living of a complete life, which is valuable, praiseworthy because it is something for which the agent is responsible. (A disposition on which the agent is not responsible is not a virtue - the man who knows no fear does not exercise the virtue of courage, though he may act in a way which we should want to describe as in some sense courageous). I am not, therefore, suggesting that courage is not good. In so far as it is a virtue, it is good. But it is not necessarily morally good. Whether or not a virtue is to be counted as a moral one will depend on whether or not the agent developed that virtue for the right reason, or from the right motive. Another way of putting this is to say that a virtue is a moral virtue when and only when it has been conscientiously developed. (This notion will be more fully developed, and the claim defended, in section 2 below).

I said above that the concept of a good life need not be a specifically moral concept, but there is an ambiguity in this statement which must be resolved. Since a complete life is a moral life, because human beings are moral agents, and live a complete life only if they exercise their moral agency, the concept (the proper full-blown concept) of a complete life is a moral concept. On the other hand, individuals may possess a concept of a good or complete life which is not a moral concept. Objectively, a complete life is a moral life. Subjectively, it need not be conceived in in a moral context. When I say, then, that the concept is not necessarily a moral one, I mean that subjectively it need not be moral, but an individual's non-moral concept of a good life is incomplete if it lacks the moral dimension involved in the living of a genuinely good life.

This distinction sheds some light on the distinction which is to be drawn between moral and non-moral virtues. A quality is a virtue if it has been developed by an agent because that agent recognizes its value as a contributory factor in the living of a complete life. It is a moral virtue if it is developed by an agent who, possessing a moral concept of a good life, regards a good life as a moral goal, as something which a human being ought to pursue. Courage, for instance, is a moral virtue when it has been developed by an agent who, regarding courage as indispensable in the pursuit of the good life which he is morally obliged to pursue considers the development of courage as being itself a moral duty, and develops it for that reason.

These various claims concerning the types of value possessed by virtues must be substantiated, but substantiation will not be fully possible until a more detailed consideration of various virtues has been completed. However, before I turn to this consideration, it is necessary, briefly to offer an account of the nature of virtues. In other words, it is necessary to answer not only the questions 'How, and why, are virtues valuable?' but also the questions 'What are virtues? (what is their logical status) and what role do they play in a complete life?'

So far, I have used the vague term 'quality' when speaking about virtues. However, now that it is settled that something is to count as a virtue only when it is something for which the agent is responsible, it is possible to achieve a more precise terminology. At this point, therefore, I will introduce the term 'pre-disposition' to name the class to which virtues belong. This term is used to indicate various points which must be borne in mind when we talk about virtues. The first of these points is that a virtue such as courage involves a more or less settled tendency to act in certain ways in certain circumstances. A single courageous act may not be a manifestation of the virtue of courage, for

a man may be said to possess that virtue if he acts courageously fairly consistently when the opportunity is offered. Secondly, he possesses a virtue such as courage only if he is set in advance to act in certain ways in certain circumstances. That is to say, the courageous man is prepared to act in the right way in a situation where courage is called for. Thirdly, a virtue is something for which an agent is responsible - he has pre-disposed himself to act in the right way in given circumstances. This is not to say that he has made all his decisions in advance, for, as we shall see, the conscientious agent is one with an open mind, and one who uses his virtues (see Part II below). What I mean is that a conscientious and a virtuous man is one who is prepared to respond to the demands of the situation. Thus, if a situation arises which is dangerous, or appears to be so, the agent who is courageous will respond to the danger, or the feared situation, courageously.[11]

When I say that a virtue is a pre-disposition, what I mean is that an agent possesses a given virtue if and only if he has set himself to respond in the appropriate way with regard to the demands of the situation. For example, a situation of danger demands courage, while one of extreme desire demands temperance, and so on. But the situation cannot be categorized in more specific terms, since different sorts of action or refraining from action will count as courageous or temperate depending on just what the situation is, so that sometimes the courageous man will confront the dangerous object, and sometimes, recognizing that discretion is the better form of valour, he will run away. To be pre-disposed to be courageous is therefore to be resolved to react to danger in the most appropriate way. And it is precisely in so far as it is a pre-disposition that courage is to be regarded as a virtue.

[11] See chapter 2 below. I am aware that this account is incomplete, but the concept will be more fully explicated below. The points I am making are logical, or at least formal ones, and are not intended to cast light on the nature of any specific virtue such as courage.

Formally, then, we may define a virtue as follows: 'x is a virtue if and when x is a pre-disposition, i.e. when agent A has set himself to act x'ly in X, the situation-demanding-x'. This definition, although formal, is not vacuous, for it will enable us to decide which variables, in satisyfing x, are virtues. But we cannot do this until we have found out more about X, the situation-demanding-x. It will therefore be necessary to discuss various types of situation in which several virtues can be manifested, so that we can see how the formal definition may be understood in more concrete terms.

Finally, though, before I turn to this discussion, I shall answer briefly the question, 'What part do the virtues play in the good life?' This question arises because of the necessity to settle the question whether virtues possess merely instrumental value or whether they possess value in themselves. It will be seen that an answer must be given in terms neither of instrumental nor of intrinsic value, but rather ~~to~~ in terms of what I shall call <u>contributory</u> value. Again, the question and answer will be couched in fairly vague terms, as a full answer will depend on the conclusions reached in a discussion of specific virtue. For now, I am still concerned with logical rather than concrete definitions.

I said earlier that virtues are accepted as such because of their being contributory factors to the good life. When I say this, I do not intend to suggest that their value is merely instrumental, in that they are useful as a means to the end of the good life. They do possess instrumental value, since an agent pursuing the good life will find some virtues indispensable. But a good life is not merely an end to be pursued, but one which can be lived, and once an agent has reached the stage where he can be said to be living a good life, he must continue to be virtuous. This is so whether we conceive of the good life in moral or non-moral terms. If, as I have suggested, the good life is a moral one, then the agent who lives

a good life can only be said to do so if he exercises moral virtues, since these virtues are among the potentialities which are harmoniously actualized in a good life. On the other hand, even if the concept of a good life is a non-moral life, the virtues (or some of them) still have a part to play in the living of a good life, since the pre-dispositions of courage, justice and so on are constituents of such a life. A coward, for instance, cannot live a complete life, since his cowardice will prevent him from doing many of the things that are involved in a complete life, whereas the courageous man will manifest courage in his living of the good life. This will be seen more clearly when courage is considered more fully. For now, I wish merely to stress that the exercise of virtues is involved in the living, and not just in the pursuit, of a good life.

Now that the more general points about the nature and value of the virtues have been made, it is possible to turn to a more detailed discussion of various virtues, so that the position I am adopting can be more clearly explained and defended.

Chapter 2

Virtues

In this Chapter, I shall discuss in some detail the four 'cardinal' virtues of justice, wisdom, temperance and courage, and shall follow this discussion by a briefer consideration of various other virtues. I hope that this discussion will make it possible to clarify and substantiate my claims concerning the nature and value of virtues, and that furthermore some light may be shed on the problems arising from the apparent 'fashions' in virtues, since I intend to argue that a virtue cannot cease to be a virtue. First, however, I want to show that the cardinal virtues are, as I have claimed, pre-dispositions, that they are necessary not only in the pursuit, but also in the living, of a good life, that their value depends on their relation to the good life, and that their moral value depends on the agent's motivation, and on his attitude towards the good life.

1. Courage

To start with, we may look more closely at the virtue of courage, which has already been briefly considered. So far, I have suggested that courage may be seen as a physical, and hence animal, virtue, and that it may also be seen as a more specifically human virtue, in that it may involve a rational response in certain sorts of situation.[1] A consideration of the types of situation in which we might say that courage is called for should, then, enable us to see more clearly what courage is, by showing us what it is a response to.

First, we can take the case of 'animal courage'. If 'animal courage' is not a misnomer, in other words, if a non-rational response in some situations may accurately be described as 'courageous', it must be the case that (non-human) animals can show courage. I do not think that this need

[1] See p 17 above.

be denied, but it is important to establish what will, and what will not, count as a manifestation of animal courage.

It is clear that courage is typically manifested in situations of (at least apparent) danger. Furthermore, it is commonly accepted that courage is manifested in situations of fear. Hence the qualification of 'danger' by the term 'apparent'. A courageous action is also somehow appropriate. This point needs to be made because the other two conditions are necessary but not sufficient conditions of courage. The situation in which fear of some apparent danger is felt is precisely the situation in which cowardice as well as courage can be manifested. So, taking the three jointly necessary and sufficient conditions into account, we can say that courage is shown when the agent reacts appropriately to feared danger.

It is the idea of appropriateness which gives rise to difficulty when we consider the possibility of animal courage. The reason for this is not so much the obvious one that talk of appropriate responses suggests some power of judgment, but is connected with the fact that there may be two types of appropriate response to physical danger, both of which are describable as courageous, but only one of which is to be found in non-rational animals. Roughly speaking, these responses are, on the one hand facing and coping with the danger, and on the other hand, running away. Animals are capable of both responses considered merely as actions, but we would be reluctant to say that running away could be a manifestation of courage in an animal. But if we refuse to call running away a manifestation of courage in an animal, should we not also refuse to call facing up to the danger a manifestation of courage? If so, it would seem to follow that animals cannot show courage, and consequently that 'animal courage' is a misnomer, when applied to the behaviour of human beings as well as to non-human animals.

However, it would be a mistake to draw this conclusion, for the argu-

ment from which it follows contains a disguised ambiguity in the term 'courage'. When it is argued that there are two appropriate responses to a situation of physical danger, both of which may be manifestations of courage, it is suggested that the responses are, or may be manifestations of the same kind of courage. This is not so, As I said, running away from physical danger may be the appropriate response, and it may be an act of courage. But the courageousness of the response does not reside in its appropriateness. It is quite possible to respond appropriately to danger by running away, without in doing so showing courage. It is brave to run away only when one is afraid to run away. Running away is courageous, when it is courageous, because one fears blame or scorn, and because one overcomes this fear. If, on the other hand, running away involves no danger or unpleasantness, it does not merit the description of courageous. The reason we are reluctant to describe animals as manifesting courage in running away is that we are reluctant to attribute to them fear of this kind of danger (or unpleasantness). But if we want to say that animals can show courage in facing up to danger, there is no reason why we should not, for it does not seem odd to suggest that animals can be aware of, and fearful of, physical danger, nor, consequently, that their facing up to the danger is a manifestation of courage. It seems, then, that we do use the word 'courage' correctly to describe a particular kind of animal behaviour in the face of danger, but that only one of the two appropriate responses to that danger can be said to involve 'animal courage'. It follows that human beings may manifest animal courage in a situation of physical danger, but that this is restricted to the case where the human animal meets the danger, where he responds appropriately by facing it. (But it should be pointed out here that if I am correct in my classification of virtues as pre-dispositions, and in my analyses of the concept of a pre-disposition) the courage which animals show is not a virtue, since it

is unlikely that animals set themselves to act in certain ways. Hence, it must sometimes be possible to act courageously without possessing the virtue of courage. And I see no harm in adopting this position, so long as we remember that the courage displayed by animals is non-virtuous, and that human courage which is mere animal courage must also be non-virtuous).

When, therefore, we say that sometimes it is brave to run away, we do not mean that running away is a manifestation of animal courage. We mean rather that it is brave to run the risk of being called a coward, when one's appropriate response to danger might be misinterpreted as an act of cowardice rather than wisdom or prudence. In this case, the same conditions must hold if the agent is to be described as courageous. He must be in a situation of danger, he must fear the danger, and he must respond appropriately to the danger. But the courage is not physical or animal courage, because the danger is not of the type to which one responds with physical courage. So while the same general conditions must hold if any act is to be described as an act of courage, we will classify the type of courage which is involved by reference to the kind of danger, and consequently the kind of fear, which is involved.

It seems that some things can be recognised as, or believed to be, dangerous only by rational beings. This seemed clear enough in the case of fear of being scorned or blamed for apparent cowardice. (Animals can fear punishment, but that is a different matter). And fear of blame or scorn is not the only kind of non-physical fear of which a human being is capable. He is capable of fearing a whole range of dangers of a non-physical kind, and consequently of showing non-physical courage in a wide range of situations. To describe these types of non-physical courage, it will be convenient to adopt the common term 'moral courage'. The word 'moral' has no significance other than 'non-physical'.

Like physical courage, moral courage is manifested by an agent who feels fear in a situation of apparent danger, and who responds appropriately to that danger. It is easy to underestimate the number of situations in which moral courage is not only possible, but actually displayed, but there are recognized to be quite a number of ways of 'standing up for one's convictions' in a way which involves courage. For instance, one may risk losing one's job by refusing to undertake shady deals, one may risk going to prison for refusing to fight, one may defend religion (or, say, chastity) in a climate of scepticism. This kind of behaviour is recognized as courageous, and judged to be admirable. It is thought to be good that people should have standards, whether moral, religious or aesthetic, or even of etiquette, sportsmanship and so on, and that they should try to live up to those standards, even to those cases where we do not accept the standards. Someone without standards is, we think, poorer as a human being. The selfish ~~man~~ man and the cynic lack something. And standards are, somehow, things we are expected to 'live up to'. Possibly something which was effortlessly maintained would not count as a 'standard'. It is, therefore, thought to be good that human beings should have standards of behaviour, that they should act in accordance with those standards, and that they should do so even when such action is difficult, and requires a display of moral courage. All of this is quite clearly related to some general idea of what it is like to be 'good as a human being'. Moral courage is recognized as a virtue because it is required by any human being who does not lack a valuable human characteristic - that is, to put it rather imprecisely, the characteristic of having standards of behaviour.

Moral courage so far does seem to be describable as a virtue just because it is connected with our ideas about what it is to be 'good as a human being'. The moral coward, and also the person who never has any occasion to show moral courage because he has nothing to live up to are,

significantly, said to 'lack something'. The idea of a 'complete human being' therefore appears to be involved in our attribution of the virtue of moral courage.

But as I pointed out, it is easy to underestimate the number of occasions on which moral courage might be, and is, shown, and I think we underestimate here because we fail to realize how many things can be feared. Partly, too, the problem is that we think of courage in terms of danger, and then we apply the term 'danger' to a narrow range of situations. We speak of a 'danger' of losing one's job, of incurring scorn, and so on, but we do not speak of the 'danger' of, say, touching a spider. And yet, surely, one may be afraid of touching a spider, and may show moral courage in picking one up so, whether we extend our usage of the term 'danger' to cover such cases, or whether we say that it is appropriate to speak of 'fearing' things other than danger, we must realize that moral courage is possible in the face of objects which are not objectively dangerous.

What I propose to do now is to consider whether the kind of moral courage which is most regularly displayed is describable as a virtue in the sense in which the other types of courage can be shown to be virtues, i.e. in their relation to the idea that they are involved in the pursuit, or the living of a good or complete life.

Now, the kind of courage I have in mind here is the sort which is displayed by most people quite often. Most people perform actions which they thoroughly dislike because they conceive them to be necessary or right. The example of touching a spider is not as frivolous as it might sound - many people are afraid of spiders, but not all of them show it. People can fear heights, or crowds, or open spaces, or meeting other people, or they can fear responsibility or loneliness. We cannot assume that because many of these fears count as phobias, and hence as irrational, that they are rare. Severe instances of such fears may be comparatively rare.

For instance, there are not a great many people who dare not leave the house, but to a lesser degree many people dislike crowds. If it is possible to lead a fairly ordinary life while avoiding crowds, they avoid crowds. But if leading an ordinary life entails meeting crowds, they will put up with crowds in, say, the supermarket at a weekend. Similarly, someone who is afraid of heights may sensibly avoid climbing mountains, but may climb a stepladder to wash windows or hang curtains. I should say that such people display moral courage, since they do what they are afraid of doing. Generally, they do not overcome their fear simply because it is a fear, but because they intend to lead a normal life, and giving in to the fear would inhibit everyday living.

The concept of a 'normal life' is an evaluative one, rather than a purely descriptive one. So people who overcome fears in order to achieve a normal life can be said to show courage in their pursuit of an end which they conceive to be worthwhile. They want to live as they think people in their situation ought to live, and they show courage in overcoming their fear because they believe that a life dominated by that fear would not be an adequate life.

If this is accepted, it is reasonable to claim that everyday moral courage is valued because it contributes to the completeness or goodness of a 'normal human life'. It therefore is valued for the same kind of reason ~~as~~ as physical courage and the moral courage which is displayed in living up to one's standards. The value of courage is thus held to lie in its connection with the pursuit or achievement of what it is good for a human being, as a human being, to be. The coward is a poorer human being because, lacking courage, he does not become what he could, if he were brave. He does not lack courage alone, but the end to which courage is a means, or of which it is a part. For courage of this kind is necessary in the pursuit and in the living of a complete life. Now it follows from

this that someone who was never afraid would not necessarily be the poorer for not having any occasion to show courage. But in practice, total lack of fear would suggest a lack of sensitivity or humility (such a person would never fear hurting other people, would not be afraid of responsibility or failure of any kind) and would, I should say, be the poorer for that.

Now that this relationship has shown to hold between the concept of courage as a virtue, and the concept of a complete human life, I shall discuss the other three traditional virtues, to see whether the same pattern of analysis is appropriate.

2. Wisdom

First, I shall consider wisdom. A complication arises from the fact that different philosophers have meant different things by 'wisdom', but the important respect in which wisdom is held to be a virtue is that in which the wise man is one whose behaviour is governed by reason. He is in general not over-impulsive, he learns by experience, and on the whole leads an ordered life. If the wise man is like this, we can see the correlation between wisdom and prudence (which is the virtue in the Christian list of cardinal virtues corresponding to the Greek wisdom. The other three are fortitude, temperance, and justice). A prudent man is reasonable and experienced (in the sense that he has learnt by experience) and wisdom or prudence can be best understood in terms of practical rather than theoretical reason. To some extent, the wise man is a man of common sense, rather than an intellectual or a philosopher.[2] The wise man may, therefore, be equated with the prudent man, who does not usually act on the spur of the moment, but works out policies and on the whole pursues those policies.

[2]Naturally, one's view of the relation between knowledge and behaviour will affect one's account of the virtue of wisdom. Plato's wise man will, presumably, be the philosopher. But if we are uncommitted to a Platonic theory of knowledge, and to a Platonic conception of the relation between knowledge of the good and being good, we need not insist that the non-philosopher cannot be wise in the relevant sense. He may, indeed, be wiser than the philosopher.

While it is not usual for ordinary people to say 'wisdom is a virtue', there is an admiring way of saying 'Jones is a very wise man' or 'Smith is a sensible chap', which expresses approval of wisdom. I want to find an interpretation of such admiring descriptions (taken to be equivalent in all important respects to 'wisdom is a virtue') which fits the feeling behind remarks of this kind. Thus, in explaining in what sense wisdom is a virtue, I intend to explain what it is that prompts people to speak admiringly of Smith and Jones.

My interpretation of the claim that courage is a virtue followed the line that part of what is meant by this claim is that a man is, in so far as he is courageous, admirable, as a man, that courage contributes to the living of a complete human life. Its value arises from its relation to that life, and its nature as a virtue is to be explained in terms of its being a pre-disposition. I shall now ask whether this is the sort of thing which lies behind the claim that wisdom is a virtue. The question is whether the man who possesses the virtue of wisdom can best be understood as a man who is, as a result of his own efforts, at least partially qualified to live a complete life. If wisdom is a contributory factor in the living of a complete life, its value can be said to lie in its relation to that life, and if wisdom is a pre-disposition, something for which the agent is responsible, it can be said to be a virtue of the same type as courage.

First, then, does wisdom equip a man to live a complete life? It might be helpful to consider the related question, whether an unwise man is ill-equipped to lead a complete life. Are impulsiveness, thoughtlessness and so on hindrances to the achievement of a complete life? I shall argue that they are incompatible with its pursuit and with maintaining it. For to pursue a complete life must involve having some idea about what would constitute such a life, and formulating at least a rough plan of how to

attain it. And once it is attained, it must be actively lived - slipping back must be avoided.

Now if it is possible to show that the complete life is for each agent something to be pursued as an end, and maintained when it is achieved, and not a life which some people happen, by a lucky chance, to lead, then we can say that wisdom is essential to such a life. What we must show, then, is that the complete life is a goal, something to be sought rather than stumbled upon. Although the concept of a complete life is still vague, it is safe to say that it involves the idea of living one's life as a human being to the full. It was seen that phrases like 'being the poorer for...' and 'lacking something' were used of people lacking courage, or lacking convictions or standards. So, in the discussion of courage it emerged that people do have some idea, though possibly a vague one, of what it is to be a complete or rounded human being, and that this idea is an evaluative one. It is in this sense that Aristotle's idea of the excellence of a human being can be tied up with ordinary modern ideas about life which most people have that to live a good life is to do what one can as well as one can. The concept of what people are gives rise to an idea of what it is good that they should be, i.e. that they should give expression to their essence. The concept of human potentiality, whose actualization is good, seems to be basic to our thinking about human beings. The concept of the complete human life is related to this, in that it is one in which human potentialities are actualized.

If it is accepted that the complete human life is an achievement; in that it involves the actualization of potentialities, then it is clear that wisdom has value in just the way that I am suggesting. For in order to show this, it was necessary to show that the complete human life is essentially an end to be pursued and maintained, rather than something which one might, or might not, live fortuitously. But if the complete life

is one in which potentialities are developed and actualized, it must be, not only a goal, but one which is to be reached by the use of wisdom. Wisdom, as a virtue, is really a matter of governing one's behaviour by reason, of thinking out what to do, and acting in accordance with policies rather than impulse. Wisdom of this kind is necessary if we are to achieve a complete life, since we must decide what we are capable of doing and becoming, and then work out how we should set about pursuing this end.

Inso far as people vary, the complete life will be something individual. It might be that we consider some things to be basic ingredients in such a life: if so, we must say that there is some general human goal. The complete life could be described as a theme on which there are as many variations as there are individuals. But neither the general nor the individual goal can be reached without wisdom. We can say, consequently, that wisdom is valued, and is valuable, in so far as it is an essential ingredient in the complete life. In this respect, it conforms to the account I have given of virtues in general, and of courage qua virtue.

But the question remains whether wisdom is a virtue in that it is a pre-disposition, since it might be objected that people do not set themselves to act wisely in situations where wisdom is demanded, but rather are or are not wise as a result of heredity or environment or even of chance. This objection, while possessing prima facie plausibility, rests on an unacceptable view of what wisdom is - possibly there is an assumption that wisdom, like intelligence, is something beyond one's control. Either you have it or you do not, but either way not much can be done about it. So, in order to answer the objection, and to show that wisdom <u>is</u> a pre-disposition and a virtue, it is necessary to give a more positive account of what wisdom is.

Earlier, I said that the wise man was reasonable, prudent, not impulsive, and in general, having learned by experience, regulated his

behaviour by reason. Two points must now be stressed. First, reason must not be equated with intelligence: what we have here is practical reason in any case, but reason as such is not the same as intelligence. Secondly, reason in the sense of reasoning ability is not the whole of wisdom; other factors, such as sensitivity, are involved.

The man who possesses practical reason, or wisdom, may be said to have knowledge both of ends and of means. He can recognize what is good, and he can say what means are both effective and, importantly, legitimate. A minimum intelligence will presumably be necessary for this, for although recognition of what is good might not require intelligent thought, recognition of effective means to an end often will. There will, therefore, be some people who are not possessed of the intelligence necessary for wisdom. But these people will not be capable of living a complete life in the full sense. They should be able to actualize their potentialities, but their potentialities will be limited. Consequently, the fact that a certain degree of intelligence is necessary for practical wisdom need not lead us to reject the view that wisdom is an achievable goal for people who pursue a good life. Anyone capable of pursuing such a life, i.e. anyone who possesses the basic potentialities which are actualized in a complete life, does possess at least the minimum intelligence required, not only by wisdom, but by any human being capable of virtue. Intelligence is therefore a necessary condition of wisdom, but is not identical with it.

I shall contend, therefore, that wisdom is indeed something which the agent must acquire by his own efforts. Wisdom, I have claimed, is concerned both with ends and with means. The wise man recognizes what is good, and can (at least usually) work out how he can effectively and legitimately attain what he recognizes as good. Although we cannot start from nothing, and require at least some natural awareness of what is good, we can, by thought and practice, enhance our natural awareness.

The wisdom which is concerned with ends entails taste, discrimination and judgement, and I would argue that all of these can be improved by the agent. What he must do in order to improve them is not easily specified, partly because the ends which can be recognized cannot really be listed. It is therefore useful briefly to consider an example. A given agent is aware of the value of artistic activity. He considers it to be good in itself, in so far as it involves stretching his imagination and his powers in general, and also to be good as something which can develop sympathy and fellow-feeling. His particular interest, we may suppose, is literature. Now his initial recognition of the intrinsic and instrumental value of literature will depend on various factors, including what he has been taught. But if he is to get anywhere with literature, either as writer or as reader, he must build on the foundation which has been provided. What he gets out of reading, say, will largely depend on what he puts into it. Reading simply will not count as an artistic activity unless the reader puts his own work into it, for only if he is willing to stretch his imagination will it be stretched. Furthermore, reading can count as an artistic activity only if what is read can count as a work of art, and ultimately the judgment that this poem is a work of art, and that that novel is not, must be made by the reader himself. He may be guided by the opinions and judgments of other readers and critics, but in the last analysis he must judge for himself. So he must be aware, not only that artistic activity, or literary activity, is good, but also that this or that work is good, bad or indifferent. His judgments will to quite an extent depend upon comparison, on openmindedness and willingness to learn, and in general on an educated taste. The important point to be stressed here is that an educated taste is a taste or power of discrimination which the connoisseur himself has educated. If he likes only what he is told he ought to like, he does not possess educated taste.

He can make distinctions but he cannot himself discriminate true value. Acquiring taste, discrmination and judgment therefore involves hard work, but if the end is recognised as worthwhile, the hard work will also be recognized as worthwhile. Thus, as far as this example is concerned, the awareness of the value of an end (viz. literary activity) intimately involves awareness of the nature and value of various sub-activities (i.e. awareness of what will count as literary activity, which will depend on a value-judgment concerning what is to count as literature), and involves also a recognition of what must be done if the activity is to be practised to the full, and a willingness to do whatever must be done.

Someone who makes these judgments, and acts in accordance with his judgments, can be said to possess practical wisdom as far as one sort of activity is concerned, and he possesses it as a result of his own hard work. Now, I want to maintain that this holds of practical wisdom in any sphere of activity. I would also maintain that the activity of the wise man cannot be restricted to any single sphere since virtue consists in living a complete life and not a biased one. The man who knows all there is to know about literature does not count as wise unless he also knows other things, in particular, the moral good. One of the important facts about human beings is that they are capable of moral activity, and the person who remains unaware of moral value fails to actualize one fundamental human potentiality. So the practically wise man has an awareness of what is morally good, and is capable of regulating his life in accordance with the moral demand.

But people do not have this kind of awarness of the moral or any other good, unless they cultivate it. Just as practice was seen to be necessary in the development of literary taste and judgment, it is necessary also in the development of moral judgment. For example, someone who consistently hardens his heart in the face of the suffering of others

will most probably end up by becoming unaware of others' suffering, and by discounting its importance from a moral point of view. On the other hand, someone who cultivates sympathy for others will be all the more likely to judge that actions which cause suffering are wrong, those which alleviate it right, and will not only make this general judgment but will also recognise specific cases of actions which cause suffering and are therefore wrong. In a moral judgment of this kind, it is clear that there are elements of both reason and feeling, and in developing a power of judgment it is necessary to develop both one's ability to feel and one's ability to reason.

An agent who does develop both reason and feeling, with the result that his value-judgments are reliable, can be said to possess the virtue of wisdom. ~~It counts as wisdom because what is involved is reliable, can be said to possess the virtue of wisdom.~~ It counts as wisdom because what is involved is reliable judgment, and as a virtue because it is developed by the agent himself, as something which contributes to the living of a complete life, in relation to the agent's own goals and in terms of his other-directed actions. For as I pointed out earlier, one of the important facts about human beings is that they are capable of moral judgment and activity, and a human being who fails to develop his moral potentiality cannot be said to live a complete life. But it is largely through the development of wisdom, involving as it does reason and feeling, that the agent develops this potentiality, so its value does not reside simply in its contribution to the agent's personal development, but also in its contribution to the agent's development as a social and moral being.

It follows from this that wisdom is a virtue in the same way as courage, as regards both nature (for it is a pre-disposition) and value (since it is a contributory factor in a complete life). Now that this is established[2], we may turn to a brief discussion of the third of the trad-

[2]Since the argument here depends on the concept of judgment, this position cannot be fully established until the interpretation of the value of judgment is established. For a discussion of judgment, see Part II, Chapters 3 and 4 below.

itional virtues, viz. temperance.

3. Temperance.

The two main elements in the idea of temperance are, I think, the idea of self-control and the idea of moderation. Problems notoriously arise in connection with the notion of self-control, but there is a common use of the term which we all understand without finding it necessary to refer to division of the soul, higher and lower selves, and so on. In this ordinary usage, self-control is nearly as closely related to wisdom as it is to temperance. It involves doing what is necessary to achieve one's ends, even when the adoption of means to those ends is not easy. In Kantian terms, he who wills the end wills the means, and the self-controlled man will show that he really does will the end (rather than merely want it or wish for it) by using the means to his end. He shows self-control when he pursues his long-term goals at the expense of thwarting his immediate desires. Self-control can therefore be seen as an aid to wisdom and courage in the pursuit of a complete life. (Of course, if self-control is to count as an element in temperance, and consequently as a virtue, it must be manifested in the pursuit of good or acceptable ends. Self-control can be put to a bad use, but qua virtue, i.e. as a contributory factor in the good or complete life, it is essentially directed to ends which are involved in such a life. Thus we see the inter-action of virtues, since self-control goes along with wisdom, which enables the agent to judge the value of ends, and the efficacy and legitimacy of means to the ends.)

Self-control, then, as an element in temperance, is an element in virtue, if and when it has been cultivated by the agent[3], and contributes to the pursuit and living of a complete life.

So is moderation. Taking things to excess is regarded as harmful in

[3]The idea of self-control essentially involves the idea of deliberate development by the agent, since self-control can be manifested only when there is something (e.g. desire) to be controlled. Consequently, self-control cannot be a natural or accidental quality, but requires development and cultivation by an agent.

various ways, depending on what it is that is taken to excess. Immoderate consumption of alchol - intemperance in the popular sense - is bad for one's health, if, that is, it is indulged infrequently. Obviously, from the 'human animal' point of view, physical health is a good thing in itself, and it may also be considered to be a necessary condition of mental vigour or spiritual strength. So anything which is, in excess, bad for the physical or mental health of a human being, should be taken in moderation. The temperate man is moderate, then, in the sense that he avoids taking things to excess, even when he is tempted to do so. He is not someone whose desires are always moderate, for then he would not practise moderation. Temperance, as a virtue, is manifested by someone who moderates his desires and actions, not by someone who has fewer or weaker desires ~~from~~ than most people.

We should not restrict the idea of moderation as a virtue to activities which are as such harmful or neutral (for example, cruelty or drinking). Activities which are in themselves good can be harmful in excess. One can work too hard, spend too much time on enjoyment, and so on. (Cf. 'All work and no play...'). Here the relation of the idea to that of a complete life can again be seen. A life entirely devoted to work, even congenial work, is thought to lack something essential - not only enjoyment, since one may enjoy one's work, but range or scope of activity. Similarly, while one can enjoy oneself in many ways, a life devoted to enjoyment is generally held to lack something. The attitude often taken towards playboys is not always moral disapproval, or even disapproval at all, but something closer to pity. They are missing something in life, some kind of extension of ability that is not required in a life of self-indulgence.

So moderation is, one way or another, quite intimately connected with the concept of a complete life. Some kinds of immoderation are physically harmful, some are mentally harmful, and thereby limit the possibility of

the achievement of the good life. But an even more important element in our evaluation of moderation comes out when we consider moderation in work and pleasure. That is, moderation is an essential part of a complete life, because if one spends too much time on one sort of activity, one just does not have time for other sorts of activity. The complete life is a balanced one. Human beings are capable of doing many things, and unless a particular pursuit is especially rewarding it may be thought that one pursuit is not enough. Too many pursuits are of course equally damaging, since if one attempts too much, one may end up not really doing anything. (This bears out some of what I said in connection with wisdom, which was seen to enable an agent to co-ordinate his ends and activities).

However, when it is said that one pursuit is not enough, the proviso unless a particular pursuit is especially rewarding needs elaboration. For it may seem that there is an ideal which constitutes a counter-example to my claim that a complete life, which is essentially a balanced one, is the end which people do pursue, or think that they ought to pursue. This ideal might be called the ideal of dedication, and examples of people who pursue it are provided by some artists, by religious, and in general by people with vocations. So, for instance, a particular painter or composer who devotes all his time and resources to painting or music may be said to pursue and achieve a life which is recognizably good, without being complete and balanced in the way that I have characterized a good life as being.

It seems that there are two courses of defence here. The first is to deny that the life of the dedicated artist, or monk or whatever is good, since it lacks balance. The second is to admit that it is good, and re-formulate the relation between goodness and balance, in such a way that it will still be possible to maintain that a good life is complete in the

sense defined earlier.

Now I think that it would be both tendentious and false to say that a life of dedication to a worthwhile end is not good, and that the ends of the dedicated artist and religious are not worthwhile. Accordingly, I shall follow the second line of defence, and attempt to show that the dedicated man does lead a complete life in the sense defined.

I defined a complete life[4] as one in which human potentialities were actualized, harmoniously. The value of balance and moderation therefore emerged as attaching to their contribution to the harmonious integration of ends and means in a complete life. But it seems that a life dedicated to one pursuit does not require balance and moderation in this way, since the dedicated man concentrates on the actualization of a single potentiality, e.g. the artistic. However, this appearance is misleading, for we cannot after reflection suppose that the painter develops a single talent, that of painting, and the composer the single talent of composing. Either we must say that painting and composing involve the actualization of more than one potentiality, or else that the potentialities involved are complex. I am inclined to say that both of these alternatives are true.

First, we may consider the claim that the potentialities involved in painting or composing are complex. Now to make the minimum claim, it is obvious that there are two elements in the ability to paint, viz. the ability to see, and the ability to transfer to canvas what one sees. (The ability to see might have to be taken metaphorically, to cover what is seen in the mind's eye, as well as what is seen by the eye, though I am inclined to think that the painter, however abstract his painting, must be able to see literally, since he must have the materials from which to abstract his 'vision'). It is not enough to be able to put brush-strokes on canvas. The painter paints something, and however abstract the 'somthing' may be,

[4] see p. 29 above.

its ~~mankind~~ material is what has been observed. On the other hand, it is not enough to be able to ~~be~~ see, since the ability to frame a perfect landscape, portrait or idea does not make a painter of someone who cannot transfer what he has seen or framed into a visual medium. Similarly, the ability to compose is compounded of at least two elements, the ability to hear, and the ability to transfer what is heard ~~as~~into a musical medium. And of course in both cases, there are numerous abilities involved without which the activity of painting or composing cannot be perhaps - the ability to move one's hand, for instance, and also to keep one's hand steady. These physical abilities are at least necessary conditions of painting and composing. It is, anyhow, clear that the potentiality for painting, and that for composing, are complex, and involve different sorts of ability. So the painter who is dedicated to painting must concentrate on developing various talents and skills, since otherwise he would simply not be dedicating himself to painting.

But it is also the case that a life dedicated to a pursuit such as painting involves the actualization of more than one potentiality, albeit a complex one. That is to say, any human being who intends to dedicate himself to an art must develop capacities, dispositions, and so on, other than those which are required specifically for that art. For example, he must develop some form of discipline, since otherwise the likelihood is that he will not make the most of his talent. He must discipline himself to work even when he does not want to, to practise forms of painting which he does not particularly enjoy, and so on. But to say this is of course to say that he must develop some form of self-control, and to that extent be temperate. It might well be necessary also for him to develop some moral courage, as his art might demand that he should risk unpopularity, ridicule, and even various privations. Consequently, although someone may devote his life to a pursuit called 'painting', it is not the case, and

cannot be the case, that he practises only one activity, or develops only one potentiality. If he did, he would never make a good painter nor a dedicated one.

It follows from this that, although people possessing a predominant talent may dedicate themselves to developing that talent, and may be said to lead a good life in doing so, it is still not the case that a good life can lack some range and balance. The artist may have to subordinate various activities and capacities to the primary talent, but in subordinating them, whether by supressing them or by making use of them in his primary activity, he is compelled to achieve a harmonious balance of potentialities. In so far as his life involves this kind of complexity, and a deliberate organisation on his part of the elements of the complex, his life is good and complete in the sense I have defined.

