The good reasons approach revisited

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Philosophy in the twentieth century has taken a Copernican turn. We have developed a keen awareness that philosophical problems are often, if not always, generated by linguistic confusions. We shall be free from philosophical perplexity about certain central concepts such as goodness, probability, God, law and the like when we come to understand how such concepts actually function in ordinary discourse. If we find out how the concept of freedom actually functions and why it functions that way, this will relieve our perplexity as to whether any man is ever free; if we find out how the notion of law is used in living contexts, this will help us, as nothing else will, to relieve perplexities about whether there are "natural laws". In moral philosophy what has been called "the good reasons approach" has utilized this philosophical method in a way that has been of an immense value to our understanding of morality. This method has also been of value in many ways to the legal theorist, the historian and the social scientist.

I have tried on previous occasions to make a contribution to the forward movement of this approach. Here I would like further to clarify it and advance it by critically examining one of the most searching criticisms of this whole approach. I shall not limit myself simply to a reply to these criticisms but I shall develop the good reasons approach so as to free it from certain obscurities and to advance such an account of morality. The criticism I have in mind is H. D. MONRO's "Are Moral Problems Genuine"[1]. I single out MONRO's essay because his very central and important criticisms have not been noted and considered as they deserve to be[2]. I have, however, a still more important reason for singling them out: they bring together in an incisive way difficulties with such linguistic approaches to ethics that have also been felt by many others. MONRO clearly voices what many others have said less clearly. He raises in a powerful form some of the persistent doubts and questions that it is quite natural to have about such an approach. I would exhort readers of this essay to read or re-read MONRO's essay, but the scale

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1) H. D. MONRO, "Are Moral Problems Genunine?" *Mind* vol. LXV, (April, 1956), pp. 166-183.
2) TOULMIN once remarked to me that he thought them very important.

of my essay is not merely limited to assessing one sharp criticism of the
good reasons approach, but its overarching aim is to re-examine and re-
state this whole approach in the light of some basic criticisms of it.

I.

MONRO argues that there is a fundamental problem about an "ultimate
justification of morals" and that an adequate moral philosophy must
solve this problem. It must, in short, provide such an "ultimate justifi-
cation" for morality. This problem is not, MONRO argues, a pseudo-
problem engendered by a failure to unterstand the functions of ordinary
moral discourse; it is rather what he labels "a genuine philosophical
problem". He holds, as against TOULMIN, HARE, MAYO, BAIER
and EDWARDS, that there is such a problem and that linguistic analysts
are mistaken in regarding such a question as a pseudo-question [3]. The very
analyses of these philosophers, he argues, bring this problem poignantly
to our attention. The issue MONRO raises is a fundamental one and he
raises it in an incisive way, but for all of that there are in my opinion
some crucial flaws in his argument.

First we need to get a far clearer idea of just what MONRO's problem
is. MONRO seems to be saying that all our practical day to day moral
judgments depend for their very soundness on certain ultimate or funda-
mental moral principles and that it is the crucial problem of moral
philosophy to show how we can justify these *ultimate* moral principles
upon which all our moral conceptions depend.

This certainly seems like a reasonable claim, but MONRO feels fully
the difficulties that we encounter when we try to justify these ultimate
moral principles. Both MONRO and the good reasons approach philo-
sophers think that the traditional attempts to justify these principles all

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3) His criticisms of BAIER, MAYO and EDWARDS occur in his searching critical notices
of their books. Reference to them will be made in assessing MONRO's position in this
essay. See H. D. MONRO, "Critical Notice of Paul Edwards' *The Logic of Moral
Discourse*," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 34 (May, 1956), pp. 52-59, "Critical
Notice of Kurt Baier's *The Moral Point of View*", *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, vol.
37 No 1 (May, 1959), "Review Bernard Mayo, *Ethics and The Moral Life*," *Australasian
Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 37, No 2 (August, 1959), pp. 176-180. His discussions of the
ethical theories of RAPHAEL, HOURANI, EWING and HARTLAND-SWANN are also
worth considering in making a thorough appraisal of his claims. See respectively *Australasian
Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 34, No 2 (August, 1956), pp. 134-140, vol. 35, (August, 1957),
pp. 137-146, vol. 38 (December, 1960), pp. 260-274.

break down. The good reasons approach rejects all varieties of intuitionism, nonnaturalism or transcendentalism. MONRO agrees with them here; but they also agree that the point made by non-naturalists about the naturalistic fallacy is well taken and thus MONRO finds it impossible to accept ethical naturalism. Subjectivism, though it seems the most palatable position to MONRO, "fails to do justice to the way people actually think and behave". And what is most important for our present purposes: none of these traditional positions handle adequately the problem about the justification of fundamental moral principles. Our situation - according to MONRO - is just this: Our workaday moral beliefs, rules and judgments depend for their soundness on certain fundamental principles, but we seem to be completely at a loss to justify these fundamental moral principles. Our crucial philosophical problem about morality consists in examining whether and how (if at all) such fundamental moral principles can be justified. The terrors of Sidgwick remain; this question cannot be dissolved as a pseudo-problem by philosophical analysis. The good reasons approach has treated it in this way, but this is a mistake. Such a moral problem is genuine.

Yet if we push the matter a bit - if we reflect on the exact nature of this question - we will discover that MONRO's question is not as clear as it may seem at first. MONRO describes his problem as follows: "What is the ultimate justification of morals? Is morality objective or subjective?" But, as TOULMIN and EDWARDS have pointed out, to ask if morality is subjective or objective can do little more than promote a stutter until we have some clear idea in what way 'objective' or 'subjective' is being used in such a context.

In his examination of MAYO's *The Moral Life and The Ethical Life*, MONRO makes reasonably clear what he means by a subjectivist in ethics [4]. A subjectivist is claiming that there is no way of rationally resolving fundamental moral disputes, for fundamental moral judgments or ultimate moral principles cannot correctly be said to be true or false independently of the attitudes of at least some people. The subjectivist is claiming, as MONRO puts it, that when we come to "ultimate moral principles we find that we can only accept or reject them, much as our palate accepts or rejects rice pudding" [5].

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4 H. D. MONRO, "Critical Notice of Bernard Mayo's *The Moral Life and the Ethical Life*," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 37, No 2 (August, 1959), p. 177.

5) *Ibid.*

There is, of course, the difficulty about spelling out exactly what constitutes an 'ultimate moral principle' or 'a fundamental moral judgment'. These concepts have a kind of specious clarity about them. But let us for the sake of the discussion assume we have clarified them.

We, of course, cannot *derive* an ultimate moral principle from another principle, for then trivially our "ultimate principle" could not be ultimate. But this does not entail, or in any way justify, the conclusion that we could not know an ultimate principle to be true and it does not at all distinguish ultimate *moral* principles from other ultimate principles.

The subjectivist, according to MONRO, is claiming that there can be no rational resolution to fundamental moral disputes. There is no moral insight or method of validation that will tell us which fundamental moral claims are true or which fundamental moral arguments are sound. If we agree on fundamental principles, then we can rationally resolve our ordinary moral disputes, but if the argument gets really fundamental - if we push our arguments to the limit - we will discover there is no way to objectively validate our fundamental moral claims. Even if as a matter of brute sociological fact we happen to agree on fundamentals, we can recognize, if we are relatively clear-headed, that we could not show that our agreed on fundamental principles were right and that conceivable alternative principles were wrong. Our basic philosophical problem about ethics is to try to determine whether such a subjectivist is right or whether some form of objectivism can be vindicated.

II.

