



Values and the Heart's Command

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VALUES AND THE HEART'S COMMAND*

SINCE its inception deontic logic has been plagued by a series of paradoxes. In an earlier paper I worked out a solution to those paradoxes, which required an extension and reinterpretation of, but no deviation from, what have come to be regarded in deontic logic as "orthodox" principles.¹ Since then I have come to the opinion that those principles themselves reflect a serious flaw in the philosophical foundations of deontic logic. In this paper I shall explain my misgivings and attempt to substantiate them; technical results in deontic logic suggested by this critique will be indicated briefly.

I. THE AXIOLOGICAL THESIS

If, when instructed concerning what ought to be, I ask for reasons, the answer may be in terms of duties, obligations, rights, ideals (of justice, of goodness, of fairness), or values (moral, aesthetic, religious). I may not have exhausted the possibilities. With inevitable simplicity, philosophers have divided the study of these reasons into two broad fields: *deontology* (theory of obligations; from the Greek *δεον*, that which is binding, needful, proper) and *axiology* (theory of values; from *αξιος*, worth, as in *is worth more than*). The former deals with what ought to be because it is required by one's

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In the course of writing this paper, I became acquainted with the following related work: C. L. Hamblin, "Quandaries and the Logic of Rules," *Journal of Philosophical Logic*, 1 (1972): 74-85; R. de Sousa, "The True and the Good," forthcoming; and T. Nagel "War and Massacre," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* (1972, forthcoming). I wish also to acknowledge gratefully my debt to discussions and correspondence with A. al-Hibri, C. Daniels, R. de Sousa, H. Ishiguro, R. Stalnaker, and R. H. Thomason.

¹ "The Logic of Conditional Obligation," to be published in the proceedings of a *Symposium on Exact Philosophy*, ed. M. Bunge; in the *Journal of Philosophical Logic*, 1 (1972): 417-438; and in the *Synthese Library*.

station and its duties, by the web of obligations and commitments the past has spun. The latter deals with what ought to be because its being so would be good, or at least better than its alternatives.

With equal inevitability, there have been attempts to pare the two to one. The axiological thesis is stated succinctly by Moore:

. . . to assert that a certain line of conduct is, at a given time, absolutely right or obligatory, is obviously to assert that more good or less evil will exist in the world, if it is adopted, than if anything else be done instead.²

And this thesis can claim ample support from actual usage and actual patterns of admonition. Thus St. Paul, that most Apollonian of Christians, phrases his imperatives in axiological terms: "It is good for a man not to touch a woman," he says, "But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn" (I Cor.7).

There is a common argument that such a reduction to axiology is mistaken.³ For, it is argued, there are many cases in which we agree that although it would be better for something to be, there is no obligation to bring it about. This, the problem of supererogation, raises havoc with the thesis as stated by Moore. But perhaps a less crude formulation will avoid the problem. Let us agree that some, and only some, true statements of the form "It ought to be the case that *A*" are true because of the existence of relevant obligations. We can then insist that, still, *all* of them are true because (and exactly because) it would be better if what they prescribe were the case. This means agreeing to the assertion that, really, people *ought* to act above and beyond the call of duty, when that is for the best, although they cannot (and, perhaps, ought not) be held to account, in some sense, if they do not.

In this attenuated form, the axiological thesis amounts to: there is some scale of values whereby what ought to be is exactly what is better on the whole. It is a thesis not concerning the relation between obligations and values, but between values and what ought to be; nor does it deny any relation between obligations and what ought to be. (With a bit more charity, we can even ascribe the thesis to Moore in its attenuated form; he would not have been the last to confuse the issues by neglecting the distinction between what is obligatory, and hence ought to be, and what ought to be for some reason or other.)

² G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge: University Press, 1922), ch. 1, sec. 17, p. 25.

³ A. Sesonske, *Value and Obligation* (New York: Oxford, 1964), pp. 70 and 75.