Finally, however, it must also be pointed out that, if my argument concerning the necessity of the actualization of moral potentialities is valid, then anyone who is to be said to lead a complete life must accept that he has moral commitments, and so whatever is necessary to fulfil them. He must therefore develop certain forms of capacity to judge morally, develop a certain sensitivity to the needs, claims and desires of others as well as of himself, etc. For this reason, we would have to deny that the artist who failed to accept his moral agency could lead a complete life, for he would fail to develop the moral capacities which are necessary in such a life.

The life of an artist, or of any man dedicated to one demanding sort of life can therefore be seen to be good in so far as it is complete. For a complete life is one in which various potentialities, including moral ones, are harmoniously actualized, and dedication to art (or religion or medicine or teaching) must involve the development and control of various capacities, skills, and potentialities. It can be seen, then, that the

artist (or the man dedicated to any life) does not really raise insuperable problems for my thesis. Although his life is directed to a primary end, it must nevertheless possess balance and harmony among subordinate ends and among means to the ends, if it is to be described as a good life.

It has been seen also that the life of the artist (that is, of the genuine or dedicated artist) is essentially a temperate one, since the artist must be disciplined, and therefore self-controlled, and must also practise moderation, in subordinating, controlling, and making use of, various desires, needs and abilities to the primary end. We may now say, therefore, that temperance is a virtue if and in so far as it involves the development of self-control and moderation on the part of an agent who recognizes the valuable contribution they make in a good or complete life. It is important not to be misled by the diversity of forms of self-control and moderation into supposing that some forms of life can be good without them. They are manifested in different ways in different sorts of life, but they are nevertheless involved in any good life.

The third of the traditional virtues, temperance, can therefore be analysed in the same way as courage and wisdom. It is a pre-disposition (or a number of complementary pre-dispositions) developed by the agent, and is valuable for the part it plays in the pursuit and practise of a complete life. Three of the four traditional virtues can, then, be understood in terms of the concept of a complete life, and that concept itself can be better grasped when we have understood why these virtues are considered to be virtues.

4. Justice

The fourth of the traditional virtues, justice, remains to be considered. It will be remembered that von Wright rejected ~~Gathrie~~ justice because it did not fit his 'conceptual pattern'[5], and it is possible to sympathize

[5] See Ch. 1, p. 8 above.

with this reaction, since it does not look as though justice will fit easily into the framework I have erected. But we must not for that reason say that justice is not a virtue, nor must we be too ready to pull down the framework or to erect a separate one for justice.

The concept of justice can be shown to be related to the concept of a complete life, but it is not related to it in quite the same way as the other three traditional virtues are. Those virtues can be described as 'personal virtues', in that they are necessary conditions of an individual's attaining and retaining his goal, and also in that they are possible 'desert-island' virtues. Justice, on the other hand, is an inter-personal virtue. It could not be a 'desert-island virtue' and its value lies not so much in the contribution it makes to the agent's own development, but in the part it plays in his relations with other people. That does not mean that it bears no relation to the 'complete life'. It means rather that we must add another dimension to that concept.

Now in order to discover in what sense justice is a virtue, that is, to discover what is its nature, and in what sense it has value, we must first discuss the manifestations of justice. For if we are to say what a just man is, and why we regard just men as good, we must first know what a just action is. Once we have discovered this, we will be able to say in what sense justice is an inter-personal virtue, and hence in what sense justice is a virtue.

In my approach to a solution of these problems, I shall assume that it makes sense to talk of justice as being manifested in certain kinds of action in certain types of situation, just as courage, temperance and wisdom are. By speaking in this way of the manifestations of justice, it will be possible to concentrate on what types of situation call for justice, and hence to place the goodness of just action, without first being committed to a particular position on the nature of justice in the

individual (and it is in terms of justice in the individual that we must understand justice to be a virtue). Once the nature and value of just action has been determined, it should be possible to discover in what sense justice in the individual is a virtue, i.e. what it is that is manifested in just action.

The types of situation which call for, and indeed make possible, the manifestation of justice are, clearly, social situations. If the manifestation of justice is thus restricted to the social situation (an assumption which will be defended later,) it follows that both the nature and value of justice are intimately connected with its inter-personality. It is not simply that certain types of action are good in the social situation, but that those types of action cannot even be performed outside such a situation. Thus, the inter-personality of justice is a function of its nature and not merely of its goodness. But that is not to say that its inter-personality is irrelevant to its goodness. If justice is possible only in the social situation, then it is <u>good</u> only in the social situation. That, at least, is true of its manifestations. But we must leave open the possibility that there is some sense in which justice as such (e.g. as a disposition) could be described as good independently of its manifestations, and hence outside a social situation. At any rate, we may assume that goodness of this kind must be related to the goodness of the manifestations of justice, and that the goodness of justice may be understood in terms of the goodness of its manifestations.

To say, then, that justice is an inter-personal virtue is, in the first place, to say something about the nature rather than the value of justice. A consideration of the inter-personal nature of justice should enable us to pin-point its goodness, rather as recognition of the kind of situation which calls for courage enabled us to pin-point its goodness. But the matter is rather more complex in the case of justice, because we

must discover whether or not justice, though essentially inter-personal can be personally good, and if so whether it is only secondarily so. Moreover, we must discover whether justice is, whether personally or inter-personally, good in the same sense as the other virtues were seen to be, i.e. in contributing to the completeness of the individual human life.

First, however, it is necessary to consider the inter-personal goodness of just acts. For the answers to the questions I have posed about the possibility of justice's being personally good will, in part, depend on the conclusions reached about its inter-personal goodness. If we can answer the question what it is about justice in its manifestations in a social situation which leads us to call those manifestations good, we will have succeeded in showing where the inter-personal goodness of justice lies. For those manifestations are, precisely, manifestations of social, or inter-personal justice.

To start with, we may find it easier to approach an answer to the question by considering the other side of the question, viz. what is held to be bad about injustice? (I am looking here for an interpretation of ordinary reasons given for condemning injustice, not endeavouring to provide a detailed account of this difficult topic). The concept of justice is one with which most people operate within the fields of distribution and punishment, and it is most often employed within the fields of <u>unjust</u> distribution and punishment. Justice is often taken for granted, but injustice is not.

We can distinguish between two types of injustice in distribution, viz. unjust distribution of benefits, and unjust distribution of rights. There is, I think, a clear enough distinction here in ordinary language, marked by the difference in emphasis of the terms 'unfair' and 'unjust'. It is unfair, we might say, to distribute benefits unevenly, but unjust to distribute rights unevenly. Thus, it is considered unfair to give one

child more chocolate than another, but unjust that the advantages of education should be unevenly distributed. In the case of 'unfairness' in the colloquial sense, if the child has a right to anything, it is not to the commodity which is being distributed, but to a fair share of that commodity. In the case of 'injustice' the child has a right to the commodity, e.g. of education, and not merely to the same chance as others. To take a marginal case, we might consider it either unfair or unjust for a parent to give a bicycle to one of his children and a bar of chocolate to another. Since the child does not have a right to the commodity (bicycle or chocolate), we might say that the wrong lies in the distribution and is thus a case of unfairness. But we could say that he is being deprived of something to which he has a right, viz. parental attention or love, and if we look at the matter from this point of view, it seems natural to describe the treatment as unjust.

It seems to me, therefore, that a distinction can reasonably be drawn between injustice and unfairness (which is of course a kind of injustice), and that the drawing of the distinction gives us two kinds of reason for condemning distributive injustice. It may be condemned on the ground that benefits should be distributed equally among equals, and that unequal distribution is therefore bad, even though one would not condemn a failure to confer any benefits on anyone. Secondly, it may be condemned on the ground that each person has a right to what is being distributed, and that the gains of some lead to the losses of others. Thus it is unjust to deprive some children of the education to which they have a right, in order to give a special education to others. It is not only the distribution which is wrong, but the deprivation in itself is wrong.

So we seem to find two different types of injustice, which are bad in two different ways. There is the injustice of favouritism ('unfairness') and the injustice of deprivation ('injustice'). However, I am inclined to

say that the favouritism type of injustice is real injustice, and that it is by an extension of the concept that we call deprivation unjust. It is only when the injustice arises in a situation of distribution, where one person is deprived so that another may benefit, that the wrong is an injustice. When we describe deprivation as such, outside a context of distribution, as unjust, I think we are using the term 'unjust' as equivalent to 'wrong'. (The point would be, therefore, that, in the Aristotelian sense, we are concerned with particular rather than general injustice[6]). If so, then what is fundamental to the concept of distributive injustice is the notion of evenness of distribution, rather than that of the granting of rights.

Up to now, I have deliberately used the noncommittal adjective 'uneven' to qualify the noun 'distribution', but of course the term usually used is 'unequal'. It is, though, difficult to decide what is to count as inequality of distribution, since its use is often confined to those cases where the uneveness in distribution is held to be unjustifiable. Thus 'just treatment' is equated with 'equal treatment' which is identified with 'like treatment of like cases and unlike treatment of unlike cases'. One's use of the terms 'just' and 'equal' is therefore governed by one's judgment as to what is to count as like and what as unlike. So in order to get at what is usually meant by the term 'injustice', it is necessary to see what people tend to count as relevant likenesses and unlikenesses.

Again, we may distinguish two types of distributive injustice, this time between unlike treatment of like cases, and like treatment of unlike cases. The example of the parent giving unfair shares of chocolate to his children is a case of the first. Why is this condemned? Primarily, I think, it is because it involves treating the child as though he were something which he is not. It is denying him the treatment which is

[6] See Nicomachean Ethics Bk. V.

appropriate to his situation and status, which are in this case definable in terms of his relation to his sibling. It is true that it is important to treat a child as an individual, but this should not involve ignoring his 'context' which includes his relationships with other people. His individuality is to some extent determined by the situation in which he, as an individual, finds himself. This suggests that the notion of a complete human life is relevant to the idea of this kind of distributive justice. To a great extent, it is up to the individual to make what he can of his life, but he does not start from nothing. His development must take place in accordance with certain factors in his environment, and two of the most important of these factors are his relationships (literal blood-relationships) with the people in his environment, and the way the people in his environment treat him.

Thus, in order to give a child a chance to develop naturally, it is important to give due weight not only to his specific individual characteristics, but also to the pattern of relationships of which he is the centre. In a certain type of society, where the small family unit is the norm, it is generally accepted that, say, a father should not merely treat a child as a child, but as his child. Opinion may vary quite widely about what counts as treating a child as one's own, from paying the nanny to devoting most of one's time to the child's education, entertainment and so on. But this variation is not worrying. The important point is that a given parent has his own ideas about what it is to treat a child as his own, and that though this treatment may vary in accordance with differences among the children (in age, sex, and so on), there is no reason why in general the ideas about what it is to treat a child as one's own should vary from one child of one's own to another.

A father with two sons Ordinarily treats the boys as his sons, and the father/son relationship affects the treatment. Given that the father

has some idea of what kind of behaviour is appropriate to this relationship, his idea applies equally to both his sons. Often, giving presents or treats to his sons is seen as part of this behaviour. It is a father that he wants to give special pleasure to his children. Consequently, where the treatment arises specifically from the parent 's view of the parent/child relationship, there is no room for discrimination, though of course discrimination in accordance with the specific needs and capabilities of the individual child is appropriate. But its appropriateness is determined by the differences between the children, and not by the relationship, and when the behaviour is of the benefit-conferring type, there is no difference between the children. (I am not concerned here with punishment, where the child might be deprived of a treat as a punishment.) It seems, then, that in such a situation, treating the children differently involves using two analogous relationships as though they were different. However, if this shows anything, it seems to be that such behaviour is unreasonable rather than bad. Its badness is concerned not only with the fact that the relationship is unreasonably used, but with the fact that the child himself is aware of whqt is going on. As I pointed out, it does not matter much (within certain limits, which are not relevant here) what views a parent has about the behaviour appropriate to a parent/child relationship, but it does matter that he himself should hold consistent views and should act consistently with those views. The child's relationship with his parents is not merely the direct child-parent one, but is mediated by his other relationships so that his father is not merely his father, but also his brother's father. If he is aware that his relationship with his father gives rise to treatment different from that arising from his brother's relationship to his father, the probability is that his development will be adversely affected.

But it is important not to let the idea of a 'complete life' which

has so far been employed blind us to other elements in this situation. The notion of a complete life is, I think, still relevant, but we need to widen the concept. There is a sense in which the complete life is a goal to be pursued, and this is important. But there is also a sense in which at any time in one's life one may make the most of what one has, and failure to do this means that, at the time of failure, one's life is incomplete. The child who is unjustly treated is lacking something now ~~more~~, and suffers from an inadequate relationship with his father, and in that sense his life is at present incomplete, as well as its being true that his development might be stifled.

The generalize, to treat anyone with whom one has a specific type of relationship without due regard for that relationship, is to make too much of the individuality of that person, and not enough of the framework in which he leads his life. It involves disregarding an important part of a human being's existence, viz. that part in which he has certain relationships and ties, and is what he is as an individual because of what he is in relation to other people.

It is reasonable to conclude, then, that injustice of this type, i.e. injustice in the conferring of 'pure' benefits, is condemned, at least partly, because it involves a failure to take this kind of consideration into account, and involves a restriction on what the individual can make of his situation in that it involves an artificially limited view of what that situation is. It involves an under-estimation of the complexity of relationships which go to make up an individual human being's life, and a consequent limitation on what the individual can make of his life. This is not the sole reason people do give for condemning injustice, but I think it underlies most of the reasons which are given.

Having considered the type of injustice which is involved in unlike treatment of like cases, we may now turn to that which is involved in like

treatment of unlike cases. There are similarities between the two types, and a vast borderline between the two extremes, but it is convenient to treat them in isolation. The field of education offers fruitful examples for anyone concerned with notions of justice, and I shall draw on some of these examples in my discussion of the injustice of treating unlike cases alike.

Education is to a great extent concerned with special cases. In forming a policy concerning the distribution of educational resources, it is necessary to consider many different kinds of ability and a vast range of abilities within those kinds. Some children are fairly good at most things, some very good at most things, some good at some and poor at others. Anyone concerned with education is presumably particularly concerned to help children do what they are capable of doing as well as they can, and this involves helping the handicapped child to do simple things fairly well, as well as helping the talented child to do difficult things very well. If, as seems to be commonly supposed, this is the aim of the educator, it is glaringly inappropriate to offer the same kind of education for all. The education which is offered must be geared to the capacities of those to whom it is offered. If the teacher treated all children as if their capacities were the same, therefore, he would necessarily fail in his aim, and would deprive many children of the help which it is his declared intention to give so, as far as education as such is concerned, the kind of justice which involves treating unlike cases differently is more relevant than that which involves treating like cases alike (though the latter kind is demanded when it is relevant of course), since there are many similarities, and many basic dissimilarities.

The point of education, then, is not to get all children to achieve the same standard, but to help all children reach the highest standard they are capable of reaching, and if an educational system is unjust, it

is more likely to be so in that it ignores the differences in capability than in that it ignores the likenesses. The badness of this kind of injustice is very obviously related to the concept of the complete life. The child who suffers from educational injustice is deprived of the opportunity to achieve what he is capable of achieving.

However, it is in this that the badness of the injustice lies? It is wrong to deprive any individual of such educational opportunities, and it is wrong because of the difficulty it creates for him in his pursuit of a complete life. But the injustice lies rather in the failure to provide for some individuals what is being provided for others, and this is not so obviously connected with the complete life concept. Again, it appears to be the discrimination as such which is condemned by the epithet 'unjust', and not the deprivation of the individual who suffers from that discrimination. The badness of this type of distributive injustice as such, appears, like the other type, to be connected with relationships and the place of the individual within a given framework, in this case the social framework. The kind of thing which I have in mind here is borne out by the common use of the phrase 'second-class citizen' to describe people who are treated as though they were inferior to other members of society. It is the idea of apparent inferiority that is important. People in society are held to be unjustly treated not when they are treated merely differently, but when the difference in treatments indicates some belief that these people are not so important as others. The discrimination occurs, or appears to occur, as the result of a value-judgment about people or their contribution to society.

One reason for condemning unjust discrimination in education, qua discrimination, is therefore that this involves an unacceptable assessment of value, possibly in an area where no assessment of value is possible. It is one thing to say that certain people's contributions are valuable,

and therefore that they should be enabled to make those contributions, and rewarded for making them. Thus we can defend the expenditure of large sums of money on educating and training doctors. But it is quite another thing to say that some people are more valuable than others. Consequently when, say, children of lower intelligence are not given full opportunities to develop their potentialities, the injustice is condemned because these children are being judged, and found wanting, as people. It is felt that the authorities consider them not worth the effort. This may not always be true of course - if discrimination is necessary because of limited resources, the basis for discrimination may be a consideration of the returns that education might bring. But when the difference in treatment does pre-suppose a value-judgment of the human being, or is made in such a way that it appears to, it is then held to involve an unacceptable and unjust discrmination between people, and a society which is run in accordance with some such principle of discrmination is held to be an unjust society. In such a society, people are prevented from attaining a complete life, and prevented from doing so because it seems to matter less that some people should attain such a life than that others should.

In a rather different way, then, it does seem to be the case that injustice is condemned because it involves a basic discrmination in judgment where no such discrimination is possible. A judgment is made about the relative importance of the human fulfilment of different people, when this is equally important in every case. Thus the judgment itself is about human fulfilment, and the result of the unjust judgment is a bar to the achievement of such fulfilment. Justice in action may therefore be seen as good in that it involves the opposite - it is based on a recognition of the equal importance of human beings and their pursuit of a complete life, and just treatment within society makes it possible for everyone to pursue this goal.

Very briefly now it is necessary to consider justice in the field of punishment. Can justice in action here be seen to be good in the same way? The first condition for a punishment's being just is, of course, that the person punished should be guilty. Secondly, it is generally held that the severity of the punishment should be in proportion to the gravity of the offence. These are, I think, the main considerations which are brought into an assessment of the justice of punishment. Whether or not a particular punishment is justifiable may depend on other considerations, but the judgment of its justice basically presupposes the importance of the guilt of the person punished and the fittingness of the punishment to the crime.

Now clearly these two considerations are connected with the justice of discrimination. When we decide who is to be punished for an offence, we are entitled to discriminate only between the innocent and the guilty, and when we decide on the severity of the punishment, we must decide to what extent we are entitled to treat the offender differently from other people, both from the innocent and from other offenders. It is because discrimination is involved in these ways that punishment is a matter of justice, and not only of rightness as such. And I think that it is at this basic level, where questions about punishment are seen to be questions about justice, that the idea of the good or complete life can be brought in again, and in various ways. For a start, the offender is someone who has, in a manner which is to be condemned, interfered with other people's lives. Secondly, punishment involves interfering with someone's life, both directly and indirectly. The punishment itself ~~and~~ whether it is in the form of imprisonment, a fire, or corporal punishment, is a direct form of interference, while the attempt to reform or deter the offender is an indirect form; the intention here is to change the direction of the offender's life. An unjust punishment may therefore be seen as one which involves a disregard

for the importance of human fulfilment, in one of various ways. An over-lenient punishment may involve an under-estimation of the gravity of the original offence, while an over-severe one may be condemned because it rates the good of society or the good of the victim of the offence too highly in proportion to the good of the offender. And some kinds of punishment may be condemned because they involve a failure to consider the autonomy of the offender, and thus fail to allow for the part of the individual's own decisions and choices must play in the pursuit of a complete life.

I do not think that it is necessary to go into this question in much greater detail. For as I suggested earlier, I think that any questions about punishment other than the most basic ones concerning its object (victim) and the justifiable extent of discrimination against its victim, are really questions about justifiability, or general moral rightness, rather than about justice as such. It is precisely because justice as such is concerned with discrimination and its justification that it can be seen as good in relation to the complete life of the individual. The relation is twofold. First, injustice involves discrimination between individuals in a way which is unacceptable in virtue of its illegitimate assessment of the comparative worth of the quality of individual human lives. Secondly, because of this assessment, it erects a block to the achievement of a complete life. At a basic level, this holds of injustice both in distribution and in punishment. Where considerations of other types apply, I think we have moved away from the concept of justice towards a more general concept of moral rightness.

Inter-personal justice in action, can, then, usefully be analysed in terms of the concept of the complete life. It is possible, though, to see justice as a virtue in the individual, as the other three traditional virtues are?

So far, I have been concerned with justice as manifested in action, and therefore particularly with the considerations which may be held to underlie our judgments as to the justice of actions or policies of action. Since justice in action is possible only in an inter-personal situation, it followed that in a primary sense the goodness of justice must be an inter-personal goodness. The goodness of justice in this sense has been seen to tie up with the concept of the good life of individuals, in that it is good in so far as it involves a recognition of the equal importance of the good life for all individuals, and avoids discrimination where no difference exists. Thus, justice as manifested in action is connected with the concept of the good or complete life, but especially with the idea of the good life of <u>other people</u>, whereas courage and so on were essentially concerned with the good of the agent.

However, we speak not only of just actions or policies of action, but also of the just man. The question arises therefore whether the just man is simply one who performs just actions or has a just policy of action, or whether he is more than that. Is there, for instance, a sense in which the just man could still intelligibly be described as a just man in a desert-island or non-social situation? And is there a sense in which we may say that it is personally good to be just, as it is personally good to be brave, wise and temperate?

First, it is intelligible to speak of a just man in a non-social situation? There is one sense which could be given to this concept, but I don't think that in the end it will do. I am thinking of the interpretation of 'just' as a description of a behavioural disposition. In this sense, a man could be described as just even when he had no opportunity to perform just actions if it were the case that he would, given the opportunity, perform just actions. If there were other people around, such a man would give equal weight to their claims to have an opportunity

to pursue a good life. In rather the same way, it might be thought, we can say that a man can be just even when he is asleep, since the same man waking performs just actions or has a policy of just action. But this second case is rather different. We know what it means to say that the just man is just even when he is asleep because we know what it means to say that he is just when he is awake. But I don't think we do know what it means to say that the man on a desert-island would be just if he had the opportunity, nor consequently, what it means to say that he is dispositionally just. Now, we can make sense of the claim that he would be just if...in one way, namely by thinking of him as a product of society who has been cast away on a desert-island, for then we would mean that he was just when he had the opportunity, and probably will be just when he has the opportunity in future.

But if we don't mean, when we say that a man id dispositionally just, that he was just and will be just in future, but have in mind rather a man who has always been outside society and has always lived on his desert-island, then we don't, I think, know what it means to say that such a man is just in any sense. This is because such a man could have no concept of justice, and while he might, if he lived in society, acquire this concept, we cannot say that he now, possessing no concept of justice, <u>is</u> just, even dispositionally.

This kind of dispositional account of the virtue of justice seems to me, therefore, to be meaningless. It is possible to give some kind of dispositional account, but it must be one concerned with actual, and not with hypothetical, dispositions. That is to say, if we want to say that a just man is one who is disposed to act justly, we must mean by this either that he <u>does</u> act justly when the opportunity arises, or that he is prepared to act justly <u>if</u> the opportunity arises, but not that, lacking a concept of justice, he <u>would</u> act justly if the opportunity arose. In this dispositional sense

(which is of course pre-dispositional, depending as it does on preparedness), the man on a desert-island could not possess the virtue of justice. Nor do I think that there is any sense in which we could describe as just a man who is not and never has been in an inter-personal situation, and has consequently had neither the opportunity to act justly nor to acquire any concept of what it is to act justly, nor, therefore to become prepared to act justly if and when the situation demands.

This does not mean that justice cannot be a personal virtue, but only that if it can be, it is still possible only in an inter-personal environment. Here, I think that a consideration of various notions connected with selfishness can cast some light on the notion of justice. The man in the extreme desert-island situation can be either selfish nor unselfish. He cannot worry about, or do things for, other people, for there are no other people. Nor can he think that he is more important than other people, since he does not know that there are other people. But one could, perhaps, make sense of the claim that a man in a desert-island situation was self-centred. Being self-centred does not necessarily mean putting oneself above other people, but rather thinking too much about one's own comfort, and that sort of thing. Thus we could envisage two men on two desert-islands, one of whom was more self-centred than the other. Perhaps he worries about his health, or thinks about his own reactions to his environment rather than seeing the environment as something separate from himself. One man might be found by his rescuers to be an expert on desert-island flora and fauna, while the other is an expert on the edible and poisonous properties of the plant and animal life of the island.

Now I think that if we relate the concept of justice to the two concepts of unselfishness and unselfcentredness, we can discover a sort of fringe sense in which a man on a desert-island could be described as just. But it is hardly close enough to the centre of the concept of justice

for us to say that such a man really is just.

The just man in society is one who is prepared to give due weight to the importance of the claims of others to the good life. His concern is especially to regard all people as equally important in this way. He is, therefore, not the same as the unselfish man who is willing to balance the claims of others against (or even rate them above) his own, for the unselfish man could still be unjust. But though justice and unselfishness are not identical, the just man must be unselfish - his own claim must count for him as everybody else's does. The just man does not discriminate at the basic level of the judgment of the relative worth of the good of individuals, and he does not, therefore, discriminate in favour of himself. But he could still be self-centred. The self-centred man is fond of himself, but he doesn't necessarily put himself before others in either judgment or action. Nevertheless we could say that unselfcentredness was conducive to justice, since the man who is not unduly fond of himself should find it easier to be unselfish. He has the right temperament for justice.

But there is another sense of 'self-centred' by which we mean that the self-centred man values himself highly. This kind of self-centredness is, as we shall see, directly opposed to the moral attitude. It is acceptance of one's role as a moral agent, and adoption of a moral attitude, which enables the naturally self-centred man (the one who is fond of himself) to be unselfish and just.

Now the second kind of self-centredness, the high valuation of oneself which is opposed to the moral attitude is not, I think, possible for the man on a desert-island, nor is its opposite, i.e. lack of self-centredness, or in other words the adoption of a moral attitude in relation to other people. This kind of self-centredness (and its opposite) is an attitude which is possible only in an inter-personal situation, where there are

other people whom one might rate lower than oneself.

We can now see why it is not possible either to be just, or to have a just disposition, outside society. It is not possible to be just, because to be justly pre-disposed, one must acquire the concept of justice, and this concept cannot be acquired in complete isolation from other people. And it is not possible to have a just disposition, because to be just in this sense is to have adopted a particular attitude towards other people. It is not a matter of caring about people or things other than oneself- that is unselfcentredness, but not the kind which is to be equated with justice. It is a matter of being unselfcentred in a particular way, viz, by being prepared to regard the lives of other people as equally important, in relation to each other's and in relation to one's own.

The virtue of justice can therefore be seen to be a pre-disposition we have seen that it is misleading to think of it as a disposition unless we stress that it is an acquired disposition, a question of disposing oneself to consider other people. And the value of justice lies in its relation to the good life of people within society. In discovering this we have discovered also the nature of justice. That is, it is an attitude, one adopted towards other people, and involves a preparedness to consider the good life as equally important for every individual. In other words, justice qua virtue is a pre-disposition concerned with the equal claim to importance of each individual.

Finally, without yet going into detail, it should be pointed out that there might be a way in which justice could he regarded as a personal virtue, since to be just is partly to have adopted a moral attitude, and if we regard the development of one's potentialities as a moral agent as a part of the complete life, we may say that in becoming just, a human being becomes something that it is good that he should be[7].

[7]See Part I, Ch. 3 below.

5. Recapitulation

Now that this conclusion has been reached, we may reconsider briefly the nature and value of the other three traditional virtues. It can now be seen that, qua virtues, all four of the traditional virtues are pre-dispositions, and are valuable in so far as they contribute to a good or complete life.

First, then, courage was seen to be manifested in a situation where the agent fears an apparent danger, but recognizes that he must face the danger if he is to achieve his goal of a good life. Thus, the brave man is not only the man who does face danger, but one who is prepared to do so when it is necessary in his pursuit of a good life. He values the good life more highly than he values an easy life, and having decided what is a good life for him is willing to adopt the means to his end. So courage involves a judgment of the value of a particular kind of life, and a preparedness to act in accordance with one's judgment. Having established his priorities, the brave man is ready to live in accordance with them. Consequently, when we say that courage is a virtue, what we mean is that the man who possesses this virtue has adopted an attitude towards the good life. He is, in other words, pre-disposed to be courageous.

Wisdom also is a pre-disposition. A man was said to be wise in so far as he formulated some judgment concerning what constituted a good life for him, and formulated some policy of life, whereby he knew what he must do in order to achieve such a life, and was willing to stand reasonably by his policy. So this virtue again is a conscious one, and not simply a disposition or an inclination. What is required of the wise man is that he should possess, in Kantian terminology, a rational will. He judges what is good, and sets himself to act in accordance with the judgment. He too adopts a particular attitude with regard to the good life, and is pre-disposed to think before he acts, and to act in accordance with his judgment.

Finally, we may reconsider temperance under the heads of self-control and moderation. Self-control may immediately be seen to be a pre-disposition in the relevant sense. Since being self-controlled is essential to living wisely, the main point to be made here is that one recognises that the pursuit of a good life necessitates a willingness to overcome one's inclinations, and to avoid too much impulsive action which might jeopardize the achievement of one's long-term aims. So having judged that certain things are part of his good, the self-controlled man sets himself to do what is necessary in order to achieve that good, and decides to be ruled by reason rather than by inclination. This too is, in the sense defined, to have a pre-disposition to be self-controlled.

As for moderation, it too may be regarded as a pre-disposition in so far as it is a virtue. Some people may be naturally moderate in desire, but qua virtue, moderation is a part of temperance and is tied up with self-control and an attempt at balancing one's life. Moderation, considered as an element in temperance, is a pre-disposition, since one judges some kind of harmony and balance to be good, and sets oneself to achieve such a balance even when one is tempted to move towards an extreme.

The four traditional virtues, justice, courage, temperance and wisdom, can therefore be seen to share important characteristics with regard both to their nature and to their value. As to their nature, they are all pre-dispositions. Their value derives from the relations they bear to a good or complete life, whether of the individual or of other people. These virtues can be said to constitute the hard core of virtue.

6. Minor Virtues

But though these virtues are central, they are not the only ones. There is a comparatively large group of what might be called 'changeable virtues', that is, virtues which are rated more or less highly by different people at different times, or which can even cease to be regarded as virtues

at all. They are neither cardinal nor constant, and yet it has not seemed odd to describe them as virtues.

Among these virtues, we find charity, thrift, generosity, magnificence, humility, pride and many others. Now I think that once it is recognized that the concept of a virtue is closely connected to the concept of a good or complete life, we find it easy to see both why these have been regarded as virtues, and why there has been, as it were, a fashion in such virtues. For it is certainly the case that ideas about what kind of life is a good life vary from one age and place to another, and that changes in judgment about the nature of a good life, and consequent shifts of attitude towards certain kinds of life, are precisely what have given rise to different evaluations of humility, magnificence and so on. It will not be possible to deal really adequately with this question, though a detailed study would be fascinating, for an adequate survey would require complex historical and sociological research. But it is possible by reference to one or two of these virtues, to indicate the lines which such a survey would follow.

The assessment of chastity, for instance, as a virtue, may be said to be dependent upon three factors, all of which are subject to change. The first is religious belief, which may be modified or rejected. The second is a belief in the value of a small family unit, of monogamy, and faithfulness within marriage, and other beliefs concerning marriage which might be based on religious beliefs. (I'm thinking here of, say, different beliefs about the part played within marriage by sexual relations.) Thirdly, there are various social and medical advances which can render chastity obsolete as a means to an end of avoiding unwanted pregnancy, or sexually-transmitted diseases.

Because these various factors determine the individual's classification of chastity as a virtue, a change in these factors can affect the classif-

ication. (Alternatively, they can lead to a change in belief as to the kind of behaviour which is to count as a manifestation of the virtue of chastity. For sometimes the name of a virtue is retained, while the relevant beliefs and behaviour alter. This may to some extent depend on the convenience of retaining a word with persuasive force. Thus, some people might suggest that fidelity to one's partner is a manifestation of chastity whether or not one is married to that partner.) A rejection of certain religious doctrines can be one factor which leads to a rejection of the classification of chastity as a virtue at all. So can a change about the nature, function or value of marriage - and all sorts of changes are possible here: one may cease to belief that marriage is socially or economically worthwhile, or may think that marriage has more to it than the procreation of children, and so on. In these two cases, changes in belief about the nature of a good life, or elements in it, lead to changes in belief about the value of something which is held to contribute to that life. Conversely, it may be that one rejects one's previous conception of the good life because one changes one's view of something like chastity - a life of chastity may be seen as incomplete, because it lacks fulfilment in parenthood, or a full expression of love, for instance. But the two concepts, of a good life, and of chastity as virtue or non-virtue, are very closely related. In the third case, of course, the person who previously found chastity good as a means to an end does not change his evaluation of the end. He has found a means which he prefers.

If, then, we see a virtue such as chastity, in relation to the concept of a good or complete life, we can see how changes in the assessment of such virtues comes about in accordance with changes in the concept of a good life or with changes in the possible means to the achievement of such a life.

These conclusions may be borne out by a brief consideration of another

changeable virtue, thrift. Two important considerations govern the assessment of thrift as a virtue. One of them is primarily concerned with the concept of a good life, but in this case the concept itself is governed by various social and economic factors. The person who values thrift is in general someone who rates security as an important part of the good life. He prefers to do without non-essentials so that he can enjoy peace of mind knowing that he will never be seriously in want. Furthermore, he may value self-sufficiency, so that although he need not feel insecure, he prefers not to depend for his security on state assistance. Thus, such a man's concept of a good life includes the qualities of independence and self-sufficiency. Within some kinds of society, however, this sort of idea may seem inappropriate: this is what I mean by saying that the concept is partially governed by social and economic factors. For instance, one may continue to rate security highly, but not caring about self-sufficiency, be willing to depend on the state. Alternatively, thrift may not seem to be an effective means to security, so that although we would like to save for old age, the rate of inflation might make one think it more sensible to spend what one has while one can get something for it. Furthermore, an insistence on self-sufficiency may appear inappropriate. Again, inflation may make it impossible. In any case, it might be argued, depending on the state is not like 'accepting charity', since one has made one's contributions. And one may take the view that since so many people receive state assistance, it would be unfair to oneself to refuse it. In such cases, one's evaluation of security and self-sufficiency change because of various social factors, and a change in the evaluation of these virtues leads to a change in one's evaluation of the contributory virtue of thrift. On the other hand, the evaluation of security and self-suffieiency may remain the same, but thrift be down-graded because it is seen not to be an effective means to their achievement. We cannot, there-

fore, entirely divorce the social-economic factors which govern the evaluation of thrift from the other factors, such as a desire for security and self-sufficiency. But we can see how both sets of factors are related to the concept of a good life, and how the nature of the society one lives in may force one to change either one's views as to what kind of life is good, or alternatively the policy one adopts to achieve such a life.

Thrift, can, then, be described as good in so far as it contributes to a life which is regarded as good, and it may be rejected along with a rejection of the value of such a life, or alternatively may be rejected as an unsatisfactory means to the attainment of such a life. (Of course, there are other reasons for valuaing thrift, e.g. regarding wastefulness as sinful, believing one must do one's bit for the under-privileged countries, and so on, but these reasons are still related to one's ideas of a good life.)

It can now be seen that because the concept of what constitutes a good life may, and indeed must, change in accordance with changes of belief of various kinds, and with changes in social, economic and technical spheres, it follows that there are bound to be changes in assessments of some of the non-cardinal virtues, and that these assessments can be expected to take place in accordance with assessments of certain kinds of life, and beliefs about the means to the achievement of such kinds of life. These virtues are policies, ways of life, or in the defined sense pre-dispositions to behave in certain ways when the situation demands it, and policies and pre-dispositions must be changed in accordance with changes in the ways of life to which they contribute.

The concept of a good or complete life is now seen to be useful in explaining both the nature and value of virtues, both cardinal and otherwise. Armed with this concept, and with the conclusions I have reached concerning the nature and value of the various virtues, I shall turn now to a discussion of benevolence and conscientiousness, in order to discover

in what sense they might be virtues, and to discover what role they have to play in a good life. This discussion will enable us to advance our investigation of moral goodness.

Chapter 3

The Relationship Between Virtue and Virtues

In this chapter, I propose to examine the parts which are played by love and conscientiousness in a virtuous life, and to establish the source of their value. This will make it possible to clarify the concept of moral goodness, and will provide a foundation for a theory of conscientiousness.