We are still not out of the woods. We have only a specious clarity here, what are we asking for when we ask, as MONRO does, for the ultimate justification of *morals*. Even assuming (as we in reality cannot) that we are clear about the sense in which 'ultimate' and 'justification' are being used here, the question still remains ambiguous. It can mean at least the following four things: 1) How can we achieve final agreement about whether or not to try to act morally? 2) How can we attain final agreement about whether or not to try to accept one pattern of moral behaviour (one moral code rather than another)? 3) How can we finally justify being moral rather than being amoral or immoral? 4) How can we finally decide which kinds of reasons are good reasons *in* ethics? I shall reject, out of hand, the first two statements of MONRO's problem as irrelevant on the grounds that they are not *justificatory* problems at

all but are problems of persuasion or goading. Here I am clearly follow-
ing HARE and FALK in distinguishing between, on the one hand, *telling*
and *guiding* and, on the other, between *getting* and *goading*. It is one
thing to *get* a group of people to agree to act together toward the achie-
vement of a common goal, and it is a quite different thing to rationally
justify to them that this is the morally correct thing to do. One might
by hypnotism, drugs, threats, propaganda and the like attain agreement
about what to do without *justifying* that goal. Moral engineering is one
thing; critical assessment of a moral code is another. 1 and 2 are goading
problems and 3 and 4 are justificatory problems. If MONRO regards
his problem as the problems stated in 1 and 2, I shall rest content with
the bare challenge that he has not raised a justificatory question at all.
If, on the other hand, MONRO's basic problem is 3), I shall grant he
has raised a justificatory problem but not a problem for *moral* justifi-
cation. So construed his problem is not a moral problem; it is not a
problem about how to justify one moral claim or code rather than ano-
ther. He is instead asking for a justification for acting morally *at all*.
He is asking for a good reason for acting morally rather than for acting
on some non-moral basis. 'Moral' here has a descriptive use and it con-
trasts with 'non-moral'. MONRO's question so interpreted is this: to act
morally is to act in such and such a manner, but why act in this manner?
In asking this question, he is asking for a justification for morality as an
activity, as over against a life based on non-moral privilege or some
other non-moral policy. It is or should be obvious enough that in such a
context we cannot sensibly ask for a good *moral* reason or a *moral* justi-
fication for acting morally. As KANT shrewdly recognized, when we ask
this sort of question, we are beyond moral reasoning altogether[6].

The good reasons approach in ethics shows a clear awareness of the
finite scope of moral reasoning. I would argue (and have argued) that
3) is an important problem and an "arguable problem" (a pleonasm), but
since MONRO and I are in agreement here I shall content myself with
insisting that this important problem of human conduct is not a problem
that can arise *within* moral reasoning, though surely it is a problem that
is *relevant* to morality.

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[6] I have tried to show that this is so in my "Is 'Why Should I be Moral?' an Absurdity?",
Australasian Journal of Philosophy, vol. 36, No 1 (1958), pp. 25-32 and "On Being Moral",
Philosophical Studies, vol. XVI, No 1-2, (January-February, 1965), pp. 1-4, and I have tried
to give a detailed answer to this question in my "Why Should I Be Moral?", *Methodos*,
forthcoming.

It is 4) that the good reasons approach has been trying to answer. I shall now try to clarify this question and ask in what senses (if any) it is a *general* philosophical problem requiring a single overall, monolithic solution. I shall assume, henceforth, that it is 4) that MONRO wishes to consider and that it is 4) that MONRO regards as inadequately handled by TOULMIN, BAIER and HARE.

III.

Let us first try to get clearer about just what we are asking for in 4). I shall first restate TOULMIN's statement of this problem and then briefly re-state the kind of answer he takes to be appropriate.

TOULMIN, like HARE, points out that whether we like it or not, we cannot avoid taking a stand on moral questions. Moral arguments, in one form or another, are constantly arising in practical life. We are thus faced with a central practical problem: "How are we to distinguish those (moral arguments) to which we should pay attention from those which we should ignore or reject"[7] Which of the reasons among the many contenders are good reasons and how far can we rely on reason in arriving at moral decisions or moral assessments? In any problematic situation where we must make a moral decision we consider the relevant facts involved and then make our decision. In doing this, we move from factual reasons (R) to a moral decision (E). We want to know if (R) is a good reason for (E). "What is it that makes a particular set of facts, R, a good reason for a particular ethical conclusion E?"[8] More generally what kinds of reasons are good reasons for certain moral conclusions; and is it necessary to find reasons for these reasons and then reasons for these reasons or does "'giving reasons' sometimes become supererogatory" in morals?[9] That is to say, what are the limits of moral reasoning and what (if anything) is the ultimate standard or standards of moral appraisal? I take this last question to be the precisification of 4) and I shall assume that both TOULMIN and MONRO address themselves to this question.

TOULMIN is, of course, on the side of virtue. He emphatically asserts that there are good reasons in ethics; and, while he does not think that there is one "fundamental problem of morals", he is willing to assert

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7) STEPHEN TOULMIN, *An Examination of the Place of Reason in Ethics*, Cambridge 1950, p. 2.

8) *Ibid.*, p. 4.

9) *Ibid.*, p. 3.

that the above problem is a problem that is both of central importance
to philosophical ethics and is frequently personally bedeviling to the man
in moral bewilderment. But TOULMIN also emphatically asserts that
we cannot give one answer to this question which will cover all situations
and all contexts. There are different kinds of reasoning appropriate to
different moral contexts. A moral agent in a particular context faced with
keeping an appointment where there are no conflicting *prima facie* obli-
gations applies the moral principle 'Promises must be kept'. Where there
are conflicting obligations or where no *prima facie* obligations are rele-
vant, a moral agent seeks to determine which of the proposed actions will
cause the least amount of needless suffering for everyone involved. If
the moral agent is questioning the moral rule or social practice as such,
he will ask whether this social practice or an alternative social practice
will be likely to lead to the least amount of needless suffering for every-
one involved. If there is an alternative rule or practice to the one he
is examining that would involve, were it adopted, less suffering for the
people involved, then we would have a good reason for adopting that
social practice rather than the one we are examining. The practice, among
the alternatives, that is most likely to lead to the least amount of needless
suffering for everyone involved, is the practice that ought to be adopted.
If the altering of a social practice led to a happier, fuller way of life for
the people involved, then that practice ought to be adopted. (Here we
have the cash value of social progress.) If alternative social practices
have no discernibly different consequences that would establish one as
having greater felicific consequences than the other, a choice between them
would be a matter of a non-moral personal decision. If the social practi-
ces are so inextricably involved with the very way of life of the commu-
nity that they cannot be compared without comparing whole ways of
life, a decision for or against one would again (according to TOULMIN)
be a non-rational, non-moral decision [10]. "The only occasions on which
one can discuss the question which of two practices is the better are those
on which they are genuine alternatives: when it would be practicable
to change from one to the other *within one society*" [11]. Thus TOULMIN
instead of giving us a block answer gives us a contextual answer to
questions about how fundamental moral principles are justified.

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10) *Ibid.*, p. 153.
11) *Ibid.*

In different contexts different answers (answers emphasized as *total*
answers by the several traditions of philosophic ethics) become relevant.
Moral principles are Protean. There is no one single principle that covers
all situations. *If* what is to count as an answer to the question 'What is
the basic justificatory standard in morals?' must be given in that single-
tracked sense then TOULMIN must answer in the negative: "philosophi-
cal moral problems are not genuine". But, if a *pluralistic* answer like the
one given in the preceding paragraph is allowable then TOULMIN must
answer in the affirmative: "Moral problems are genuine". There are
standards or principles of reasoning in morals; and there are definite
limits to moral reasoning. It is at these limits where moral justification
comes to a natural end as all justification must. *A* central task, if not *the*
central task, of the moral philosopher is to give an accurate paradox-
relieving description of these standards and the roles these standards play
in everyday moral assessment.

The same point might be put somewhat differently. A crucial task of
the philosopher is to define 'morality' in the sense of delimiting its bound-
aries; that is in "showing how it abuts onto, but is distinct from law,
tabu, etiquette, technique, enlightened self-interest and so on" [12]. But
there is no single formula which could be an adequate replacement for
such a description of moral discourse. We need an actual depiction of the
scope of moral reasoning. Single principles can only indicate how some
sectors of the boundary run.