II. IMPLICATIONS OF THE AXIOLOGICAL THESIS

It should be noted that the very use of such phrases as 'more good', 'less evil', 'better', and 'best', presupposes that there is a *single* scale of values to which all moral judgments defer. For if neither of two courses of action is any better than the other, then it follows that they are equally good. (It would be quite different if Moore and St. Paul had used such terms as 'more good of some kind' or 'better in some respect'; for 'better in some respect' is compatible with 'worse (all told)'. And it is possible that each of two courses of action be no better than the other in some respect, and also that there be no respect in which they are equally good or bad.)

So, from this point of view, whether an ought-statement is true depends on two factors: the set of alternative possibilities we are evaluating, and the scale of values by which we rate them.

If the function of the ought-statement is to *counsel*, the alternatives considered are the possible outcomes of our action. If the function is to *judge*, the alternatives are the actual state of affairs and those which might have been actual if we had acted differently. For any sentence A , let $H(A)$ be those alternatives which make A true. Then we say:

"It ought to be the case that A " is true exactly if some value attaching to some outcome in $H(A)$ is higher than any attaching to any outcome in $H(\text{not } A)$.

Intuitively phrased: we ought to opt for the realization of the highest possible values, and, more generally, for any state of affairs that is a necessary condition for the realization of the highest attainable values. (To obviate an obvious objection: when a possible outcome is evaluated, its relative likelihood should be given due attention.)

This is easily generalized to conditional ought-statements such as "The poor ought to be succored, if there are any," written canonically as "It ought to be that A , if B ." For this we note that if B be *given* as true and an inescapable part of the context, then in judging or counseling one must ignore all those logically possible states in which B is not true. So in the above truth-definition we replace $H(- - -)$ by $H_B(- - -)$, which is the same as $H(B \& - - -)$. Intuitively, it ought to be that A , if B , exactly if $(B \text{ and } A)$ is, on the whole, better than $(B \text{ and not } A)$.

The logic thus founded has a quite traditional look, counting as tradition the still very short history of the subject (see the paper mentioned in footnote 1).

III. MORAL CONFLICTS

If the axiological thesis, even in its attenuated form, is accepted, then certain tenable ethical positions are ruled out. From this (which I shall try to substantiate) I conclude that the axiological thesis is itself an ethical doctrine, not a thesis of metaethics. (And if that is so, deontic logic should not be founded upon it, although a logic so founded might be interesting as a special subject from a metaethical point of view.) More important, perhaps, is this corollary: notwithstanding any slogans about how fulfilling obligations, or having good intentions, or living by ideals, is something good (or good on the whole), not every ethical doctrine differs from, say, utilitarianism only in its choice of values.

To demonstrate this, I must show what is ruled out by the axiological thesis. And what is ruled out is exactly this: that there should ever be an unresolvable ethical conflict. By this I mean a conflict between what ought to be for one reason and what ought to be for another reason, which cannot be resolved in terms of one reason overriding another, or one law or authority or value being higher than another. Sir David Ross thought that it was exactly the business of the moral philosopher to show how such conflicts are to be resolved, how conflicts between *prima facie* duties are, after all, illusory upon proper understanding. The axiological thesis requires this. For suppose that *A* and *B* are incompatible. Then if it ought to be the case that *A*, higher values attach to some outcomes satisfying *A* than to any that satisfy *not A*. But, because of the assumed incompatibility, all outcomes that satisfy *B* satisfy *not A*. Hence it is better to opt for *A* than for *B*. So, whenever *A* and *B* are mutually incompatible, it cannot be that both ought to be the case—either we ought to opt for *A*, or we ought to opt for *B*, or the matter is indifferent (morally indifferent, that is).

Is this a substantive ethical assumption, or is it nigh tautological? I shall present the case for both sides: for its denial and for its assertion, and hope to show that it is indeed a thesis which, although phrased in metaethical terminology, actually concerns the kind of fact of moral life on which ethical theories founder.