A useful starting point is provided by the controversy between philosophers who want to define moral goodness in terms of conscientiousness, and those who define it in terms of love. The latter argue that conscientiousness is either a second-rate substitute for love and the virtues, or at best is just one virtue among many. Love or benevolence, it is said, really is the supreme virtue. The benevolent man does not need to be conscientious. Virtue comes naturally to him. I shall argue that the whole disagreement is based on a misunderstanding, and that love and conscientiousness are not rival contenders for the title of supreme virtue, but that both of them possess a unique value. Conscientiousness, however, possesses a unique moral value.

Obviously, part of the defence of the value of conscientiousness can be based on an attack on the idea of virtue 'coming naturally'. Enough has been said about the virtues to enable us to say that a virtue is not, and cannot be, merely something that 'comes naturally'. But a full defence of conscientiousness cannot be mounted until we have reached some understanding of the nature and value of benevolence.

To start with, it is essential to sort out just what is meant by the term 'benevolence'. Commonly, I think that benevolence is held to be a kind of good feeling towards mankind in general. A benevolent man is one who likes other people and who cares about their welfare. However, philosophers who speak of 'benevolence' tend to have one of two distinct

meanings in mind. Some of them mean 'love', and others, holders of a more Kantian position, mean 'beneficence', i.e. practical as opposed to pathological love.

I intend to attack both the views which may be represented by the statement that benevolence is the supreme virtue, viz. that love is the supreme virtue, and that beneficence is the supreme virtue. It should be remembered that the views which I am attacking are, when fully stated, to the effect that love or beneficence as opposed to conscientiousness are supreme. There are two ways, not incompatible, of attacking these views. First, it may be shown that love is not the supreme virtue. My argument for this will be based on the claim that the concept of a supreme virtue on which this kind of view is based is fundamentally confused. Secondly, it can be argued that, though there is a sense of 'supreme virtue' in which benevolence can be said to be supreme, its supremacy in this sense is not incompatible with the unique moral value of conscientiousness. Thus benevolence is not a rival to conscientiousness.

First, we may consider the claims that love is the supreme virtue, and that it is therefore somehow superior to conscientiousness. And by 'love' we may understand either practical or pathological love. In so far as it is possible to separate these two, practical love may be identified with beneficence, and will be considered below. Here, I intend to discuss the claim that pathological love is the supreme virtue.

The argument against this can be stated very briefly. Basically, it is to the effect that pathological love is not a virtue at all and therefore cannot be the supreme virtue. If the analysis of virtue that I have offered is accepted, it is clear that pathological love cannot be a virtue, for virtues are pre-dispositions, whereas love is an emotion. There are two possible replies to this argument. The first is that love is, in an appropriate sense, a pre-disposition.

First, then, it is suggested that since love is, after all, a virtue, it cannot be the case that virtues are pre-dispositions. Now I think that if we accept this argument, we commit ourselves to an untenable position with regard to virtues other than love. For if the essence of virtue is to be found in love, it follows that the other 'virtues' which I have discussed, and which have for centuries been regarded as cardinal virtues, are not really virtues at all. Since love is just not the same sort of thing as justice, courage, and so on, an insistence on the virtuousness of love rules out the virtuousness of the traditional virtues. Thus if love is not a pre-disposition we may reject the second reply made above, and with it a great deal of support for the first.

That love and the traditional virtues are quite different sorts of thing can easily be seen. The essence of pathological love is that it is an emotion or feeling. Not only is it essentially an emotion, it is essentially natural, in the sense that it is not something over which we have full control. We may be able to subdue it, or channel it, but we cannot turn it on or off to order. The traditional virtues on the other hand are in the first place essentially pre-dispositions and not emotions, and in consequence are essentially non-natural, not only in that we can choose, or set ourselves to be, brave or just, but in that courage or justice are virtues only when they are adopted like this. The difference between love and the traditional virtues is therefore located at a very deep level.

It may be suggested, however, that the distinction I am drawing is based on a mistaken idea about the nature of emotion, and the sense in which it is describable as natural. Love, it might be argued, is not an uncontrollable gush of feeling, but is a human development of a mere primitive animal feeling, which my argument mistakenly identifies with love. But if this is so, how are we to determine at what stage the primitive

feeling becomes love? Surely it is more accurate to say that there is a range of feelings, from the very primitive to the humanly developed, which may all be called love. I am not denying that emotions may be specifically human, but I do want to maintain that it is unrealistic to distinguish feelings felt by animals and feelings felt by human beings. The important point, anyway, is that although love may not be an uncontrollable gush of feelings, it is in an important sense outside our control, i.e. in that it cannot be turned on and off. If love is a development of a more primitive animal feeling, it has its roots in that feeling. It is not a development in that it is separable from its root, but in that in every human being the primitive feeling may grow and develop into a controllable emotion.

If this is so, pathological love is still importantly different from the traditional virtues, which were seen to be pre-dispositions. The feeling from which love develops is still a primitive form of the same feeling. But in the case of the pre-dispositions which are virtues, the pre-disposition is not a development of a more primitive form of the same pre-disposition. It is rather a controlled response to a feeling which is different from the pre-disposition. Courage involves setting oneself to face what one fears, temperance to doing without some objects of desire, and so on. If pathological love were the same sort of thing, one would expect it to involve, say, setting one self to be nice to people from whom one recoils. But this simply is not what pathological love is, even in a sophisticated form.

I think we can admit, then, that love is, in the most important respects, different from the traditional virtues. It follows from this that if one maintains that pathological love is the supreme virtue, one is committed to denying that the traditional 'virtues' are really virtues at all. For love and, say, courage, are of such essentially different types

that we cannot say that one of them is the supreme thing of its kind, and that the other is an inferior thing of the same kind. Comparison is not possible.

We are left, therefore, with the choice between saying that love is not a virtue and saying that the traditional virtues are not virtues. Now since it is possible to identify both the nature and value of traditional virtues in terms of the part they play in a good life, it would be perverse to deny the name of virtue to those pre-dispositions which are describable as virtues because they share a property or properties which render them good for man. One would need a very good reason for taking this step, and the wish to describe pathological love as a virtue is not a good enough reason. Given the choice between love and the traditional cardinal virtues, it is only reasonable to choose the latter.

Since pathological love is not a virtue at all, it cannot be described as the supreme virtue. What this means of course, is that pathological love cannot be described as the supreme virtue among others. But this is not to say that there is <u>no</u> sense in which love is describable as a virtue. But if we do maintain that there is <u>a</u> sense in which love is a virtue (as we might say that in some sense practical love or conscientiousness are virtues), we shall have to distinguish between different kinds of virtue, in terms both of nature and of worth. One type, for instance, may be seen to possess moral worth, another type some other kind of worth.

For the time being, however, it is enough to show that pathological love cannot be the 'supreme virtue' since it is not in the relevant sense a virtue at all. But a more serious contender, it may be thought, is practical love. Many philosophers might object to the preceding argument on the ground that when they say that love is the supreme virtue, they are speaking of <u>practical</u> love. This claim makes better sense than the previous one, and I shall attempt to show that, provided the claim is

properly understood, there is not necessarily any disagreement between the supporter of practical love, and the supporter of conscientiousness. Either practical love is a virtue among others (even the supreme one), or it is a virtue of a different kind, or even not a virtue at all. In none of these cases is it a rival to conscientiousness. If it is one virtue among others, it is no more a rival to conscientiousness than courage, temperance and so forth. If it is a virtue of a different kind, or not a virtue at all, it is still not superior to conscientiousness, since it is different from that, too.

First, let us adopt the suggestion that practical love is the supreme virtue among others. This means that, while it is superior to courage, temperance, justice and so on, it is the same kind of thing, and may be graded according to the same criteria. To see whether this is a tenable position, we must consider the nature, and the source of value, of practical love.

What is practical love? It is, essentially, a way of doing rather than a way of feeling, compatible with practical love but not dependent upon it. Sometimes it is suggested that to show practical love is to act <u>as if</u> one felt pathological love for the person helped. This is, I think, misleading, since there is no one particular way of showing pathological love, and since even harming someone may in some circumstances be a way of showing pathological love. For instance, a jealous outburst does not show that what is felt is not love. There is no need to equate 'love' with 'good love'. Of course what a possessive mother feels for her child is love - that's why she is possessive. But in so far as her actions are harmful, she does not show practical love. Consequently, I prefer to keep the ideas of pathological and of practical love apart. We may, I think, follow Kant in defining practical love in terms of helping others, and of treating them as ends and never merely as means. In New Testament terms,

loving one's neighbour means doing as much for him as one does for oneself, and recognizing that as a human being he is of equal importance to oneself and others. If we define practical love like this, we can see that love is, in the sense defined, a pre-disposition, since one sets oneself a policy of loving action in accordance with a value-judgement of human beings. That is, one sets oneself to help other people because one recognises that they are important. It should be noted that, although practical love is not based on pathological love, and does not involve acting as if one felt pathological love, it does involve some degree of tact. Even if one helps other people in a spirit of grim duty, it matters that they should not be hurt, and therefore it is true to say that carrying out one's duty in an overtly reluctant manner is bad. I think it is this idea which underlies the common assumption that in showing practical love one acts as if one felt love. The truth of the matter is that in showing practical love, one sets oneself not to show dislike or reluctance. Tact is part of the attitude or pre-disposition.

So far, it looks as though practical love does not differ very much from justice. If is a pre-disposition, it involves setting oneself to help people, and it is based on a judgment of the equal importance of individual human loves. But though there is this strong similarity between love and justice, the only way in which they may be identified is by making justice a part of love, for they are not co-extensive. Justice, as we saw, is an inter-personal virtue. But love must be both personal and inter-personal, if the Kantian definition of it is to be accepted. The formulation of the categorical imperative by which Kant expresses the command of love runs, 'so act as to treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of any other, always at the same time as an end, and never merely as a means'.[1] The important reference here is to your own person'. Practical love is not manifested only by recognizing the

[1]See Grundlegung

importance of other people, but also by recognizing one's own importance. Some kinds of self-sacrifice are not justifiable in terms of practical love. If you and I are of equal importance, then you are as important as I, but I am also as important as you.

It follows from this that while justice, as being essentially concerned with methods of distribution and consequently as being essentially interpersonal, is not a possible desert-island virtue, practical love is, since if it is possible at all to treat oneself as an end, one may do this on a desert island as well as within society.

Thus, practical love can be said to share with the other virtues the characteristic of being a pre-disposition. Its goodness can also be explained in the same terms as the goodness of the other virtues, i.e., in terms of its relation to the good or complete life. Where it differs from the other virtues is in the relation it bears to the complete life, both of the individual and of other people.

Kant argues that treating people as ends - showing practical love - has both a positive and a negative aspect. Negatively, one treats someone as an end in so far as one refrains from treating him merely as a means to some other end. We recognize that he too is an individual with aims and purposes. In other words, as a rational being, he has a concept of a good life, and seeks to harmonize his ends in a systematic whole. Not only does he seek fulfilment in this way, he has a right to do so, and a duty to do so when he is tempted to go for the short-term gains to the detriment of his long-term ends. Positively, we treat others as ends by making their (morally acceptable) ends our own. In this sense, practical love means that we should not just avoid hindering other people, but should exert ourselves on their behalf.

The same applies to the display of practical love in the sphere of self-regard. I treat myself negatively as an end when I refuse to gratify

my inclinations when their gratification would jeopardize the fulfilment which my rational nature demands. Positively, I treat myself as an end by pursuing fulfilment as a rational being.

Thus Kant analyses practical love in terms of positive and negative respect for the attempt to actualize the rational potentialities of human beings, whether those potentialities are one's own or someone else's.

This seems to me to be an acceptable analysis of the concepts which underlie the idea of loving one's neighbour as oneself. If, then, we do accept this analysis, it is easy to see both why practical love resembles a virtue (in nature and in value) and also why it is misleading to describe it as the supreme virtue, thus implying that it is of precisely the same type as other virtues.

Since practical love is a pre-disposition, and one which is valued because of the contribution it makes to the search for the complete life, it is similar to, and valued for the same kind of reason as, other virtues. But it is sufficiently different from them to lead us to deny that it is one, albeit supreme, among others. For it can be argued that practical love encompasses the other virtues, or that courage and so on are aspects of practical love in different sorts of situation, whether the virtue in question is personal or inter-personal, since practical love can be either.

Thus, we can say that practical love is not a virtue, or the supreme virtue, which would suggest that we could sometimes have to choose between love and, say courage or justice, but rather is virtue as such. The particular virtues are particular forms of love. Being just is one way of showing practical love for others, being brave or temperate a way of showing practical love either for oneself or for other people. So is being wise. For wisdom, as we saw, involves knowledge both of worthwhile ends, and of effective and legitimate means to those ends. Thus, in planning wise policies of action, either I show prudence, which is one way of showing

self-love, or else respect for others, in recognizing the importance of other people and helping them to pursue their ends, or at least refraining from hindering them. So we may say that it is because justice, courage and so on are ways of showing practical love that they are seen to be good, and practical love is seen to be good because it governs the pursuit of the good life for oneself and others.

However, it looks as though I have amended the opposition's case in such a way that it presents an even greater threat to my own. If practical love encompasses the particular virtues, does that not make love and virtue identical? And in that case, where does conscientiousness come in? It would surely be too neat a solution to identify love and conscientiousness.

At this point, it is necessary to remember that a distinction is to be drawn between the concept of virtue as such and that of moral virtue. A life may be good without being morally good, and a man may be (non-morally) good in so far as he leads a (non-morally) good life. Now I have argued that a complete life is one in which human potentialities are actualized, and that a genuinely complete life is one in which the moral potentialities is necessarily actualized. If the moral potentialities are not actualised, the life is good up to a point but not complete. It possesses worth but not moral worth.[2]

Bearing this in mind, we can argue as follows. Although the value of practical love, as a pre-disposition which encompasses particular virtues, is indisputable, it does not follow that it is a rival to conscientiousness. Just as it did not make sense to call love the supreme virtue because comparisons between it, the generic virtue, and particular virtues are impossible, it does not make sense to describe it as superior to conscientiousness which is, so to speak, in a different league. Neither does it make sense to speak of conscientiousness as the supreme virtue, since that implies that its value is not unique. Both love and conscient-

2 see ch I pp 18-19 above.

iousness possess unique value. This is not self-contradictory, though I think the belief that it is underlies the attempts to rank love above conscientiousness in the same scale. But they are not in the same scale, and in their different spheres they each possess unique value.

In order to defend my case, therefore, it will be necessary not only to show that conscientiousness does possess a unique value, but also to show that it is a different kind of thing from, and therefore incomparable with, love, as far as its value is concerned. I do not propose to say very much now, since Part II below will be largely devoted to a discussion of this topic, but I shall indicate the lines which the discussion will follow.

First, it is necessary to establish what is to be understood by the term 'conscientiousness'. As with the term 'love', my usage will be Kantian, though I am not suggesting that it is a statement of Kant's own position. Thus, in Kantian terms we can say that conscientiousness is manifested in acting for the sake of the law. But to avoidance reference to 'the law', which raises numerous questions not directly related to my enquiry, I shall use the formula 'doing what is right because it is seen to be right'. The conscientious man, therefore, is one who does the right thing just because it is the right thing to do. His will is good. Someone is to be described as conscientious in virtue of his motives for action, and not in terms of his actions themselves, though it will be seen that the nature of the actions must have some bearing on our classification and assessment of the motives, and consequently on our application of the term conscientious.[3]

In what way(s) does the conscientious man differ from the man who acts out of love? A point which must be stressed is that <u>in practice</u>, in his <u>actions</u>, he need not, and most probably will not, differ at all. Far from being incompatible, love and conscientiousness are closely related.

[3] see Part II, ch. 1 and 2.

But they are not identical, and the criteria for the application of the terms 'loving' and 'conscientious' are different. Conscientiousness is manifested in doing what is right because it is seen to be right. Love is manifested in acting bravely, or justly, or whatever, in situations where a particular virtue is called for by the pursuit of the good life. Now if, in a particular situation, it is necessary to continue one's pursuit of this end by the practice of, let us say, justice, if, that is, the situation demands the performance of a just action, then it seems to follow that the right action to perform is the just one. Therefore, both love and conscientiousness will, in such a situation, be manifested through the performance of the just action.

The difference between the loving act and the conscientious act is to be found in the motivation, though even here the difference is chiefly one of emphasis. In the particular situation of the example, the one external action is the just action, the loving action and (usually) the conscientious action. But the action is just, loving, and conscientious in virtue of different characteristics.

It is clear, to start with, that since the just act is the act that does not discriminate between equals, or does not fail to discriminate between unequals, an act is <u>objectively</u> just. Its justice does not depend on the motive or the will of the agent, but on the circumstances of the case.[4] Of course, it may not always be easy, or even possible, to discover which the just act in a particular situation is, but that does not mean that we need deny that there <u>is</u> an act which is just, or least unjust, as being the one which lays weight as evenly as possible on the claims of all the individuals involved. So the just act may be done from any motive, since its justice is not subjective, though of course if it is done from a bad motive it is not the act of a just man.

[4]see Part II, Ch. 2.

Similarly, the act which is demanded by practical love in a particular situation is capable of determination by objective criteria. For instance, the act demanded by love in the example under consideration is the just act. In another situation, it might be the brave or the temperate act, but in each case it makes sense to say that the situation demands a particular act of the agent.

Thus it is possible to determine what the virtuous act in a situation is, by reference to objective criteria. But, it will be seen, this is not necessarily true of the conscientious act, which depends rather on the agent's experience of the demands of the situation.[5] However, even in the case of the just or the loving act, the motive is not irrelevant, for the virtuous man is not merely the man who performs objectively virtuous acts, but the man with certain pre-dispositions, i.e. the man who has set himself to do the kinds of action he conceives to be good. A virtue is manifested in an action when that action is performed by an agent with the appropriate pre-disposition.

At this point, it might be suggested that practical love and conscientiousness are after all merging into each other, since it now appears that an agent's motives determine the virtuousness of his actions, and he cannot be said to manifest the virtue of love unless he has the appropriate attitude. Since conscientiousness is manifested in the performance of an action seen as right, and performed because it is seen as right, and since practical love is manifested in the performance of actions perfofmed in pursuance of a virtuous policy, doesn't it seem rather hair-splitting to distinguish the two?

In answering this question it is helpful to distinguish between the goal of conscientious action, and the goal of loving, or virtuous, action. We may say that the goal of loving or virtuous action is the good, while

[5] see Part II, Ch. 2.

the goal of conscientious action is the right. The difference is one of emphasis, primarily, since, as I shall argue[6], the good and the right are explicable in terms of each other, and the good and the right action will often in practice be the same. But they might not always be, and certainly at any rate there is an important difference in emphasis, in terms of which we can understand the difference between practical love (= non-moral virtue) and conscientiousness (= moral virtue or goodness).

The good, which is the goal of virtuous action, is, as I have explained, the good life, i.e. the actualization of human potentialities in oneself and in other people. Thus we can say that the end of the virtuous man is the human good. Now what is important here is that the virtuous man may or may not see the human good in terms of morality. If he sees it in terms of morality, he will think of it as that at which he ought to aim. It will be a matter of duty. And he will recognize that moral as well as other potentialities ought to be developed. Such a man's goal is a moral good, and his motivation is morally good. He is, therefore, morally virtuous. He manifests both practical love and conscientiousness, for his goal is the life of virtue which manifests practical love in the performance of particular virtuous actions, and his motivation is obedience to the moral demand. There is no split in this case between practical love and conscientiousness, for the morally virtuous, or conscientious man does have as a goal the life of virtue definable in terms of practical love. But the virtuous man need not see the human good in terms of morality. He may rather see it as something valuable, as a worthwhile (or the most worthwhile) end, towards which he feels it worth making a contribution. It is not that he thinks he ought to pursue his goal, but that it is a worthy cause to which to devote his life. For my argument, it doesn't really matter whether there are people who do see

[6]Part II, ch. 2.

the good in this way, though I think that there are. What matters is that if there were such people, we would call them virtuous. And of course there is no reason to refuse to call them virtuous. They have decided what is worthwhile, they have worked out policies for achieving it and they have set themselves to aim at it. In other words, they have the appropriate pre-dispositions, and they are virtuous. Thus one may be virtuous without feeling morally committed to the pursuit of the good, and this point may be expressed by saying that the goal of the virtuous man is the good. The man whose goal is the good in this sense is therefore virtuous, but non-morally so. Although his actions manifest practical love, they are not morally virtuous. So although the conscientious man manifests practical love in a life of moral virtue, the loving man need not be conscientious. His goal can be the good rather than the right.

But, by definition, the goal of the conscientious man is the right. He performs actions which he recognizes as right because he recognizes them as right. In other words, he recognizes a moral demand. The conscientious man is, ipso facto, virtuous. He is the virtuous man who does see the good in terms of morality, and not merely in terms of a worthy cause. This is why it is tempting to assimilate practical love, virtue and conscientiousness. But it is a mistake to do so, because while conscientiousness involves practical love, and is virtue of a particular kind, viz, moral, practical love/virtue is not necessarily conscientious, since it is not always moral.

It should now be clear why I propose to defend the claim that conscientiousness alone is morally good. Virtue is of course good. Practical love, i.e. generic virtue, possesses the characteristic which leads us to call particular virtues good, i.e. a special relation to the good life, or human good. But it possesses moral goodness only when its goal is the goal of morality, i.e. the human good seen as something at which we are morally obliged to aim. In other words, it is morally good

only when it is manifested by the conscientious man. But since practical love is possible without conscientiousness, we should reserve the title of moral good for conscientiousness which, I shall argue, is always morally good.

It can be seen, therefore, that the main objections raised in the name of virtue to the claim that conscientiousness alone is morally good are ill-founded. They assume that various specific virtues such as courage are the same kind of thing as love, and that love is the same kind of thing as conscientiousness. From this assumption follows the further mistaken views that the values of the specific virtues, of love, and of conscientiousness, are comparable, and that conscientiousness is inferior to love, with which it cannot really be compared. Conscientiousness is not superior or inferior to love, because its value is of a different kind. (Though it could perhaps be argued that moral value as such as superior to any other kind of value).

Of course, the conclusions reached so far about conscientiousness have not yet been adequately defended. Furthermore, since they concern particularly conscientiousness in relation to virtue, they are largely negative. But now that some of the confusions which arise in discussions about the value of conscientiousness have been cleared up, it will be possible to begin a more detailed and positive discussion about the nature and value of conscientiousness. In Part II, I shall provide such a discussion.

PART II. CONSCIENCE AND CONSCIENTIOUSNESS

Chapter 1

Conscientious[ness]: Some Misunderstandings

In Part I, I sought to show that love is not a rival to conscientiousness, and that conscientiousness is not to be attacked by means of comparison with other virtues, general or specific. However, it is necessary to consider some attempts to show that conscientiousness is not the supreme virtue, for they embody not only the mistaken assumption that love is a virtue among others, but also a misidentification of conscientiousness with some other attitude, which may be like conscientiousness while being, in the most important respects, different from it. In an attempt to show what conscientiousness is, it is both necessary and useful to consider discussions which are based on such misidentifications. A mistake of this kind is made by Nowell-Smith[1], when he seeks to show that, while conscientiousness may be valuable, it is not the supreme virtue. Interestingly, in his use of examples of 'conscientious action' he makes a double misidentification. A detailed discussion of these examples will enable me not only to show what kind of behaviour is not conscientious, but also to develop my more positive argument about the nature of conscientiousness and conscientious action.

First, however, we may consider some usages of the term 'conscientious' in popular speech, and also in a more strict sense, so that various conclusions about the meaning and implications of the term may be applied in a consideration of Nowell-Smith's position.

1. Non-moral conscientiousness.

Popularly, the adjective 'conscientious' is quite often used pejor-

[1] Ethics (Pelican) p.247ff.

atively, at any rate in an oblique way. In this usage, it is closely akin to the term 'scrupulous', and both terms are used implicitly to deny the possession of qualities which are regarded as valuable. The scrupulous man, in this sense, is the man who concerns himself so much with the niggling details of morals that he fails to respond adequately to the moral demand. He lacks breadth, and consequently is incapable of dealing with important moral problems, which require a flexible approach. The conscientious man (in the popular sense) is often scrupulous too, though conscientiousness and scrupulosity[2] are not identical. Scrupulosity implies a deficiency, since it is incompatible with the qualities which are possessed by the morally freer, more flexible moral agent. Conscientiousness also implies a deficiency, sometimes in the same way as scrupulosity, but sometimes (perhaps more often) in that in this popular sense conscientiousness is a <u>substitute</u> for virtues in which the conscientious man is lacking.

It is important here to be clear about what the popular attribution of conscientiousness does <u>imply</u>, and what, less rigorously, it suggests. Unlike scrupulosity, conscientiousness is not necessarily a bad thing, and this can be seen if we consider the suggestions of deficiency carried by both terms. As I pointed out, scrupulosity may accurately be said to imply a deficiency, since it is incompatible with qualities regarded as good. One cannot be both scrupulous, and broad, free or flexible, in moral matters. It should be noted that this is so if we use the term 'scrupulous' in a general sense. Very often it is used adverbially to qualify such adjectives as 'honest', and of course the scrupulously honest man may be in general morally flexible. But the man who is describable as 'scrupulous' in general (the man of scrupulosity) is one who is in general rigid, niggling over trifles, and altogether lacking in an acceptable sense of priorities. And so, in so far as the scrupulous man is rigid, he cannot be

[2]I use 'scrupulosity' rather than 'scrupulousness' to name the niggling harmful attitude of the sort of person in question.

prepared to face wider moral issues in the right frame of mind, and overall cannot be expected to deal satisfactorily with questions about the relative importance of different moral issues. He is, therefore, morally deficient.

Conscientiousness, even popularly, is rather different. While describing someone as 'conscientious' suggests that that person is deficient in certain qualities, it does not imply it. In order to expand on this distinction between implication and suggestion, I shall take a non-moral example of the use of the term 'conscientious', viz. the example of the reference.

It is usual, when one is writing a reference, not to be explicit in one's criticisms. Sometimes, in the case of a quality which is necessary for the job, the convention may be simply not to mention that quality if the applicant lacks it. Thus, since living-in maids, for example, had to be clean, hard-working and honest, one would, in writing a reference for a maid who had been idle, say merely that she was clean and honest. The prospective employer would gather from this that she was not hard-working. Similarly, if one wrote that she was clean and hard-working, it would be inferred that she was not honest. This method of getting across all necessary information by judicious omission can be quite effective in cases where there is a small finite number of qualifications for the job. The matter of writing a reference can, however, be more complex, for various reasons. For instance, an academic tutor may not know enough about the non-academic qualifications of the student. Alternatively, he may not know exactly what personal qualifications the job requires. Furthermore, different types of people may be equally fitted, in different ways, to do the job. The lack of one qualification may be compensated for by the possession of another, but the referee may find it difficult to judge to what extent some qualifications off-set others. For these reasons, among others,

he has to compose a reference very carefully, but to help him he has access to a store of conventional terms or phrases which are usefully, though not misleadingly, vague or ambiguous. One such term is, of course, 'conscientious'. (In a way, this is unfortunate, for philosophers, like other academics, often write references for students, and are, I suspect, influenced in their philosophical views of conscientiousness by their familiarity with this specialised conventional attribution of it.)

We may suppose, then, that a tutor is writing a reference for a student who has applied for a post in, say, the Civil Service. The tutor is not quite sure what a civil servant ought to be like, but may think that clearheadedness is important, while originality is not essential. Reliability and punctuality are presumably also important. For the purpose of writing the reference, how is the tutor to differentiate between the student who always hands in a mediocre essay on time, and the one who arrives a day late with an interesting and well-researched piece of work? This is where he can make use of the term 'conscientious', but he must be careful about how he uses it. If the writer of the mediocre essay is not to blame for its mediocrity (for he may, after all, be punctual with his work because he spends little time on it), if, that is to say, he is not only reliable over handing in work, but also about preparing it, then the tutor can say that he is a conscientious student.

Now this usage is, I think, what many people have in mind when they think of conscientiousness as a substitute. The applicant described by the referee as conscientious is not a particularly good student, but in so far as hard work and application can be used as means to the end of academic attainment, he may reach the level of attainment reached also by the brighter but less conscientious student. But conscientiousness even in this context is not really a substitute. The tutor may write as

though it were, but that is because he is trying to praise the student so far as he can without conveying a false impression about his ability. The referee records his impressions as accurately as possible by stressing the conscientiousness of the student, while refraining from comment on his ability. If he thinks that in this case the student will get on as well through hard work as a brighter student would, he must say so. Otherwise, it will be assumed that, although the student possesses sterling qualities, he is not very good at his subject. Thus, conscientiousness in a student is one thing, ability is another, and in the comparatively rare cases where conscientiousness can effectively act as a substitute for ability, it is necessary for the referee to say that this is so.

On the other hand, we may consider the second type of student, that is, the one who hands in interesting and well-prepared work late. Just as punctuality on the part of the poor student was not necessarily a sign of conscientiousness, since it may have been achieved through skimping on work, so unpunctuality on the part of the good student is not necessarily a sign of lack of conscientiousness. It may well be that he is consistently late in handing in his essays precisely because he works hard in preparing them and is reluctant to put punctuality above good work. If he finds that it takes him eight days, instead of the more usual seven, to prepare a good essay, it is not unreasonable for him to demand eight days. (It would, of course, be more reasonable for him to explain the situation to his tutor, and to have a tutorial every eight days instead of weekly; equally, it would be sensible for the tutor to suggest such an arrangement. Oddly, such a solution does not often seem to occur to either student or tutor.) At any rate, unless one regards punctuality as a necessary element in conscientiousness, one may, as referee, fairly describe this student as conscientious, though to avoid confusion with the first kind of student one must employ some such formula as 'Not only is he ... (interesting, intelligent,

good at his subject), but also conscientious, hard working...' Now this use of the term 'conscientious' does suggest that conscientiousness is not just not a mere substitute for other qualities, but that it can be, and is, regarded as a valuable complement to them. The referee refers to the conscientiousness of the student because he wants to make it clear to the prospective employer that the student is more than merely good at his subject.

Finally, in an extreme case, the referee may feel obliged to draw attention to lack of conscientiousness on the part of the student. If the student has a flair for his subject and is capable of good work, but is erratic in attendance at tutorials, fails to do background research (even if he presents original and good work without it), and so on, the referee may feel that his student is not a good candidate for the job, and will make this clear in his reference, whether explicitly or by omission.

These considerations enable us to see more clearly to what extent, and in what way, the attribution of conscientiousness implies some deficiency in the person to whom it is attributed. The referee, we have seen, has, broadly speaking, three types of student to deal with in references. There is, first, the 'conscientious student'. The conventional use of the term 'conscientious' is such that the student who is described merely as 'conscientious' is understood to be not very good at his subject. Secondly, there is the student who is 'not only good ... but also conscientious'. This formula may be used to commend the applicant highly. He possesses both natural ability and also qualifications of character, and may therefore be regarded as well-fitted as a candidate for the job. Finally, there is the student who 'has a natural flair for the subject'. If the referee says this, and stresses the student's ability, while saying nothing about his application to the subject, it may be understood that the student lacks the useful qualification of conscientiousness. These are, of course,

over-simplifications, but I want only to indicate how, in general terms, formulae involving 'conscientiousness' in the popular sense are used, so that the relationship between conscientiousness in this sense, and deficiency in the conscientious man, may be clarified.

There is, as the example shows, a use of the term 'conscientious' according to which the conscientious person is understood to be deficient in some ability. In this use, conscientiousness may be considered to be a substitute for the lacking ability, depending very much on the particular case. (For instance, to confine the example to the case of students and academic work, beyond a certain point conscientiousness is no substitute for mathematical ability, but a student who is conscientious may do as well at a subject requiring an extensive knowledge of facts as a more intelligent student does.) Whether or not conscientiousness can replace the lacking ability, though, the suggestion conveyed by the use of the formula or conventional term, 'conscientious' is that the conscientious person does lack some ability. But it must be stressed that this usage is a formula, and that conscientiousness as such is not incompatible with ability. Thus, the best student is probably both able and conscientious. This corresponds to the conventional use of 'honest' to describe the inefficient maid. Honesty is clearly compatible with efficiency, and a maid who is both honest and efficient is obviously better than one who is merely honest, or one who is merely efficient. The non-conscientious, erratic but able student is roughly equivalent to the maid who is honest and clean but not hard-working. Honesty and cleanliness are compatible with hard work, but the maid who is described merely as honest and clean is tacitly accused of idleness.

So while there is this conventional use of the term 'conscientious', by means of which the referee tacitly accuses the conscientious applicant for a job of a lack of some ability, we must be aware that, even in the

conventional context of the reference, the attribution of conscientiousness does not imply a deficiency. The convention works because it involves not only the use of positive terms, but also the omission of terms which, it is known, would be included if they had any reference. It is not the attribution of conscientiousness which damns the applicant, but the deliberate failure to attribute ability to him. In describing their students as conscientious, referees may be damning them with faint praise. But we must not let the damnation and the faintness blind us to the praise. Conscientiousness even of this type is good, but it may not be an adequate qualification for a job. We may say the same of academic ability. It may be a necessary qualification, but it is rarely sufficient.

In this popular usage, then, conscientiousness is often stressed as a virtue which is found in people who are deficient in natural ability, but though it may be, and is, found in such people, it is also found in people who do possess natural ability. The conscientious student works hard. It may be that human (or student) nature is such that most people work hard only if they have to, and hence that most conscientious students are untalented ones who have to work hard in order to get through. But quite apart from the fact that this seems an unduly pessimistic view of human nature, even if it is true, it is true only as a generalisation, and not universally. For it is a fact that some talented people do work hard, and that ability and conscientiousness are not only compatible, but complementary.

The suggestion of deficiency carried by this use of the term 'conscientiousness' is, therefore, just a suggestion and not an implication. That is to say, neither is it logically necessary that the (popularly) 'conscientious' worker is untalented, nor is it a fact.

2. Moral conscientiousness and dullness.

Now that we can see that conscientiousness of a non-moral kind does not imply dullness, and that it is merely a convention that has lent a dull

flavour to it, we can turn to a consideration of conscientiousness (in the popular sense) in the moral sphere. The suggestion of 'dullness' carried by 'conscientiousness' is secondary. The primary suggestions (or even implications) are of reliability, and, especially, industry.

My impression is that the important element in the popular attribution of conscientiousness is that of industry,[3] but that the suggestion (merely) of dullness is also included. The morally conscientious man is, in the popular sense, the man who works hard at morality. Hence, it is supposed, he is dull and insensitive. The view that the morally conscientious man is dull in some way involves two presuppositions, neither of which need be accepted. The first is that hard work is boring, and makes a bore of the industrious man. The second is that morality, or at any rate duty, is distasteful, or rather that it is distasteful to do one's duty when one realizes that that is one's duty. These presuppositions are not essential to the view that conscientiousness equals dullness, but they do lend it a spurious support.

As far as the first presupposition is concerned, the only sense in which it is true is this - that some people who work hard concentrate on a narrow area of work, and that they have no interests outside their work. Such people may have a tendency to talk shop, and some shop is boring. On the other hand, many hard workers have a wide range of interests, within or outside their work-areas; many of them do not talk shop, preferring to get away from their work in periods of leisure; and of those who do talk shop, some are and some are not, bores - the shop itself may be either interesting or boring to the layman, and the talker of shop may talk boringly or interestingly. So in general, we cannot accept that hard work turns a man into a bore. Nor does it make him insensitive (the accusation of

[3]It will be seen that this element is also important in the 'real' as opposed to the 'popular' meaning of conscientiousness.

dullness suggests insensitivity too). Any generalisations about hard work are bound to be inaccurate, for so much depends on the nature of the individual who undertakes it, and on the nature of the work to which he devotes himself.

There is no reason to suppose that working hard at morality is more unfortunate in its effects on the worker than working hard at the practice of medicine, or teaching, or making cars. But there may appear to be such a reason, for it is, I think, supposed that hard work at morality is necessary only for those who are morally insensitive. For the morally sensitive, morality is more natural. Now here we must distinguish between theory and practice. If someone has to work very hard at moral 'theory', in other words, if he has to think a great deal about what he ought to do, and is not more or less immediately aware of what it is good or right to do in many situations, then there might be some truth in the claim that such a person is morally insensitive. But while it does seem to be true that quite often one can simply know what one ought to do, without devoting a great deal of thought to it, nevertheless I think that it is too easy to believe that morality is less complex than it is, and that moral duties are easily identifiable. Lack of thought about morality may be just as reliable a sign of moral insensitivity as too much thought. To take a simple example, we may consider the morality of telling a white lie to avoid hurting someone's feelings. Someone asks me (perhaps with reference to a new coat) 'Do I look all right?' Now it may well be necessary to think what one's reply ought to be in such a situation. Of course, if one likes the coat, there is no problem, but I am assuming that I do not like the coat. I must, therefore, decide whether I ought to tell the truth, or whether to lie. There are, however, different ways of deciding, some involving next to no thought, and some involving a great deal of thought.