After this exposition of how TOULMIN would "answer" MONRO's
question, I think we can see clearly what bothers MONRO most. MON-
RO is not exercised by the whole of the problem, but with that part of
the problem which deals with the justification of moral principles and with
the justification of whole *ways of life*. I think it is also fair to say that
it is just this problem which exercises a very great number of the more
traditional moral philosophers. It is simply disingenuous of contemporary
linguistic philosophers not to recognize this.

MONRO rightly enough sees ambiguity and inadequacy in Toulmin's
analysis here. Monro points out that Toulmin's conception of the function
of morality and his conception of a principle for judging social practices
admit of two interpretations. One of these interpretations makes Toul-
min's ethics into a universalistic utilitarianism and the other into a form

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12) STEPHEN TOULMIN, "Principles of Morality", *Philosophy*, vol. XXXI, (April, 1956),
    p. 150.

of ethical relativism. Toulmin tends at various points to hold both these
positions and it is not at all clear how they could be reconciled. Monro
also argues that we cannot solve or dissolve the basic problem of "the
ultimate justification" of moral principles by appealing to the function
of moral principles or to certain purely *formal* criteria like universalis-
ability.

I agree with MONRO that TOULMIN's conception of the function of
ethics can be interpreted in a manner that will support either a utilitarian
criterion or a form of ethical relativism. I also agree with MONRO, as
against TOULMIN and HARE, that moral questions about whole ways
of life can arise and to know what would constitute an answer to them
is very important. TOULMIN seems to have confused a question of
immediate social engineering with a question of theoretical moral assess-
ment. To use BAIER's way of putting it, TOULMIN has confused the
practical aim of a moral reformer with the theoretical aim of a moral
critic. There is no way of transforming the slave society of Ancient
Greece into a non-slave society; reflections on ancient Greek morality
are in this way pointless from the point of view of the moral reformer,
but there still is a job here for a moral critic. Sometimes it is even per-
fectly sensible for the moral critic and the moral reformer to make
comparisons between whole ways of life. The reformer may not see the
immediate steps to be taken in transforming one society into another, but
for all that, an administrator of a colonial territory, a contemporary
American Indian caught between two ways-of-life, or a KEMAL ATA-
TURK can hardly avoid asking: "Which way of life is the better?" That
this is not just a theoretical problem is amply demonstrated by MARGA-
RET MEAD's study of the fantastic transformation of the Manus from a
pre-literate society to what we call "civilization" in the space of ten
years. Their change brought acute problems for them about which way of
life was better. And their choices were not just those concerning the
periphery of their culture, for their very central social structures were
transformed. Here we have a genuine experiment in living. There are
even cases that are closer to home. We may, after our adolescent enthu-
siasm cools a bit, come to disagree with the more romantic moral assess-
ments of Polynesian sexual morality and family life. We may no longer
compare our forms of life so invidiously with the life of the Somoans;
but whether we downgrade Tahiti and the Youth Group and upgrade
Mother, God and Country or view Polynesia as a superlatively better
Sweden, we are still able to make these judgments, because such compa-

risons and the arguments they give rise to are intelligible to us as bits of moral discourse. (That they are wild impressionistic judgments is here not to the point.) Such comparisons may be highly speculative and the arguments may indeed be very, very loose and very, very anxiety-arousing, but such arguments and such comparisons are still perfectly possible. MONRO is right here and a good reasons approach that is wedded to TOULMIN's reasoning here has certainly gone astray.

There are, however, crucial points in MONRO's analysis that I cannot accept. MONRO thinks that even if we take TOULMIN's account as a version of universalistic utilitarianism it is still a very tangled and very inadequate account of moral reasoning. I shall try to rebut MONRO's argument here. I shall also criticize MONRO's claim that in moral discourse there are no formal criteria consistently followed, universally applicable and mutually consistent. I shall argue instead that the formal criterion of universalisability, plus TOULMIN's conception of the function of ethics (interpreted so as to be compatible with a non-relativistic utilitarianism) and an appeal to sympathetic imagination, give us the most important sign posts for an adequate map of the moral terrain [13]. If we clearly understand the respective roles and interrelations of these three features of morality, we are well on our way to understanding the logic of moral discourse. But we must never forget that sign posts aren't maps and formulae aren't descriptions.

IV.

MONRO claims that TOULMIN's conception of the function of ethics does not necessarily involve an appeal to the utilitarian conception of the greatest good for the greatest number. TOULMIN, it will be recalled, claims that we justify moral rules by asking whether they will harmonize desires. We have a morality - any morality at all - to enable men to live together in society. Society could not survive unless there were some minimal degree of harmony of desires and aims among its members. It will, moreover, very frequently be the case that the members of one

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13) It should be apparent that KANT, the classical utilitarians and HUME all have their places here, but they are different non-competing places. For a development of this claim see my "Justification and Moral Reasoning", *Methodos*, vol. IX (1957), pp. 1-35. While I do not think that HARE will quite go all the way with me here, there certainly is an affinity between what I am saying here and some of the central claims of his *Freedom and Reason*, (Oxford: 1963). Something of the sort is also suggested by TOULMIN in his "Is There a Fundamental Problem of Ethics", *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 33 (May, 1955), pp. 1-19.

community or society will need at some point to co-operate with the members of another community. The communities would then in a certain sense be a part of one "larger community". Again there would have to be a harmonizing of desires and aims to make life together viable. Such a harmonizing of desires, developed along principles of equity, will amount in practice to the classical utilitarian principle of the greatest happiness for everyone concerned.

It is here where MONRO balks. We can accept TOULMIN's conception of the primary function of morality, he argues, without recognizing its utilitarian offspring [14]. "Two communities C 1 and C 2 might coalesce in such a way that their members become slaves and slave-owners respectively." Desires, MONRO points out, might even in this case be harmonized to the satisfaction of everyone involved. Masters would have duties to slaves and slaves would have duties to masters. It is even possible that they could all quite genuinely accept the code in question, but the result is that it will not harmonize desires in the sense of putting an equal value on the desires of slaves and slave-owners, though it will harmonize desires so that as many people *as possible* will get whatever it is that they want. It will not accord with what we pre-analytically understand to be the conditions of fairness.

MONRO then points out that we cannot tell from TOULMIN's conception of the function of morality whether we have in such a situation a set of moral principles or whether we simply have non-moral rules of privilege. But whatever TOULMIN says, he is in MONRO's opinion in trouble. If, on the one hand, he says that the slave society is *not* a moral community, then there can be a community which reasons in accordance with his conception of the function of morality, but is still not a moral community. (Remember here that 'moral' is being used in a descriptive sense where it contrasts with 'non-moral' rather than 'immoral'.) If, on the other hand, TOULMIN says it is a genuine moral community "then the criteria to which moral principles must conform are far more varied than he (TOULMIN) seems to suppose" [15].

TOULMIN in my judgment is not really stuck here. In criticizing TOULMIN, MONRO has not brought out an essential feature of TOULMIN's conception of the primary function of ethics. But this element in

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14) MONRO, "Are Moral Problems Genuine?", *Mind*, vol. LXV (April, 1956), p. 176.
15) *Ibid.*

TOULMIN's account would *not* allow him, as MONRO argues, to ignore questions of equity or fairness in dealing with a case like the one of such a slave society.

Let us see how this is so. To do this we must return to TOULMIN's conception of the function of ethics. Provisionally defined, the function of ethics is - to quote TOULMIN - "to correlate our feelings and behaviour in such a way as to make the fulfilment of *everyone*'s aims and desires, as far as possible, compatible" [16]. Fullfledged moral utterances are, according to TOULMIN, categorical imperatives [17]. A moral argument to be a moral argument must be worthy of acceptance whoever is considering it. "If . . . the most general principles to which we can appeal still contain some reference to us, either as individuals or as members of a limited group of people, then our appeal is not to 'morality' but to 'privilege'" [18].