IV. DIRTY HANDS

It will occasion no surprise if some primitive ethic places its adherents in terrible quandaries, resolvable only by riding roughshod over one or another of its demands. If Alfonso van Worden, whose whole conception of moral action is governed by that of the point of honor,⁴ finds himself in dire moral predicaments, we shan't draw

⁴ See Count Jan Potocki, *The Saragossa Manuscript*, ed. R. Cailliois, tr. E. Abbott (London: Cassell, 1962).

theoretical conclusions. These are the perils of moral barbarism. But turning from barbarians to Greeks, we find Orestes torn between two clear moral commandments, badgered into one course of action by a god's threats and a sister's flattery, and the conflict finally resolved not by a decisive moral argument but by a political settlement between gods and Furies. And closer to us is Nora's reply to Helmer's assertion that her most sacred duty is to her husband and children: "I have another duty, just as sacred . . . My duty to myself."⁵ If two duties, equally sacred, conflict, an exercise of the will can settle the conflict, but not a calculation of values.

Few moral theorists seem to have accepted the appearance that there are real conflicts, as opposed to merely *prima facie* conflicts. However, there is a sense in which they occur in Bradley's ethical scheme. (The qualification is that for Bradley all the ethical considerations apply only to Appearance and not to Reality; but the final resolution of all contradictions in the Absolute is not the kind of resolution of all ethical conflicts that is being denied here.)

In Bradley's *Ethical Studies*, his own ethical theory is set forth dialectically, in the typical idealist thesis-antithesis-synthesis pattern. We need look only at the last two stages. The penultimate stage is the morality of "My Station and Its Duties." Each man has, through circumstances and through choice, a certain place in the social structure. This place is largely characterized through the set of duties and rights that accrue to the occupier of that place. We may here construe the social structure widely, so that all relations to others (including blood relations and relations through commitments, moral debts, and promises) enter into the definition of one's station therein. And while certain aspects of this station are due to the circumstances of one's birth (consider the obligation one has *qua* son, *qua* citizen), there is no implication here of a "rigid" socioeconomic structure. To live morally is to live as required by one's station. The intuitive evidence for this is considerable: it is certainly *prima facie* immoral to break one's promises, ignore filial duties, renege on commitments, and so forth.

But, as Bradley argues, the morality of this penultimate stage (even if surrounded with safeguards concerning the presuppositions of obligation, so that war criminals cannot plead duty, for instance), is unacceptably short-sighted. There are also the demands of self-realization, the ideals which, we fancy, guide our progress from the state of nature to a life proper to those created only a little lower than the angels. These ideals include moral ideals: it ought to be, from the moral point of view, that man live in freedom,

⁵ H. Ibsen, *A Doll's House*, Act III.

freedom from subjugation and freedom to pursue the ends of self-knowledge, personal sanctity, control over his mind and passions—or, if the catalogue should be less puritan, to pursue to its limits the possibility of human experience, and the understanding thereof. But though our souls cry to high heaven for perfection, no such perfection is instantiated in our actual communities, and the possibilities we contemplate are closed by force of circumstance. The ideal of a life in freedom and love creates its own categorical imperative, but our station's duties may require competition, aggression, and exploitation.

It may seem that, in such a situation, there is a resolution, a morally correct resolution, of the conflict, namely revolution. The intent of revolution is so to change the social and economic structure that it will no longer be incompatible with the ideals that the revolutionary sees everywhere violated. But the revolutionary places himself in a role subject to a conflict of exactly similar structure. During the process of revolution, the pursuit of many ideals, and the exercise of rights, is temporarily suspended by a force of circumstances more violent than the norm. The revolutionary himself proposes thus to sacrifice himself and if necessary his whole generation for the sake of the coming community that he serves. He chooses the second horn of the dilemma described by Bradley, not wrapping himself "in a virtue that is [his] own and not the world's" but accepting "through faith and through faith alone, [that] self-suppression issues in a higher self-realization."⁶ The resolution is through will and through faith, not through moral argument alone.