3. Moral conscientiousness and Decision-Making.

First, then, I may decide what I ought to say by appealing to some moral rule. Holding a set of rigid moral rules relieves me of thought in the particular situation. If, for instance, I believe that one ought always to tell the truth, it will not occur to me to weigh the claims of truth-telling against the claims of avoiding the infliction of pain, for the claims of truth-telling are absolute. But I think it is true to say that most people would agree with me that the person who always tells the truth, whatever the consequences, is morally insensitive. I wrote above that in the situation I am considering as an example, 'I must decide whether I ought to tell the truth'. But for the person who makes it a rule always to tell the truth, no such decision is necessary. All such decisions were made in advance, at the time of the adoption of the principle. Surely, though, only a morally insensitive person could block off future decisions in this way. Different situations require different responses from the moral agent, and one cannot allow for these in advance, at least if one adopts rules of such generality as, 'Always tell the truth.'

Suppose, though, that the rule to which I refer is more specific than this. Realizing that telling the truth sometimes causes suffering, I make it my rule always to tell the truth except when doing so will cause suffering. This rule is ambiguous, for it is not clear whether I have made it a rule always to tell the truth except when it will cause suffering, but to lie when telling the truth would cause suffering, or whether I am leaving my decisions concerning truth-telling in the exceptional cases to be made at the time when the exceptions occur. If my rule is to be interpreted in the first way, then although it is more specific, it is just as rigid as the rule always to tell the truth. I have made it my rule always to lie in cases where telling the truth would cause suffering. Although the rule is rigid, its adoption shows less insensitivity on my part then did the adoption of the rule always to tell the truth, whatever the consequences,

since I have at least recognized that there may be two competing claims on me, those of telling the truth, and of avoiding causing suffering. But even so, I have made in advance decisions which might be better left for the time when they must be made. I have decided always to tell white lies in circumstances when frankness would be painful to the recipient of my frankness. But this might not always be the best thing to do. Suppose my friend asks me whether her new coat looks all right. I can avoid hurting her feelings by telling her that she looks nice, but circumstances might arise in which it would be better to hurt her feelings, not so much for the sake of the truth as such, but because of some further consideration. She might, for instance, be going for an interview for a job, and it could be argued that I ought to help her, even at the risk of hurting her feelings, to look her best at the interview.

Thus, in these two cases, when I can avoid concentrated attention on what are usually minor moral problems, by arming myself in advance with rules which may govern my decisions, I do indeed save myself some hard work at morality, but I do not show myself to be morally sensitive. Moral sensitivity may be, in such cases, more certainly indicated by a willingness to accept a certain amount of hard thinking in particular cases. (I am not arguing that anyone who adopts moral rules necessarily shows himself to be insensitive. My point at the moment is merely that, if the conscientious man is the one who works hard at moral 'theory', it does not follow that he is insensitive to the demands of morality.)

On the other hand, it can be argued that excessive concentration on particular cases may indicate some degree of insensitivity. As I said earlier, there are cases where it simply is clear what I ought to do, and the person who agonizes over his decision-making in such cases may demonstrate an inability to distinguish between what is and what is not important. Such a person is properly to be described as over-scrupulous, and we

have seen that scrupulosity is a fault.

Both rigid adherence to rules (which saves work), and scrupulous attention to details in particular cases, are in the end bad in the same way. For both of them involve an inability to adapt oneself reasonably, an inability to be flexible enough to respond appropriately to particular situations. Thus both of them involve 'insensitivity' in the sense in which I am using the word. The morally sensitive man is the one who 'sees' what he ought to do in situations where sight, or rather insight, is possible. I shall pursue this line of argument further when I turn to a more positive discussion of the nature of conscientiousness. For now, it is enough to point out that the man who finds it necessary to think about what he ought to do, and who may for that reason be described as 'conscientious' in the popular sense of the term, is not necessarily insensitive.

As I suggested earlier, the idea of 'working hard at morality' has application not only in the realm of theory, but also in that of practice. The conscientious man is sometimes rated below the 'naturally good man' because he does not always find it easy, or pleasant, to do his duty. He knows, or thinks he knows, what he ought to do, but he has to make himself do it. This is, no doubt, true. But it does not provide us with a point of contrast with the naturally good man, nor with an identifying feature of the conscientious man. (Neither is it a distinguishing characteristic of Kant's dutiful man, though Kant is consistently misinterpreted on this point.)

4. Moral conscientiousness and motivation.

The argument about the conscientious man, who is supposedly to be contrasted with the naturally good man, goes something like this. The conscientious man is the one who acts for the sake of duty. Therefore, when he does what he conceives to be his duty, he does not act out of inclination.

Consequently, the conscientious man is one who acts against inclination. If, then, we ascribe moral worth only to the conscientious man, we commit ourselves to the view that we can be morally good only when we do things we do not like doing. It follows from this that, say, the benevolent man labours under a great disadvantage, because he enjoys helping other people. This shows that he is acting from the wrong motive, and that he is not morally good. But since this conclusion is unacceptable, we must reject the premise from which it follows, i.e. the premise that the motive of duty is the only moral motive, and with relief we can say that the conscientious man, who looks for the unpleasant jobs, and identifies them with his duty, is not really morally good, and that moral goodness and misanthropy don't, after all, go together.

This seems to me to be a fair, if succinct, statement of the argument underlying the rejection of the unique moral goodness of conscientiousness. But when the argument is put as succinctly as this, we can see its flaws, and recognize its weakness as an attack on conscientiousness.

To start with, we may accept that the conscientious man acts for the sake of duty. (I prefer to say that he does what is right because he sees it to be right but the difference is small, and does not matter at this stage.) It follows from this that he is motivated by a 'sense of duty'. To say this is to speak loosely, since it is hard to see quite how one can be motivated by a sense, but if we take it to mean that he performs certain actions because he recognizes that he ought to, we may still accept the argument up to this point. Furthermore, it follows that he does not act 'out of inclination'. That is to say, what moves him to act is not inclination, but a recoghition that a particular action is the one he ought to perform. But although he does not act <u>out of</u> inclination, that is not to say that he acts <u>against</u> inclination. All we can say is that the conscientious man would act against inclination if the action he recognized as his

duty were not compatible with what he wanted to do. If he is benevolent, and if he recognizes a beneficent action as his duty, he is inclined to do that which he believes he ought to do. In order that his action should be describable as conscientious, it has to be the case that he does it because he recognizes that he ought to, and if he is to be described as morally good his motive must be the motive of duty (that is, if, as I am contending, conscientiousness alone is morally good), but this merely means that he must not be motivated by inclination, not that no inclination towards the action must be present. Now, it might in some cases happen that the actions of the benevolent man lack moral worth, where externally similar actions performed by someone who lacks benevolence (permanently or termporarily), possess moral worth, since the benevolent man might be prompted by inclination to perform the action which is his duty, and might go ahead and do the action without reflection as to where his duty lies. This conclusion may not be entirely palatable, but I shall argue that, palatable or not, it is true. At any rate, it is not as unpalatable as the absurd and fallaciously drawn conclusion that the benevolent man can never do good turns from a morally good motive. But it is this absurd conclusion, which does not follow from the premises, which has led some philosophers to reject the premises from which they believe it to follow. Thus, unless they insist upon rejecting the milder conclusion that not all benevolent actions are (or need be) morally good, they have no reason to reject the premises that conscientiousness alone is morally good, and that conscientiousness is manifested in actions performed for the sake of duty.

The other element in the argument need not be accepted either. This is the corollary to the assumption that conscientious action is done against inclination, viz. that the conscientious man identifies duty with what is unpleasant. Of course, even if it were true that conscientious action is action done against inclination, it would not follow that duty is to be

found in whatever is unpleasant. If duty were always unpleasant, it need not be assumed that whatever is unpleasant is duty.

Yet another odd idea is involved in this sort of argument, viz. the idea that duty is unpleasant, or rather, the idea that the mere recognition that one ought to perform an action renders one disinclined to perform that action. For it seems that only some assumption such as this can have led to the easy transition from the statement that the good man is not motivated by inclination, to the statement that he must struggle against inclination. The latter statement so clearly does not follow from the former, that it appears necessary to look for some explanation of the fact that many members of the anti-conscientiousness lobby think that it does. And one possible explanation is that they themselves think that duties recognized as duties must be contrary to inclination. To be fair, however, there is an alternative explanation, to the effect that defences of dutifulness are identified with Kant's position in the Groundwork, which has often been misinterpreted.[4]

There is, at any rate, no need to identify dutifulness with the performance of unpleasant tasks, or to identify the conscientious man with the misanthropist. Accordingly, we need not look among the stoical people who face up to 'unpleasant reality' for examples of conscientious men. Admittedly, conscientious men may face up to unpleasant reality, but if reality is unpleasant, then that reflects no discredit on the conscientious, but rather on the ostrich defenders of 'natural goodness'.

A great deal more remains to be said on this. It will be necessary to establish, not only the nature of true conscientiousness, but also that of natural goodness, in order to demonstrate adequately the falsity of the

[4]For a discussion of Kant's position on motivation in the Groundwork see A. Broadie and E.M. Pybus 'Kant's Concept of Respect' KANT STUDIEN forthcoming.

dichotomy between the two. The destruction of the argument which underlies the kind of misidentification of conscientiousness with which I am concerned here will be enough for my present purpose, which is to show that apparent counter-examples to the claim that conscientiousness alone is morally good are not genuine counter-examples.

Now, we cannot argue[5] that if a man habitually does something he dislikes doing, he must be acting from a sense of duty. Such an argument depends on the assumption that there are only two kinds of motive, sense of duty and inclination. Now, if we understand the terms 'sense of duty' and 'inclination' very widely, we might say that there are only two broad categories of motive. But since each category is divisible into two distinct types, which could give us four narrower categories of motive, we cannot argue from the absence of one kind of inclination to the presence of one kind of 'sense of duty'.

5. Categories of motive.

Normally, the term 'sense of duty', as used in the expression 'motivated by a sense of duty', is understood to mean something like 'the recognition that this is something one morally ought to do'. And normally, when we say that someone did something 'out of inclination' we mean that he did what he wanted to do, because he wanted to do it. Therefore, if someone does something which causes him distress, it is tempting to say that, since he did not want to do it, he must have done it because he thought that it was his moral duty to do it. In order to see that this does not follow, we may first distinguish another sense of 'inclination'. To be inclined to do something is not necessarily to feel a desire to do it, nor to find the prospect of the action attractive. Not all inclinations are immediate inclinations. It is possible to act against immediate inclination from a motive of self-interest, and possible to do something distasteful because

[5] As Nowell-Smith's argument seems to suggest, for instance, see below.

one sees that it will, in the long run, be for one's own good. We could call this motive some sort of 'inclination', for if we think of action done from inclination as designed to satisfy some want, we need not think of the satisfaction as immediate, nor of that which is wanted as something which is susceptible to immediate attainment. However, though the motive of self-interest may for these reasons be subsumed within the broad category of motives of inclination, I think that speaking in this way is likely to lead to confusion, and prefer to distinguish between motives of self-interest and motives of inclination.

This distinction gives us three categories of motive, viz. inclination, self-interest, and dutifulness. It is therefore clear that the existence of evidence which rules out immediate inclination as a motive for a particular action does not provide us with a licence to infer that the motive for that action must be dutifulness. The action, distasteful or not, might have been performed from a motive of self-interest.

But even these three categories are not exhaustive. Different kinds of dutifulness can also be distinguished. When we say that someone performed an action because he thought it his duty, we do often mean that he did it because he thought that he morally ought to do it. But not all duties are moral duties, and someone may do something which he believes to be his duty without believing that the action is one he is morally bound to perform. Many duties, for instance, arise in the context of particular jobs or professions. A policeman, for instance, may have a duty to report people who park their cars on double yellow lines. This is one of his duties qua policeman. Now, it is possible to argue that a policeman has a <u>moral</u> duty to report people who park illegally, because in becoming a policeman he accepted that he would have to perform, in his capacity as policeman, various actions which a civilian would not have to perform. But the point is not that it is a moral duty to report people who park

illegally, but that, in the first place it is a professional duty for him to do this, and, in the second place, it is a moral duty for him to carry out the professional duties imposed upon him. Thus, we may distinguish between professional duties (or duties of a role), and moral duties. Externally, the actions which are demanded by one's professional status, and those which are demanded of one qua moral agent, may be identical. But often the reasons for saying that an action is a professional duty are different from those for saying that it is a moral duty. This distinction can be seen to be a genuine one if we consider the fact that sometimes it is possible at the same time to admit that a given action is both a professional duty, and one which it is morally wrong to perform. We can, for instance, say that policemen in some countries have the professional duty of enforcing apartheid, and that they have a moral duty not to discriminate between people of different races and colours.

The category of motives is now seen to be fourfold. There are motives of inclination, and motives of self-interest, and there are motives of moral dutifulness and motives of professional dutifulness. Thus, roughly speaking, I may perform an action because I want to do it, or in order to satisfy an immediate desire, or I may perform an action because I see that it is in my long-term interest to perform it. Though both these motives are in the general area of wanting, they differ in important respects. And then, I may perform an action because, as a member of a particular profession I see that my membership of that profession imposes the performance of that action upon me as a duty. Finally, I may perform the action because I believe that I morally ought to do so. There may of course be overlaps among the categories, but that should not prevent us from seeing that motives may fall within any one category without falling within any other. For instance, one's self-interest may overlap with the performance of one's professional duties, and in a given case it may be hard to discover whether

the agent was moved by self-interest or by (merely) a sense of professional duty. And equally, one may conceive oneself to have a moral duty to perform one's professional duty. But there need not be overlaps in all cases, and it is, I think, important to distinguish the various categories.

6. Types of motive and types of duty.

Undoubtedly it can be aruged that people do in general have a moral obligation to do what is required of them in their professional capacities. For instance, we may say that a contractual obligation is involved. In accepting a particular job, and a salary for doing that job, someone incurs the responsibility of carrying out that job in the way which is laid down by the employers. If he accepts the salary, and fails to perform the job adequately, he does not fulfil his part of the contract. Sometimes, the employer may regard the methods of his employees as unsatisfactory in some way. To take the example of the policeman again, he may, like many members of the driving public, think that it would be better for the police to concentrate on attacking serious crime, instead of spending so much time on booking motorists. Now, if the policeman thinks this, there are various things he might do. He might, for example, state his views as persuasively as possible to his superiors. He might try to work his way to the top of the organisation, so that he will be in a position to accomplish changes. He might decide that the job is not what he thought it was, and therefore resign and do something else, or might even, having resigned, set himself up as a private detective so that he can do part of the job which he thinks the police ought to be doing. But he cannot legitimately stay in his job and not bother to do the minor tasks, connected with motoring offences, that he is employed and paid to perform, if for no other reason than that he would be obtaining money by false pretences, since if it were known that he was not doing what he was supposed

to do, he would not keep his job.

The course of action which the policeman adopts will depend on various things, including his personality, his desire for steady employment, and so on. But one important factor is the nature of his disapproval for the current use of resources by the police. If, for instance, what he feels is disappointment rather than disapproval, because he wanted to spend his time catching criminals, he will probably resign. But if he disapproves morally of police policy (and is willing to stick his neck out), he is more likely to follow one of the alternative courses of action. Which of these alternatives he adopts will depend, at least partly, on the strength of his disapproval. If it is comparatively mild, he may confine himself to stating his views. If he feels strongly that police policies are wrong, he may rather try to work himself up into a position of power, from which he can do something effective. Again, something depends on precisely what it is that he disapproves of. What I have in mind here is that he may feel strongly that there should be an attack on serious crime, but may not think that such an attack has to be organised specifically by the police. In such a case, he may adopt the alternative of setting up an independent attack on crime. But if his view is, not only that serious crime ought to be wiped out, but that it is the task of the police to wipe it out, he is unlikely to feel that he is carrying out his duty by offering himself as an alternative to the police. He will see his duty as lying in the reform of police procedures, which is to be achieved from inside the organisation. At any rate, if what he feels is disapproval and not mere disappointment, if, that is to say, he believes that it is morally wrong that police efforts should be directed primarily against minor offenders, he is unlikely to remain in the organisation but fail to carry out his professional duties concerning minor offenders. By doing that, he would not only fail to effect any ~~return~~ reform, but would also be acting dishonestly in failing to fulfil his contract. For

while he thinks that it is wrong that the police should concentrate on catching motorists rather than, say, stamping out protection rackets, he sees this as essentially a comparative thing. He thinks that the protection-racket offences are worse than the motoring offences, and that time and money spent on motoring offences are wasted, since they would be better spent on the protection-racket offences. The important point is that he does not think that it is in itself wrong to charge people with motoring offences, merely that it is wrong to do so when doing this is incompatible with doing something which he regards as more important.

One can, however, think of examples of people who feel absolute moral disapproval of the actions which must be carried out in the course of their profession. In countries where there is some form of racial suppression, a policeman may believe, not just that it is wrong to devote his time to preventing negroes, or Jews etc. from entering theatres and so forth, when he would be better employed in opposing serious crime, but rather that he ought not to limit the freedom of any racial group. In such cases, while one may feel that he ought to take positive steps towards reform, and might blame him for trying to do so, we need not therefore condemn him for failing in his duty if he turned a blind eye to offences which in his view ought not to have been declared legal offences. Thus, even though his professional duty is to uphold racial discrimination, we need not say that he has a moral duty to do so, and might rather say that it would be morally wrong for him to perform his professional duty. Nor does it follow that he ought to resign. If he remains in the police force, he may be in a position to effect reforms, but even if he is not, we might think it better that there should be some small-scale opportunities for flouting the law.

It is possible to see, even from such a brief consideration of these examples (and of course many different examples could be cited), how com-

plex the relationship is between professional duty and moral duty. It might be the case that one does not have a moral duty to carry out the duties of one's profession, and it might be that one has a moral duty not to carry out the duties of one's profession. Thus, professional duty might be compatible or incompatible with moral duties of various sorts, and although, as I said, it can be argued that in general one has a moral duty to carry out the duties required of one in one's professional capacity, it is clearly impossible to hold that professional and moral duties are always identical, or even compatible.

7. The motives of the professional man.

Now, someone in a particular profession may see the relationship between his professional and his moral duty in one of various ways. First, he may think that one morally ought always to carry out one's professional duties. Secondly, he may hold a modified version of this view, that one has a moral duty to carry out one's professional duties unless there is something morally objectionable in the performance of the duty. Thirdly (in connection with the second), he may think that, although the priorities of the professional code need changing, he ought to do what is expected of him, but at the same time work for reform. Finally, he may think that the duty is so morally objectionable that he ought not to perform it.

Taking these alternative viewpoints, we can now consider in what senses a man doing his professional duty might be said to be morally conscientious. The first view that might be attributed to him is that one is always morally obliged to carry out the duties of one's profession. If he thinks this, and he regularly does carry out what he conceives to be his moral duty, whether or not he desires to do the requisite actions, are we to say that he is (morally) conscientious?

I think we must say that he is not conscientious, and that the belief that he might be arises, not only from the misapprehensions I have already

discussed, concerning dullness, insensitivity, the unpleasantness of duty, and so on, but also from an undue stress on the manifestation of conscientiousness in action. Conscientious men are often thought of as men of principle. I have no objection to this identification, but it is important to recognize that a man of principle is not just a man who always acts in accordance with his principles. A great deal depends both on the principles which are held, and on the method by which those principles have been reached. Unthinking acceptance of principles he has been taught, or has absorbed, do not qualify a man as a man of principle. More will be said about this later, but for the time being, I think that it is pretty obviously true that someone who firmly believes in, and acts on, principles, is not necessarily a man of principle. One (true) example which illustrates this quite neatly is that of the child who was taught that it is a sin to whistle. This may seem as reasonable as most adult pronouncements to a child of five. But suppose that the child had continued to believe that it was a sin to whistle, had always avoided whistling because she believed that it was sinful, and had exhorted others to refrain from the sinful practice of whistling. One would be inclined to say, in such a case, not only that adherence to such a principle didn't count as evidence of being principled, but that it counted as evidence of a lack of moral sense. Someone who held to such a principle would appear not to know what morality was, and in so far as some idea of the nature of morality is a necessary condition of moral agency, and hence of conscientiousness, we must say, not that such a person has given inadequate confirmation of his conscientiousness, but that he has given adequate confirmation of his inability to be conscientious.

Mere adherence to principles, then, is not a sufficient condition of conscientiousness. We can now ask, then, whether the principle that one morally ought always to carry out one's professional duties, is such that

one can say that adherence to it is evidence of, or a manifestation of, conscientiousness. The principle is not as absurd as the principle that whistling is sinful. Nevertheless, since it is not morally acceptable, anyone's adherence to it would justify us in refusing to call him conscientious.

As I said, two factors are involved when we try to decide whether or not adherence to a particular principle affords evidence of conscientiousness. One is the nature of the principle (not necessarily its subject-matter, but most often that), and the other is the method by which it has been reached. Thus, adherence to a principle which is clearly immoral would not, I think, entitle us to call a man conscientious, but would be more likely to lead us to deny that he is, though there might just be exceptions to this.[5] Adherence to a principle which we might call 'morally absurd', like the one about whistling, is evidence of a lack of moral discrimination. Thus the nature of a principle might be relevant to our assessment of the conscientiousness of the person who holds it. When I speak of the <u>method</u> by which the principle has been reached, what I have in mind is that a conscientious man, or in its special sense a 'man of principle', is one who holds, and acts on, principles which he has thought about, and has chosen, or at any rate re-affirmed. These two things are not unconnected. The nature of a principle may tell us something about the method by which it has been reached, though this works with reference only to absurd or unacceptable principles, since one may quite uncritically accept a perfectly sound principle which one has been taught.

Now, the principle we are considering, i.e. the principle which might be held by a professional man, is that one morally ought always to carry out one's professional duties. But someone who holds this principle is not

[5]This will be discussed with reference to Nowell-Smith's Robespierre example.

conscientious. As I pointed out, if we are to accept adherence to a principle as evidence of conscientiousness, we must judge, not merely by behaviour, but by the principle itself. But if we think about the principle 'One always has a moral obligation to carry out the duties of one's profession', we can see that the principle is such that it cannot have been adopted in an acceptably critical spirit. Ex-hypothesi, the principle is held to be universal, i.e. to lack exceptions. Yet it so obviously does have exceptions that we can say with confidence that anyone who does not recognize those exceptions cannot have thought about the principle before accepting it. The principle states that anybody in any profession, job or role ought, without exception, to perform the duties required by the profession, job or role. Thus, we must consider, not only actual professions, jobs or roles, but hypothetical ones too. If someone were employed by a megalomaniac to avenge by torture and death all insults, real or imagined, offered to the megalomaniac, it would, according to anyone holding the principle in question, be morally wrong for him to refuse to torture and kill someone who 'insulted' the megalomaniac by being better looking than the megalomaniac. Since no-one worthy of the name of 'moral agent' could accept this, it follows that a principle which entails it cannot be held by someone worthy of the name of 'moral agent'. However, it might be objected that such an argument is unfair. The fact that someone has failed to realize that his principle would commit him to saying something morally unacceptable in circumstances whose possibility would be envisaged only by someone with a wildly disordered imagination, or by a philosopher, does not entitle us to say that he is morally uncritical, let alone unworthy of the name of 'moral agent'.

This objection may be accepted, but the argument stands. For even if we rule out hypothetical cases (and I don't really see why we should, since anyone who accepts absolute, universal principles lays himself open to

attacks of this kind), there are still enough real cases left to support the position. To take the most obvious example from real life, we may consider the professional duties of some of the Nazis. Some of the Nazis were required, not only to kill the Jews, but to treat them with the utmost brutality. (It is not, after all, so different from the hypothetical case of the megalomaniac.) Thus anyone who says that one morally ought always to carry out the duties of one's profession, is committed to saying that it would have been morally wrong for a Nazi to refuse to treat the Jews in this manner.

Suppose, though, that the professional man protests that his principle does not hold in cases where it is possible to say that nobody should have entered the profession or accepted the role in the first place. If he says this, then it cannot be the case that he holds the principle to be absolute and universal. For he is making an exception to it by modifying the term 'profession' to 'acceptable profession'. His principle therefore becomes 'one morally ought always to carry out one's professional duties, when one's profession is morally acceptable'. He may of course take this way out, but since this modification is the only means available to him of justifying his acceptance of a principle which no thinking moral agent could accept, we can say that, so long as the principle remains unmodified, acceptance of the principle demonstrates, not the conscientiousness but the a-morality (or even an extremely complex form of immorality) of the person who accepts it. If, then, we accept the first alternative among the possible formulations of the principle on which the professional man acts, we can say that, far from being conscientious, he has, in failing to think out the implications of his principle, committed himself to a view which could be held only by a moral freak.

Another possible position for the professional man is that one has a moral duty to carry out one's professional duty unless there is something

morally objectionable in the performance of the duty. Or, connected with this, he may hold that, although the priorities of the professional code need changing, he ought to do what is expected of him, but at the same time work for reform. I do not think that either of these positions can be accepted or rejected as they stand. In order to judge of the morality of the stance of a given professional, we should have to know just what was entailed by the performance of his professional duties. If his professional duties are morally unobjectionable, we can agree that he ought, morally, to carry them out, since he has contracted to do so. If he can work for reform without performing illegitimate actions, again he should, morally, do so. Details are needed, however, before we can judge either what the professional man's motives are, and whether they are morally good motives or not.

8. Nowell-Smith and conscientiousness.

Now that I have discussed these more general points about attacks put forward against the view that conscientiousness possesses a unique moral worth, I shall turn to a consideration of a specific attack made by Nowell-Smith in his Ethics.[6] The preceding considerations will enable us to see that his forceful attack is misdirected, and in particular that his counter-examples do not work.

In Chapter 17, entitled 'Conscientiousness'[7], Nowell-Smith argues against the Kantian view that distinctively moral worth is confined to the good will. He uses two main arguments. The second is directed against Ross, and I shall discuss that later.[8] The first consists in the use of counter-examples, and it is this with which I shall be concerned for the rest of this chapter. My defence against his attack will be that his

[6] Ethics. P. Nowell-Smith. Pelican.
[7] p.245ff.
[8] Part II Ch.2 below.

counter-examples do not provide him with a conclusive refutation of the Kantian position on the good will, since they are not genuine counter-examples. That is, I shall argue that, since his examples are not examples of actions of a man of good will (in the Kantian sense) or of a conscientious man (in mine) and since they could work as counter-examples only if they were genuine examples of good will or conscientiousness, his case is not established.

Nowell-Smith writes,[9] "the tacit equation between conscientiousness and moral virtue comes out well in Paton's treatment [i.e. in his edition of the Grundlegung] of the question whether moral virtue is the "highest" good. He contrasts conscientiousness with non-moral goods, such as artistic activity and knowledge; but he does not even raise the question whether conscientiousness is 'higher than' other moral virtues. Nevertheless it seems that this is an open question.

"And it is also an open question whether conscientiousness itself is good without qualification. Many of the worst crimes in history have been committed by men who had a strong sense of duty just because their sense of duty was so strong. I should myself have no hesitation in saying that Robespierre would have been a better man (quite apart from the question of the harm he did) if he had given his conscience a thorough rest and indulged his taste for roses and sentimental verse. There is a story of an Oxford don who disliked Common Room life and whose presence caused himself and others acute distress. Yet he attended Common Room assiduously because he thought it his duty to do so. He would have done better to stay at home.

"In answer to this type of criticism Paton says: "It is certainly true that good men may do a great deal of harm; and this harm may spring, not from officiousness and vanity (which belong to moral badness) but from

[9] Ethics p.247-8.

mere silliness and stupidity." But may not the harm also spring from their very conscientiousness? We might adopt the moral principle that conscientiousness is so valuable that a man ought to be conscientious no matter what harm he does; but it is quite another thing to say that their conscientiousness is never the ~~same~~ source of the harm that good men do.

"Nor, I think, is the principle of the supreme value of conscientiousness one that we have any reason for accepting."

Now one point that must be made here is that, as I have argued above, it is not the case that conscientiousness is the supreme virtue, but rather that conscientiousness uniquely possesses moral worth. This, too, is Kant's point. The good will alone possesses moral worth. Consequently, we should be on our guard against an attack which misrepresents the case for conscientiousness by supposing that its value is of the same sort as that of various virtues.

However, on the assumption that Nowell-Smith is attacking the view that conscientiousness possesses unique value, we may consider his use of counter-examples in his attempt to show that there are occasions when conscientiousness is less valuable than some other motive, and even occasions when it is positively bad.

9. The Oxford Don.

First, we can take his example of the Oxford don. As we shall see, this is not a genuine counter example, since it is possible to argue that the don is not morally conscientious. If he were, however, we should have to deny that he would have done better (i.e. morally better) to stay at home.[10]

This example may be discussed, and dismissed, very briefly. The don, we are told, considers it to be his duty to attend Common Room, though his

[10] See Part II Ch.2 below.

presence causes distress both to himself and to others. On the basis of this, Nowell-Smith concludes that the don is conscientious, and that he would be morally better if he were not.

But we have seen that it is a mistake to assume that every motive of dutifulness is to count as a manifestation of conscientiousness, since it is possible to hold that one's professional duty is in some sense morally objectionable. Now, since the don's performance of his professional duty causes distress not only to him but to other people, we would be justified in assuming that he had not bothered to consider whether or not he was morally entitled to perform his professional duty. If he has not even considered this, then of course his actions cannot count as morally conscientious. Alternatively, if he has considered the moral status of his actions, but has concluded that they are morally legitimate, we might suggest that his deliberations were inadequate, failing as they do to take into account the distress caused by them. In either of these cases, then, the don is not, or need not be, morally conscientious. But if he has fully considered his actions, and has decided that he is morally obliged to do his professional duties despite the distress caused, then however wrong we think he is, we must admit that he is conscientious. In that case, however, we cannot condemn him for acting on the basis of a conscientious decision. For as we shall see,[11] an analysis of objective and subjective duties will lead us to conclude that a man really ought to do what he conscientiously believes he ought to do. And if this is so, then it is a mistake to say that the don would (or could) be morally better if he failed to act as he conscientiously believes he ought to act.

Nowell-Smith's appeal to the Oxford don as a counter-example must therefore be dismissed. Most probably, the don is not conscientious, but if he

[11] Part II, Ch.2 below.

is, then we cannot deny unique value to his motives. Nowell-Smith's mistake here is to fail to distinguish between different types of motive, each of which can be analysed in terms of some sense of ought, but not necessarily the moral sense. The Oxford don can therefore be dismissed as a red herring.

There remains, however, the other 'counter-example' offered by Nowell-Smith, viz. that of Robespierre. It is, I think, this example which Nowell-Smith would hold to constitute a more powerful weapon against conscientiousness. Though it does raise problems, however, the case is easier to answer specifically, since it is easier to place the motivation, and the character, of Robespierre, than it was to place those of the shadowy don.

10. Robespierre.

Nowell-Smith expresses his case as follows. "...it is also an open question whether conscientiousness is good without qualification. Many of the worst crimes in history have been committed by men who had a strong sense of duty just because their sense of duty was so strong. I should myself have no hesitation in saying that Robespierre would have been a better man (quite apart from the question of the harm he did) if he had given his conscience a thorough rest and indulged his taste for roses and sentimental verse."[12]

I do not propose to present a complete answer to this case at the moment. As I have indicated, special problems are raised for my thesis by the fanatic, and if Robespierre was not a fanatic, he came very close to it. Whether or not Robespierre 'would have been a better man ... if he had given his conscience a thorough rest' must be resolved by reference to a discussion of the relation between goodness and rightness.[13] The general

[12] Ethics p.247.

[13] See Part II Ch.2 below.

position that I am defending in this thesis is that conscientiousness and moral goodness are to be identified. If this position is correct, then it shows that if Robespierre is conscientious, he is to be described as morally good, and that he could not have been morally better if he had failed to be conscientious. In the next chapter, I shall argue for this position. In the present chapter, however, I am particularly concerned to dispel misunderstandings about the nature of conscientiousness, and one such misunderstanding is involved in Nowell-Smith's ready assumption that Robespierre was conscientious.

In offering the apparent counter-example of the Oxford don, Nowell-Smith depended, as we have seen, on a distorted view of the popular and conventional pictures of conscientiousness. In discussing Robespierre, he is, I think, depending on a distorted view of the Kantian picture of dutifulness. Now, when I say that there is a misunderstanding of the nature of conscientiousness involved in Nowell-Smith's ready assumption that Robespierre was conscientious, I do not mean to suggest that Robespierre was necessarily not conscientious. What I mean is that the undefended assumption that he was, and the failure to define what is to be understood by the crucial term 'sense of duty', suggests that Nowell-Smith has not considered the possibility that Robespierre was not conscientious. Certainly, an argument in support of the belief that Robespierre was conscientious could be put forward. But the absence of such an argument does suggest that Nowell-Smith does not conceive such an argument to be necessary, and consequently that he takes Robespierre's conscientiousness to be indisputable. From these indications, we can infer that Nowell-Smith's picture of the conscientious man has certain characteristics.

One of these characteristics is that he is, in some sense, a 'man of principle'. Another (connected with the first) is that he will sacrifice anything (himself included) for the cause. A third (again connected) is

that very often he has a cause, probably a large one. After all, the 'conscientious' man has committed some of the 'worst crimes in history'. Another characteristic of this kind of 'conscientious' man is that he is, in a special sense, 'incorruptible'. Robespierre himself was known as 'the Incorruptible'. It seems to me that it is precisely because Robespierre possessed all these characteristics that Nowell-Smith takes him to be the apotheosis of the conscientious or dutiful man. I would suggest myself that, if one were to give a list of those characteristics to someone familiar with the English language, and ask him how he would describe a man possessing all of them, his reply would be, not 'a conscientious man', but 'a fanatic'.

I have already admitted that it is possible that some conscientious men are fanatics, and that a defence of conscientiousness must be able to reconcile this possibility with the claim that conscientiousness is always morally good. But it is not only not self-evident but clearly false, that fanatics are always conscientious. Thus, when I say that Nowell-Smith's introduction of Robespierre into his discussion involves a misunderstanding of the nature of conscientiousness, what I have in mind is that Nowell-Smith appears to believe that a man possessing the dintinguishing characteristics of a fanatic is ipso facto, conscientious (or dutiful, in the Kantian sense.)

This is, as I said, a misunderstanding. In the first place, I don't think that any normal usage of the terms 'fanatic' and 'conscientious' commits one to the view that fanatics are always conscientious. This will be seen when we consider in turn the characteristics in virtue of which Nowell-Smith identifies Robespierre as conscientious. In the second place, Kant's own usage of the terms 'dutiful' and 'good will' makes it clear that fanaticism as such is not moral goodness, though Kant must, if he is to justify his opening statement of the Groundwork, that nothing except the good will

can be conceived as unconditionally good, be able to cope with the possibility that some fanatics might be men of 'good will'.

Since I shall be referring to Kant several times in the subsequent discussion, I shall at this point briefly outline what he has to say about the good will and duty in the Grundlegung.[14] The good will is the will of an imperfectly rational being who wills actions on objectively valid maxims, that is, maxims on which a totally rational being would necessarily act. Thus, the good will is not only the will which wills actions for the sake of the moral law, but also in accordance with the moral law. If the actions were not compatible with the moral law, the maxim, or principle on which the action is performed, could not be objectively valid. It follows from this that, whenever a human agent acts in such a way that his will can be described as good, it is not only the case that he acts for the sake of the law (or, as Nowell-Smith puts it, for the sake of duty, or out of a sense of duty), but also that his action is right. Now, if we grant that there is a moral law, by reference to which the rightness of actions may be determined, and that the human agent in virtue of his rationality can discover what is enjoined permitted and forbidden by that law, and finally that the will of that agent is good when he wills action for the sake of, and in accordance with, the law, then we cannot say that terrible crimes can be committed out of a sense of duty, i.e. for the sake of the law. Clearly, we may not wish to accept all these presuppositions, at any rate without long consideration, or possibly even after such consideration. The important point here is that these pre-suppositions are all involved in Kant's claim that the good will alone is unconditionally good. Kant,[15] therefore, could not have admitted that

[14] esp. the first section. See, for instance, The Moral Law H.J. Paton pp.59-70

[15] At any rate, the Kant of the Grundlegung. He modifies his position in the Mataphysic of Morals.