Now consider MONRO's case of a slave society. TOULMIN's conception of the function of ethics requires that we consider everyone's wishes and interests. In addition he makes it plain that no moral claim can make an irreducible reference to individuals or to members of a class as such i. e. to slaves and slave owners. If such an appeal is made, the appeal isn't to morality, but to privilege. TOULMIN's very conception of the function of morality necessitates such a conclusion. If we accept it we must accept that conclusion. If MONRO's slave society does not consider everyone's interests and if it simply appeals to members of a class (slave-owners and slaves) *qua* members of a class, then, on TOULMIN's own showing, such a code of such a society could not count as a morality. MONRO is wrong in claiming that TOULMIN's conception of the function of morality does not allow us to decide such a case. He is not on MONRO's fork. Given the above description of the "slave society", it could not properly be said to have a morality and TOULMIN's conception of the function of ethics can show why. But MONRO's case is sufficiently indeterminate to allow us to say, again in accordance with TOULMIN's conception of the function of ethics, that it is a community with a moral code. In either case the fault is not with TOULMIN, but in the indetermancy of MONRO's case.

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16) STEPHEN TOULMIN, *An Examination of the Place of Reason in Ethics*, Cambridge 1950, p. 137 italics mine. See also pp. 136, 145, 170, 223.
17) STEPHEN TOULMIN, "Discussion of R. M, HARE's, *The Language of Morals*", *Philosophy*, vol. XXIX (January, 1954), p. 168.
18) *Ibid.*

Let us see how such a community could be consistently taken to have a moral code. Given certain factual beliefs (racist ones for example), one could still in such a society be concerned with everyone's interests - one could still be willing to universalize one's maxims. One need not justify the different treatment of slaves and slave owners simply by an appeal to their class. One need not abandon morality and make an appeal to privilege here. The slave owner could appeal to certain features about himself and other slave owners to establish his natural superiority, and willingly grant that if the slaves had these qualities they too ought to be treated in that way [19]. Furthermore, if the slave owners were, as a matter of fact, like the slaves, they too ought to be treated as slaves. Meeting the conditions of fairness, no doubt by the help of rationalization, the slave society, even on TOULMIN's utilitarian grounds, could correctly be understood to have a moral code, albeit an irrational moral code. (Surely 'an irrational moral code' is not a contradiction in terms.) As a moral agent, I am as concerned as the next man to oppose such a morality, but this does not blind me to the fact that such a code is still a moral code. In short, MONRO's case in no way shows the inadequacy of TOUL-MIN's conception of the function of ethics even if it is interpreted as committing one, if one is prepared to reason morally, to an utilitariran criterion for assessing social practices. In deciding whether the slave community was or was not a moral community, we made an appeal to utilitarian considerations, i. e. to whether everyone's interests, desires and wants were being taken into consideration in such a way that everyone, treated initially alike, could as far as possible, as fully as possible, satisfy his interests and desires. Perhaps this requirement is too strong, but it is reasonable to interpret TOUL-MIN's conception of the function of ethics in that way and MON-RO has not shown, that if such an interpretation is made, we must end up calling something 'morality' that plainly isn't or denying something the title of 'morality' that plainly is morality. TOULMIN has neither flaunted common sense nor those pervasive features of ordinary usage that any adequate meta-ethical theory must be responsive to.

But even if we have undercut MONRO's criticism about the function of ethics, we still have, apart from difficulties about universalisability to which we shall turn in the next section, difficulties about the utilitarian criterion of happiness or least suffering

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19) ARISTOTLE reasoned in much this way.

MONRO points to the "notorious ambiguities of the term 'happiness'" and to the anthropological fact that whether we are happier in one culture rather than in another "will depend, at least in part, on the community we happen to have grown up in." What will make us happy will depend largely on what secondary needs our culture has instilled in us; and, as MONRO (following MALINOWSKI) is concerned to emphasize, once such needs have been created they will be just as important, just as strong motives for action as motives rooted in primary needs. They may, in fact, even become stronger motives [20].

I think it should be admitted straight off that what *causes* happiness is no doubt quite varied and is in part at least culturally relative. It is also plain enough that 'happiness' is a polyguous term; that is to say, 'happiness' like 'probable' and 'good', refers to a variety of different things. What we are referring to when we use the term 'happiness' or the term 'suffering' will, in part at least, vary from context to context. That is why general definitions of 'happiness' are so unhelpful. But it is also true that 'happiness' normally has a commendatory force; 'suffering' has just the opposite force. While *just what* will count as happiness may indeed vary from tribe to tribe and even from person to person, a consideration of the felicific consequences of social practices is always used as one very fundamental consideration in judging social practices. It was one of BENTHAM's great insights to see that those moralities which claimed to be opposed to the greatest happiness principle actually employed it in practice. The criteria of application for the word 'happiness' varies, but the force of the word remains the same. Whatever it is that well informed people in a rational frame of mind take as genuinely furthering their happiness that is something they ought *prima facie* to seek. They should only *not* seek it when their happiness - that is the happiness of some individual - conflicts with the common good, e. g. with the maximum distribution of happiness for everyone involved or with the good of many others. (Not just with the good of others, for, as W. D. FALK has nicely shown, there is a limit to how much one should sacrifice for others [21]. Sometimes one has the right to put one's own good above the good of others. There is a large area of indeterminacy here that no formula or generalization will adequately cover, but we do have

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20) D. H. MONRO, "Anthropology and Ethics", *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 33 (December, 1955), p. 174.
21) W. D. FALK, "Morality, Self and Others", in *Morality and the Language of Conduct*, HECTOR-NERI CASTANEDA and GEORGE NAKHNIKIAN (editors), Detroit 1963, pp. 25-69.

some guide lines. If widespread misery will follow from attaining what one wants, one clearly ought not to seek it.)

To reply to MONRO in this way, it might be objected, is really to in effect bring out the strength of his point. If the criteria of 'happiness' are actually so variable, so culturally and even personally relative and if we only have the "hurrah force" of the word in common, we have no common standard at all. To say that 'happiness' has a laudatory force but that there is nothing which 'happiness' in all its uses refers to or signifies is merely a fancy way of saying that of happiness and misery there is no common measure. If 'happiness' has no common criteria there can be no states of affairs, no experiences, no actions, no attitudes that will constitude or even partially constitute happiness for all rational human beings.

Even if all this were completely true, it would still be important to realize that we do use this word in such a way in appraising our practices. Yet surely this is not to say nearly enough, for it would only disguise the fact that we have no common ground for appraising our practices. But while 'happiness' is polyguous is it so polyguous that it has no common criteria? I don't think this is the case. Certainly there is a close connection between happiness and pleasure or what will give one satisfaction in living. And it is just not so that what is one man's pleasure is another man's pain. It is true enough that one man may gain pleasure from driving through the country or fishing while another finds such activities a great bore; or one man may love bull fighting or gambling while another abhors them or finds them uninteresting. But such differences do not show that there is no agreement about what is pleasurable and what is painful. There are plenty of quite mundane sources of pleasure and satisfaction that are quite pan-human. We like - in normal circumstances - to eat, make love, talk with our friends, listen to music, hear stories, etc., etc. That these are stable sources of pleasure is plain enough. And what will cause pain and suffering is still more obvious. There are also less tangible things that are sources of happiness and pleasure. We (or at least most of us) need to love and be loved; we need some work which will be both meaningful to us and renumerative; we need a life in which we have both privacy and companionship; we need both to keep our self-esteem and involve ourselves with others. Without these things we will be frustrated and miserable; a life that has a preponderance of things of this sort will be a life that is in the main a happy life. MONRO rightly points to the ambiguities of 'happiness', but it is certainly a mistake to argue that "of happiness and of despair we have no measure".