Closer to our time, Sartre has maintained that no ethical system can resolve all moral dilemmas. (We must take him to be referring to actual ethical systems, not possible systems concocted by logicians.) As example he considers Christian morality in connection with a case of a French boy who, at the start of the German occupation, must choose between joining the Free French and seeing his aged mother through the coming ordeal. "Qui doit-on aimer comme son frère, le combattant ou la mère?"⁷

Sartre gives this thesis practical content by arguing that in any political context (taken in a wide sense) effective action presupposes the will to countenance violence.⁸ Hoederer states the view even more strongly in *Les Mains Sales*: you cannot act effectively without dirtying your hands. Hugo, however, cannot accept this: he feels

⁶ F. H. Bradley, *Ethical Studies* (London: King, 1876), pp. 184–185.

⁷ J.-P. Sartre, *L'Existentialisme est un Humanisme* (Paris: Nagel, 1964), p. 42.

⁸ Cf. his article on the Hungarian uprising, *Les Temps Modernes*, xii (November 1956): 579.

with equal strength the command not to kill and the command to work for the classless society; he cannot accept that one overrides the other. Neither the godless communist nor the god-possessed capitalist would have his dilemma, but for Hugo the conclusion is that if you can't act effectively without dirty hands, then guilt is inevitable. In *Le Diable et le Bon Dieu*, a kind of sequel to the other play, Goetz comes to terms with the problem: he resolves by an act of will what he cannot resolve by moral argument—and without pretending that what he does is morally right or most right. The existentialist hero is the man who does not fail to act upon his ideals, *and* does not rationalize away his dirty hands.

V. COUNTERARGUMENTS

I have presented this particular view of the moral situation at some length, because, if it is tenable, then the axiological thesis is incorrect. (Note that I say "tenable," not "true"; *possibly*, a number of alternative stances with respect to morality are tenable, and, *possibly*, the philosopher cannot guide the ultimate choice between competing moral views.) But there are a number of arguments designed to show this view untenable, and to these I turn now.

A reasonable man will strike a balance between the conflicting demands of moral duty and moral ideal. Perhaps so. Perhaps that is what 'reasonable' means. But it does not follow that there is a morally right balancing, in the sense in which there is a moral solution to the dilemma that occurs if a murder cannot be prevented without a lie. In that case one commandment clearly overrides another. But overriding is not a relationship that places all moral imperatives in a linear order.

Well, it may not *seem* to, there certainly are *prima facie* conflicts; but what reason is there to believe that careful moral argument will not always suffice to resolve them? That is a curious counterargument: if there is a conflict *prima facie*, the presumption should surely be that it is real, and the *onus probandi* is on those who say not. But I shall give a reason nevertheless. Law is somewhat like morality: through its historical development, a community develops a system of laws and a system of morals. There are often cases before the tribunal in which extant law rules ambiguously, inconsistently, or not at all. There is for such cases an intricate set of rules and procedures for adjusting the system of laws through creative interpretation by judges, precedent, legislative action, and plebiscites or elections. The similarity between law and morals suggests that there must similarly occur many cases in which our morality's guidance is ambiguous, inconsistent, or absent

altogether. And for morality there is no institutionalized process of adjustment. (There is for those who can submit such questions to an agency they accept as infallible on questions of morals and faith, but whether that is right is itself a moral question.) And if the present moral conflicts disappear through a natural evolution over the generations, that is of little moment to the present, subject to present morality.

The two counterarguments given so far dealt with inclining reasons, but there are also counterarguments dealing with logic. It is asserted that "it ought to be the case that" implies "it is permitted (morally unobjectionable) that it be the case that," and that similarly "ought not" implies "not permitted." But then it follows that if it ought to be the case that *A*, then it is permitted that *A*, and hence it cannot be true that it ought not to be the case that *A*. Hence, *A* and *not A* can never both be such that they ought to be the case.