Robespierre's will was good if Robespierre's actions were crimes. For from the fact that the actions were crimes it follows that they were not in accordance with the law, and cannot have been performed on objectively valid maxims. Since, therefore, Kant's terms are very clearly defined, and since Robespierre's will cannot (at least if his actions were crimes) be described as good or dutiful, it is impossible for Nowell-Smith to assert that in Robespierre we find an example of a dutiful man who would have been morally better if he were not dutiful, and to take this as evidence that the good will is not unconditionally good. If the example is to work as a counter-example to Kant's claim on behalf of the good will, it must be the case both that Robespierre was dutiful in the Kantian sense, and that his actions were crimes. But in Kantian terms, if Robespierre was dutiful, he was not criminal, and if he was criminal, he was not dutiful. We must, therefore, reject Nowell-Smith's assumption that this is a counter-example to Kant's claim in the Grundlegung that the good will is unconditionally good.[16]

It is not open to Nowell-Smith to reply to this criticism that he is attacking Kant's general position and that it is not enough to show that Kant's terms are defined in such a way that the attack misses its target. He is, indeed, entitled to attack Kant's general position, but to do that he must attack the presuppositions involved in Kant's argument. He cannot simply assume that they are false, and on this assumption show that Kant's theory leads to unacceptable conclusions.

We may, therefore, reject Nowell-Smith's discussion of Robespierre in so far as that discussion is intended to be an attack on a position which Kant was supposed to, but did not, hold. However, it is necessary

[16]That Nowell-Smith's attack is directed against Kant's position in the Grundlegung is made clear on p.246-7 of Ethics. On p.247 he quotes from the Grundlegung.

to consider whether it holds up as an attack on a more general position concerning conscientiousness. For it is of course possible to hold that conscientiousness is identical with moral goodness, and to describe oneself as being in this sense a Kantian, without maintaining that conscientious action is always right (or that dutiful action is, by definition, in accordance with the moral law).

Even as far as this more general position is concerned, I think that Nowell-Smith's appeal to Robespierre as a conscientious man who could have been better involves a misunderstanding of the nature of conscientiousness. As I pointed out, there are several characteristics in terms of which Nowell-Smith seems to have placed Robespierre as a conscientious man. Typically, these are the characteristics of the fanatic rather than the conscientious man, and though we may admit that fanatics can be conscientious, it is not true that they always are. If Nowell-Smith's attack is to have any force, therefore, it is necessary for him to show that the fanatical characteristics found in Robespierre are of the right type to justify him in calling Robespierre conscientious. Since he does not show this, I shall in the next chapter consider whether or not Robespierre is describable as conscientious. For now, I shall show merely that the identification of fanaticism and (at least one kind of) conscientiousness, is mistaken. In the course of this demonstration, some of the mere positive characteristics of conscientiousness will emerge, and will provide part of the basis upon which the rest of my argument will rest in the subsequent chapters.

The characteristics which apparently lead Nowell-Smith to describe Robespierre as conscientious are those I mentioned earlier. In the first place, Robespierre is a 'man of principle'. Next, he will sacrifice anything for the cause (for such men have causes). Finally, he is 'incorruptible'. Thus, Robespierre believed passionately that what he was doing was

right, and nothing, whether alternative moral considerations, fear for his own safety, or hope of gain of any kind, could deflect him from his unswerving pursuit of 'duty'.

Now, some of these are, to repeat my earlier points, possible characteristics of the conscientious man. More typically, they are characteristics of the fanatic. They are not sufficient conditions of conscientiousness, though they may, in circumstances which must be carefully defined, be compatible with it.

First, we may take the fact that Robespierre was a 'man of principle'. As I admitted earlier, in my discussion of the Oxford don, there is a sense in which the terms 'conscientious man' and 'man of principle' are used interchangeably. But not all 'men of principle' are conscientious, since a great deal depends on how the principles were reached, and on the nature of the principles. We saw, for instance, that rigid adherence to the principle that it is sinful to lie was evidence, not of conscientiousness, but of lack of ability to tell the difference between right and wrong. Furthermore, even if the principle to which the agent adheres is in itself acceptable, it would not be usual to describe him as conscientious, if he had merely taken it, unreflectively, on trust. Other objections which were made to 'men of principle' included the fact that often such men are too rigid and unyielding in their application of their principles. If, then, it is reasonable to claim that a conscientious man has a certain degree of moral sensitivity and of flexibility, we might reasonably deny that the rigid absolutist is conscientious. And I think that this demand for sensitivity and flexibility is a reasonable one. To be conscientious is, among other things, to meet the demands of the particular situation. It will be remembered that my rough definition of conscientious action was 'action which is performed because the agent recognizes it as right', and such action is performed by someone whose guiding principle is that he shall do

what is right. He sees the life of duty as the life which is demanded of him. Now, it does not seem accurate to say that someone who has a fixed set of rules which he brings to bear on all moral problems which face him is, in the sense outlined, truly conscientious. There is a strong probability that this way of trying to lead a moral life will lead to mistakes, and in a case where a principle seems to apply but does not (cf. the earlier example of 'lying is wrong' or of 'lying is wrong except when the truth will offend someone, in which case it is obligatory.' Either of these ready-made rules may not give the agent a correct answer to his moral problem in some cases), it would be incorrect to say that the agent 'recognizes something as right'. He sees what his principle demands, but if his principle is inapplicable, he does not really recognize what is right, nor do it because he recognizes it as such.[17]

This discussion might suggest that I am reverting to the Kantian position that conscientious or dutiful action is always objectively right. This is not intended as an implication of my view. What I do maintain is that if someone is to be described as truly conscientious, i.e. to be described as someone who is guided by the principle of doing right, of doing what is demanded of him as a moral agent, then we might expect him to adopt the best means of meeting the moral demand. But rigid principles and ready-made rules do not provide the best means. A more effective approach to the moral life is one which does involve flexibility, and a willingness in particular cases to see what is demanded of one. In a very general way, principles can be useful. One must have some idea of what is good and what is bad. Fixed sets of universal principles are, however, a hindrance rather than a help.

[17]This does not imply that an agent can never conscientiously perform a wrong action - just that he should try to the best of his ability to correctly recognize something as right.

If we rule out such principles, therefore, we are left with two senses in which the conscientious man may be described as a man of principle. First, he does guide his life by a general principle, or maxim, of duty. Secondly, he may be said to be a man of principle in that, once he has decided where his moral duty lies, he will not normally be deflected by non-moral considerations from acting as duty requires.

If, then, Robespierre is qua man of principle, to be described as conscientious, he must be a man of principle in the senses I have outlined, and not in the sense that he goes all out to act in accordance with rigid, ready-formed principles. The mere fact that he can be described as a man of principle does not, therefore, entitle us to call him conscientious.

This leads me to the second characteristic of the fanatic, viz. that if he has a cause, he will sacrifice anything for it. Now again, there is a sense in which the conscientious man has a cause for which he will sacrifice anything. That is, he has the cause of duty. But this cause is significantly different from other causes. For by definition, there are some sacrifices that the conscientious man cannot make, viz. moral sacrifices. He cannot, as the fanatic does, do wrong that good might come. Since he does what he recognizes as right, he does not, in pursuit of some end, ignore the moral status of the means to the end. He may sacrifice gain, popularity, or even his life, but he cannot sacrifice the responsibility he has as a moral agent of deciding whether particular actions are right. But sometimes this is necessary for the fanatic, since often he can achieve his end only by performing actions which are morally wrong. Espousing a cause as the fanatic does involves abdicating the responsibility of making moral judgments about the rightness or wrongness of actions which must be performed if the end is to be achieved. A judgment is made in advance, of course, to the effect that this end is so important

that any means to the achievement of it is not only right but obligatory. But someone who has really resolved always to do what is right cannot, consistently with his resolve, make such a blanket judgment to cover all his future actions and decisions. Thus, there are some lengths to which a conscientious man cannot go, since they involve his denying the principle according to which he leads his life.

Consequently, before we accept that Robespierre is conscientious, we must know whether he is willing to make <u>any</u> sacrifice for the good of his cause, including the sacrifice of abdicating responsibility for deciding on the morality of the means to his ends, or whether he limits his sacrifices, as does the conscientious man, to the morally possible ones.

Finally, Robespierre possesses the characteristic of incorruptibility. This can easily be seen to be a characteristic of the fanatic, and within limits, of the conscientious man. We do not expect someone who is conscientious to be deflected from doing his duty by the prospect of gain. Indeed, I think we must admit that incorruptibility is, in itself, always good. Even if the consequences of somebody's being corrupted would be immensely good, I do not see that we could say that he, the agent, was morally better for being corrupted. If a Nazi, for instance, could be bribed into letting Jews escape, clearly the consequences would be good, but even though one may abhor the code of the Nazi, I do not think that his giving in to temptation, while retaining his beliefs, could in any sense be thought to improve him morally. Incorruptibility, then, seems to be the one characteristic of which the conscientious man shares with the fanatic. But while it may be necessary that the conscientious man be incorruptible, it is not sufficient.

The case for saying that Robespierre is conscientious is not, then, by any means proved. The characteristics which he possesses <u>may</u> qualify him as conscientious, but they may rather qualify him as a fanatic. Whether

he is conscientious remains to be considered in the following chapter.

Several important points, both negative and positive, concerning the nature of conscientiousness have emerged in the course of this long discussion of the two counter-examples offered by Nowell-Smith. Briefly, they may be summarized as follows. The conscientious man is not a man who is deficient in any quality. Conscientiousness is something positive which is to be best understood in terms of the notion of setting oneself to do one's duty. But there are more ways than one of setting oneself to do one's duty, and it seemed reasonable to suppose that the truly conscientious man adopts the most effective means to the accomplishment of a complete life. Thus he will not be, as is commonly supposed, insensitive, but will try to make himself sensitive to the demands of morality. Nor will he be rigid. He will recognize that flexibility is necessary in facing moral problems, and will therefore try to avoid solving all problems by the application of universal rules. He will not, in important respects, be like the fanatic who may be thought to resemble him, for though he is a man of principle, he is not-rule-bound. Though he has a cause, he will not sacrifice morality for that cause.

The general picture of the conscientious man that seems to be emerging is not, then, the rather repulsive one which many people have. In the first part, it was seen that conscientiousness is not incompatible with sensitivity and flexibility, but indeed requires them. The details of this picture will gradually be drawn in the course of the rest of this thesis.

The next problem which requires a thorough discussion is that of rightness, and the possible relation between objective and subjective duty. It is necessary to consider these concepts primarily because the claim that the conscientious man does what he believes to be right may lead to difficulty in cases where his belief is mistaken, and where it might, consequently, be argued that although he is conscientious he is not morally good. The best

answer to this lies in a distinction between objective and subjective duty, and the next chapter will be devoted to a discussion of these, and related, concepts.

Chapter 2

Subjective and Objective Rightness.

1. Introductory

So far, I have stressed that conscientiousness, whose nature is gradually becoming clear, is morally good, and that nothing else is morally good. I have considered various objections to this view, and have endeavoured to show that they are misplaced. For instance, the criticism that conscientiousness cannot be the 'supreme virtue' (a claim that I do not, in any case, make), arises from the mistaken assumption that conscientiousness is inferior to some virtue such as love, whereas we have seen that their values are not to be measured on the same scale. Another criticism, that conscientiousness is not only not of supreme value, but is sometimes in itself bad (apart from its consequences), was seen in the previous chapter to be based partly on unacceptable views of the nature of conscientiousness. Thus, we can say that Nowell-Smith's examples of the Oxford don and of Robespierre do not demonstrate the occurrence of conscientious acts which are bad, since it is by no means certain that the acts were genuinely conscientious. If, as I am suggesting, a conscientious man is not merely a man who acts in accordance with his principles, but one who performs actions which be believes <u>after due reflection</u> to be right or obligatory, then we can at least say that Nowell-Smith's case is unproved, since there is no evidence cited by him to show that either the don or Robespierre reflected sufficiently on the rightness of their actions. What evidence there is is to be found in the actions themselves, and the actions are such that their performance suggests a lack of moral reflection on the part of their agents.

However, while we may say that the opposition's case is unproved, it has not yet been shown that it is false. If it <u>might</u> be the case that

Robespierre acted conscientiously, and might also be the case that Robespierre would have been a better man if he had acted otherwise, then it might also be the case that conscientiousness is not always morally good. The problem that has to be solved may be expressed like this. It seems as though people have, on various well-known occasions, performed grossly immoral actions in perfectly good faith. Robespierre might be regarded as one such person, and we may also suggest as candidates the Spanish Inquisitors and the Nazis. If it is correct to say that conscientiousness and moral goodness are identical, then it looks as though we must say that Robespierre, the Spanish Inquisitors and the Nazis were morally good, and that if they had failed to act in accordance with their moral beliefs, they would have been morally worse men. Since this seems an unacceptable conclusion, it looks as though we will have to abandon the premise from which it follows, and reject the previous identification of conscientiousness and moral goodness.

I propose to attempt a defence of this premise, however, by means of an analysis of a distinction between objective and subjective rightness, and an interpretation of moral goodness in terms of subjective rightness. First, I shall argue that actions are describable as objectively right or wrong. Secondly I shall argue that they are describable as subjectively right or wrong, depending on the aims and intentions of the agent. I shall then try to show that it is morally good to perform the subjectively right action, even when that action is objectively wrong. It will be seen, however, that although actions may be subjectively right and objectively wrong (and vice versa), subjective rightness is to be understood in such a way that there are not very many actions which are subjectively right and objectively wrong, or gross. Those which are, however, must be described as morally good.

It might seem that I am making my own position unnecessarily difficult

to hold by arguing that there is such a thing as objective rightness or wrongness. For if rightness were always subjective, there would be no such thing as the conscientious performance of wrong actions. I do not wish to take this line, however, for two main reasons. First, I think that to adopt it would be merely to push the problem back one stage, since there is so obviously a difference between actions like torturing unbelievers, and actions like helping the poor, that we would, assuming the non-objectivity of morality, have to distinguish between different kinds of subjective rightness, those which are and those which are not morally good. In the second place, I find the position that rightness and wrongness are always subjective untenable.

2. Objective rightness.

When I say that it is possible to describe actions as objectively right, wrong, or obligatory, I mean that it is possible to ascertain the truth of such statements as 'x is wrong', where x is an action, and to do so without reference to the aims, intentions, or beliefs of the agent. I do not mean to suggest that we can always be certain of the moral status of any and every action. If we could, the difficulty which arises from the possibility of a clash between objective and subjective rightness would not constitute such a hurdle for the defender of conscientiousness. Nor would the practice of morality be as complex as it is. It is, then, often hard, and perhaps sometimes impossible, for the agent to discover what we ought to do in a particular situation. But if it is correct to say that at least in principle it is possible to ascertain the truth of statements 'x is right, wrong, etc', then it is the case, first, that such statements have a truth-value, and secondly, that there are criteria by which we may judge the morality of actions.

At this stage, I do not want to discuss this point in great detail, since I shall treat it fully when I come to talk about moral judgments.[1]

[1] see Part II, Ch. 3 below.

In the present chapter, the objectivity of morality will be assumed, in that I shall suppose that we could not attach any value at all to conscientiousness or moral goodness unless we thought that it was at least reasonable for a human being to try to do what he ought to do, and that he is not suffering from an illusion when he claims to be aware of a moral demand.

Thus the general position underlying my discussion of subjective rightness is that, in any given situation, the agent's beliefs about what he ought to do are either true or false. If he believes that x is obligatory he might be correct or mistaken, and if he believes that x is permissible or wrong, he is correct or mistaken. To refer to one of Nowell-Smith's examples, we find a don who believes that it is his duty to attend Common Room. Whether it really is his duty, we do not know, since we are not in possession of all the facts. But we can at least say that his belief does not render attendance obligatory. If he is right in thinking he ought to attend, he is right because his belief is <u>true</u>, not because he has the belief.

3. <u>Subjective rightness, mistakes, and avoidability</u>.

Subjective rightness must therefore be distinguished from objective rightness. For while the objective rightness of an action does not depend at all on the beliefs of the agent, its subjective rightness does. Unless we make the distinction between objective and subjective rightness very clear, and unless we understand just what subjective rightness is, and what relation it bears to the beliefs of the agent, we run the risk of supposing that, since people can believe almost anything, then almost anything can be subjectively right. If we suppose this, we will rightly regard with suspicion the view that conscientious action, the doing of what is subjectively right, is always morally good. It is by understanding what subjective rightness is that we will reach an understanding of the

nature and value of conscientious action.

From an objective standpoint, actions may be seen to be obligatory, permissible, or wrong. Subjectively, also, they may be seen to be obligatory, permissible or wrong. There are therefore a number of combinations of subjective and objective rightness and wrongness. To take rightness as an example, an action may be: objectively wrong and subjectively right; objectively right and subjectively right; or objectively right and subjectively wrong. The possibility of the first combination is the most dangerous for conscientiousness, and I shall discuss this first. The conscientious agent is one who tries to discover the moral status of his proposed actions, and who acts in accordance with the conclusions he has reached. Having decided that an action is obligatory, he will perform it for the sufficient reason that that is what he has decided, and so on. Now I think that an important factor in establishing the value of conscientiousness is the phrase 'tries to discover'. An action is not to be described as subjectively right because the agent happens to believe that it is right, or because he has cursorily decided that it is. It can be said to be subjectively right only if he has tried to discover its moral status.

When we try to find things out, it is always possible that we will make mistakes[2]. We might be responsible for our mistakes, which sometimes arise from carelessness or idleness. Sometimes, on the other hand, we are not responsible for our mistakes, even though it might be possible to say that if we had tried even harder, we might have been right. Something here will depend on the situation in which we have to carry out our procedure of discovery. If time is short, we might be excused mistakes for which we would otherwise be held responsible, and indeed we might be blamed for

[2]The mistake may be one of fact, or of value. But the point I am making apply equally to mistakes of both kinds.

achieving accuracy at the expense of something else. In an examination, for instance, we would ~~avoid~~ award higher marks to the students who made more mistakes and also got more correct answers than we would to the one who got all his answers right, but answered only half the number of questions required. So although the first student could have made fewer mistakes, we judge him to have allowed the wiser course in writing quickly.

Similarly, people making moral judgments may make mistakes. Sometimes, they are not responsible for their mistakes (like the student who has never been taught how to solve a particular kind of problem) and sometimes they are responsible in that they could have reached the right answer. But although we can in this sense say that people are always responsible for the mistakes they could have avoided, it does not follow that they are always to be blamed for the mistakes for which they are responsible. Thus, though we may insist that trying to discover the moral status of an action is an indispensable part of conscientiousness, we must be careful to keep our demand for effort within sensible limits. It would be a mistake, for instance, to demand that they should try to the best of their ability, in so far as this suggests that the ability of the agent is limited only by the limitations of his intelligence, perceptiveness, and so on. For the agent must be influenced by the limits imposed not merely by his own nature or talent, but also by those imposed by the situations in which the judgment has to be made.

So far, then, we can say that if an action is to be described as subjectively right, then the agent must have tried to discover what he ought to do. We can concede that he may have made a mistake, in which case the subjectively and objectively right actions will not coincide. But where he had made a mistake, it remains open whether or not the action is subjectively right, since the mistake may be totally avoidable, unavoidable in the circumstances, or avoidable in the circumstances. Now it is clear

that in order to discover the subjective moral status of an action, when the action is objectively wrong, we must know what sort of mistake has been made. We must know whether the mistake was avoidable or unavoidable, and in what sense it was avoidable or unavoidable.

The total avoidability or unavoidability of a mistake is a matter of fact. That is to say, although it may be difficult to establish what the fact is, the question is one about facts rather than values. As we shall see, this makes total avoidability very rare (as I indicated earlier, I do not want to make too sharp a distinction here, but there is a common enough sense in which 'facts' are understood to be non-moral). If the mistake was totally unavoidable, we can establish this, if we can establish it at all, by reference to the impossibility of the agent's reaching the right answer. It might be impossible for him to reach the right answer because he is unintelligent, or imperceptive, or uninformed, or it might rather be impossible because there is no avoidable means of discovering the facts needed for judgment.

Circumstantial avoidability, on the other hand, is not simply a matter of fact, but of value judgment. To say that the agent could not, in these circumstances, have avoided making this mistake is, paradoxically, quite often to say that he was right to make the mistake. It would have been stupid, or unwise, or imprudent, or even blameworthy, to have done what was necessary definitely to ascertain the truth. To say that he could, in these circumstances, have avoided the mistake, is to say that he should have avoided it. It is to suggest that he was careless, or lazy, or insensitive, or, perhaps, biased.

Although the dividing line is not easy to draw; it is important that we should be aware of what kind (un)avoidability we are attributing to the mistake of the agent with whose judgment we disagree. Only if we know this can we know whether we should describe his action as subjectively

right or not.

In the first place, if his mistake was totally unavoidable, if he could not possibly have avoided making the mistake he did make, then we can describe his action as subjectively right, since he acted in accordance with a belief that he could not help holding. Secondly, if his mistake was totally avoidablel we can refuse to describe his action as subjectively right, since he did not try hard enough to discover what he ought to do. But while this is true on a general level, when we come down to particular cases, we will find it not so easy to judge the subjective moral status of the action. If we consider some of the reasons given for attributing total (un)avoidability to mistakes, we can see that often we are attributing circumstantial rather than total (un)avoidability. That is, we are not stating a fact, but making a value-judgment. For example, we say that the agent could not help making a mistake because he was stupid, or imperceptive, or uninformed. Stupidity, perhaps, is unavoidable. But if the unavoidability of a mistake rests on an avoidable factor such as lack of perception, or ignorance, are we really saying that the mistake was unavoidable? Surely we would want to say that the agent should not have let himself become so imperceptive or uninformed. If he had tried harder earlier on, he would have been in a better position now to make correct judgments. Thus, if a mistake is to be described as totally unavoidable, the unavoidability must arise from elements outside the agent's control, not only present but past. As a simple illustration of the fact that we often do judge mistakes in this way, we may consider somebody who attempts to excuse some conduct which was meant for the best but which caused offence, by saying 'Oh well, you know me, I'm always putting my foot in it'. The natural response to this is not to say forgivingly, 'I suppose you can't help it', but rather to say 'It's about time you learned not to'. The offence is not less blameworthy because it is one of many of a similar

type. Anyone might cause offence occasionally, but to do it frequently suggests a character-defect for which we hold the agent responsible.

Mistakes in moral judgement are rarely totally unavoidable, since the agent is often, in the long term, responsible for being the kind of person who makes that kind of mistake. But they are not often totally avoidable, either. It will be remembered that statements of total avoidability are statements of fact, not judgments of value. They suggest that the agent could have avoided the mistake, not that he should have. But the statement that he could have avoided it often includes some judgments to the effect that he should have. After all, if a mistake could have been avoided, it is difficult to see why it should have been made, unless we suppose that the agent did or omitted something for which we blame him. He must have been careless, or thoughtless, or biased, or self-interested. The statement of the fact of total avoidability can therefore be seen to be usually inseparable from a value-judgment as to the agent's method of attempting to ascertain the truth.

Almost always, then, when someone makes a mistake in judgment, there is at least something for which we hold him responsible. This may be more or less serious, involving a judgment of character, or the imputation of a moment's thoughtlessness. There are, however two kinds of situation in which we might absolve the agent from any responsibility for his mistake. The first is that in which the circumstances were such that he had no access to the necessary source of information, by means of which he could have discovered the truth. Thus if, for instance, a doctor decides that he ought to discharge a patient from hospital (this can be made into a moral question if we include some reference to, say, shortage of beds), and bases his decision on the foreseeable consequences of his action, he cannot be held responsible if one consequence of what he does is the suicide of his patient who has quite irrationally and secretly decided that

he has cancer. (The doctor can hardly allow for this kind of possibility, since any way of finding out whether patients have this kind of fear would presumably involve planting a seed of suspicion in the minds of patients who had never even thought of cancer.) The doctor therefore decides reasonably on the basis of the information available to him, and even though he comes to the wrong conclusion, and can consequently be said to have made a mistake, the mistake was totally unavoidable, and could not perhaps even be called 'his' mistake.

The second kind of situation in which we might regard a mistake as totally unavoidable is one in which the mistake arises inevitably, not from the unavailability of information, or from external factors at all, but from the character, ability, or beliefs of the agent where he is not responsible for his character. We hold people responsible for being careless, or insensitive, and therefore hold them responsible for mistakes in judgment arising from carelessness or insensitivity. But we do not hold them responsible for being mentally ill, or retarded. Consequently, if mistakes in judgment arise from a condition for which the agent is not responsible, we do not regard these mistakes as avoidable.

We may now use the conclusions which have been reached about mistakes in judgment in an attempt to clarify the demand that an agent should 'try to discover' what he ought to do, if his actions are to be described as subjectively right, even though they are objectively wrong.

If he is not responsible at all for his mistakes, we may say that his efforts to discover what he ought to do were, though unsuccessful, sufficient. The doctor's action in discharging the patient was subjectively right. What if the mistake is unavoidable because of, say, mental illness? Suppose a madman, after thinking things over, decides to kill the man he believes to be systematically poisoning the reservoir which supplies water to a large city, are we to say that his action is subjectively right?

Perhaps it would seem more accurate to say that he is not a moral agent at all. But if his decision is taken on grounds which seem to him to be moral, because he believes he ought to save the city's inhabitants, I see no reason to deny that he did what he really, after due reflection, believed he ought to do, and therefore that his action was subjectively right. If he is capable of any coherent thought, the wildness of the premises from which he validly argues should not lead us to say he has not made a judgment. If so, it follows that whenever anyone has tried to discover what he ought to do, and has made an unavoidable mistake in judgment, we may call his actions subjectively right.

If the agent is responsible for his mistakes, we must distinguish within the class of avoidable mistakes those for which the agent is to blame, and those for which he is not to blame. He is to blame for those mistakes which are made through carelessness, or insensitivity and so on. But in general he is not to blame for mistakes which arise through what might be called pressure of circumstances. If a man refuses to spend very much time on trying to find out what he ought to do in a trivial case because he rightly believes that he should concentrate on more important matters, we cannot blame him for his trivial errors of judgment. (I say 'in general' since there are obviously going to be differences in different cases here. Perhaps he could have made a quick and accurate judgment if he had not been insensitive, for instance. But then the mistake arises partly from pressure of circumstances, and partly from a defect in the agent's character for which we do blame him.) If he is to blame for his mistake, we can refuse to call what he does subjectively right, but if he is not to blame, we can say that, so long as he tried to discover what was right, his action was subjectively right.

This conclusion will enable us to discuss more fully the problems which arise from a conflict between subjective and objective rightness.

Since mistakes in judgment are not only possible, but common, it quite often happens that someone performs an objectively wrong action believing it to be right. But it does not follow from this that people often perform objectively wrong actions which are also subjectively right. Sometimes, admittedly, we do, and it is necessary to consider such cases. But we do not need to account for objectively wrong actions performed in the belief that they are right by people who are to be blamed for holding such a belief, since these actions are not subjectively right. Judged by the criterion of 'trying to discover', they are found wanting.

Thus, when I say that conscientiousness alone is morally good, and that it is always good to perform the action which ~~are~~ is believed to be right, or which, in other words, is subjectively right, I am not committed to the view that, whenever anybody does anything, no matter what, which he believes to be right, in any and every sense of 'believe', he is morally good. Nevertheless, there are still problems, since it may not always be easy to discover whether the mistaken belief acted upon by the agent who performs morally wrong actions, are based on mistakes which could have been avoided, and for which the agent is to blame, or whether the mistakes were unavoidable, and the agent blameless. The main problem does seem to arise in the case of fanatics, but it is to be found also in any case whether the mistake arises from a defect in character. I shall return to this problem in subsection 5 of this chapter.

4. Special Cases

First, however, it is necessary to consider a separate class of subjectively right actions. As I pointed out earlier, there are several possible combinations of the subjective and objective moral status of actions. An action may be subjectively wrong and objectively right, objectively wrong and subjectively right, or objectively and subjectively right (or wrong). The same range of combinations holds for obligatoryness.

(I use the term 'right' to mean 'permissible' rather than 'obligatory'.) When an action is both objectively and subjectively right or wrong, no problems arise. But the possibility of an action's being subjectively wrong and objectively right gives rise to some interesting speculations.

One possible example of such an argument is afforded by an agent who is, on moral grounds, a vegetarian. Presumably, not all vegetarians refuse to eat meat because they believe it to be wrong to do so. They might dislike meat, or might have special views about the nutritional value of various foods. But some people refuse to eat meat because they disapprove, morally of the practice of living on other animals. Now I should myself be inclined to say that there is nothing morally wrong about eating meat, (though I should give serious attention to the view that certain farming methods involve cruelty to animals, and that one ought not to eat the food obtained by such methods.) Thus, we can say, though a vegetarian would not, that it is not morally wrong to eat meat. Eating meat is objectively permissible. But if we assume that after careful consideration the vegetarian has decided that eating meat is morally wrong, then we must say that meat-eating is subjectively wrong for the vegetarian.

However, in case this example is not accepted (since I might be mistaken in my judgment that meat-eating is permissible), I shall offer another, which must be. Catholics, or at any rate most Catholics, believe that it is morally wrong to use artificial means of contraception. Ultimately, this believe is based on a Papal pronouncement: because the present Pope has officially announced that it is unnatural, and therefore wrong, to use artificial contraceptives, Catholics who accept that the Pope's official announcements on matters of morals are authoritative, are committed to accepting his authority in this matter, and to saying that it is, as the Pope says, objectively wrong to use artificial means of contraception. The matter is rather complicated by the fact that the Catholic church

recognizes the ultimate authority of the individual conscience, since it is possible for that reason for a Catholic to reject the Pope's teaching. However, it is clear that the Catholic must be very sure of his beliefs, and of his reasons for his beliefs, if he is to be described as genuinely conscientious in his rejection of the Church's teaching.

On the other hand, we find many non-Catholics who believe conscientiously (that is, after due reflection, and after 'trying to discover', in the relevant sense, what is objectively right), that artificial methods of birth-control are not only permissible, but obligatory, since a refusal to regulate the birth-rate by the available means will lead to serious problems for mankind, problems of suffering, starvation, and possibly even the ultimate destruction of mankind.

It is clear that artificial contraception cannot be, at the same time, objectively wrong and objectively obligatory. Therefore either the Catholic who condemns birth-control, or the non-Catholic who regards it as obligatory, is mistaken. Consequently, if the actions of the Catholic and the actions of the non-Catholic (in both cases based on moral conviction) are describable as subjectively right, we have a case of a conflict between subjective wrongness and objective rightness. If artificial contraception is objectively morally right or even obligatory, then its subjective wrongness for the Catholic conflicts with its objective rightness. If it is objectively morally wrong, then the non-Catholic's subjective obligation to practise it, or, in other words, his subjective obligation to refrain from contributing to the populations problems of the world, conflicts with the objective rightness of avoiding artificial methods of contraception. Without, then, coming down on one side or the other, we can say that at least for one of the parties concerned, subjective wrongness conflicts with objective rightness. It might conceivably be argued against this that there is no conflict, since one of

the sides is not only mistaken, but culpably so. But I do not think that this is a tenable position. The Catholic cannot blame the non-Catholic for not knowing a revealed truth which has not been revealed to him. The non-Catholic cannot blame the Catholic for believing something which he has been told by the person he holds as the ultimate source of moral knowledge. He might blame him for believing it unthinkingly, or for unthinkingly accepting the Pope as his authority, but presumably not all Catholics accept either the individual pronouncements, or the general authority, of the Pope, without giving some reasonably deep thought to the question.

We may, therefore, say that, just as there can be a conflict between objective wrongness and subjective rightness, there can equally be a conflict between objective rightness and subjective wrongness. This is important, for if we identify conscientiousness with moral goodness, we must be able to show not only that it is always morally good to act conscientiously, even when the action is objectively wrong, but also that a failure to act conscientiously is always a failure to be morally good, even when by failing to be conscientious one performs the objectively right action.

The background to the argument that it is always morally good to act conscientiously, and always morally poorer (at least poorer, and possibly bad) to fail to act conscientiously, is now filled in. I shall, accordingly, turn to the arguments in favour of this claim.

5. Nowell Smith's position

First, I shall concentrate on the claim that it is always morally good to act conscientiously. The second part of the claim is not entirely separable from this, but there are special cases (e.g. that of the vegetarian) which do need to be handled separately.

The chief of the modern opponents of this claim is Nowell-Smith, some

of whose arguments I considered in the previous chapter. By attacking his argument, I shall provide a basis for the development of my positive thesis. In the previous chapter, I discussed Nowell-Smith's counter-examples to the claim that conscientiousness is always morally good. Now I shall discuss one of his examples (Robespierre) again, in the wider context of his general attack on conscientiousness.

First, in attacking Kant's claim that the good will alone is good without qualification, and in particular Paton's defence of Kant's position, Nowell-Smith says, "...he[Paton] does not even raise the question whether conscientiousness is 'higher than' other moral virtues. Nevertheless it seems that this is an open question".[3]

He goes on, "and it is also an open question whether conscientiousness itself is good without qualification. Many of the worst crimes in history have been committed by men who had a strong sense of duty just because their sense of duty was so strong. I should myself have no hesitation in saying that Robespierre would have been a better man (quite apart from the question of the harm he did) if he had given his conscience a thorough rest and indulged his taste for roses and sentimental verse".[4]

After quoting Paton's defence against this kind of criticism, to the effect that, while good men may do harm, this harm may spring from silliness and stupidity, Nowell-Smith goes on to ask "But may not the harm spring from their very conscientiousness? We might adopt the moral principle that conscientiousness is so valuable that a man ought to be conscientious no matter what harm he does; but it is quite another thing to say that their conscientiousness is never the source of the harm that good men do,"[5] But while we may adopt the principle that conscientiousness is of supreme

[3] Ethics, p.247

[4] Ethics, p.247

[5] Ethics, p.248

value, Nowell-Smith sees no reason to accept it. He argues that two kinds of mistake underlie the adoption of such a principle. First, he suggests that defenders of conscientiousness assume that non-conscientious action must be both impulsive and selfish. Now while this may in some cases be true, as a matter of fact, there is no necessary connection between the claim that conscientiousness is of supreme value, and the assumption that non-conscientious action is both impulsive and selfish. This assumption is in my opinion clearly false, and I agree with Nowell-Smith that it must be rejected. But it does not follow from this that we must reject the claim of conscientiousness to be of supreme value.

The second accusation levelled by Nowell-Smith at the defenders of conscientiousness is that they are guilty of a confusion. He develops this accusation in a discussion of an argument put forward by Ross. Since I want to make my own defence of conscientiousness on the basis of an attack on Nowell-Smith's position, I shall avoid unclarity of exposition, or unfairness, by quoting Nowell-Smith's discussion in full.

He writes, "Sir David Ross uses the following argument to prove that we must regard a man who acts from a sense of duty as a better man than one who acts from any other motive. "Suppose that someone is drawn towards doing act A by a sense of duty and towards another, incompatible, act B by love for a particular person. Ex hypothesi, he thinks he will not be doing his duty in doing B. Can we possibly say that he will be acting better if he does what he thinks not his duty than if he does what he thinks is his duty? Evidently not. What those who hold this view mean by 'acting from the sense of duty' is obeying a traditional, conventional code rather than following the warm impulses of the heart. But what is properly meant by the sense of duty is the thought that one ought to act in a certain way... And it seems clear that when a genuine sense of duty is in conflict with any other motive we must recognize its precedence. If you seriously think

that you ought to do A, you are bound to think that you will be acting morally worse in doing anything else instead.""[6]

First, Nowell-Smith objects to Ross's use of the word 'impulse', which suggests the capriciousness of motives other than a sense of duty, and he points out that motives such as sympathy, benevolence and so on are not necessarily impulsive. This is true, and in so far as this is a part of Ross's position, that position must be attacked. Since it can stand without this prop, however, we must consider Nowell-Smith's second and more detailed objection.

He says, "Indeed the passage I have quoted is mostly an appeal to the self-evidence of the proposition that a man who acts from a sense of duty is a better man than one who acts from any other motive. It is only in the last sentence that an argument is used to support this view, and the argument seems to depend on a confusion between what an agent necessarily thinks about his own action and what a critic or spectator necessarily thinks. Ross's object is to prove that Jones necessarily regards Smith as a better man if he does what he (Smith) thinks he ought to do; but the statement at the end of the quotation is only true if 'you' is taken to refer to the same person throughout. We must distinguish the following three statements:

"(1) I think that I ought to do A but that I would be a better man if I did B.

"(2) I think that you ought to do A but that you would be a better man if you did B.

"(3) You think that you ought to do A, but you would be a better man if you did B.