V.

MONRO also criticizes HARE's and TOULMIN's position about formal criteria in moral discourse. His criticism is directed in large measure against the appeal to *universalisability* that plays such a crucial role in our above remarks about the primary function of ethics. MONRO discerns three related formal criteria. Moral utterances must 1) conform to a maxim or principle, 2) they must be generally applicable in similar circumstances and 3) they must be applicable to others as well as to ourselves.

The only sense that MONRO can make out of 1) is the truism that all our acts have motives. But, he adds, if we examine our actual behaviour our actions do not always conform to 2) and 3). People are not as consistent as 2) implies and what "really raises" MONRO's doubts is the assertion made in 3) that we always act from principle in the sense that we apply to others the same principles we apply to ourselves.

The basic consideration underlying 3) is TOULMIN's contention that if "the most general principles to which we can appeal still contain some reference to us, either as individuals or as members of a limited group of people, then our appeal is not to morality but to privilege" [22]. We cannot defend this, MONRO argues, by contending that since principles, to be principles, must be teachable, we "cannot teach others to abide by one set of principles while following quite a different set ourselves" [23]. We, after all, can and do teach rules of privilege as well as moral rules. Furthermore, it is a mistake to believe that viewed from within moral codes or ways of life are internally consistent or coherent, though he admits that the anthropological evidence suggests "that there is in human societies a drive towards something that can be called an integration of attitudes". But this is compatible with a great deal of actual inconsistency that is masked by cultural myths.

Surely anyone who has ever lived, ever felt the pangs of his own mortality, must grant MONRO the above point. Yet MONRO's contention does not even begin to touch the problem linguistic analysts are trying to handle when they seek formal criteria in moral discourse. MONRO gets a little closer to the mark when he remarks that perhaps

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22) D. H. MONRO, "Are Moral Problems Genuine", *Mind*, vol. LVX, (April, 1956), p. 122. MONRO's reference to TOULMIN is to p. 168 of his *An Examination of the Place of Reason in Ethics*.

23) D. H. MONRO, "Are Moral Problems Genuine?", *Mind*, vol. LXV (April, 1956), p. 173.

"they appeal rather to the way men feel they ought to behave" [24]. But even here, MONRO, argues, the principles we feel we ought to obey are frequently mutually inconsistent; furthermore, there are people who would dissent from or deliberately reject any appeal to a "rational ethic of mutually consistent principles". Instead, after the fashion of D. H. LAWRENCE, they would argue for a "life of impulse" [25]. It is indeed true that a non-evasive glimpse at our world will make it abundantly apparent that "there are certainly people who would defend rules of privilege" [26]. MONRO sums up his argument in the following remark: "My point so far is that the concept of a way of life consisting of actions regulated by principles which are universally applicable, not rules of privilege, mutually consistent, and consistently followed is an artificial one: it is not derived either from an analysis of the actual behaviour of human beings or from their account of how they think they ought to behave. That is why modern moral philosophers have felt that it does stand in need of some justification" [27].

There certainly is truth in what MONRO says, but he has again missed his target. First, a rather minor point. MONRO has not produced any evidence that people when they believe they are reasoning morally are willing to consciously accept inconsistency in their basic principles. Surely "the Spirit of Middletown" is rife with contradictions. A whole generation of American novelists ambivalently broke with Middletown because they could not accept these internal inconsistencies. But does this establish that the Pillars of Society in Middletown consciously recognize these inconsistencies? Ibsen keenly exposes an earlier Norwegian bourgeoise morality, but Ibsen penetrates more deeply still when he fashions his defenders of the *status quo* so that they only recognize the inconsistencies in their moral code when they are literally forced on them. Until the last - until extreme conditions force this awareness on them - they persist in believing the emperor has fine new raiment. Only then do they have their brief, dearly bought, "moment of truth". MONRO's own remarks in another article about rationalization and myth-making in morality would seem to bear out and partially explain the facts about human behaviour that Ibsen has placed before us [28]. Myth-making and rationalization are, MON-

24) *Ibid.*
25) *Ibid.*
26) *Ibid.*
27) *Ibid.*, pp. 173-4.
28) D. H. MONRO, "Anthropology and Ethics", *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 33 (December, 1955), pp. 160-176.

RO points out, really expressions of a drive toward rationality and consistency. It is an attempt, by means of myth or ideology, to reconcile what appear at least to be conflicting principles[29]. In our cultural life we have at our disposal here a whole battery of factual *sounding* expressions that actually function as disguised moral recommendations. When these expressions are functioning in this way, they may quite properly be called ideological statements[30]. By means of such statements we manage to believe sincerely that there is consistency where there is actually conflict of principles. The evidence seems to be that human beings seek consistency and will go to great lengths to whitewash any real inconsistency of moral principles. The history of southern thought about segregation is a good case in point. There seems to be no basis for claiming that people do not *feel* they ought to be consistent in their moral assessments. Indeed there are those who will say, rightly enough, that "*foolish* consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds"; and there are those who will claim that we ought not always go around figuring everything out at great length but we ought to give way to our deep heartfelt convictions. But even here it is "*foolish* consistency" that is to be avoided and it is 'we' that ought to do it; and we should also note that a universalizable principle of behaviour with a definite rationale is being proclaimed in making such a claim. That is to say, there remain with the most impulsive "existentialist type" moralist conceptions of fairness and equity. Both "Kantian superego morality" and a "looser Millian morality" accept the principle of universalisability. They have built into their systems just this principle that TOULMIN and HARE argue is part of the very meaning of morality.

MONRO also claims that people sometimes defend what I would call morally inadmissable rules of privilege. This is perfectly true, but then they have gone beyond strictly moral considerations altogether. An unabashed appeal to privilege where it conflicts with morality is perfectly possible. But here we do not have two rival "moral geometries" but essentially appeals from two quite different vantage points - vantage points AIKEN has aptly called "the ethical" and "the post-ethical"[31]. Similarly a life of impulse may be more desirable - in some non-moral sense of

29) D. H. MONRO, "The Concept of Myth", *The Sociological Review*, vol. XLII (1950), pp. 115-132.

30) See my account of ideological statements in my "On Speaking of God", *Theoria*, vol. XXVIII, No. 2 (1962), pp. 118-125.

31) H. D. AIKEN, *Reason and Conduct*, New York 1962, pp. 65-87.

'desirable' - than a moral life, but if we are careful about how we use language we will not say such a life, where it conflicts with morality, is *morally* desirable. Men may find things personally good or desirable that have nothing to do with morality or that even in extreme cases conflict with it. TOULMIN emphasizes that strictly moral considerations have a limited application and there is a point where we pass beyond the scope of morality to questions of each man's pursuit of the Good. Here for TOULMIN, as for AYER, personal attitudes and choices are paramount[32]. It is quite possible that someone might wish to challenge the desirability of the moral life itself. There is nothing in TOULMIN's writings to rule out this move. Rather he is, like KANT, making the analytical claim that such reasoning is, by implicit definition, not moral reasoning[33]. Thus the fact that there is behaviour inconsistent with the formal criteria HARE and TOULMIN appeal to does not at all upset their claim that these are genuine formal motifs in moral discourse.

VI.