There are two, by now classical, principles of deontic logic that provide the impetus for this third counter-argument. The first is that 'permitted' (or 'unobjectionable') is definable as "not ought not." I have no objection to the definition. The second is that "ought" implies "permitted" (so defined). But that is *equivalent* to the thesis that two oughts can never conflict. Symbolically:

$$\begin{aligned} O(A) &\supset P(A) \\ O(A) &\supset \sim O(\sim A) \\ \sim O(A) &\vee \sim O(\sim A) \\ \sim [O(A) \ \& \ O(\sim A)] \end{aligned}$$

(where I am using ' \sim ' for "not", ' \vee ' for "or", '&' for "and", 'O' for "ought", and 'P' for "permitted"). I can only conjecture that the original devisors of deontic axioms had a certain ethical bias; perhaps they were utilitarians, or accepted some other axiological creed.

The next logical counterargument also has two premises. The first is that "ought" implies "can." That is, no one can be subject to a moral obligation to do the impossible. The second is that logical consequences of what ought to be, ought to be. There may be some equivocation in that, but we can hardly expect to bring about what ought to be without bringing about its necessary consequences. So I won't object to either doctrine. But then, the argument goes on, suppose that I ought to see to it that *A* and also that *B*, where *A* and *B* are logically incompatible. Evidently I am then under a moral obligation to do the impossible, which is absurd.

Here I must object to the equivocation. Consider a (relatively) concrete example. The agent is subject to incompatible obligations due to his several allegiances to heaven and earth (sons and lovers, party and fatherland, choose what you will). He appears before the tribunal of heaven (respectively, of earth) and, pointing to his several allegiances, defends his shortcomings by the statement that he cannot be expected to do the impossible. Whereupon the heavenly judge joints out, with irrefutable logic, that the agent is held guilty *not* of failing to do the impossible, but of failing to honor his allegiance to the cause of heaven. His defense before the earthly tribunal fares no better (recall Orestes' last conversation with his mother). The accused was equivocating between having a commitment to do *A* and also a commitment to do *B*, and having a commitment to do both *A* and *B*.

Here it might be interjected that someone required on the one hand to do *A*, and on the other to do something incompatible with *A*, is for all practical purposes required to do the impossible. But there is in fact a crucial difference. For to attain a state-of-affairs *X*, one must attain all necessary conditions of *X*. Now if *X* is impossible, then everything is a necessary condition of *X* (in the slipshod sense accepted everywhere outside the logic of relevant implication). So if one is required to do the impossible, one is required to do everything, and *all moral distinctions collapse*. But for the person in a moral quandary it is by no means true that all moral distinctions have collapsed—much as he might like to plead this.

The remaining counterarguments concern the notion of guilt. As a subject, this is practically *tabu* to moderns, among whom other four-letter Saxon words have become quite acceptable. (Perhaps it would help if we returned to the four-letter spelling.) I think I can at least clear myself of psychologism with the simple thesis that it is appropriate to feel guilt if and only if one is guilty, and that there is no overriding moral reason to indulge in any feeling, whether appropriate or not.

The first argument to consider here is that the problem is simply one of *misplaced* guilt. Not when he failed to honor one or other allegiance or commitment, but when he allowed himself to become subject to several allegiances or commitments that might lead to a quandary, was the agent guilty of an immoral action. However, this implies that we cannot act both reasonably and morally on probabilities as opposed to certainties. For it means that, no matter how good the consequences of accepting a commitment, its acceptance is morally wrong if there is the least possible chance that it could

figure in a moral dilemma. Secondly, it seems to me that this counterargument assumes that obligations are typically incurred by conscious decisions. And this seems false.

The second and third counterarguments concerning guilt were added by Robert Stalnaker.⁹ If we admit the possibility of a moral dilemma without resolution, then a judgment attributing guilt to the man in such a dilemma can be made without reference to his character or actions. But that is absurd: a moral judgment about a man can be justified only in terms of factors under his control.