"Now there is an air of contradiction about (1) and (2), but not about (3). And the reason why (1) is logically odd is that 'I ought to do A'

[6] Ethics p.252 the passage quoted by Nowell-Smith comes from W.D. Ross, The Right and the Good p.164.

expresses a decision to act in a certain way, and implies that the decision is of a certain kind, namely one based on reasons which, in a moral case, may take the form of a belief that A would be fitting or in accordance with a certain moral rule. A man who said that he ought to do A but would be morally better if he did B is in the same breath deciding to act on a moral principle and condemning himself for making this decision. But to condemn himself is to abandon the moral principle in question.

"And (2) is logically odd for a similar reason. To say "you ought (morally) to do A" is to advise a man to adopt a certain moral principle and the force of "But you would be a better man if you did B" is to retract this advice. It is as inconsistent to recommend and to condemn a moral principle in the same breath as it is to decide to adopt and to condemn a moral principle in the same breath.

"But (3) is not logically odd at all; it is the natural way for Jones to express his moral disagreement with Smith. Now conscientiousness is an extremely valuable motive and it is so valuable that we often wish to encourage a man to be conscientious even in a case in which we think that the principle on which he thinks he ought to act is a bad one. In such a case we might well wish to encourage him to do what he thinks right without wishing to endorse the principle on which he proposes to act. We should then say "I think you ought to do B; but if you are really convinced that you ought to do A, then you ought to do it. For what really matters is not that you should act on the right principle but that you should act on the principle that you believe to be right." But I do not think it is logically necessary that we should rate conscientiousness as highly as this nor that, as a matter of fact, we always do. Statement (3) is not logically odd except in the mouth of a man who has already accepted the very principle of the supreme value of conscientiousness which Ross is trying to establish."[7]

[7] Ethics pp 253-4.

6. The nature of moral disagreement

The first point to be made here is that the lurking suggestion that Ross's argument begs the question is unfair, since Ross is, as he quite clearly says, appealing to the self-evidence of the proposition that "If you seriously think you ought to do A, you are bound to think that you will be acting morally worse in doing anything else instead." And there is no doubt that this proposition is true. Indeed, it is tautological. But what I think Ross is trying to say is that it is self-evident that "we (cannot) possibly say that he someone with incompatible motives of love and duty will be acting better if he does what he thinks not his duty that if he does what he thinks is his duty". Now if this is what Ross means, he is not begging the question in saying that someone is a morally better man, and would be regarded as such by a spectator, if he acts out a sense of duty than if he ignores his sense of duty and acts from an incompatible motive. On the other hand, if he is saying that this follows from the tautological proposition about what the agent himself thinks, he is wrong, unless we add more premises to the argument. It will be seen that the necessary premises can be obtained from Ross's claim that when a sense of duty conflicts with some other motive, "we must [my emphasis] recognise its precedence".

It is, unfortunately, difficult to be sure of Ross's precise position. But it is clear enough that his main point is that one ought to do what one believes one ought to do. How, then, does Nowell-Smith's argument hold up against this point, which is the one I wish to make? Ideas of supreme value are irrelevant here. What is in question is what an agent ought to do when he is motivated by a sense of duty to do one action, and by some incompatible motive to some other action. Ross's reply, and mine, is that he ought to do the action towards which he is prompted by his sense of duty.

Nowell-Smith's argument is based mainly on his claim that that there is nothing logically odd about the third of the assertions above, viz. "You think you ought to do A, but you would be a better man if you did B", and that, not only is this not logically odd, but it is a perfectly natural way to express moral disagreement. My reply to this will be two-fold. In the first place, it is not a natural way to express moral disagreement In the second place, although we may accept (after slight emendations), his statement that the third assertion "is not logically odd except in the mouth of a man who has already accepted the very principle of the supreme value of conscientiousness which Ross is trying to establish", this amounts to saying that the assertion is logically odd, since we must accept the principle which Ross is "trying to establish". This principle is not, however, that conscientiousness is of supreme value, but that one ought to do what one believes one ought to do. In this sense, conscientiousness is the moral motive - it is the motive which over-rides other, incompatible motives. Thus conscientiousness as a moral motive has a value which other motives do not, viz. moral value.

First, however, we may consider the idea that we quite naturally express moral disagreement by saying "You think you ought to do A but you would be a better man if you did B." It is worth showing that this is not so, since Nowell-Smith believes that it is he, and not the deontologist, who expresses the beliefs of the ordinary man. Thus if we can show that he is mistaken in this, his position will be weakened, though not destroyed.

Suppose, then, that someone expresses to me his intention to perform an action, A, which be believes to be his duty. I believe that he is mistaken (whether culpably or otherwise) and that objectively his duty is to perform action B. When he tells me that he thinks that he ought to do A, I might well reply, "You think you ought to do A, but it would be better if you did B". But if I say this I do not mean "You would be a better man if you did B,

even though your conscience tells you that you ought to do A". If I mean to imply anything about conscience, it is that it would be better if his conscience were different. The point of my reply is that he is mistaken in believing that he ought to do A. If I hold him to be blameworthy for believing that he ought to do A, I could also say that he would have shown himself to be a better man if he had said (and meant) that he believed that he ought to do B.

Now if I disagree with someone like this on a moral issue, I do not state that he would be a better man if he performed some action which he believes to be wrong. Nor do I say (holding conscientiousness to be of great value) that his belief is mistaken, but that he ought to act in accordance with it. Yet it is because Nowell-Smith apparently sees only these two alternatives that he is able to ridicule the idea that the spectator would regard the conscientious man as morally better. Ross seems to identify the agent with the spectator. Nowell-Smith takes up the idea of the spectator, complete with the notion of passivity (he watches and judges, but doesn't take part), and then identifies the spectator with a participant in a moral argument. This participant has the spectator-characteristic of passivity. But of course the participant in the argument is not a passive spectator, unable to do anything but judge and pronounce judgment. What he can and does do is argue.

There are therefore three possible lines of argument for the participant.

1. "You think you ought to do A but you would be a better man if you did B." This is the line which Nowell-Smith would speak.

2. "I think you ought to do B... but what really matters is not that you should act on the right principle but that you should act on the principle that you believe to be right".[8] This is the line Nowell-Smith

[8] Ethics p. 254.

offers the deontologist.

3. "You think you ought to do A, but you are mistaken. You really ought to do B. You haven't considered that doing A involves...or, Look, it's clear that you ought to do B, because... This is the line which most normal people, including deontologists, would speak.

It is obvious that if the deontologist's position is expressible only in the second line of dialogue then we need not regard acting in accordance with one's beliefs as of supreme importance, of such importance that we would not even venture to argue with someone whose beliefs were mistaken. But of course the deontologist need not hold such ab absurd position. Since he regards acting in accordance with one's beliefs as being very important, then he will also hold it to be important that people should hold the right beliefs. He will, therefore, argue with anyone who expresses a belief that he ought to do an action, A, which is objectively the wrong action. By arguing, he hopes to change the agent's beliefs, so that the objectively right action becomes, for that agent, the subjectively right action also, that is, the action which that agent accepts, after due reflection, as his duty.

Thus, moral disagreement is not normally expressed in statements to the effect that people would be morally better if they did what they thought was wrong, or that doing the right thing is unimportant in comparison with acting in accordance with one's principles. It is normally expressed in argument, and in an attempt to convince some that he is mistaken and why he is mistaken.

In many cases, we do manage to convince our opponent that he is wrong. If we succeed, then we have done what we set out to do, i.e. we have brought about a fusion of objective and subjective rightness. But in other cases, we do not succeed. And finally of course there are those cases, where we cannot express our disapproval by arguing with the agent,

since the agent is dead or fictional. But in these cases, though we do disagree, we disagree with the beliefs and not with the agent. In a sense, I disagree with Robespierre's beliefs. But I do not disagree with Robespierre. I cannot utter any of the allotted lines to him. This is not, therefore, the kind of disagreement Nowell-Smith has in mind, since he did, after all, write two of the lines himself.

What are we to say when we have failed to convince our opponent? What do we say of the object of our disapproval when, being dead, he can be judged but not argued with? I think that in both cases we must admit the rightness of genuinely conscientious action, and say that people really ought to do the actions which is subjectively right, i.e. which they conscientiously believe that they ought to do, and that the good man is the conscientious man.

7. Identification of the good man and the conscientious man.

This may be argued for in the following manner. Now I want to argue that the good man is the man who does what he ought to do, i.e. his duty, and that duty is to be defined subjectively, not objectively. One's duty, what one really ought to do, is the subjectively right action. Now, the good man is defined [see Part One] as the man whose goal is the right. He is, therefore, an agent who intends to do what is right. How does he execute his intention? Unless people are infallible over matters of right and wrong (which obviously they are not, as the fact of disagreement shows conclusively) we cannot say that they never make mistakes. Thus, although they intend, if they are good, to do what is right, they might be mistaken about what is right. So if we demand, not only that the good man intends to do what is right, but also that he executes his intention, we shall have to say either that one cannot always execute one's intention, and that goodness is therefore sometimes impossible, and sometimes unknowable, or else we must say, if goodness is always to be possible, and if we are to

know that and when people, including ourselves, are good, then one can execute one's intention to do what is right by doing what one has judged to the best of one's ability to be right.

Since it seems odd to say that one can at the same time execute one's intention to ϕ, and yet fail to ϕ, it is more appropriate to say that the good man intends to do, as far as possible what is right, and that he tries as far as possible, to execute his intention. Otherwise, goodness would be beyond the grasp of most of us, whereas of course it is precisely goodness that is within ones grasp, and rather saintliness or holiness that is beyond us.

If goodness, therefore, is to be possible or achievable, I think we must say that the good man is the one who tries to do what is right. (It was necessary to switch from the concept of intending to that of trying for the sufficient reason that a definition in terms of intending is incompatible with the inevitable failures that will occur, whereas one in terms of trying making goodness achieveable, through effort, by everyone.

But if the good man is the one who tries to do what is right, then it can be shown that the good man and the conscientious man are the same. For how can we try to do what is right? There is only one way: to think hard about what one ought to do, to make a judgment about it, make a decision on the basis of the judgment, and act on the decision. And this is precisely doing what one believes, after due reflection, one ought to do. In other words it is acting conscientiously. Goodness, therefore, consists in being conscientious. Moral goodness and moral conscientiousness are identical. For moral goodness is achievable only through trying to do what is right, and trying is possibly only through conscientious action. This being so, it is impossible to argue that someone who fails to do what he sincerely believes to be right (even through something respectable like love), is, or would be, a morally better man than the conscientious man. In repudiating

one's moral beliefs, one repudiates whatever chance there is of achieving moral goodness, and cannot, therefore, be described as morally good in the act of repudiating. In that act, one gives up the attempt to do what is right, and leaves rightness to chance.

It seems to me to be undeniable, therefore, that I ought always to do what I believe to be right, though all the earlier provisos are to be understood here, that I must try to discover what is right, and so on. One objection might be made to this argument, that I have not really justified the claim that in refusing to act on my moral beliefs I am leaving the rightness of my actions to chance. For instance, Nowell-Smith might say that in avoiding reference to moral beliefs, and relying instead on, say, altruism, I am justified in that reliance. As he says, "A man can consistently adopt a policy of doing good to others, not because he regards it as his duty, but because that is what he most wants to do or enjoys doing... But his altruism is not necessarily less consistent or more easily shaken than that of the man who tries to do good because he thinks it his duty."[9] Of course, this is perfectly true. Altruistic men may be extremely reliable. But my original contention still holds. For if the altruistic man adopts a policy of doing good to others because that is what he wants to do, he is, as I said, abdicating his moral agency, in rejecting the one means to trying to do what he ought to do. His actions are, indeed, likely to be right, but they will not be right because he has decided to do, as far as possible, what he ought to do. Ultimately, what he has decided is that he will do what he most enjoys doing, which <u>happens</u> to be doing good to others, and this is not a moral pre-disposition, in the sense that the adoption of a consistent policy of doing what one enjoys precludes the possibility of doing something else when one ought to do something else. Thus, the link between goodness (as manifested in, say, altruism

[9] <u>Ethics</u> p.253

and rightness would, on Nowell-Smith's argument, be contingent.

However, it seems unlikely that the altruistic man has adopted his altruistic policy for this reason (enjoyment) alone, and that is why Nowell-Smith's argument appears fairly strong. The man who is consistently altruistic does appear to others to be a morally good man, but that is because they assume, from knowing how he acts, that he believes that it is good (not just enjoyable) to help other people. Some people may think that thinking ~~else~~ a lot about morality is a bad thing, and that it is best to rely on one's instincts (which would include benevolence, sympathy, and so forth) to tell one what one ought to do. While I would not agree with this, it is at least a belief that is compatible with, indeed presupposes, the moral attitude which characterizes the conscientious man. For ultimately such people (among whom Nowell-Smith seems to be included), base their moral lives on an ultimate moral principle to the effect that one will achieve the best one can by spontaneity. Someone who never thinks about mora ity does, as I said, abdicate his moral agency. Entirely spontaneous spontaneity, as it were, is incompatible with acceptance of one's responsibility to try to do what is good or right. But a policy of spontaneity, such as that which Nowell-Smith seems to advocate, is itself a moral policy, based on a principle adopted by a moral agent. Thus, Nowell-Smith cannot have it both ways. He can advocate a 'natural' life and say that it is morally good. But it cannot be morally good unless at least one moral decision has been taken. And if the necessary moral decision has been taken, the 'natural' life is, as I understand it, one version of the life of the conscientious man.

Nowell-Smith's failure to realize this is, I think, again based on a misunderstanding of what it is to be conscientious, or to act 'for the sake of duty'. This is illustrated by the final paragraph in chapter 17, entitled "Conscientiousness". He writes, "To ask whether conscientiousness is the

highest virtue is not unlike asking the question whether money is more valuable than other goods. The answer depends on how much you have. Moreover this is a question the answer to which is a moral judgment and it cannot therefore be answered either by observation or analysis of moral language. Aristotle held that a man was not really good unless he enjoyed doing what is good, and I am inclined to agree. The sense of duty...plays little part in the lives of the best men and could play none at all in the lives of saints. They act on good moral principles, but not from the sense of duty; for they do what they do for its own sake and not for the sake of duty."[10]

Conscientious action is doing what one believes one ought to do. It is not defined by reference to a specific kind of conscientious man, viz. the plodder. There are different ways of conscientiously accepting one's moral agency. One may decide to decide each case on its merits; one may decide to govern one's life by principles; one may decide to be spontaneous. Now, in saying that the question about the value of conscientiousness is itself a moral question, Nowell-Smith gives the game away. For in judging that the best life is not the life of the conscientious man, understood in its narrower sense, but rather the life of men who "do what they do for its own sake", he himself states his belief that this is how one ought, ideally, to live. In doing so, he makes a moral judgment about what constitutes the bes life, and about the life which one ought, as a moral agent, to try to live. If he not only believes this, but also acts in accordance with his belief, he affords us a very good example of a conscientious man.

A final point which may be made about this revealing paragraph is that to suppose that it is one thing to act from a sense of duty, and another to "act as good principles" and to "do what they the best men do for its own sake", is to misunderstand what it is to act from a sense of

[10] Ethics pp. 258-9.

duty. For to act from a sense of duty is to do what one does for its own sake. It is to do what is the kind of thing that can be done for its own sake. It is not to do what one wants, but neither is doing good actions for their own sake doing what one wants. It is to do them for their own sake in the sense that one does them for the sake of their goodness. As Kant would say, a human being feels obliged to do such actions, and in doing them doesn't act in accordance with principles by which his behaviour is necessarily governed. But to recognize obligation is not to do good things reluctantly, but to do them responsibly. And the best men and saints recognize obligation, for they are human. God and the angels are different, but Nowell-Smith's concern, like mine, is with human beings. No human being is necessarily good - if he were, he would not be a moral agent, since he would not be free. Some human beings do enjoy being good. But if they 'are good' because they enjoy it, and for no other reason, then they may do good, but they are not morally good. Aristotle is surely right in saying that a truly good man enjoys doing what is good, but that still makes the doing of good logically prior to the enjoyment, And if he does what is good with pleasure, and is the better for the pleasure he feels, his moral superiority lies in the fact that he enjoys what is good, rather than what is good. That is, his pleasure is in the goodness of good acts, and not in the acts (which will, after all, be of numerous kinds) themselves.

8. Conscientiousness, obligation and goodness.

Now it may seem that I have offered a fallacious argument, rather as Ross appears to Nowell-Smith to have done. Even if it is true that I must accept my own obligation to do what I believe I ought to do, it does not follow that I am really obliged to do these things which I believe I ought to do, nor does it follow that it is always and only morally good to do what I believe I ought to do. Actually, it is the reference to goodness which provides the link between my necessary acceptance of the authority of

my convictions and the duty of the moral agent to act in accordance with his convictions.

Now, in saying that the moral agent ought always to do what he believes he ought to do, I am not, obviously, saying that objectively the right action is always the one the agent believes he ought to do. But if it is true that ought implies can, then the most we can say of the moral agent is that he has a duty to try to do what is right, for since he cannot always do, knowingly, what is objectively right (for he is not infallible), then he must simply do his best. Thus, we cannot say that all moral agents at all times have a duty to do what is objectively right, for we would be asking the impossible. But if we are to say that moral agents have duties at all, then in general, what they ought to do is to try to do what is right. And as I have shown, acceptance of this duty implies acceptance of the authority of one's moral beliefs. So it is not merely that I think I ought to do what I think I ought to do, but that, because I ought to accept my duty to do my best, I really ought to do what I think I ought to do. And this is not just a statement about me, but about me qua moral agent, and consequently about moral agents as such. Thus, moral agents really ought to do what they think they ought to do.

Does it follow from this that they are morally good if, and only if, they do what they think they ought to do? I think that it does. They cannot, for a start, be morally good unless they do what they think they ought to do, for they cannot be morally good unless they accept their responsibility as moral agents to do the best they can. Doing what one thinks one ought to do is therefore a necessary condition of moral goodness. But it is also a sufficient condition of moral goodness, since adoption of the principle that one ought to do the best one can, and that this can be done only by doing what one believes best, is, precisely, adoption of the moral pre-disposition, and acceptance of one's moral agency. And if it is

not morally good to adopt the moral pre-disposition, then I don't think that there could be such a thing as moral goodness at all, since there is no other candidate. As I have stressed, the moral attitude may take different forms, for there are different ways of approaching an attempt to lead a good life. Thus, not all conscientious men will be of precisely the same type. But unless at some point they have taken the decision to do their best, they have not fulfilled the necessary condition of moral goodness.

It might be argued (and I think that Nowell-Smith would take this line) that the truly good man must enjoy doing what is good. I shall leave a full discussion of this until later.[11] But for now, I shall point out that in saying this, Nowell-Smith must mean one of two things. First, he might mean that unless a man enjoys doing good, he is not morally good at all. Since this would put moral goodness outside our control, I cannot accept this. For one cannot make oneself enjoy doing what is good, though one may certainly train oneself to become reasonably accustomed to it, and consequently at least to dislike it (if one does dislike it) less. Secondly, he might mean (as the passage I quoted above, where he cites Aristotle, would suggest) that the best men enjoy doing what is good. But then there can still be good men who do not enjoy it, and though they are not as good as the best men, we can only make sense of the concept of the best in terms of the concept of the good. The best men are best in relation to the good, not in relation to the bad. I do not think, therefore, that we can describe enjoyment of doing good as a necessary condition of moral goodness. Consequently, conscientiousness, or acting in accordance with one's moral beliefs (arrived at after due reflection), is both a necessary condition of moral goodness, and, since there are no other conditions, a sufficient condition, too.

The conscientious man, i.e. the one who does what is subjectively right,

[11] See Part III, conclusion

is therefore morally good, and the morally good man is the conscientious man. We cannot, therefore, say of anyone that he would be morally better if he acted against his moral beliefs. We can, if we blame him for holding the beliefs that he holds, deny that what he does is subjectively right, and therefore that he is conscientious, and we may possibly agree with Nowell-Smith, that Robespierre would have been a morally better man if he had tended his roses. That depends on whether we consider that he could have avoided the mistaken beliefs that he holds. But if we believe that he was genuinely conscientious, we cannot say that he would have been morally better if he had acted otherwise than he did, for he would not even have been morally good, let alone better. The point is not that he should have given his conscience a rest. Mistaken consciences need exercise, not rest, though of course one may conscientiously decide that it would be better to take one's mind off one's moral problems, so that one may come back to them in better form. That is another matter than forgetting about one's moral agency, ~~or~~ Nowell-Smith at some point implies one ought to do.

9. Special cases

It remains, in this chapter, only to consider the special case of the subjective duty to do what is objectively neutral. It clearly follows from the argument of the previous sub-section (8) that if one believes onsself to have a duty to perform an action which objectively is not a duty, one ought to perform that action. Here, the example of contraception might not apply since that was a situation where one of the two parties had a subjective duty to do what was objectively wrong, not neutral. But we may shift the example round, so that we may say that it is neither wrong nor obligatory to practice artificial contraception. The Catholic is mistaken in supposing that it is wrong, and the non-Catholic is mistaken in supposing that it is obligatory. (And actually it is odd to suppose that it is obligatory, since the duty is surely that of avoiding contributing to the population

problems of mankind, and there are means other than artificial contraception of doing one's duty in this matter.) We may also, for the sake of argument, take my vegetarian example, and suppose that eating meat is objectively neutral, i.e. that it is neither wrong nor obligatory to eat meat. (The difficulty here is a minor one. There can be little doubt that people do sometimes believe that they have a duty to do what is objectively neutral. It is merely hard to think of non-tendentious examples.)

As I said, it follows from my previous argument that if one believes oneself to have a duty to perform an action which objectively is not a duty, then one nevertheless ought to perform that action. People can, therefore, be said to have a duty to perform objectively neutral actions, that is, actions which are neither obligatory nor wrong. This is a view which has been regarded with some suspicion because of some of the conclusions to which it apparently leads. But, as will be seen, it need not lead to those conclusions, though where it does they must be accepted.

The Catholic believes that he has a duty to avoid artificial contraception, although, we may suppose, the practice is objectively neutral. The vegetarian believes he has a duty to avoid eating meat, though eating meat is objectively neutral. Now I am committed to saying that the Catholic <u>ought not</u> to practice artificial contraception, and that the vegetarian <u>ought not</u> to eat meat, even though I am assuming there is nothing wrong with either practice. It seems, indeed, to be perfectly natural to speak in this way. Quite often we believe that people ought to act in accordance with their principles, even if we regard those principles as rather cranky. I can quite reasonably blame them for failing to live up to their principles. If I catch the convinced vegetarian eating a steak, I could tell him, and mean it, that he ought to be ashamed of himself, even while I myself am unashamedly tucking into a steak. Non-Catholics who do not accept the Pope's authority may quite reasonably blame Catholics who

reject that authority. We both can and do blame people for doing things which we ourselves do not consider to be wrong. The fact that this is a perfectly natural thing to do bears out my contention not only that we really ought to perform the subjectively right action, but that this is, together with its implications for a theory of conscientiousness, a very common belief. In other words, I claim the support of the ordinary moral consciousness on this point. And even if its implications are not so readily sensed by the ordinary moral consciousness, that does not mean that ordinary people do not hold the belief which has those implications, nor that it does not, after all, have those implications.

The suspicion with which this view on subjective rightness is sometimes regarded by philosophers, arises from the assumption that it will commit us to saying that anything at all can count as a moral principle. My reply to this is twofold. First, it does not commit us to saying that anything can count as a moral principle, merely that <u>if</u> someone holds a belief conscientiously as a moral belief, he really ought to act in accordance with it. Some cranky beliefs may slip through, but given the proviso that the belief must be reached <u>after due reflection</u>, after an attempt to discover what is right, there should not be too many of these, though there may be some. Secondly, why should we <u>not</u> say that anything can count as a moral principle? <u>Im</u>moral principles constitute a special case (as with fanatics), but objectively <u>non</u>-moral principles could, for their adherents, ~~cannot~~ count as moral principles, in which case we can reasonably expect them to act in accordance with them, and blame them for not acting in accordance with them.

10. <u>What one ought to do.</u>

Last of all, after this discussion of objective and subjective duties, do we not seem to be left with an indeterminate realm of things we 'really ought to do' which are neither objective nor subjective duties? I do not

think that we are. Objective duties are those actions which may be said to be duties in the sense that they are the right actions in the circumstances. But I think it is really a mistake to use the word 'duties' for these. Objectively, they are right or fitting. But if one's duty is to do what one ought to do, and if ought implies can, then one does not always have a duty to do the right or fitting action. Subjective duties are those actions which the agent believes, after due reflection, that he ought to perform. Real duties, as they might be called, are those actions which the agent really ought to do. They are, therefore, identical with subjective duties properly defined, since one really ought to do one's subjective duties. But real duties span the objective/subjective gap. For the basic moral duty is to try, or to do one's best, to do what is right. In other words, the basic moral duty is to accept one's responsibility as a moral agent to find out, and to do, what is right. To understand this is to understand what it is to be a moral agent, and what it is to have a duty. The basic duty is therefore seen to be to try to make one's subjective duties conform to the objectively right and fitting, not to do what is right and fitting, since that is not always possible, but to try to do it. And ultimately, one must try by adopting the only available means, i.e. by using one's ability to judge, and by accepting one's judgments as the basis of action.

Therefore what duty is can be understood only if we understand what it is to be a moral agent, and if we understand the interplay between the subjectively right and the objectively right, and if consequently, we understand what it is to be truly conscientious.

In this chapter, I have tried to elaborate and clarify the concept of true conscientiousness. Some considerable stress has been laid on the notion of judgment. This notion will be discussed fully in the next two chapters. It is clearly of great importance, since I am arguing that one's real duty is

to do what one judges to be best. I shall, therefore, attempt to show that such reliance ~~as~~ on judgment is not only necessary, but justified. That is to say, although it is the best we have, it is not a <u>poor</u> best, the Oxford don and Robespierre notwithstanding.

Chapter Three

The Justification of Moral Judgments

1. Introductory

So far, I have argued that if we are properly to understand the notion of moral goodness, we must explain it in terms of conscientiousness. The morally good man is the conscientious man who does what he believes to be right because he believes it to be right. He acts on the basis of conscientious judgments and decisions. In accordance with this analysis of goodness, we must explain duty in terms of subjective rightness. A moral agent's duty is to do what he conscientiously believes to be right. However, it has been seen that objections have been raised against this position on the ground that there are some people of whom we may predicate conscientiousness while at the same time denying that they are morally good. Furthermore, it might be argued that some actions performed in good faith are nevertheless morally wrong, so that the conscientious man may perform wrong or even outrageous actions merely because he is conscientious.

These objections, however, rest on a misunderstanding of the nature of conscientiousness. We have seen that there are different senses of the term conscientious; and that it is important to be clear which sense is involved when we identify the good man with the conscientious man. We do not commit ourselves, in making such an identification, to claiming that the narrow minded, over-scrupulous, uncritical or unimaginative man who rigidly acts in accordance with his 'principles' is morally good, for such a man is not conscientious in the relevant sense.

As for the second objection, that wrong actions are sometimes (or often) performed in good faith, two types of answer may be offered. First, we may deny that such actions are performed in good faith, or are truly conscientious Secondly, we may maintain that the objection is beside the point, since

there is no incompatibility between the claims that an agent did what he ought to do (in doing what he believed to be right), and that he acted wrongly (in failing to perform the action which was really the best, or most appropriate, in the circumstances). Neither of these replies is sufficient if taken on its own. Which of them is appropriate depends on the particular case. Sometimes we want to say that a particular action which has been brought to our attention is wrong, but was not performed in good faith, since the agent had failed to think sufficiently about what he ought to do, or had not used his imagination, and so forth. But on the other hand, we do sometimes want to say that an agent did perform an action in good faith, but nevertheless acted wrongly. In saying this, we are not saying that he ought to have acted otherwise, since in doing what he conscientiously believed he ought to do, he did the (moral) best that we can expect of any agent. In such a case, we cannot blame him for acting as he did, but we may still say that his action was not the appropriate one in the circumstances. Sometimes we may speak out of hindsight, having discovered that the consequences of the action were not those which were legitimately expected, and sometimes we may judge from a position of greater knowledge. We know something that the agent does not know and cannot be expected to know. When the agent learns the fact, he too will be in a position to say that his action was the wrong one, while maintaining as we do that he did what he ought to do in doing what he sincerely thought best.

In this context, the question arises, 'What justification can we have for our moral beliefs?' There are two main types of reason for wanting to find an answer to this question, both of which arise out of the previous considerations. First, in order to say whether or not a particular judgment or decision is a conscientious one, we must know what sorts of process the agent must go through in order to make a conscientious decision.

We cannot describe the agent as conscientious unless it is the case not only that he acted in accordance with his moral beliefs, but also that he was justified in holding such a belief. Secondly, if the distinction between judging an agent to have acted rightly, and judging his action right is to hold, we need to know at least that the criteria for the judgment of actions are different from those for the judgment of agents. Of course, it should be pointed out that the case for conscientiousness would not be affected by a failure to discover criteria of objective rightness, or even by a discovery that there are no such criteria. If there is no way of judging with certainty what actions are right, that does not make us deny that the agent should do what be believes he ought to do. On the contrary, the case for conscientiousness would be strengthened by the necessity to reject an objectivist position on the criteria of rightness. But I wish to make it clear that my adoption of the view that conscientiousness and moral goodness are identical does not depend on a pessimistic view of the possibility of moral knowledge. Rather, my analysis of conscientious action, and consequently the nature of the view of conscientiousness that I do adopt, depends to some extent on the belief that the conscientious man is essentially reasonable. In order to eleborate this belief, it is necessary to show that reasonableness in moral belief is possible, and what sort of reasonableness is possible.

First, it is necessary briefly to distinguish different senses of the terms 'reason' and 'reasonable', and to explain in which sense moral judgments may be said to be reasonable.

One of the things which can lead to misunderstandings when the term 'reasonable' is used is that the term 'reason' is itself ambiguous. In the first place, 'reason' may be understood as the name of the faculty possession of which distinguishes men from other animals. Thus, one may hold that reason (man's special characteristic) is involved in something, whether a

judgment, a proposal, or an attitude. We may perhaps say, for instance, that reason is involved in emotion, meaning by this that emotions are peculiar to rational beings, say as involving recognition of the object of the emotion. But to say this is not to say that emotions are essentially reasonable. Only a rational being can have a phobia, but a phobia is an irrational fear.

We may however wish to suggest that something involves reason more closely than this. For example, we might say that a particular judgment involved reason in the sense that the person who makes the judgment has reasoned it out. He has argued step by step from certain premises to the judgment which is the conclusion of the process of reasoning. But a reasoned judgment is not necessarily reasonable, for it is possible to reason correctly from untrue or even bizarre premises to an untrue or bizarre conclusion. The validity of the reasoning does not guarantee the acceptability in all senses of the conclusion.

Perhaps, though, when we speak of judgments and so forth as reaonable, we do not mean primarily that they involve the faculty of reason, but that they are such that reasons can be given for them. So here we have the concept of 'a reason'. But this is also an ambiguous term, for it is used both of explanations and of justifications. Again, the availability of an explanatory reason does not guarantee the acceptability of a judgment. If I judge that whistling is morally wrong, there may be an explanatory reason for my judgment, for instance that I have been told, by someone I respect, that whistling is wrong. But that does not mean that the judgment is acceptable.

For my purpose, the sense of 'reason' which is important is that of a 'justificatory reason'. A judgment may be said to be reasonable if a reason can be given in support, or justification, of it. We must still be careful, though, for the phrase 'can be given' is in this context ambiguous.

It may mean that the agent making the judgment can give a justificatory reason for his judgment, or it may mean that support could be given, though the agent does not in fact know what the support is. But if a judgment is to be 'reasonable' in the sense in which I am using the term, it must be the case both that there is a (good) supporting reason for the judgment, and that the agent knows the reason and bases his judgment upon it. An acceptable judgment, then, is one made by an agent who can support his judgment by giving the reason upon which it is based, but the reason must genuinely support the judgment. Then we may say that the judgment is reasonable, and that the agent is reasonable in judging.

Clearly, much more could be said about this, but at present my main concern is to clarify the terminology I shall use in the ensuing arguments.

I propose, therefore, to argue that the conscientious man holds reasonable beliefs. This position must be distinguished from the pessimistic one that the conscientious man is justified in holding his beliefs, merely because the alleged impossibility of moral knowledge renders morality an irrational affair, in which one view is as good as another. On the contrary, one moral view is not as good as another, but some are acceptable and others are not. Conscientious action, action in accordance with conscientious judgments, is therefore to be understood not only in terms of the agent's acceptance of certain beliefs, in accordance with which he makes his decisions, but in accordance with the acceptability of those beliefs. The beliefs of the conscientious man are reasonable in the sense explained.

2. Moral Beliefs as Statements

In order to defend this position, it is necessary to tackle the questions whether or not we may be said to know the truth of moral beliefs. In order to approach this problem, however, we must have some idea whether

it makes sense at all to speak of moral beliefs as being capable of truth or falsity. For if we adopted a theory in terms of which moral utterances are to be understood entirely as, say, expressions of emotion, we would not be justified in saying that such utterances are true or false. If, on the other hand, such utterances are taken to be, not expressions of the speaker's emotions, but statements about the feelings or attitudes of the speaker, we would be able to say that such statements can be true or false, but this would not be enough to secure reasonableness for moral beliefs, since someone could quite truthfully say that he feels abhorrence for kindness, or approval for murder, without our being entitled to say that the statement, being true, is reasonable. This is not to suggest that it is impossible to speak of its being reasonable to approve of somethings, or to abhor others, but that the mere accuracy of the statement as a report of the speaker's feelings is not itself evidence of the reasonableness of those feelings. Consequently, if we want to define moral utterances as descriptions of the speaker's feelings, while at the same time wishing to speak of the reasonableness of such utterances, we must attempt to show that approval or disapproval are appropriate responses in some circumstances and not in others.

It is, I think, pretty clear that most people who do construe moral utterances as descriptions of the speaker's feelings really do want to allow for the reasonableness of such utterances. The mere use of a term such as 'approval' suggests this, for usually such a word is chosen in preference to, say, 'liking' precisely in cases where it is not thought that the response is purely a matter of taste.[1] We approve of actions, states of affairs and so on, whereas we like ice-cream, or beer, or the

[1] I should in fact contend that genuine liking is not merely a matter of taste, in that to justify one's liking x, one must be able to point out features of x which one considers to be likeable. Thus judgment is involved in liking. But one may not wish to insist that other people also like or ought to like x, whereas, as I shall argue, one does , in approving of x, demand that others also approve, or else claim that they ought to.

colour yellow. If one man says that he approves of the present Prices and Incomes Policy, and another says that he does not, we would normally assume that they disagreed with each other, and our assumption would be supported by the fact that they would most probably proceed to have an argument about the merits of the policy, each offering reasons in support of the view that he holds. The one who approves of the policy might point to the danger of inflation, while the other might claim that risk of industrial unrest is too great. They do not, at least at the outset, agree to differ. Prices and Incomes policies have both purposes and effects, and one may justify one's approval for them by reference to their fitness for achieving their purpose (e.g. a more stable economy), or one's disapproval by reference to the consequences they are likely to have (e.g. industrial unrest, poverty for those on fixed incomes, and so on). Normally, then, one approves of something which one has considered and assessed. In other words, to say that one approves of something is to say that one has judged it. And judgments can be reasonable or unreasonable. But to say that one likes something is different. It implies, not that it has been judged and has passed the test, but that it has been tried, tasted or experienced, and has proved pleasant.[2]

In deciding to speak of moral beliefs as reasonable or unreasonable, then, I am not ipso facto ruling out an analysis of moral utterances as stating that the agent approves or disapproves of something, since approval can itself be reasonable or unreasonable. Even if we accepted the suggestion that moral utterances express the speaker's approval (rather than stating that he feels it), we could still say that in so far as what is expressed is approval, there must be some foundation for what is felt. Consequently, theories of ethics which concentrate on approval and

[2]I do not want to press too far this distinction between approval and liking. What I wish to stress is that, whether or not liking involves rational evaluation, approving certainly does, and to a greater degree. Liking is, I think an emotion. Approval is more.

disapproval need not be (though specific theories in fact often are) opposed to the view that moral judgments are, or can be, reasonable.