The above two points are minor compared with a general point about formal criteria in morals I wish now to make in defense of the good reasons approach. TOULMIN, HARE and like-minded philosophers are trying to give accurate descriptions of the *actual uses* of terms like 'good', 'moral', 'morally relevant reason', etc. They are not carrying out a psychological or sociological examination of the behaviour of people, they are not trying to discover the *causes* of moral behaviour and they are not trying to find out how many people generally behave morally as opposed to how many are immoral and the like. They are not even trying to give a description of *feelings* of guilt, remorse, obligation, righteousness, etc.; they are not even concerned in a *sociological way* with moral language: that is to say, they are not out to discover how many (if any) people now substitute 'cooperative' and 'uncooperative' for 'good' and 'bad' behaviour. Such discoveries may sometimes be pertinent to their task but their job is to describe accurately the uses of moral language in order to relieve conceptual perplexity over morals. In seeking out formal criteria they are trying to find out what (if any) other words are linked

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32) STEPHEN TOULMIN, *An Examination of the Place of Reason in Ethics*, Cambridge 1950, pp. 158-160.
33) *Ibid.*, p. 158.

with moral words in such a manner that one could not understand the use of the moral word in question without reference to the other word or words. We could not understand what it means to say a man ought to do something unless we understood what it would mean to say that he could have done otherwise. Similarly in coming to understand that I have an obligation to do something, I of necessity come to understand that anyone like me in such a circumstance should do so as well. HARE puts this in a formal way by saying that the link between universalisability and morality is an analytic one. I see nothing in MONRO's analysis which would undermine HARE's claim.

If something is *universalisable it* must be applicable in all the same type or relevantly similar type of contexts. The kind of people involved and the circumstances of these people are taken as part of the context. HARE applies *universalisability* to morality in the following way: "If I maintain that it is my duty to do a certain act, but say of another person, placed in exactly similar circumstances, that it is not his duty to do a similar act, I say something which is logically odd, and gives rise to the presumption that I do not fully understand the meaning of the word 'duty' " [34]. Moral principles, to count as moral principles, must be impartial. Though we make exceptions in morality, these exceptions are in turn universalisable or impartially statable; that is to say, we have definite principles of priority and differentiation. Thus we say, 'Jones has no obligation to give blood for he has hepatitis' or we issue the moral imperative 'Women and children first' or the prohibition 'Only adults can see this picture', but the one principle of differentiation we cannot appeal to in morals is that of pure self-interest. We cannot make the move 'I do not have to do this but you ought to do it because *I am I and you are you*'. The 'I am I' can serve as *a principle of differentiation* only when it is a short-hand locution to point out that I am a special case because I have certain special characteristics or I am in a special kind of situation. We do this when we make a claim for special treatment as in 'Because I am a Statesman and my value to my country, now that it is at war, puts me in a special position' or 'I am the Mother of four small children but you have none'. But we can never use, as a morally relevant principle of differentiation, the flat appeal to personal interest. NIETZSCHE, you will recall, never regarded first names as morally relevant; and it was not even simply the class *qua* class that gave

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34) R. M. HARE, "Have I A Duty to My Country As Such", *The Listener*, (October 20, 1955), p. 651.

Übermensch superiority over the herd; rather, it was the characteristics of power, autonomy, and self-discipline that differentiated them.

Let me put my point more generally. In giving reasons why someone or some group ought to have different treatment there cannot - logically cannot - occur in the statement of these reasons a singular term which is not replaceable by a conjunction of general terms; or, in the language of modern logic, for a statement to be universalisable it must be capable of being formulated in a symbolism which employs only predicates, individual variables, operators and logical connectives.

It is important to note (as KANT did not) that the principle of universalisability is a truth of language and not the supreme principle of morality. As *modus ponens* limits the form syllogistic arguments can take, so universalisability is a principle that limits the form that moral appraisals can take. The principle of universalisability is a second-order principle and first-order non-formal principles (KANT's material maxims) containing material predicates are made in *accordance* with it. These *first-order* principles are not, however, deducible from the universalisability principle anymore than 'If Todas are pacifists then some peoples are pacifists; but Todas are pacifists; therefore some peoples are pacifists' can be *derived* from *modus ponens,* though it is made in accordance with *modus ponens.* Furthermore, to claim that from a logical principle a moral principle can be derived is to commit the *naturalistic fallacy* in the form of trying to derive an ought from an is-statement about language.

I have, in my above remarks, made some grand assertions, but how do I prove that the link between morality and *universalisability* is an analytic one? This claim has been challenged by philosophers of competence. As is so often the case in philosophy, I do not see that there can be a formal proof here one way or another. The best one can do is to give a description of the standard uses of moral utterances and note whether or not to understand them involves understanding that they are *universalisable.* If there are some that are not *universalisable* then the claim that all moral utterances are *universalisable* is not an analytic truth. It seems to me that there is such an analytic link with universalisability; and it seems to me that the most convincing way to show this is to exhibit, by example, how a specimen argument becomes *unintelligible as a moral argument* at the point where this requirement is dropped.

I will proceed by first giving you representative specimens of our common moral language and then by talking about them show their

distinctive function. The latter activity amounts to an attempt to describe
their use where such a description is directed to relieving certain philo-
sophically paradoxical features of these specimens or paradigms. HARE
also does just this with two different examples[35]. His point is to show
that, given our conventions of moral discourse, a rejection of universali-
sability is unintelligible. I shall use a fresh example that will return to
MONRO's questions about slave morality. S, an advocate of a "slave
morality" talks with R, an unrepentent egalitarian.

    1. S: I have a right to have slaves. In fact it is something I ought
          to do.

    2. R: So you think *people* ought to have slaves.

    3. S: No, I think *I* ought to have slaves. I ought to have as many as
          I can use.

    4. R: So there is something special about you. Your circumstances put
          you in a privileged position.

    5. S: No, I ought to have them simply because I am I. I don't say
          you or anyone else ought to have slaves. I simply say that I
          ought to have slaves because I am like I am and I like having
          slaves.

    6. R: You really set that forth as a moral judgment.

    7. S: You bet I do.

    8. R: And you are using 'moral' as it is usually used?

    9. S: Of course.

    10. R: In that event I fail to understand what you *mean* here. Your
           use of 'ought' and 'moral' is unintelligible.

My point is that S's allegedly "moral pronouncements" are simply unin-
telligible as bits of moral discourse. Anyone familiar with the conventions
of our language will have to agree with R's conclusions in (10). S's reply
in (3) to R's initial question in (2) begins to puzzle us. With (5) we are
completely puzzled. When we learn (8) we come to conclude, as R does
in (10), that S simply does not understand the uses of 'ought', 'moral'
and the like. As moral utterances, they are unintelligible. This is almost
as evident as it is evident that A in the dialogue below does not under-
stand the use of 'birthday'.

    A: I had two birthdays last week.

    B: You mean you celebrated your birthday twice?

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35) *Ibid.*, pp. 651-2 and R. M. HARE, "Universalizability", *Aristotelian Society Proceedings,*
    vol. 55 (1954-5), p. 305.

A: No I had my 20th birthday last Monday and my 21st the following Thursday.

B: You are using 'year' and 'birthday' in their usual ways? You' re not just joking?

A: I'm quite serious and I am using the words you mention in their usual ways.

B: Then I find your first statement utterly unintelligible.

When a child makes A's mistake we simply correct him and say this is not the way 'birthday' is used. One cannot, *not* as a matter of fact but as a *matter of logic,* have two birthdays in one year. A similar point is to be made for the "moral dialogues".

There is, however, a difficulty here. In the two dialogues above (HARE's dialogues have the same effect) the reader is in effect asked to carry out a kind of experiment in imagination about his own linguistic behaviour. My comments on the dialogues only prod the reader's own reflections. He must finally simply "see" that what I claim is so as he must "see" that if my pencil is green it must be colored or that my toothpaste cannot be said to be talkative.

Some might not like this appeal to "linguistic intuition". Suppose someone carried out "the experiment in imagination" and said he found nothing unintelligible about S's remarks or A's, then it would simply be his word against mine. I would have no grounds for saying that he was wrong.