This last assertion I consider to be itself a substantive ethical thesis, and not one that can be justified on the basis of what the terms mean, because it denies the doctrine of original sin (under at least one straightforward interpretation thereof). I quote, in free translation, the beginning of the Five Articles of the Synod of Dordrecht (1618–1619): “Since all men have sinned in Adam, and have [thus] become so guilty as to deserve damnation and eternal death, God would have treated no one with injustice had He left the whole human race in sin and damnation and doomed it because of [this] sin.”

The third and last such argument is perhaps the most basic. The proponent of the axiological thesis can make perfect sense of the situations described by his opponent. It is possible to be in a situation in which one course of action leads to the attainment of something of great value, and another course of action leads to the attainment of something quite different of equally great value. The choice will be agonizing, and if afterward one feels regret to the point of anguish, this is only natural, since something of great value has been lost. Thus the facts of the moral situation are not denied by this proponent; he just describes them differently.

The key term here is ‘regret’. The case of Orestes or of Nora is counted as fundamentally the same as that of the philanthropist who regrets that he has but one fortune to give for mankind and has agonized over the choice between endowing the arts and furthering birth control (or as the case of the revolutionary who agonizes over the question where he should risk his life against oppression—in Bolivia or in Guatemala). But the cases are the same only if regret is the same as guilt, or if it is necessarily appropriate to feel guilt if and only if it is appropriate to feel regret. And that can tenably be denied.

⁹ Comments on an earlier draft of this paper, presented at Cornell University, October 1971.

VI. IMPERATIVES AND TRUTH

The metaethical argument that the view of morality examined was tenable proceeded by displaying the arguments and counter-arguments of proponents and opponents of the view—hence by displaying ethical arguments. I shall conclude that the view constitutes a significant ethical position (whether correct or incorrect); let us return now to the airy heights of metaethics.

Ethical conflicts are possible; so sometimes there are two sound moral arguments, concluding respectively that A ought to be the case ($O(A)$) and that *not*- A ought to be the case ($O(\sim A)$). When we have arrived at two conclusions, we can conjoin them:

$$O(A) \ \& \ O(\sim A)$$

can be true. But "ought" implies "can" (or, at least, I see no reason to deny that it does); so

$$O(A \ \& \ \sim A)$$

cannot be true. Finally, logical consequences (i.e., necessary conditions) of what ought to be, ought to be; for a man ought not to put himself in a position in which it is impossible for him to do what he ought to do. Hence

If B can be inferred from A , then $O(B)$ can be inferred from $O(A)$.

is a sound rule.

But we already know that no sense can be made of the above if we construe what ought to be as what is better or for the best. To make sense of it I shall appeal to the idea of moral imperatives or commandments, taking a cue from Kant, the young Hegel, the moral intuitionists, Sellars, and Castañeda. However, I must confess a great deal of ignorance about the moral imperative and its logic. I shall sum up the little I think I know.

First, there are many conceivable imperatives, but only some are *in force*. The problem of the ontogenesis of moral imperatives is the problem of what brings imperatives in force. I assume their sources are legion: conscience, ideals, values, duties, commitments, and so on. The process must be complicated, because one imperative may be *overridden* by another (under given circumstances); this means presumably that one imperative's being in force may prevent another's being in force. In this way, direct orders may cancel standing orders, and circumstances may take away the authority under which a standing order is the reason that a certain imperative is in force.

When an imperative is in force, we evaluate possible outcomes and possible states of affairs with respect to it, by asking whether the imperative is *fulfilled* or *violated*. So for each imperative I there is a class of possible outcomes I^* in which it is fulfilled. As an initial attempt to explain 'ought', I propose:

$O(A)$ is true exactly if, for some imperative I that is in force, I^* is part of the set of possible outcomes in which A is true.

This means, less formally, that it ought to be that A exactly if some imperative in force would not be fulfilled if *not-A*.