However, the belief that moral utterances are merely equivalent to ejaculations expressing likes or dislikes is, I think, in conflict with the claim that moral utterances are susceptible to tests for reasonableness. At ~~best~~ least, if this argument is taken to an extreme, it conflicts with my own claim. The extreme version of the argument, however, would find few adherents, for it does not merely reduce moral utterances to the status of expressions of emotion, but to that of expressions of primitive feelings, or instinctive attractions and revulsions. If the feeling expressed is not of this primitive instinctive kind but is an emotion we will be able to re-introduce the claim that moral utterances are in some sense reasonable or unreasonable, since emotions can be described as reasonable or unreasonable, in terms both of their intensity and of their appropriateness as responses to certain situations.

We can say, therefore, that reasonableness must be ruled out of morality only on the assumption that we must accept an extreme form of emotivism which equates moral utterances with expressions of primitive instinctive feelings. In deciding whether it is legitimate to speak of moral judgments as reasonable, then, it is necessary first to decide whether or not moral utterances are merely expressions of primitive feelings. If they are more than this, then it will be necessary to consider whether they are expressions of more sophisticated feelings, i.e. emotions, or statements that the speaker feels a certain emotion, or has a particular attitude, or whether they are not properly to be analysed in such terms at all, but are rather to be taken as propositions about certain actions, states of affairs, and so on. Once this has been settled, it will be possible to say what, if any, kind of reasonableness attaches to moral judgements.

First it is, I think, fair to dismiss as implausible the extreme claim

that moral utterances are expressions of primitive feelings. In order to see the implausibility of this claim, it is helpful to consider various types of moral utterance. If we concentrate on an agent's immediate response to the action of another, we may feel that this response is simply an expression of disgust, aversion, attraction and so forth. But of course not all moral utterances are of this type. Indeed, in using the term 'utterance' as a fairly neutral replacement for 'judgment', we beg the question in favour of the extreme emotovist. For instance, 'That's wrong' could be thought to be similar to 'Oh don't!' or 'Disgusting!' if it is uttered by someone watching the activity he condemns. But if we consider instead an agent's examination of various courses of action open to him, or his memory of actions, which he regrets performing, it is more difficult to construe his thought that he ought not to do this, or that he regrets having done that, as expressions of simple revulsion. Situations in which the agent considers future courses of action, or reviews past courses of action, may, and often do, involve awareness of the pleasure he will achieve by doing a particular action, or the pleasure he did achieve from performing a past action, at the same time as awareness of the moral undesirability of the action in question. In such cases, then, the response is mixed, but the primitive element in the response seems to involve the attraction held out by the action, while the moral element opposes this primitive element. To say that an agent regrets having performed an action is not, therefore, to say that the memory of having done it evokes disgust or aversion. Furthermore, what are we to say of more general utterances? If, for instance, to say, 'stealing is wrong' is to express an emotion, it is certainly not to express a primitive aversion. It is difficult to make sense of the idea of primitive feeling responses, whether of aversion or attraction, to anything but a particular object of experience. If, therefore, we consider moral utterances as including, not only immediate responses

to particular experiences, but also as responses to the thought of future actions, the memory of past actions, and the thought of classes of actions (such as stealing, lying or killing), we can see that they are not, on the whole, expressions of primitive emotions.

We are now left with types of emotive theory which not only admit but presuppose that moral responses are in some sense reasonable, though they might not meet the requirements I laid down in my definition of a 'reasonable judgment' in so far as they may not require that the agent be able to state his (good) reasons for a response. The types of theory may be classified as suggesting that moral utterances are expressions of non-primitive emotions, that they are statements about the speaker's emotional state, that they are expressions of approval and disapproval, and finally, that they state that the speaker feels appfoval or disapproval.

I am not concerned to choose among these types of theory, or to support analyses in terms of expression of, rather than, say, statements about, emotional states. My chief concern is with the contrast often drawn between theories which treat moral utterances as statements of belief, capable of truth and falsity, and those which treat them as not being capable of truth and falsity. My argument, broadly speaking, will be to the effect that although on one level cognitive theories of ethics are different in important respects from non-cognitive theories, nevertheless there is a point at which they can be said to meet, viz. at the point of justification. This sounds paradoxical, for we may well suppose that it is over the question of justification of moral judgments that cognitivists and non-cognitivists part company. But I hope to show that the differences are not really of very considerable importance.

One useful approach here lies in a consideration of the main reasons which lead some philosophers to insist upon, and others to reject, the view that moral judgments can be true or false. After considering these

reasons, I shall go on to show that acceptance of the underlying views of cognitivists and non-cognitivists does not commit us to accepting or denying that moral utterances are capable of truth and falsity, but that there are still reasons for treating moral judgments as statements of belief.

3. Non-Cognitivism

First, then, we may consider what appear to be the chief reasons for rejecting the view that moral judgments are capable of truth and falsity. In the first place, there are two views, one more extreme than the other, concerning the verification of moral judgments. The more extreme view, held by logical positivists, is that there is no way of verifying moral judgments and consequently that such judgments are meaningless. Since people do indeed make what they believe to be meaningful moral judgments, it is necessary for the logical positivist to show that these judgments are really no more than expressions of the emotions or attitudes of the speaker. The less extreme view is, not that there is no method at all of verification, but that there is no way of conclusively verifying or falsifying moral judgments. In other words, we cannot prove them.

I do not think that either of these views need cause the cognitivist much concern. The more extreme thesis, if true, would lead us to reject the claim that moral judgments are statements of belief, but the thesis in its extreme form may convincingly be disputed. The less extreme thesis, once its implications are drawn out, might be acceptable, but the conclusion that moral judgments are not capable of truth and falsity does not follow.

First, is it the case that there is no method of verification of moral judgments? And secondly, if this were the case, would it commit us to saying that moral judgments are meaningless? We may answer the second question first. There are notorious difficulties involves in the logical positivist position, the chief of which concerns the defensibility of that

position itself. For if the meaning of any proposition is the method of its verification, how are we to defend the statement that this is so? There seems to be no method of verifying the statement about meaning that is the basis of the positivist position. This is not necessarily a fatal objection to the theory, however, for it is possible to regard the basic premise of the theory as a rule of procedure rather than as a statement. Thus we may consider it to be a piece of advice, to the effect that an investigation into the truth of propositions may usefully be conducted by means of an enquiry into methods of verification. Alternatively, we may regard it as a definitive rule of investigation. Now, as far as some of the sciences are concerned, this may well be a useful approach. But there seems to be no strong reason for accepting the verifiability criterion (or the falsifiability criterion) as a criterion of all investigation, including non-scientific. Or, we might say that <u>in order to</u> assign meaning to a proposition or judgment, we need to know something about what could count for or against its truth. But if we do take this position (which I do not think we must) we are no longer committed to the view that moral judgments must be meaningless, for the nature of the evidence for or against a judgment will depend on the field of enquiry to which that judgment belongs. Not all enquiries are scientific enquiries, and scientific evidence is not the only kind of evidence. Thus, bearing in mind that acceptance of some kind of verification or falsification principle does not automatically rule out the meaningfulness of moral judgments, we may turn to the first of the two questions asked above, viz. is it the case that there is no method of verification of moral judgments? This question may now be rephrased in terms of the availability of evidence for and against moral judgments. So long as we do not demand evidence of a scientific nature, then there seems to be no reason why we should deny that some sort of evidence is available, and consequently that reasons can be

given in support of moral judgments. As for the kind of reasons which might be available in support of moral judgments, we must leave consideration of that for the time being.[3]

The less extreme view concerned with verificiation which has led some people to deny that moral judgments are statements of belief, is that such utterances are not capable of proof. If what is demanded here is logical certainty, then we may agree that moral judgments are not capable of proof. Indeed, they may be said to be significant precisely in so far as they do not express logical certainties. If we want to make moral discoveries, we are ill-advised to work for tautologies. Moreover, if logical necessity is taken to be a necessary condition of our saying that moral judgments are statements of belief, we must suppose that tautologies alone are statements of belief. It follows from this that most of our claims to knowledge and belief are misplaced, and even more seriously, that the concept of belief becomes inapplicable, since we are denied the possibility of believing anything but tautologies, and it would be pointless to speak of <u>believing</u> tautologies.

On the other hand, if the claim is that moral utterances are not capable of proof in some less strict sense, presumably this again involves the suggestion that there is nothing that could count as a justificatory reason for the acceptance or rejection of moral judgments. The reply to the objection in this form is in the same terms as the reply to the strict logical positivist. There is, we may point out, no reason to rule out in advance the possibility of giving justificatory reasons in support of claims in the field of morality. There may be such reasons, and I shall discuss their nature in the next chapter.

Thus, although we may accept up to a point the claims made by non-cognitivists concerning the non-verifiability of moral judgments, the

[3]See Part II chap. 4 below.

parts of the argument which may (but need not) be accepted are not incompatible with a cognitivist position. Moral judgments, one might agree, are perhaps fully comprehensible only if we know what sorts of thing can count as good reasons in the field of moral enquiry. It does not follow from this that moral judgments are meaningless, or are not statements of belief, since we need not accept the necessary additional premise that no reasons of the relevant kind are available.

The second consideration which has led philosophers to reject the view that moral judgments are statements of belief is of a different kind. This is a recognition of an element involved in the making of moral judgments which is not always brought out by a cognitive analysis. When we make moral judgments, it is said, we are in a sense involved in what we say. Unless we feel something about the action, motive, or whatever it might be, we do not make a judgment about it. When we say that an action is wrong, for instance, we express some emotion or attitude which we do not normally express when we remark that it is a fine day, or that there is no post today, and so on. Emotions of liking, approving, disapproving and so forth are involved in moral judgments, and to construe 'x is wrong' as a statement of belief or knowledge as we would 'x is red' is to ignore the emotion or attitude which is conveyed by the judgment. However, while it is no doubt a feature of moral judgments that they are bound up with emotions or attitudes, this feature is not peculiar to moral judgments, nor is it the case that this element in moral judgment cannot be accounted for in a cognitive analysis. The meaning of a statement is not to be confused with the reason for making that statement, or the speaker's intention in making it, or the feelings which give rise to his uttering it. And even if it is always the purpose of anyone using the word 'wrong', say, to express or convey disapproval, that is not to say that one cannot convey one's disapproval by uttering a true or false statement. Suppose we take

a statement such as 'Smith's house is painted purple'. This statement is either true or false, and there are perfectly adequate methods of verifying it. But in certain circumstances, I may make such a statement not only to convey information about Smith's house, but also to express disapproval of Smith's taste in colour. It may be replied to this that 'purple' is a neutral term, and that my disapproval is conveyed by my tone of voice, for instance, whereas moral terms are not neutral, and necessarily express approval or disapproval. That does not answer the point, however, since even if it is part of the function of moral terms to express approval or disapproval, and even if we were willing to admit that anyone who failed to recognise this fact about moral terms did not really understand such terms, we would still not be committed to the view that the meaning of these terms must be defined solely by reference to their use.

Thus, a cognitive analysis of moral judgments can include reference to the emotive element in moral judgments, and the second objection is, like the first, true only up to a point, but not beyond the point at which we would be compelled by accepting it to reject the view that moral judgments are statements of belief.

Here, though, the third objection may be put forward, to the effect that it is impossible to assign any meaning other than a functional one to moral terms, and that we cannot therefore meaningfully make statements in which moral terms are predicated of the subject. There is some force in this view, for there are difficulties involved in defining moral terms, whether naturalistically or non-naturalistically. But I think that the problems can be avoided, and that it is possible to give a working definition of moral terms. An examination of what will count as a good reason for a moral judgment will help us in determining what the meanings of moral terms are.[4]

[4]See Part II ch. 4 below.

Finally, problems arise over the practicality of moral judgments. Since moral judgments are to a very great extent concerned with conduct, it seems to be necessary to find some relation between moral judgments and action, so that we can explain why it is that making a particular judgment should somehow commit us to acting in accordance with our judgment. One way to secure such a connection is to construe moral judgments imperativally, so that to make a moral judgment is to commit oneself, under pain of inconsistency if one fails, to obeying the self-addressed moral imperative. But if all that is wanted is to secure a connection between judgment and action, it seems unnecessary to take the strong view that judgments <u>are</u> in some sense imperatives. And one disadvantage of this view is that it ties up judgment and action so closely that one cannot sincerely make a moral judgment and fail to act in accordance with it. This conclusion appears to be incompatible with experience, since there do appear to be occasions when we do not do what we judge to be morally right.

Nevertheless, the feature of practicality is one which must be accommodated in an adequate theory of moral judgment. It is necessary to show how judgment can (and may legitimately be expected to) lead to action. But in order to accommodate this feature, we need not go to the extreme of identifying judgments and imperatives. Instead, we can revert to the point that moral judgments do involve attitudes and emotions, whether or not they also involve anything further. Now, if my moral judgment, whether or not it is a statement of belief, serves to express an emotion or attitude towards the subject of the judgment, then we can see how moral judgments can lead to action. An attitude of disapproval will, in normal circumstances, lead to avoidance of the object of disapproval. An attitude of approval involves, other things being equal, an attempt to secure the object of approval. Avoidance of the disapproved object is the typical manifestation of disapproval, as pursuit of the approved

object is of approval.

It is therefore possible to deal with these objections to cognitivist theories of moral judgment. For it is possible to show that we need not rule out a priori the possibility of giving good reasons in support of judgments made in the field of moral enquiry, and that there is consequently no logical impossibility in regarding moral judgments as statements of belief. But it is also possible to show that there is no need for a cognitive analysis to ignore important elements of moral experience, such as the element of emotion which is involved in moral judgment. And the inclusion of this element enables us to deal with the feature of practicality which is necessary to an adequate theory of moral judgment.[5] We have, therefore, a lot to learn from the objections commonly made to cognitive theories of moral judgment.

In addition to the more specific features which we have seen to be necessary to a theory of moral judgment, we may draw a more general conclusion from the previous considerations. That is to say, we can now see that it is necessary to distinguish between judgment as an act, and judgement as the form of words in which the act of judgment issues. Judging, or the act of judgment, must be considered in the light of the agent's reasons, motives and intentions in judging, and in the commitments he acquires by judging. If he judges, he does express some kind of emotion; judging involves evaluating, and evaluating involves valuing. He expresses an attitude - he is for or against what he is judging. And in so far as the attitude is directed towards conduct, his judgment will supply him with a motive for acting in one way rather than another. All these features can be brought out by a consideration of the act of judgment.

But we must consider also the form of words in which the act of judgment often issues. And it is with the form of words, the utterance, that

[5] cf. the discussions of pre-dispositions in Pt. I above.

the cognitivist shows his concern. But his concern, like the non-cognitivist's, is one-sided. A theory of judgment must deal with both the act of judgment, and with the verbal judgment which is the result of the act.

4. Cognitivism

What, then, are we to say of the verbal judgment? Is it, or is it not, a statement of belief? Various reasons have been put forward in favour of accepting some sort of cognitivist position. In other words, although many philosophers have wished to hold that moral judgments are statements of belief or knowledge, they have had different reasons for holding this position. Before reaching any conclusion on the status of moral judgments (understood as verbal formulations rather than acts), it is necessary to discuss the reasons which are most often adduced in support of cognitivism.

First, it is often held that, if moral disagreement is to be possible, there must be some facts which moral judgments express. If one person says that Smith's action is right, and another that it is wrong, it seems, both to the people making the judgments, and to observers, that they genuinely are disagreeing, and that one of them must be mistaken. If it were the case that 'Smith's action is wrong' merely expressed disapproval of the action, then it seems that 'Smith's action is wrong' is logically compatible with 'Smith's action is right', and two people making these judgments are not really disagreeing; they simply feel differently. This apparent reduction of moral judgment to a matter of taste does not square with our experience. Our judgments about the moral merits of actions do not seem to be at all like our judgments about the relative merits of rice pudding and blancmange. This is true, and it seems to me to be a strong reason for rejecting a theory that it conflicts with common experience.

Nevertheless, the objection is pressed too far if it is taken to establish, on its own, that there is some fact about which people making

moral judgments disagree, viz. the fact that a given action possesses a property of rightness or wrongness. All that is established is that, in judging actions to be right or wrong, we do not merely express preferences. In judging Smith's action to be right, Jones does not take himself to like something which Robinson, who regards the action as wrong, dislikes. The discrepancy is not like the discrepancy involved when Jones chooses rice pudding and Smith chooses blancmange. But this does not establish that the disagreement between them is of the same type as that between two people who maintain respectively that the Battle of Hastings was fought in 1066 and that it was fought in 1067. We are not necessarily confronted with an all-or-nothing situation where the matter is one of straightforward fact or mere taste.

Following the earlier discussion of the theory that making moral judgments involves expressing attitudes of approval and disapproval, we may adopt the position that, while expressing approval does not necessarily involve stating a matter of fact, neither does it involve expressing simple preference. It is possible to say, therefore, that our moral experience is not in accordance with the view that moral judgments are merely expressions of taste, but that this need not commit us to saying that they are statements of fact. We can accommodate disagreement on moral issues in a compromise theory, by reference to the nature of approval and disapproval, and the implications of expressions of such attitudes.

It is natural to speak of appropriateness and inappropriateness with regard to attitudes of approval and disapproval. Certain objects are taken to be suitable objects of such attitudes, while others are not. If I say that I disapprove of something, I lay myself open to the question why I have such an attitude, and this question concerns justification rather than explanation. (It is of course possible to explain attitudes of approval or disapproval, e.g. by reference to my upbringing, but anyone

asking why I have such attitudes is likely to be dissatisfied with an explanatory rather than a justificatory answer.) Now, in attempting to justify a given attitude of disapproval, or in trying to show that it is appropriate, I am likely to start off by showing that the object of my disapproval belongs to a class whose members in general I disapprove. If my questioner continues to ask why I disapprove of objects of that type, I may appeal to some more general justification, and so on.[6] If, however, I am unable to offer any justification for my attitude, my questioner is entitled to doubt whether what I feel is really disapproval at all. To return to the earlier example, if I claim to disapprove of rice pudding, I will normally be taken to be misusing words, and incorrectly trying to express my dislike of rice pudding. This is not to rule out completely the possibility of disapproving of rice pudding. I may be able to make my attitude intelligible by reference to some health hazard which I believe to attend the eating of rice pudding. But in general, disapproval of something innocuous seems unintelligible unless I can show that the object is, or seems to me to be, in some way harmful. But this does not apply only to innocuous objects. For if I claim to disapprove of, say, lying, without being able to offer any justification of my attitude, it could reasonably be doubted whether I really did disapprove of lying. Perhaps I dislike it, or perhaps I accept the views of my friends, but if I have no justificatory reason for disapproving of it, then it does seem true to say that, whatever I do feel towards the object, it is not disapproval. Though more general points arise in this connection, these may more usefully be discussed below in the final section of this chapter. For the time being, it is enough to point out that, if we are to follow normal usage, attitudes of approval and disapproval are susceptible of justification, and an attitude which cannot be justified, on which the agent is unable to

[6] I do not at this state wish to go into this question in detail, as I shall be discussing it in ch. 4 below.

justify, is unlikely to be one of approval or disapproval. Thus, when I express my approval of something, I commit myself to offering a justificatory reason for my attitude, and, as it were, tacitly pledge that I have a justificatory reason for adopting the attitude. Consequently, even if we analyse moral judgments in terms of expression of attitudes of approval and disapproval, we can accommodate moral disagreement in the analysis, since there may be disagreement about the reasons which are to count as justifications for the attitudes.[7]

A second reason for claiming that moral judgments have cognitive status is to be found in the necessity for explaining the importance which is generally attached to morality. If, it is argued, morality is ultimately a matter of choice, preference, or even commitment, then it is hard to see why people should take it so seriously. Why should it matter what moral choices we make, or what moral preferences we have, if there is no such thing as the right choice? This ties up with the claim that morality is not an arbitrary matter, but is rather a rational pursuit, and that if we are to account for this, we must be willing at least to assume that our moral judgments are at least capable of being true. Now again, this claim, while perfectly acceptable up to a point, can be taken to prove too much.

People do take morality seriously. We use words like 'moral' and 'morality' partly to indicate that what we are talking about is important. If a choice is a moral one, or described as a moral one, we may take it for granted that the choice is more important than a choice between objects of pleasure, for instance. If a claim is a moral one, it is usually taken to over-ride any claim other than a moral one. If we attach importance of this kind to moral matters, or if, perhaps more accurately, we identify those judgments, choices and claims which we regard as most important by describing them as 'moral', then it would certainly be odd to say that

[7] Such a view about reasons may commit us to some kind of cognitive account at that level. This will be discussed below.

morality was purely arbitrary, and that one judgment or choice was as good as any other, depending only upon the taste of the agent involved. In accepting the importance of morality, we commit ourselves to regarding it as a rational pursuit. Whether it is so or not perhaps is unprovable, but we cannot consistently regard it as being important and irrational.

But these considerations do not force us to postulate objectivity of morals in the strong sense that we must somehow reify moral properties. Such a conclusion rests, I think, on the acceptance of some theory of meaning and truth which need not be accepted. Philosophers who draw this conclusion accept the challenge offered by the logical positivist on his terms, but this, as I have tried to show, is not necessary. We need not accept that only two kinds of statement have meaning, namely those which are analytic and those which are empirically verifiable. Consequently, we need not accept that, in order to defend the reasonableness of moral judgments, we must show that they are analytic, or else that they are, or can be translated into, empirically verifiable statements. Because of this, we do not have to say that there exist in the world such properties as goodness, rightness, or obligation. All that we need to do is to show that moral judgments are or can be reasonable, since justificatory reasons can be given for them.

5. Reconciliation

We must, therefore, be careful in repudiating non-cognitivist theories of moral judgment. What I mean by this is primarily that we must not allow ourselves to be pushed into what is called a 'cognitivist' position and is held to involve commitment to one of a set of unacceptable theories about moral properties. So far, I have argued that non-cognitivist theories of judgment need not be accepted if it can be shown that some judgments are reasonable and others are not. If there are justificatory reasons which entitle us to make one judgment rather than another, then we are justified

in speaking of the judgments supported by those reasons as true, and those which are contra-indicated as false. If evidence of this entitling kind can be found, then I think we are forced to accept some form of cognitivist position: that is to say, we must accept that moral judgments are capable of truth or falsity. But we do not have to go on to say that their truth or falsity is dependent on the existence of properties, whether natural or non-natural, which can correctly or incorrectly be predicated of the subject being judged. Our acceptance of their truth depends on the adequancy of the reasons for the judgment to establish the conclusion drawn.

The arguments adduced against non-cognitivism, that non-cognitivism cannot allow for moral disagreement, the importance of morality and its non-arbitrariness, seem to be perfectly satisfactory arguments for the moderate conclusion which I wish to draw. But the conclusion is not so much that non-cognitivism as such must be rejected, but that there is more cognitivism in the non-cognitivist's theory than he realizes. If he takes the view that moral judgments are expressions of approval and disapproval, a consideration of the meanings of the terms 'approval' and 'disapproval' will show us that he is committed to a view very much like the view I have outlined as constituting a moderate and acceptable cognitivism.

He might not, however, accept the conclusion I have drawn from the fact that attitudes such as approval or disapproval are essentially based on reasons for adopting a given attitude towards certain actions. For I have suggested that if justificatory reasons are available, then we need not deny that moral judgments are statements of belief, and may consequently be true or false. But the difference between us is now chiefly a terminological one, which can easily ebough be resolved.

Consider the judgment, 'Smith's action is right'. The non-cognitivist takes this to be an expression of the judge's approval. If he is right in

supposing that what is expressed is approval, as opposed to liking or attraction, then he is committed, in virtue of the logic of the term 'approval', to saying that the judge has justificatory reasons for his approval. But he may still wish to deny that the judgment is itself a proposition, since the utterance of the judgment expresses approval, and does not state that the approval is appropriate. So long, however, as he accepts that the judgment commits the judge to the claim that his judgment is appropriate, then there is no real disagreement between us. For while I would say that the adequancy of the reasons for approving renders the judgement true, he must at least say that such adequacy justifies the judge in adopting an attitude of, and expressing, approval. Now if the utterance of the judgment 'Smith's action is right' is justifiable if and only if, approval is justified, and if in any given case approval is justified, then in that case the judgment is reasonable. And in saying that the judgment is true, that is really what I want to say. Thus the non-cognitivist, in saying more than he realizes, is saying very much the same thing as I am, but saying it in a different way. If my use of the word 'true' is rejected on the ground that it misleadingly suggests that I am asserting the real existence of moral properties, I am quite willing to give up the word 'true' and use instead the terms 'reasonable' or 'justified'. But I would expect the non-cognitivist in return to withdraw his claim that moral judgments are mere expressions of approval, and to admit that it makes sense to speak of judgments as reasonable, justified or acceptable.

This does leave us, then, in a compromise position. There is no need to draw pessimistic conclusions from the non-cognitivist's case, for he is himself committed to speaking of the reasonableness of moral judgments. But we need not embroil ourselves in the difficulties caused by adopting a full-blown objectivist position concerning the status of moral properties.

The argument so far has not yet established the possibility of

reasonableness, of course. All that has been shown is that *if* there can be justificatory reasons for moral judgments, then those judgments may be described as reasonable, justified, or acceptable. The questions remain whether there are such reasons, and, if so, what they are, and how we are to establish their relevance and strength. In the following chapter, I shall discuss these questions, and try to show that we are entitled to speak of the reasonableness of moral judgments, and that there are legitimate ways of establishing it in given cases.

Chapter 4

The Justification of Moral Judgments. 2.

In the last chapter, I argued that it is possible to do justice to the arguments of both cognitivists and non-cognitivists by stressing both the features of moral judgment as an act, and of moral judgment as a verbal utterance. By doing this, we can in the first place allow for the emotive elements in the process of judging, and by doing so link up judgment and action, while in the second place we can, by construing judgments qua verbal utterances as statements of belief, allow for the reasonableness of moral judgments in such a way that we are entitled to speak of them as true or false. However, although it was shown that it is theoretically possible to speak of judgments as reasonable or unreasonable, true or false, since there is no logical necessity to rule out the availability of reasons which might be offered in justification of judgments, it was apparent that we cannot speak of moral judgments as being actually justifiable or justified unless we can identify reasons which will count as justificatory reasons for judgments in the field of moral discourse. It is necessary then both to identify such reasons, and to show that we are entitled to treat them as justifying judgments.

At this point, it is helpful to distinguish three different types of moral judgment. First, there is the particular judgment, which has reference to a particular action, agent, or state of affairs, whether past present or future, actual or intended, real or imagined. Secondly, there is the general judgment, which has reference to classes of action, types of motive, and so on. Finally, there is the basic judgment, which has reference to a wide area, if not the whole, of morality. The common names for these types of judgment are, respectively, judgments, general rules,

and fundamental principles. But it is useful to remember that general rules and fundamental principles are properly to be described as types of judgment, distinguishable from particular judgments by reference to their generality and comprehensiveness. Thus, to take an example of a fundamental principle, the principle of utility, that actions are right in so far as they mazimise pleasure and minimise pain, is itself a moral judgment. Equally, 'One ought not to lie' is both a general rule and a judgment.

Consequently, in discussing the nature and justification of moral judgments and justificatory reasons for them, it is important to remember that judgments may be of these various types.

First, it is important to have some idea of the nature of the relationships between rules, principles and particular judgments, for only when we have this will we be sure that our justification is of the right thing. Particularly must we decide whether the general is to be decided by reference to the particular, or vice versa. For it seems that a certain amount of confusion is generated by a failure on the part of some modern philosophers to make it clear whether they are concerned, in adopting naturalism, non-naturalism, intuitionism and so on, with methods of discovering and adopting or establishing judgments of the particular, or basic principles.

If we argue that particular judgments are established by reference to general or basic principles, we are, I think, relying upon a particular concept of the pattern of moral discussion and argument. First of all, we have a particular judgment. For instance, Smith says to Jones, 'You ought not to have done that.' Jones then plays the part of the questioning philosopher, asking for justification at each point in the argument, while Smith, in providing answers, presents an argument going backwards

from the particular to the general. A typical example of such a dialogue may be presented like this.

Smith: You ought not to have done that.

Jones: Why not? It seems perfectly proper to me.

Smith: Well, it's stealing. I agree that we expect perks in this job but taking things like that is going too far.

Jones: So what? In condemning stealing, you're just paying lip-service to conventional morality. There's nothing really wrong about it.

Smith: But in stealing, you're doing a great deal of harm. You're depriving people of what they're entitled to.

Here the argument might stop, or it might take a different turn. It would seem odd for Jones to ask what is wrong with doing harm, or why one shouldn't deprive people of what they are entitled to. So at this point he might agree with Smith that one oughtn't to deprive people of what they are entitled to, Thus Smith's appeal to a basic principle of justice might succeed in convincing Jones that his action, being classifiable as an act of injustice, is condemned by a basic principle accepted by both of them. On the other hand, Jones might deny that his action is classifiable as an act of injustice, since he regards capitalism as an evil, and considers that the directors, shareholders and so on are not entitled to their ill-gotten gains. He and Smith agree in condemning injustice, but they have different concepts of injustice. Consequently, if the argument conforms to the pattern, the result could be that Jones convinces Smith that his original judgment was mistaken, since it is not after all supported by the principle of justice which he has in mind. But whichever way the verdict goes, successive judgments are justified by reference to judgments of wider generality. Final justification of judgments is thus seen to be a matter of the justification of fundamental principles. A particular judgment is supported by reference to a general rule, and the general rule by reference

to the fundamental principle. The fundamental principle is then unsupported. At this point, philosophers take different lines concerning the fundamental principle. They may appeal to intuition, or claim that the principle possesses a priori validity. Alternatively, they may claim that the fundamental principle possesses explanatory force, pinning down features which are common to particular judgments. An appeal to the common moral consciousness might be lodged at this point. But before considering these various ways of attempting to justify basic moral principles or judgments, we must ask whether the assumptions which lead to the belief that final justification is concerned with basic principles are acceptable assumptions.

The previous pattern of moral argument goes from the particular to the general. Particular judgments are justified by reference to more wide-ranging judgments. But it is possible to turn this argument round, and to suggest that the basic judgment by reference to which others are to be justified is the particular judgment. So it might be argued that when someone states a general rule, such as 'One ought not to lie', the justification he would offer if challenged might consist of an appeal to particular instances of lying which were (according to him) recognizably wrong. A general rule would thus presumably be an inductive generalisation from particular instances of judgment. Possibly Mill would say this of general rules, which he regards as rules of thumb based on the collective experience of mankind. In support of this position, it could be argued that particular judgments are more solidly-based than general ones, since it is in the particular situation that we can obtain the relevant information about motives, consequences, and so on. But if we regard particular judgments as basic, what are we to say about fundamental principles? Surely a fundamental principle, which has reference to different types of action and situation, cannot be simply an empirical generalisation. If we

are justified in saying, on the basis of the judgment that this lie is wrong and that lie is wrong, that lying is in general wrong, are we similarly justified in saying that since this lie is wrong, that theft is wrong and so on, that (say) causing unhappiness is wrong? The answer to this could be that fundamental principles are not simply generalisations of particular judgments, but are based on an investigation into the reasons we would give in support of particular judgments. Thus, we might say that this lie is wrong because it causes unhappiness, a particular theft is condemned because it causes unhappiness, and that some act (of, say, beneficence is right or good because it brings about happiness. Since the common denominator of particular judgments is the reference to the happiness or unhappiness caused by the actions which are judged, then the basis of judgments would appear to be the happiness-potential of actions.[1]

Now it is clear that in practice people may offer arguments conforming to either of these patterns. That is to say, they sometimes justify particular judgments by reference to more general judgments, and sometimes appeal to particular judgments in support of the rules or principles which they advocate. The reason for this, I suppose, is the different types of challenge are issued. Sometimes a particular judgment is challenged, in which case one may show that the challenger shares a principle which covers the particular judgment. But sometimes it may be a rule that is challenged, and one may be able to support it by getting the challenger to agree with a set of judgments which give rise to some generalisation.

However, although both patterns of argument are to be found in practice, and it is the case both that particular judgments are cited in support of general judgments, and that general rules or principles are cited in support of particular judgments, it is reasonable to assume that one form of argument has logical priority, even though the relationship

[1]I am of course appealing to the principle of utility merely as an example of a possible fundamental principle. I am not arguing that it is fundamental.

between particular and general judgments is such that we may argue indiscriminately from one to the other.

The important question might thus seem to be whether the basic judgment (by reference to which other forms of judgment are to be justified) is the particular or the fundamental. For I do not see that the general rule or judgment could be basic, or useful as a justification, since it is essentially one which has exceptions. 'Lying is (usually) wrong' does not serve to establish 'This lie is wrong' since the point at issue may be precisely whether this lie is one of the ones which are wrong, or whether it is one of the exceptions.

Roughly, what I want to say is this. It is by making particular judgments that we come to be able to formulate what we think but the features basic to moral judgments are the common elements expressed by fundamental principles. Thus the basic justification of moral judgments is to be found in the criteria according to which we make moral judgments. These criteria may conveniently be condensed into statements of principle, but the criteria which support particular judgements and find expression in fundamental principles are the hard currency of judgment. If this is so, it explains the form taken by many moral discussions and arguments, where a particular judgment is justified by being shown to be covered by a basic principle, but where people differ about the meaning and scope of the principle. For example, when Smith and Jones differ about the rightness of taking valuable'perks', Smith argues that Jones is acting wrongly since he is stealing and stealing is unjust. Smith knows that Jones also condemns injustice, and therefore hopes to convince him that he is acting wrongly by showing that his actions are unjust. But Jones replies that Smith is wrong when he supposes that stealing is unjust. What is really unjust is exploitation of the workers, and it is necessary to undermine the property-system in order to bring about a just state of affairs. It

thus becomes apparent that genuine discussion can be achieved only if each man states and clarifies his criteria for his particular judgments, since such clarification alone can show whether or not they agree as to the basic principle of justice.

In practice then we do not always need to go into all the ramifications and presuppositions of our judgments. For there is no reason why people who share common assumptions should spell out everything they say. But where there is disagreement over judgments, and justification is demanded, it does become necessary to exhibit the criteria by which one makes particular judgments, and thereby explain the rationale of one's particular judgments and basic principles.

In order to show what will constitute a reasonable and adequate justification of moral judgments, whether particular, general or basic, it is therefore necessary to discover acceptable and adequate criteria for judgments. The task of justification is therefore two-fold, for it is necessary to show that various criteria, if they are acceptable to support moral judgments, and to show that these criteria, themselves embodying moral assumptions, are themselves acceptable. For example, if we accept 'It causes unhappiness' as a reason for calling a particular action wrong, we must be able to show that this reason is relevant to the judgment in question, in the sense that it must be true that this action causes unhappiness, and also that we must be able to show that the reason is acceptable in the sense that causing unhappiness is wrong (or a wrong-making characteristic). A reason expressing a criterion of moral judgment points to a feature in or of the object being judged, and also embodies a moral assumption about the moral status (right, wrong, good, bad) of that feature. If the reason expressing the criterion is to be an adequate justification, it must therefore point to a feature which is there, and it must point to a morally relevant feature.

We now know approximately what we must do in order to justify moral judgments, and moral judgements will be seen to be justifiable if and only if the task is a possible one to accomplish. It is now necessary to discover criteria which are adequate and letitimate in the sense which I have explained.

To start with, we may take several features which are frequently taken to be relevant to an assessment of the moral status of actions, and then try to relate them to various judgments. One feature is happiness-production. The utilitarian will justify his judgments by showing that actions increase or reduce happiness. His justification will be effective if it is the case both that his assessment of the happiness-production of the judged action is correct, and that his assumption that actions are right or wrong in so far as they produce happiness or unhappiness is acceptable. Secondly we have the feature[2] of justice. Third, an action may cause or alleviate suffering. Fourth it may infringe liberty. Fifth, it may involve respect, or lack of respect, for persons.[3]

This may not be an exhaustive list of features which are pointed to by moral judgments, but at least it enables us to see all the basic features which are frequently thought to be relevant in an assessment of the rightness and wrongness of actions (leaving aside, that is, purely formal requirements such as that expressed by Kant's Categorical Imperative). It may be observed that each of these features is contained in a principle which has been held to be fundamental. The first is enshrined in the Principle of Utility, and the second in a Principle of Justice or Equality. The third may be expressed in a significant variation of the Principle of

[2]A vague word, but one which must be used in the absence of one more precise and less loaded.

[3]My point here is not that these features of actions are all of the same type, or that each is equally relevant and acceptable as the basis of moral judgment, but merely that they are all in fact cited in support of moral judgments.

Utility, in the Principle of Negative Utility 'Minimise Suffering'. We also have the Principles of Liberty and Respect for Persons. It is therefore clear that each of the features I have mentioned has been taken very seriously as being not only relevant but basic to moral judgment. An examination of them may be expected to yield some information about justificatory reasons for moral judgments. We must consider which of them, if any, is necessary and/or sufficient for justified judgment.