It is perfectly true that *if* we had such a clash of "intuitions", I would have to shift to other grounds to make out my case. It is also perfectly true that it is *logically possible* that someone might so react about S's or A's remarks. But if they did "inquiry would not be blocked", for we could still use NAESS's techniques of empirical semantics or ZIFF's contrastive method to get at what in such contexts it would make sense to say. I do not, of course, rule out the use of such methods *when we really need them*. I only submit that we do *not need them here* for no one really thinks S's remarks or A's remarks make sense. I suspect that *if* anyone felt compelled to say that, appearances to the contrary, they must make sense, he must be under the spell of some metaphysical theory about what it makes sense to say. If anyone will actually and honestly attend to S's remarks and A's remarks, he will surely immediately realize that what they say does not make sense.

VII.

There are other difficulties with the good reasons approach. More specifically there are quite different difficulties connected with its appeal to
universalisability. Granted that moral statements must be *universalisable,*
is such a formal criterion of any value in judging which reasons or which
types of reasons are good reasons in ethics? The principle of *universali*
sability will countenance both the maneuvers of the casuist who overloads
Kantian maxims and the ideological irrationalist who uses *je ne sais quoi*
concepts. Thus even nihilistic or irrationalistic "moral positions" are perfectly *universalisable*[36]. As a logical principle in moral reasoning *univer*
salisability can not *by itself* outlaw any moral principle, though all moral
principles must be made in accordance with it.

It is indeed true that taken by itself the principle of *universalisability*
cannot rule out any moral principle. But here HARE's remarks about
the value of this principle need careful examination. HARE maintains
that the principle of *universalisability* though analytic has "great importance for questions of international morality". Once we accept the notion
of *universalisability* as essential for morality, "we have set our feet upon
a road from which there is, in the end, no turning back - the road which
leads from tribalism to morality"[37]. The principle of *universalisability*
has, *as a matter of fact,* lead men to assent to another principle: this time
a moral principle. This moral principle is a basic principle in any truly
egalitarian, humanistic morality. It prescribes the following architectonic
moral principle: No mere differences as to tribe or race are to count as
morally admissable excuses for differentiation or priority: rather from
the point of view of morality, men are simply to be considered as men.
As members of the human species, they have a *prima facie* right to equal
treatment. *Homo sum, nihil humani a alienum puto.* ("I am a man, and
I do not regard as morally relevant mere tribal differences between myself
and other men.")

It is, however, essential to remember that this basic moral principle
cannot be derived or deduced from the principle of *universalisability*
alone; nor can it be deduced from any set of premises that do not
involve at least one moral premise. Furthermore, it is not the only moral
principle which can be made in accordance with the *universalisability*

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36) *Ibid.*, ERNEST GELLNER, "Morality and *Je Ne Sais Quoi* Concepts", *Analysis,* vol. 16
   (April, 1956), pp. 97-103 and R. M. HARE, *Freedom and Reason,* Oxford 1963.

37) R. M. HARE, "Have I A Duty To My Country As Such", *Listener,* (October 20, 1955).
   p. 651.

principle. The logical principle *suggests* the moral principle and for some-one like KANT they seem to be inextricably linked. It is natural to link these logical and moral principles, but we must never forget that in fact the link is not one of logical derivation.

We can, however, say to the man who advocates a "slave morality": 'Be honest about this! Would you really advocate that if you *were* a slave? Think now, think very specifically and take the matter to heart, just how it would be for you and yours.' By this persuassive (but not irrational) device we get or provoke him into exercising his imagination. We evoke feelings of sympathy he may have. Yet, he might, with impeccable logic, reply that if he were a slave with a "slavish mentality", he wouldn't object. But since this is extraordinarily unlikely such a worry has the air of the philosopher's closet. Human beings, being what they are, having the desires and needs they have, simply do not react in this way. We all have feelings of sympathy and mateship.

So what? We have here only discovered another *cause* of our acting in some of the ways we do act. But what *reason* do these discoveries give us for claiming that egalitarianism is right and tribalism is wrong? It might seem that we are at an impasse here. There seem to be no further principles of a still greater generality that we can appeal to. The quest for moral certainty, even the quest for moral objectivity, seems to be bogged down here. What indeed can be said here?

I think in all candor we must say this. Over questions of morality and questions of values, we finally reach a point where we can not establish our position from unassailable premises; we must - if we are going to reason morally - finally simply subscribe to some principles of action. The claims of HARE and NOWELL-SMITH here seem to me to be essentially correct. It is just here where so-called "subjectivism" in the history of moral philosophy has shown strength.

As usual, there is another side to this as well. There is a place for "objectivism" as well as "subjectivism" in any display of the logical geography of our common moral notions. I have tried to prominently locate their respective places on the moral map, seeing them not as mutu-ally exclusive answers to the same problem but as complimentary compo-nents of the moral map.

I do not believe that the above concession to "subjectivism" indicates that moral assessments are all subjective in any plausible sense of that word. This can best be seen if we try to ignore the principle of *universali-sability* for a moment and consider again our conclusion about the pri-

mary functions of morality. If my contentions are correct and morality, as a limited mode of discourse, functions primarily to harmonize desires so that as many people as possible can attain the goals that they as free reflective agents desire, it is easy to see why, in the interests of *this kind* of social harmony, we must develop a sympathetic imagination for the other fellow. Only where men cooperate with each other in attaining their mutual ends can morality successfully function. And if we do not understand what the other fellow wants - what goals he sets for himself - it will be very difficult, if not impossible, for human beings to effectively cooperate. If a man does not use his imagination to consider what others (often very different from himself) would want or what he would want if he were differently placed, he is not reasoning in the way a moral agent should reason. To assert this is not to make a moral judgment about how moral agents should reason; it is rather to make a methodological remark about what counts as effective moral reasoning. An adult to be fair must consider what a child would want in a given situation. A fairminded Catholic must regard what a Jew or a Buddhist would want in order to attain the conditions of life he desires. This takes both an open-mindedness and a lively play of the imagination, but this is required in the moral life if justice is to prevail. (And within moral discourse we cannot sensibly ask: 'Should justice prevail.') A man without feelings or an appreciation of the feelings of others is unable to play the moral language-game (Sprachspiel). To play the game to the fullest, we must be able to understand what our fellow creatures aim at and desire, we must understand ourselves and be clear about our own desires, and we must will that what the other fellow wants on reflection should be realized where it does not conflict with a fair distribution of human wants and needs.

It is true, we finally have to *resolve* to play the moral game, but once we have resolved to play it, there are certain requirements, both material and *formal*, that are inevitable - in a perfectly natural sense of 'inevitable'.

VIII.

To sum up. I have maintained, as against MONRO, that there is at least one formal criterion, namely *universalisability* that governs the uses of moral talk. Any way of life or pattern of behaviour that is to count as 'moral behaviour' or as an 'ethos' (e. g. 'a morality') must be *universalisable*. I have *not* disputed MONRO's factual claim that there are other patterns of behaviour; but I have maintained that these patterns of

behaviour cannot count as 'moral behaviour'. I have not at all denied that it is possible to question the very autonomy of morals, as amoralists do, by asking why be moral. A frank thoroughly amoral egoism is certainly a possibility. I only deny that it is a *moral* possibility. I have also tried to defend and further explicate a TOULMIN-like conception of the primary function of morals. I admit that there is the ambiguity which MONRO mentions, but I have tried to sketch a consistent utilitarian conception of the primary function of ethics that would adequately account for the pattern that our very varied moral reasoning actually takes. I have further maintained that if we are committed to reasoning from the moral point of view such a conception of the function of morality will give us a basis for saying which kinds of reasons are good reasons in ethics. Such a general consideration will not, of course, always give us a unique answer to problems of human conduct, but it will enable us to establish important guide lines. These two arguments constitute, I believe, a vindication of the kind of linguistic analyses practiced by the good reasons approach; it will serve as an adequate answer to MONRO's charges and more generally to the wider and wilder charges made by others that linguistic analysis in morals is a systematization of the prejudices of an educated contemporary Anglo-Saxon. I have been describing what it is to reason morally: not just what it is for a liberal educated Westerner to reason morally.

Lastly, I would not wish (and I certainly do not think Messrs. HARE, TOULMIN, and NOWELL-SMITH would wish) to deny that moral problems are genuine. Anyone who has rubbed elbows with his fellows knows very well that moral decisions are surely a part of our very human condition. As TOULMIN well puts it "ethics is everybody's concern" and even if we conclude with FREUD that the whole idea of value is a chimera we still need to know what to do and how to live[38]. One need not be a KIERKEGAARD to recognize the truth of this.

But I am being ingenuous. MONRO is not denying this commonplace. His title does not mean quite what it says. Rather, it really means "Are Philosophical Problems of Ethics Genuine?" Because of the ambiguity of this question a straightforward answer to it is impossible. The very writing of this essay indicates that, in a sense, I do think they are genuine. Furthermore, I am fully convinced that certain recent philosophical ana-

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38) STEPHEN TOULMIN, *An Examination of The Place of Reason in Ethics,* Cambridge 1950, p. 112.

lyses, as well as some parts of some classical analyses, have helped us immensely in getting clearer about the nature of moral assessment. I would even be willing to concede that *perhaps* a sense may be attached to MONRO's question: "What is the ultimate justification of morals?" though, as I have suggested, his question could mean several things. But I am also firmly convinced that the good reasons approach, on the very points that MONRO complains about, has given us a reasonably accurate map of the moral copse. Such analyses are not intended to solve particular moral problems; they try rather to make clear to us the logic of our moral reasoning. Such an understanding of the nature of moral reasoning may, in turn, be used to clear away the philosophical underbrush so that moral problems may be seen in a clearer, philosophically unincumbered light. And this in turn may relieve certain kinds of non-philosophical moral perplexity.

In another way there are philosophical perplexities about morals that do express purely conceptual muddles, and thus in one plain sense they are not genuine problems, however harrassing they may be for the man who does not understand their nature. There are indeed general questions about the nature and limits of moral reasoning that are certainly philosophical and certainly genuine. But after determining what moral reasoning is and why we have it and the nature and limits of moral justification, to go on to ask for a deeper more philosophical justification of morals seems to be but another confused expression of that "Protean metaphysical urge to transcend language". There is and can be no such problem and as philosophers our task here is to show why this is so [39].

KAI NIELSEN

La fondation nouvelle de la méthode de la bonne raison

Résumé

La méthode de la bonne raison est reprise et soutenue. Une attention toute particulière est mise à démontrer les mérites des critiques pénétrantes de H. D. MONRO de cette méthode, quoique mon mémoire va même plus

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39) I have tried to show some further ways in which this metaphysical lament may be met in "The 'Good Reasons Approach' and 'Ontological Justifications' of Morality", *Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 9, No. 35 (April, 1959), pp. 1-16, "Appealing to Reason", *Inquiry*, vol. 5 (1962), pp. 65-84 and "Wanton Reason", *Philosophical Studies*, (Maynooth, Ireland), vol. XII (1963), pp. 66-91.

loin qu'une telle appréciation pour aboutir à une récapitulation et à un prolongement de cette théorie métaéthique. En opposition à MONRO, il est soutenu ici que la notion d'universalisabilité, c'est une critère formelle qui règle l'emploi du langage moral. C'est bien vrai que parfois les gens ne s'y conforment pas dans leurs actions, mais on peut ainsi dire que leur action, en tant qu'on y attribue l'emploi du mot «moral», ne peut pas compter en tant qu'action morale. Un égoisme franchement amoral reste comme dessin possible d'action.

Une conception quasi-TOULMINesque de la fonction primordiale - la raison d'être, pour ainsi dire - de la moralité est également soutenue. La conception de TOULMIN se précise et une certaine ambiguité, dûment notée par MONRO, se corrige. Il est même soutenu que pour les hommes engagés à raisonner du point de vue moral, une telle conception de la fonction primordiale de l'éthique leur donne une base pour qu'ils puissent dire lesquelles sont les bonnes raisons en matière éthique. Ce n'est pas une forme nouvelle de casuistique moral, mais elle nous permet d'établir dans une forme claire certaines lignes normatives qui servent à nous guider en éthique.

On essaie de caractériser ce qu'on demande exactement quand on cherche les limites du raisonnement ou de la justification en éthique. Il existe un sens distinct selon lequel la question «est-ce que les problèmes moraux sont authentiques?» exige une réponse négative, mais il existe aussi bien des sens significatifs selon lesquels une réponse positive est exigée. On est en plein chaos quand on regarde la morale comme si elle était voisine à un système axiomatique. Il n'y a pas d'axiomes moraux ou de règles de formation et de transformation; il n'y a pas de système de principes morales définitives qui doivent se justifier pour que la moralité ne s'écroule pas; et il n'y a pas une seule justification compréhensive de toute affirmation morale. Les critères de l'évaluation morale sont beaucoup plus complexes. La tâche du philosophe moral est de décrire le terrain moral dans une manière qui résoud les paradoxes. Ici on s'en charge et les limites du raisonnement moral sont indiquées.

KAI NIELSEN
Die Neubegründung der Gute-Gründe-Position
Zusammenfassung

Die Gute-Gründe-Position wird hier neu aufgestellt und verteidigt. Besondere Aufmerksamkeit wird der Bewertung der Hauptpunkte der schneidenden Kritik H. D. MONROs zu dieser Position geschenkt; jedoch geht mein Essay weit über eine Bewertung hinaus zu einer Neuformulierung und Erweiterung dieser meta-ethischen Theorie. Gegen MONRO wird behauptet, daß *universalizability* ein formales Kriterium ist, welches den moralischen Sprachgebrauch beherrscht. Es ist allerdings war, daß das Verhalten der Menschen manchmal nicht mit ihm übereinstimmt, aber dann kann ihr Verhalten auch nicht als moralisches Verhalten - gemäß dem Gebrauch von 'moralisch' - betrachtet werden. Ein offener, amoralischer Egoismus ist immerhin möglich als Richtlinie für menschliches Verhalten.

Auch wird eine TOULMIN-ähnliche Auffassung der primären Funktion - *raison d'être* - der Sittenlehre verteidigt. TOULMINs Auffassung wird genauer dargestellt und eine gewisse Ambiguität korrigiert. Ferner wird behauptet, daß den Personen, die sich verpflichtet haben, vom moralischen Standpunkt aus zu urteilen, dieser Begriff der primären Funktion der Sittenlehre eine Basis gibt, festzustellen, welche Gründe gute Gründe in der Ethik sind. Dies ist keine neue Form moralischer Kasuistik, sondern es gibt uns die Möglichkeit, in klarer Form gewisse normative ethische Richtlinien aufzustellen.

Es wird ein Versuch gemacht, zu charakterisieren, wonach wir eigentlich fragen, wenn wir nach den Grenzen der Vernunft oder der Rechtfertigung in der Ethik fragen. Es gibt ein klares Verständnis, in dem die Frage „Sind moralische Probleme genuin?" negativ beantwortet werden muß; aber es gibt auch andere klare und wichtige Verständnisrahmen, in welchen die Frage affirmativ beantwortet werden muß. Es ist verwirrend, wenn man in der Sittenlehre die „Cousine" eines axiomatischen Systems sieht. Es gibt keine moralischen Axiome oder Regeln der Formation und Transformation; es gibt keinen Satz ultimativer moralischer Prinzipien, die in irgendeiner Weise gerechtfertigt sein müssen, wenn die Sittenlehre nicht ganz und gar umkippen soll; und es gibt keine einzelne, allgemeine Rechtfertigung ethischer Urteile. Das Kriterium für moralische Werturteile ist viel komplizierter. Die Aufgabe eines Moralphilosophen ist, das ethische Terrain so darzustellen, daß Paradoxe verringert werden. Dies wurde hier versucht, und es wurden die Grenzen der moralischen Vernunft aufgezeigt.