Now, with this definition, $[O(A) \ \& \ O(\sim A)]$ could be true, namely if there were two conflicting imperatives in force. Secondly, $O(A \ \& \ \sim A)$ cannot be true if no *single* imperative is impossible to fulfill (taken by itself). And, if A implies B , then $O(A)$ implies $O(B)$; that also follows from the definition. A sound and complete logical system, for a language constructed with the above truth-condition for 'O' and subject to the restriction that any single imperative can possibly be fulfilled, has the following axiom schemes and rules:

A1. Axiom schemata for propositional logic

A2. $\vdash \sim O(\sim A \ \& \ A)$

R1. if $\vdash A$ and $\vdash A \supset B$, then $\vdash B$

R2. if $\vdash A \supset B$, then $\vdash O(A) \supset O(B)$

Finally, under suitable assumptions about the ultimate resolution of all conflicts, the definition will agree with that of the axiologist.

But this scheme is too simple-minded, because it does not take account of two facts. The first is that imperatives are typically conditional; a venerable example is St. Paul's "Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised." (I Cor.VII). If we try to construe this as the categorical demand that some conditional be true, we may expect the Good Samaritan and its retinue to plague us again. (In fact, the Good Samaritan paradox was introduced by Bradley not against the axiologist but against the deontologist, citing Blake's ironic "Pity would be no more/If we did not make somebody poor.")¹⁰

So imperatives are themselves conditional, and I shall assume that a conditional imperative can be fulfilled *or* violated only if its condition is the case. If the Corinthian church numbered no Jews, they might subscribe to, accept, or take to heart what St. Paul said, but they could neither follow nor violate his injunction.

Suppose it is imperative that A , given B ; and suppose that B is true (or rather, inevitable, since we are considering *outcomes* of

¹⁰ Bradley, *op. cit.*, ch. IV, p. 140.

courses of action). Does it follow that it is imperative that A ? I would say no (though von Wright and Castañeda apparently disagree). My reason is that I take imperatives to have *presuppositions*: I take it that circumstances may remove the force of imperatives, or the authority or justification from which they derive their force. Also, under new circumstances, one imperative may come to be overridden by another. Hence I cannot accept that what is imperative if everything is possible, will be imperative if inevitable limits to action appear. There may be systematic relations governing this moral dynamics, but I can only profess ignorance of them.

The second scheme I propose therefore takes ought-statements to have a conditional form $O(A/B)$ ("it ought to be that A , given B "), and explains them in terms of conditional imperatives:

$O(A/B)$ is true exactly if there is some imperative I in force, which is itself conditional upon B , such that A is true in all the outcomes in which B is true and which fulfill I .

More briefly, $O(A/B)$ is true if $I^*_B H(B)$ is part of $H(A)$, where by ' $H(- - -)$ ' we mean the set of outcomes in which $- - -$ is true, and I_B is some imperative conditional upon B .

If a language is constructed with this truth-definition and if the assumption that any single imperative with possible antecedent can be in force only if it is possible that it be fulfilled, a sound and complete logical system has the following axiom schemes and rules:

AC1. Axiom schemata for propositional logic

AC2. $\vdash O(A/B) \supset O(A \& B/B)$

RC1. if $\vdash A$ and $\vdash A \supset B$ then $\vdash B$

RC2. if $\vdash A \supset B$ then $\vdash O(A/C) \supset O(B/C)$

RC3. if $\vdash B \equiv C$ then $\vdash O(A/B) \equiv O(A/C)$

With suitable additional assumptions guaranteeing the resolution of all conflicts, the correct logical system becomes equivalent to AC1-AC4 with RC1-RC4 of my "The Logic of Conditional Obligation."

VII. EVALUATION BY IMPERATIVES

For simplicity, let us just consider unconditional imperatives and ought-statements, and see whether we have not oversimplified.

Though I have no good account to give of the idea that one imperative may *override* another, I have adopted the thesis that an imperative is not in force if it is overridden. Hence the relationship of overriding need not play a role in the account of the truth of ought-statements, since, there, only imperatives in force are relevant.