The principle of Utility, in various formulations, has for a long time been considered to be a, if not the, fundamental principle of morality, expressing a or the, criterion by which we may judge the rightness and wrongness of actions. According to this principle, an action is right if it maximises happiness, wrong if it fails to do so. The rightness of an action is held to be determined by its consequences, whether actual, foreseen or foreseeable. What we must refer to in deciding whether or not an action is right is therefore the amount of happiness which the action produces or may be expected to produce, but we cannot take its happiness-production in isolation, for what matters is that happiness should be maximised and so we must know whether this action produces more happiness than any alternative action (or inaction). Thus the main point made by a utilitarian is that, since any given judgment is to be justified by reference to the happiness brought about by the judged action, the type of reason which is relevant in the field of moral enquiry is that which points to the happiness-production of actions. Given any judgment 'That action is wrong' and the challenge 'Why is it wrong?' we can support the judgment and meet the challenge, by saying, 'Because of all the alternative actions, this one produces the greatest happiness.' Before we decide whether the criterion expressed by this reason is or can be morally basic, we must consider some of the other features I have referred to.

One of the commonest appeals made in support of moral judgments is to

the justice or injustice of actions. Favouritism, racialism, prejudice in general, are denounced because they involve injustice. Any action which involves discrimination between equals or failure to discriminate between unequals, is normally thought to be morally wrong, and a judgment to the effect that a given action is morally wrong can, it is thought, be adequately supported by reference to the fact that unjust discrimination is involved. Now it is clearly the case that justice and happiness production cannot at the same time be features of action to which adequate reasons for judgments may appeal. For justice and happiness-production need not, and sometimes do not, coincide, so it may be, and sometimes is the case that conflicting judgments are generated by appeals to these two features of action. We must therefore conclude that one of these features might be morally basic, or that neither of them are, but not that both of them are. That does not mean that they cannot both be morally relevant, or even important, but that reasons appealing respectively to happiness-production and justice cannot both be adequate and sufficient justificatory reasons for moral judgment. Before deciding which, if either, has priority, we must consider reasons appealing to the features of negative utility, liberty, and respect for persons.

The feature of negative utility may also be called the feature of suffering-production. If we hold that this is a, or the, basic moral feature, what we are saying is that the fact that an action causes more suffering than alternative actions is an adequate reason for saying that that action is wrong. Moral judgments can be adequately supported by reference to the criterion of negative utility. Again it is clear that if this is the basic moral feature of action, then neither utility nor justice can be basic, though they may still be important. For if a judgment that an action is wrong is adequately supported by reference to the fact that that action fails to minimise suffering, we cannot adequately support moral

judgments by showing that an action produces maximum happiness, or is just. For it need not be the case, and it sometimes is not the case, that the features of utility, negative utility, and justice are compatible. An action may at the same time produce maximum happiness and fail to minimise suffering. It may minimise suffering but be unjust, and so on. Consequently, reliance on any one of these features as morally basic precludes reliance on either of the others as basic.

The same can be shown to be true of liberty and respect for persons. If an action is right in so far as it respects the liberty of individuals, or refrains from violating it. then a judgment as to an action's moral status cannot be adequately supported by reference to utility, negative utility, or justice (understood as equality). For sometimes it may be possible to respect liberty only at the price of producing less happiness or more suffering, or of treating equals unequally, unequals equally.

Finally, we must consider respect for persons, for although this feature may not be compatible with all the other morally relevant features of actions, it may be compatible with some of them. Respect for persons may be said to be manifested in actions performed in recognition of the moral status of human or rational agents. In Kantian terms, it is manifested in treating a rational being as an end in himself. The emphasis is consequently on rationality rather than on humanity, and we may say that essentially respect for persons is manifested in treating them as rational beings capable of willing and choice. If then the rightness of actions depends on whether or not persons are respected, and the fact that persons are respected or not is a sufficient reason for calling an action right or wrong, we must ask whether this moral reason can be basic, and whether it is compatible with the other criteria which claim to be morally basic. It seems clear that if respect for persons is a morally basic feature, then utility cannot be. For it is quite easy to conceive of a Brave New World

situation in which the happiness of the majority is produced by means which must be condemned if respect for persons is the basic moral criterion. Secondly, negative utility and respect for persons are incompatible as basic moral criteria. For again, we can conceive of a situation in which suffering is minimised at the cost of failure to respect persons, or conversely respecting persons involves failure to minimise suffering. We may assume that suffering is not necessarily confined to the rational element in human beings, or even to human beings. Very often, suffering is caused by physical phenomena. Pain is not always mental pain. Consequently, if we could minimise physical suffering by, for example, administering drugs which cause mental confusion, we could not at the same time perform the action which minimises pain, and still respect persons.[4]

However, it seems more likely that respect for persons, as a basic moral criterion, is compatible with justice and individual liberty. To take justice first, it seems unlikely that an act of discrimination between equals would or could be demanded by the requirement of respect for persons, since recognition of the moral status of persons must involve recognizing their equality in possession of rationality. And even if we wanted to speak of justice with regard to non-rational beings, the requirements of justice as a basic moral criterion would be at least compatible with respect for persons, since rational beings are not equal to non-rational beings, and we could treat them differently if it were required by respect for persons without being unjust, while if there is a requirement to treat non-rational beings equally there is no reason to assume that such action would necessitate a violation of respect for persons. It is reasonable to conclude, then, that justice (with regard to equality) and respect for persons could at the same time be basic moral features, and that one form of justice, that concerned with equal treatment of rational beings, is

[4]But see below pp 213-6. Negative utility and respect for persons do conflict, but we may have to effect some compromise.

involved in respect for persons. The two are conceptually related in such a way that if respect for persons is a basic moral requirement, then so is justice with regard to rational beings. Nor is it, I think, conceptually possible that justiceis a basic moral feature even if respect for persons is not.

The same is applicable to liberty. If liberty, qua moral criterion, is defined as it commonly is in terms of the right of rational beings to choice and decision, then in respecting individual liberty we are respecting persons, and if either is a basic moral feature then so is the other. As far as the liberty of non-rational animals is concerned, it is hard to see how we are to make sense of the idea that animal liberty ought to be respected, unless, that is, we understand the term 'liberty' literally. Although one might well argue that there is an area of morality covering human treatment of animals, we would only by analogy speak of treating animals justly, and respecting their liberty. What does seem to be involved here is the minimisation of suffering. If it is wrong to cage animals, it is because they suffer in captivity. If we ought to treat animals justly, then surely what we mean is that we ought not to treat some animals well and others badly, and if this is so, then it is simply because we ought not to treat any animals badly. But if, with regard to animals, the basic moral feature of action is that actions causing suffering are wrong, then it is not the claim to liberty that is incompatible with respect for persons as a basic moral feature, but the claim to be spared suffering, and we have already seen that negative utility and respect for persons appear to be incompatible as basic moral features. Justice and liberty are therefore each compatible with respect for persons as basic moral criteria, but we have seen that they are not at first sight compatible with each other. However, this apparent conflict can be resolved, so long as we recognize the subordinate status of justice

and liberty.

Consequently, if we are looking for a basic moral feature, or a group of them, we must (assuming that the original list was exhaustive) pick one of this set: utility, negative utility, justice, liberty, respect for persons, justice and respect for persons, or liberty and respect for persons. In other words, in searching for an adequate criterion for moral judgments, we may expect to find it among a set of reasons pointing to one or other of these features of action.

However, although it is the case that I have defined 'basic moral feature' in such a way that these moral features cannot all be basic, since a feature is basic if and only if its presence is enough to determine the rightness and wrongness of actions, it must be borne in mind that there is another sense of 'basic' in which these features might all be basic. For something is basic if there is nothing more basic to which it can be reduced. Thus, utility and negative utility could both be basic in this sense, and so could respect for persons, though it might be argued that justice and liberty are reducible to respect for persons. But the implications of the suggestion that all these features might be basic must be made explicit before we accept this suggestion. For it seems as though in adopting it we commit ourselves to denying what could be regarded as a dogma of moral philosophy, viz. that ought implies can, or that we cannot have a duty to do what we are unable to do. If, say, negative utility is a basic moral feature, then we must say that an action securing negative utility is obligatory. Thus if we were in a situation where negative utility, and respect for persons (also basic) conflicted, incompatible actions would be obligatory. In answer to this it might be pointed out that 'basic' now means merely 'irreducible to anything more basic'. But I think it is quite unhelpful to regard something as morally basic in this sense along. There is no point in describing a feature as morally basic

unless we regard discovery of such a feature as significant, but if a feature is to be significant, surely we must say that knowledge that an action possesses that feature is action-guiding. Consequently, if to say that a feature is morally basic means no more than that it cannot be reduced to anything else, its moral relevance is hard to find. However, we may accept this and still avoid the conclusion that ought need not imply can. For the choice is not necessarily between a feature which is basic in the sense that an action possessing that feature is either obligatory or forbidden, and one which is basic in the sense merely that the feature cannot be reduced to other more basic features. And this is where it is helpful to speak of criteria rather than of moral principles or particular judgments. For to say that a feature of action is morally basic is to say that the possession by an action of a morally basic feature gives us a criterion for judging that action, though not necessarily a conclusive one. If we say this, we avoid the choice between features which are morally basic but insignificant, and those whose possession is sufficient to render an action obligatory or wrong.

We can now see that an attempt to discover one feature which is morally basic in the sense that a judgment pointing to it is adequately justified by reference to it, is misguided. For though a judgment is fully justified if and only if there are adequate criteria by reference to which it is made, it need not follow that one criterion alone is adequate to support any moral judgment. In this context, we may consider the analogy between moral and aesthetic judgments. In judging works of art of various kinds, we point to features possessed by the work. Our reasons for judging a work of art to be good, bad, or indifferent contain references to features which we consider to be aesthetically relevant. But we would not suppose that all types of work of art are judged by the same criteria, or even that all works within one particular type are to be judged by the same criteria.

Thus it is obvious not only that we point to different types of thing in judging paintings and literary works, but also that we look for features in lyric poetry that we would not expect to find in novels. So although we may judge a lyric poem by reference to its rhymes and scansion (let us suppose), in a novel we are more likely to judge the handling of the characters. But although scansion may be an aesthetically basic feature of the lyric poem, and character of the novel, we can still say that a poem, or that a novel in which character-development is well-handled is still not a good novel. Saying this does not commit us to saying that scansion is not basic to the poem, or character-development to the novel, but merely that we need to know more about the poem or novel before we can really judge. The poem is good in so far as its scansion is satisfactory, but on balance the poem might fail. It may even be the case that two possibly-incompatible features are basic to a work of art such as a novel, so that in a particular type of novel, satisfactory characterization might preclude balanced structure, or theme-development is possible only if the characters are parodies. So in general terms we might say that a novel in which psychological realism is pursued is likely to be thematically weak, while a fable can be thematically powerful only if the characters are universal rather than particular, but we can still maintain that theme and characterization are both basic features of the novel. This could lead us to say that the best novels are those in which theme and character mutually interact, but even if we regard the fable or the psychological novel as inferior forms of the novel, we will still be able to judge them in terms of their respective basic features, viz. theme and psychological realism, so long as we are aware of the nature of the work which we are judging.

It would be misleading to press this analogy between moral and aesthetic judgements too far, since the objects of moral judgments, say,

actions, motive and character, do not fall into types as works of art do, nor into genres within types. The point of the analogy is to show that in making judgments we rely upon a range of features which are morally or aesthetically basic, and do not necessarily regard one feature as the most basic, or even as relevant in all cases. What we do is to isolate the features which we regard as important and make judgments on balance. The action, say, is good in so far as it possesses the feature of positive utility, bad in so far as it possesses the feature of injustice, and on balance is, let us say, bad. To express this in terms of reasons, we may say that we have a reason for judging it to be good and a reason for judging it to be bad, but the conclusive reason or criterion is that which leads us to call the action on balance bad.

But we must not suppose that judgment is possible only when we are in a particular situation and know all the facts about that situation. For the morally basic features may be arranged in a hierarchy. For example, we might say in advance of any action possessing the features both of utility and injustice that it is bad or wrong because justice comes higher in the hierarchy than utility, but still in a case where considerations of justice do not enter into the matter the possession of utility by an action may provide us with a conclusive reason for calling the action good.

If then we are to avoid the conclusion (surely false to experience) that we cannot make accurate moral judgments except in a particular situation, we may argue that there is a group of moral criteria, some of which take priority over the others, but each of which must be taken into account in judging. The obvious candidates are clearly the five I have been discussing, viz. utility, negative utility, justice, liberty and respect for persons. Some of these as we saw can be taken in groups, for instance Respect for Persons with liberty and/or justice. It is now necessary to show which of these if any is morally basic, and which take

priority. If we can show that some of them are morally basic and that some take priority over others, we shall have succeeded in showing that moral judgments can be reasonable, since the criteria by which we judge are themselves acceptable. (I do not intend to discuss in detail the question of the moral relevance of those lower in the hierarchy - if some are shown to be basic, others may still be relevant, and I shall assume that they are. Thus, if utility cannot be the one basic moral criterion, I shall nevertheless assume that an action which causes happiness is, other things being equal - in the absence say of injustice - right.)

In order to show the priority of some criteria, I propose to examine the idea that the concept of morality is such that if we practise the activity of morality we must accept certain features of action as morally basic. If this can be shown, it will follow that if we accept a moral commitment, we must in order to be moral accept certain moral judgments, decisions and actions. We can if we choose opt out of morality, and thereby reject the concept of moral obligation, but if we opt out of morality we repudiate an essential part of our humanity.

The concept of morality is essentially tied up with that of sentient beings, that is to say with beings capable of feeling, both physical and emotional. Any relation between morality and inanimate objects is mediated by the links between inanimate objects and animate beings. Thus stealing and vandalism are wrong not because they involve maltreatment of valuable objects but because in stealing we deprive someone of something which is his, and in vandalism we destroy things which belong to or are of use to other living beings. Basically then, in concerning ourselves with morality, we concern ourselves with the lives and welfare of people and non-human animals. This may be taken as a fact about what people conceive the concern of morality to be. So also may the fact that morality has both a positive and a negative aspect, in the sense that we accept that

some forms of treatment of people and animals are wrong, while others are obligatory.

Now one basic fact from which many moral beliefs stem is that there exist in the world sentient beings other than ourselves, who are capable of feeling pain and pleasure. If this were not the case we would have no use for the concept of morality which we now have. Since it is the case, however, it is possible to say that our moral concern has an empirical basis. On the basis of the fact that there exist beings capable of pain and pleasure, we found one of our most basic moral evaluations, viz. that unnecessary suffering is bad, and that to cause it is wrong. This basic evaluation can be seen to underlie many of the moral prohibitions which are expressed in our judgments. We believe that we ought not to be cruel, to kill indiscriminately and so on. But there is also a range of positive judgments which are based on a positive evaluation of certain forms of life, activity and achievement.

We start off therefore with a statement of how things are, their actual nature (e.g. as sentient beings) and proceed to argue towards morality by means of a value-judgment as to what it is good that things should be. I would argue then that the concept of morality begins at the point where our concepts of fact and value merge together, and that for the normal human being it is impossible to view the world neutrally. Our actual experience is itself evaluative, and the concept of nature is itself an evaluative concept. We ourselves play a vital role in our experience of the world. In a Kantian sense we structure it. Thus we cannot be aware that there is pain or suffering without being aware that the object of our experience, suffering, is bad. It might be objected to this that there are people who remain indifferent to the suffering of others, and even people who take pleasure in it. Now the fact that some people enjoy others' suffering does not run counter to my thesis, since the point about

this kind of cruelty or sadism is precisely that pleasure is taken in what is known to be bad. There could be no pleasure in gloating over the sufferer unless one knew that his experience was a bad one. By this, I do not mean morally bad, but rather something of disvalue, something harmful. Admittedly the sadist sees the suffering as something good for him, but it is good for him in so far as he takes pleasure in an object whose badness for others is valued by him. As for the people who are indifferent to others' suffering, which clearly includes most people some of the time, and some most of the time, the reply to this is that one remains indifferent only in cases where awareness is lacking. Awareness of suffering and indifference to it are incompatible.

It is clear that the point I am trying to establish is intended to be significant, and yet it may seem that what I am saying about suffering and disvalue is simply analytic, since nothing can constitute a counter-example. Awareness of suffering involves a negative evaluation, otherwise we do not have a case of genuine awareness (or alternatively not a normal human being - e.g. a psychopath with no moral sense). This statement cannot be merely an empirical generalisation, for if it were we could consider it to be falsified by experienced cases of indifference to suffering. But if it is analytic, then it says nothing more than that the term 'awareness' is used in a particular way, and tells us nothing about human beings and the evaluation of suffering. The proposition is therefore both justifiable and useful only if it is a synthetic a priori proposition. If it is a priori it is not merely empirically based (and therefore false), but if it is synthetic it avoids the triviality of an analytic proposition.

Now it is obvious that if the proposition is true, it is not an empirical generalisation, but how are we to show that it is true if we cannot appeal either to empirical evidence or to the meaning of the term 'awareness'? Following a Kantian line, we can argue that the proposition

is valid if it states a necessary condition of experience. We can therefore defend the view that evaluation of this kind is an essential part of human experience, and at the same time avoid triviality, if we can show that human experience would not be as it is if it were not the case that awareness of certain things involves an evaluation, favourable or adverse, of those things.

The experience which is made possible by the evaluative activity of the human being in relation to the objects of his experience, is the moral experience. If awareness of certain objects did not involve an evaluation of them, there would be no such thing as the experience of the moral agent and judge. But since the moral experience, i.e. the experience of approving and disapproving of some things, of feeling obliged to do and refrain from others, is a datum, then we can say that it must be true that awarness involves evaluation. But how are we to show that a synthesis of awareness and evaluation is a necessary condition of moral experience? The answer to this is that this alone can close the gap between fact and value, and that the openness of the gap is incompatible with moral experience. It is accepted that an evaluative conclusion cannot be derived from premises containing no evaluation. Thus if we do draw evaluative conclusions our premises must contain evaluations. An agent who, after deliberation, concludes that he ought to perform action x must therefore include evaluations in his premises. But the process of deliberation could never get going if he started from neutral facts since he could not get from a neutral factual premise to an evaluative premise from which he could draw a moral conclusion. We must assume therefore that unless all moral arguments are fallacious then not all factual premises are neutral. But we cannot accept that we are moral agents and that our moral experience means something, while at the same time asserting that all moral arguments are necessarily fallacious. Thus if we take a moral standpoint,

we have to accept the possibility of the validity of moral deliberation and argument. Since the validity of moral argument depends on the existence of non-neutral premises, while its point depends upon their factual status, it follows that the adoption of a moral standpoint commits us to asserting the non-neutral factual status of certain premises. But since their factual status depends on experience and their non-neutrality depends on evaluation, experience must itself be evaluative. Therefore the evaluative activity of the human agent in relation to some of the objects of his experience is a necessary condition of moral experience. The proposition that awareness and evaluation are inextricably linked must therefore be accepted as a synthetic a priori truth, at least by anyone adopting a moral standpoint. If someone refuses to adopt a moral standpoint, or refuses to believe that the moral experience is anything more than a widespread illusion, he cannot be proved wrong. But I am concerned with the justification of moral belief from the inside, i.e. on the part of anyone who accepts the validity of moral experience. It is therefore enough to show that the argument holds on the assumption of such validity.

This argument shows that the human moral agent contributes the evaluative element in the experience of certain basic objects. But it does not show which objects are basic, or which way they are evaluated, positively or negatively. To find that out, we must examine moral experience more closely.

As an illustration in the exposition of the previous argument, I used the point that it is impossible to be aware of suffering without at the same time recognizing its badness. To say this is to say that the proposition that suffering is bad is valid in virtue of its being a necessary condition of moral experience. If it is the case that some part of moral experience is dependent on the validity of the proposition, we can say that the proposition has been validated. As I admitted, it is true that

some people remain indifferent in the face of suffering, and that others even take pleasure in it. But these facts do not invalidate the proposition, since a failure to respond to suffering indicates a lack of moral commitment. If I am unmoved by the suffering of others, I shall not do anything, or believe that I ought to do anything, to alleviate it. Conversely, if I do not recognize a duty to alleviate suffering, I manifest a failure in awareness. Awareness of suffering involves a negative evaluation of it. But if I recognize the badness of suffering, the likelihood is that I shall conceive it to be a duty to alleviate it. For the moral agent associates the evaluative awareness of what is good and bad with the moral judgment that the good is to be pursued and evil avoided. This, I contend, is what it means to say that the moral agent possesses a conscience, or moral sense. When we say that people have consciences, we mean in the first place that they perform the activity of evaluative recognition of the objects of experience, and in the second place that this evaluative recognition is, in the normal agent, a necessary and sufficient condition of moral judgment and of acceptance of one's role as a moral agent, as someone who can and should act to bring about and maintain what is good, and abolish and diminish what is bad. Thus conscience is not merely a cognitive faculty, but is a capacity on the part of moral agents to recognize value and disvalue, and to recognize their role as agents of change.

Thus, if we can say of anything that it is judged by moral agents to be good or bad, and which is for that reason something to be pursued or avoided, maintained or diminished, then that object is the possessor of a basic moral feature.

Before going on to discuss the possible hierarchy of basic moral features, it will be helpful to recapitulate and reOorder the conclusions which have been reached so far. The human being is called a moral agent in

virtue of his possession of conscience, which is to say that he has moral experience. The moral experience may be said to consist in a recognition of a moral demand, i.e. in a recognition that one is capable by one's actions of affecting the objects of experience, and that one ought to act in accordance with the basic principle that the good is to be pursued and evil avoided. But this experience is possible only if the moral agent is capable of recognizing what is good and bad. Not only does he recognize it, but he plays an active part in the evaluation of objects of experience and it is upon this role that the objective validity of certain evaluative propositions depends. Furthermore, we can now see how the claim that the good life is to be pursued can be vindicated, for this claim is an elaboration of the principle that good is to be pursued and evil avoided, and recognition of the claim of the good life is an essential part of the evaluative activity of the conscience of the moral agent. But the question remains, what, specifically, is to be pursued as good and avoided as evil. If we can answer this question in terms of the set of morally basic features which has already been postulated, and if we can order that set, then we shall have succeeded in providing a framework of justification for moral judgments.

The features which have been most widely considered to be morally basic are, as I explained earlier, those of utility, negative utility, justice, liberty and respect for persons. If we are to see that these features are morally basic, we must see whether our moral judgments presuppose their value or disvalue. If they do then we may legitimately assume that the human being's evaluative activity, which makes possible the objective validity of moral judgments, centres on these features or objects of experience.

First then we should consider the feature of negative utility. An action or state of affairs possesses this feature if it is the case that

the action causes or the state of affairs contains more suffering than there would be in some alternative situation. It is indubitable that human beings cannot be aware of suffering without considering it to be bad. This is of course most obvious in the case of personal suffering. I cannot regard my suffering as being in itself anything but bad. I may consider it to be necessary as a means to some end, but its value consists in its use as a means and not in the suffering as such. But the same is true of the suffering of others. I cannot be aware that some other living being is suffering without recognizing that their experience is in itself bad. Where I can fail is in my awareness, but given the awareness I must recognize the object as bad. On the basis of this recognition or evaluation, I judge that suffering ought to be alleviated and that I ought to do as much as I can to alleviate suffering and to avoid causing it. This evaluation and judgment are presupposed by a great many of our moral judgments. Specific acts of pain-infliction are condemned, as are unkindness, excessive teasing and so on. On the whole it is considered to be necessary for the advancement of science and medicine to perform experiments on non-human animals, but to be unjustifiable to cause even a minute amount more suffering than is necessary. There is really no need to discuss this point in detail, since the instances of moral judgments which presuppose a negative evaluation of suffering are obvious and unnumerable. It is clear without argument that one must always have a good reason for causing suffering if one's action is to be justified. Disagreement will arise over what counts as a good reason, but not over the necessity for one.

Secondly, utility is considered to be a morally basic feature, so that an action which maximises happiness, or a state of affairs which contains it, is considered to be better than one which causes or contains it, is considered to be better than one which causes or contains less happiness. Again, it is part of the concept of happiness that it is good

in itself, though we may have reasons for condemning certain instances of happiness. Again, too, it is clear that many of our moral judgments presuppose a positive evaluation of happiness. Charitable and philanthropic acts are approved. That an action causes happiness is a reason (a morally relevant one) for performing it. A failure to cause or maintain happiness requires justification. Our concept of morality is such that a failure to recognize this betrays an inadequate concept of morality.

Thus, utility and negative utility are both morally basic features, in that a positive evaluation of the one, and a negative evaluation of the other, are parts of our conceptual scheme of morality. But is one of them more important than the other? That is, is it the case that in situations of conflict, one must take precedence over the other? We can easily conceive of examples where the maximisation of happiness involves the creation of some suffering, or where the alleviation of suffering lessens the amount of happiness. In order to resolve such conflicts, I think we must appeal to the judgment that the avoidance of what is bad is more important than the pursuit of what is good, if the bad and the good are of the same type. Thus since pain and suffering are bad, and pleasure or happiness are good, and since suffering and happiness belong to the same category in the sense that we can meaningfully oppose one to the other or weigh one against the other (without making the misleading assumption that happiness and suffering are simply contraries) then suffering is (morally) more important than happiness. In other words, if we had to choose between a world where there was no suffering but no positive happiness either, and one where there was both suffering and happiness, we should, morally, choose the world free of suffering. In this sense, we might regard happiness as a moral luxury, which ought to be promoted, but only when suffering and happiness have been eliminated, or at least only when happiness is achievable without the creation of suffering. This is not to

say that there is no positive value which can outweigh suffering, but that if there is such a value it is not happiness. Thus if we have to choose between minimising suffering and maximising happiness, the moral choice is that of minimising suffering. The best support of this is an example. If a number of people would be made happy by the pain of one man, it is morally better that the man should not suffer pain.

Given a moral choice between utility and negative utility, then, we must choose negative utility. But how do these features weigh against the other features of liberty, justice and respect for persons? And how do these weight against each other? Although liberty and justice may conflict, I think we must argue that their value depends upon the value of persons. If we did not consider that human beings were of importance or moral significance, we would not believe that the freedom of the individual or the equal treatment of human individuals, were of moral significance. It is therefore clear that the value of the person is morally more basic than the value of personal liberty or justice. The comparative value of liberty and justice will in any given case be determined by the value of the person. They are different aspects of personal value, and in some cases regard for the value of a person may be manifested in a regard for liberty, and in other cases in a regard for justice. We cannot say that justice as such is more important than liberty, or vice versa. We can say only that whichever action manifests respects for the worth of the person is right, and that sometimes the liberal action and sometimes the just action will manifest such respect. There is no real conflict between liberty and justice. The apparent conflict arises from a misguided attempt to attribute a definite value to either of them, instead of recognizing that they possess value in relation to the personal value which is fundamental.

This means that we should not try to determine whether liberty is

more important than utility, justice than negative utility, and so on. The important question is whether the positive value of persons is more or less important than the positive value of happiness and the negative value of suffering. First, I think, we must say that an understanding of the concept of morality commits us to valuing persons more highly than happiness. If we can maximise happiness only by failing to respect human rationality, personal equality or individual liberty, we must say that morally we ought not in such cases to maximise happiness. As I have argued, the concept of a good life is an essential part of the concept of morality. But happiness has a relatively small part to play in a good or complete life. A complete life is achieved by the development or actualisation of potentialities. In so far as this is compatible with happiness, then happiness is not only good, but a morally legitimate goal. But if happiness can be achieved only at the expense of failure to develop human potentiality, it does not come in as a morally possible goal. The happiness of the inhabitants of Huxley's Brave New World cannot justify the means employed to achieve it - the brainwashing, the drugs, and the abolition of judgment, art and dignity. To maintain that happiness is more important than any of these things is to deny the value of morality. Thus if we opt into morality we cannot place utility above respect for persons, and as I pointed out, I am not concerned to argue with those who opt out of morality.

This leaves us with two rival candidates for the role of basic moral feature, viz. negative utility and respect for persons. We cannot be aware of suffering without recognizing its badness and acknowledging a moral obligation to do what we can to diminish it. But we cannot be aware that someone is a rational being, with all the potentialities which rationality creates, without recognizing his special worth. Yet there can be conflicts. For instance, a doctor may alleviate suffering by

performing an operation which renders someone unable to make choices judgments and decisions. Or we might find that in order to enable someone to recognize his freedom, we must let him endure alone the suffering caused by a loss of security.

Now it seems to me that the evaluative activity of the human conscience creates a concept of morality which includes a fundamental negative evaluation of suffering and a fundamental positive evaluation of personality. We cannot say that our concept of morality commits us to placing one of these above another. It commits us to both. We cannot view ourselves as moral agents and remain uncommitted to the alleviation of suffering in all circumstances, but neither can we regard ourselves as moral agents and remain uncommitted to the development of human and personal potentialities in all circumstances. There is consequently a central tension between the two basic elements of our moral thinking. On the one hand we have the disvalue of suffering and on the other the value of human potentiality. We cannot accept moral commitment without accepting that we have a duty to lead a good and complete life, and also a duty to alleviate suffering, but often the two are incompatible. When it comes to making particular judgments and decisions, we may opt for one rather than the other, and some people may regard one as being more important than the other (so, for instance, some people are doctors and others teachers), but even when we choose one of them we are uneasily aware of the other. I do not think that this conflict can be resolved. Sometimes we are pulled in opposite directions, and it seems that whatever we do will be wrong; but also whatever we do will be right. Recognition of the existence of this conflict will not make the moral life any easier, but it does at least enable the philosopher to explain the tensions of a moral life, and to contend that not only are moral judgments reasonable, but that even when they are ultimately unjustifiable because they conflict,

they are also essentially rational, since acceptance of one's role as a moral agent is a necessary part of one's acceptance of one's rationality, and indeed humanity. The objective validity of morality springs from the activity of reason and judgment in the evaluation of the objects of experience. Refusal to perform this activity involves a repudiation of the power of judgment, and a failure to be fully human.

Conclusion

It will now be possible to draw together the arguments and conclusions of the preceding chapters. In setting out to discover whether it was possible to defend the view that conscientiousness possesses unique value, it proved necessary to examine the concepts of virtue and the virtues in order to establish a basis upon which a theory of moral value could rest.

Accordingly, in Part I, I discussed the general concept of virtue, and several examples of specific virtues, both cardinal and minor. I defined a virtue as a 'pre-disposition' in order to emphasize the point that a man who possesses a particular virtue has set himself in advance to perform the action demanded by that virtue in particular circumstances. Virtue in general may also be said to be a pre-disposition, in that a virtuous man is one who has set himself to perform virtuous actions whenever they are demanded by the circumstances in which he finds himself. Now, although virtue in general and goodness may be identified, it is important to remember that, just as we speak of goodness in a general sense and of moral goodness specifically, so we must make it clear whether our concern is with virtue in a general sense or with moral virtue.

Before we can find out the relationship between goodness and virtue, and moral goodness and moral virtue, we must first establish what we recognize as their value. It seemed likely that an examination of specific virtues and the part they play in the life of a human being would yield some clue as to the nature of the value they possess. Indeed there seemed to be an essential link between the concepts of virtue, virtues, and of human life. Consequently, I suggested that we should adopt the hypothesis that what we value is a good human life, and that we regard certain pre-dispositions as good, and hence as virtues, because of their role in a good or complete human life. The virtuous man, I suggested, is the man who lives fully as a human being, and becomes what we regard as a good human being. An examination of the nature

and value of the virtues of justice, wisdom, temperance and courage supported this hypothesis, though we saw that it was necessary to distinguish between personal and inter-personal virtues, since some virtues contribute to the good life of the agent, and others primarily to that of other people. A further discussion of minor ~~vitures~~ virtues showed that an analysis of virtues in terms of the concept of a complete life enabled us to make sense of the worth placed on different predispositions at different times, in different places and by different people.[1]

We could therefore say that the value of a given pre-disposition, which renders it virtuous, is to be explained in terms of the part played by that pre-disposition in the achievement and maintenance of a good or complete human life, i.e. a life in which human potentialities are actualized. But this is not to say which virtues possess distinctively moral value. A pre-disposition may be said to possess moral value, and hence to be a moral virtue, if the agent who has cultivated that pre-disposition has done so in response to his awareness of a moral demand. One of the human potentialities is the moral potentiality. Recognition of this can lead us to develop in ourselves those pre-dispositions or virtues which will enable us to respond appropriately to the moral demands of the situations in which we find ourselves. But since the man of moral virtue is the morally good man, and since the man who develops various virtues in response to his awareness of a moral demand is, precisely a conscientious man, i.e. one who sets himself to do whatever may be morally demanded of him, and who prepares himself as well as possible to meet moral demands, then the morally good man is the

[1]The fact that some virtues were 'changeable' in this sense did not of course show that some pre-disposition that once was a virtue could cease to be such. It could cease to be valued, if those who valued it saw it merely as a means to an end, but then they never regarded it strictly as a virtue in the first place. Alternatively, in some circumstances, it could cease to have application, though if and when it has an application it is of course good. Thus, thrift, as a form of prudence is good, but sometimes the situation is such that it is not prudent to be thrifty.

conscientious man.

Sometimes, though, this position is attacked on the ground that it leaves insufficient room for the special value of love. However, this objection is based on a misunderstanding. For however much we may value love, we do not attribute to it specifically moral value unless we consider it to be a pre-disposition and therefore a type of conscientiousness. For unless love is a response to a recognition of a moral demand, it cannot possess moral worth, while if it is a response to such recognition, then it is not a rival to conscientiousness, but is itself a conscientious response. Nor need we suggest that the conscientious man is unloving or cold-hearted. If he is to respond appropriately to a moral demand, we do not expect him to be grudging in his response.

These conclusions lead naturally enough to a discussion in Part II of the nature and value of conscientiousness. First, if we are to say just what conscientiousness is, and why it uniquely possesses moral value, we must dispose of some misunderstandings. It is a mistake to suppose that conscientious men are dull, or cold-hearted, boring, pig-headed, fanatical and so on. But some objections to the claim that conscientiousness alone is morally good are based on precisely such presuppositions. The conscientious man, is, quite simply, one who has set himself to respond to the moral demand because of its unique claim on the human being. Because he sees that there are actions which he is morally obliged to perform, and others from which he morally ought to refrain, he prepares himself to do as best he can whatever he ought to do. This preparation involves thought and deliberation and the cultivation of virtues. It does not necessitate a rigid adherence to rules. The conscientious man realizes that situations may vary and that he must be ready to cope with special circumstances. Ultimately, then, he is prepared to do whatever actions he believes, after deliberation, he ought to do.

It has been objected to this that the conscientious man may be wrong. Examples are cited of men who are conscientious in the performance of wrong actions. But this does not mean that conscientious people are to be recognized on account of a rigid adherence to an abhorrent code (fanaticism and conscientiousness are not identical), nor does it mean that it would be morally better to ignore the dictates of conscience. Rather it suggests that we should be specially conscientious in making moral decisions. But even when we are mistaken, we must, if we are to be moral at all, do what we conscientiously believe that we ought to do, since if we refuse to judge, and to trust our judgment, we abdicate our moral responsibility. We really ought, then, to do what we believe we ought to do, since there can be no other way of acting morally.

Since so much stress must be laid on the beliefs of the conscientious man, it seemed necessary to discuss the justification of moral judgment. First, we want to see whether moral judgments are to count as meaningful statements, since if they are not, we fall into a serious confusion in our concept of morality. Merely because our moral judgments are not like other statements, we must not suppose that they are meaningless or indefensible. Thus while acknowledging and incorporating the claims of the non-cognitivist to the emotional element in moral judgment (in the act of judgment) we must consider possible justifications for moral judgments qua statements. By adapting a Kantian argument, we can show that the objective validity of moral judgments is the product of an interaction between the objects of experience and the evaluative activity of the human conscience. If conscience did not play this constructive validating part, our experience would not be as it is. We must therefore say that conscience does perform this activity, and that so long as we accept the reality of the moral experience we are committed to recognizing the essential rationality of the judgment-act, and the objective validity of judgment-statements. Furthermore we can establish

a hierarchy of basic moral features, though we must accept a tension between the negative value of suffering and the positive value of human development.

The conscientious man, therefore, is the man who accepts the responsibility of his moral agency, and lives the complete life of a human being in which actualization of the moral potentiality is included. The man who denies the power of the conscience in its validating activity, and its authority as the exponent of the moral demand, must opt out of morality. The true moral agent is, precisely, the conscientious man who accepts the power and authority of his conscience. He is the morally good man.

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