However, it seems natural to say that if one's choice is between fulfilling two imperatives (in force) and fulfilling only one of them,

one ought to do the first. As example, Stalnaker proposed:

- I. (a) Honor thy father or thy mother!
- (b) Honor not thy mother!
- Hence, thou shalt honor thy father.

It is important to see that the premises express imperatives, and are not ought-statements. For, since various incompatible imperatives may compete, the statement that one ought not to honor one's mother might be true because one ought not to honor either one's mother or one's father, owing to an imperative incompatible with (a).

Secondly, argument I is not valid if it is impossible to honor one's father, since "ought" implies "can."

However, even with these provisos it is clear that the account I gave in the preceding section does not do justice to the example. For if (a) and (b) are the only imperatives in force, then there is no imperative I in force such that $I^* \subseteq H$ ("Thou honorest thy father").

Accordingly, I propose a revision of the truth-definition. Suppose that β is one of the possible alternatives we are considering. Let us say that the *score* of β is the class of imperatives in force that β fulfills. Then:

$O(A)$ is true if and only if there is a possible state of affairs β in $H(A)$ whose score is not included in the score of any γ in $H(\sim A)$.

It can be seen immediately that the basic criteria are satisfied: $O(A)$ and $O(\sim A)$ can both be true; $O(A \ \& \ \sim A)$ cannot be true; and, if A implies B , then $O(A)$ implies $O(B)$. In addition, if I_1 and I_2 are the only imperatives in force and if there is a β that belongs to I_1^* and also to I_2^* , then, if β is in $H(A)$, $O(A)$ is true.

But can this happy circumstance be reflected in the logic of the ought-statements alone? Or can it be expressed only in a language in which we can talk directly about the imperatives as well? This is an important question because it is the question whether the inferential structure of the "ought" language game can be stated in so simple a manner that it can be grasped in and by itself. Intuitively, we want to say: there are simple cases, and in the simple cases the axiologist's logic is substantially correct even if it is not in general—but can we state precisely when we find ourselves in such a simple case? These are essentially technical questions for deontic logic, and I shall not pursue them here. In conclusion,

it seems to me that the problem of possibly irresolvable moral conflict reveals serious flaws in the philosophical and semantic foundations of "orthodox" deontic logic, but also suggests a rich set of new problems and methods for such logic.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Prototractatus: An Early Version of Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus. LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN. Edited by B. F. McGuinness, T. Nyberg, G. H. von Wright. Translation by D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness. Historical introduction by G. H. von Wright. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1971. cxx, 256 p. \$18.00.

This volume has been handsomely and thoroughly wrought. Indeed, the book may even have been overdone. I suspect that its hefty price tag may be due in no small part to the inclusion of a 120-page photocopy of Wittgenstein's handwritten manuscript; yet I have some doubt that the facsimile of the master's original text is of sufficient scholarly utility to justify the heavy tariff its inclusion occasions. Professor von Wright has written a meticulous introductory history, partly of the composition, but mostly of the efforts to publish the *Tractatus*. This account is fascinating, in large part because von Wright includes many letters Wittgenstein wrote about getting his work printed. These letters add much to our image of the unusual and somewhat hysterical person Wittgenstein seems to have been. In preparing the printed German text, the editors rearranged the numbered remarks in the manuscript in Wittgensteinian numerical order, though they have included page references to locate the remarks in the manuscript; it *might* prove interesting to know in which "contexts" which remarks were inscribed by Wittgenstein. The numbered remarks of the printed text of the *Prototractatus* are flanked on the right by the numbers of identical or nearly identical remarks in the 1933 German text of the *Tractatus*; this editorial kindness should prove to be of great value in comparing the two texts. More or less minor variations between the German text of the *Prototractatus* and the 1933 text of the *Tractatus* are indicated by a perspicuous system of brackets. It seems evident to me that editing the text was a painful task scrupulously executed in such a way as to make the text, and not the editing, stand out. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuin-