II—THE EMOTIVE MEANING OF ETHICAL TERMS.

By CHARLES LESLIE STEVENSON.

I.

ETHICAL questions first arise in the form " Is so and so good ? ", or " Is this alternative better than that ? " These questions are difficult partly because we don't quite know what we are seeking. We are asking, " Is there a needle in that haystack ? " without even knowing just what a needle is. So the first thing to do is to examine the questions themselves. We must try to make them clearer, either by defining the terms in which they are expressed, or by any other method that is available.

The present paper is concerned wholly with this preliminary step of making ethical questions clear. In order to help answer the question " Is X good ? " we must *substitute* for it a question which is free from ambiguity and confusion.

It is obvious that in substituting a clearer question we must not introduce some utterly different kind of question. It won't do (to take an extreme instance of a prevalent fallacy) to substitute for " Is X good ? " the question " Is X pink with yellow trimmings ? " and then point out how easy the question really is. This would beg the original question, not help answer it. On the other hand, we must not expect the substituted question to be strictly " identical " with the original one. The original question may embody hypostatization, anthropomorphism, vagueness, and all the other ills to which our ordinary discourse is subject. If our substituted question is to be clearer, it must remove these ills. The questions will be identical only in the sense that a child is identical with the man he later becomes. Hence we must not demand that the substitution strike us, on immediate introspection, as making no change in meaning.

Just how, then, must the substituted question be related to the original ? Let us assume (inaccurately) that it must result from replacing " good " by some set of terms which define it. The question then resolves itself to this : How must the defined meaning of " good " be related to its original meaning ?

I answer that it must be *relevant*. A defined meaning will be called " relevant " to the original meaning under these circumstances : Those who have understood the definition must be able to say all that they then want to say by using the term in the defined way. They must never have occasion to use the term in the old, unclear sense. (If a person did have to go on using the word in the old sense, then to this extent his meaning would not be clarified, and the philosophical task would not be completed.) It frequently happens that a word is used so confusedly and ambiguously that we must give it *several* defined meanings, rather than one. In this case only the whole set of defined meanings will be called " relevant," and any one of them will be called " partially relevant ". This is not a rigorous treatment of *relevance*, by any means ; but it will serve for the present purposes.

Let us now turn to our particular task—that of giving a relevant definition of " good ". Let us first examine some of the ways in which others have attempted to do this.

The word " good " has often been defined in terms of *approval*, or similar psychological attitudes. We may take as typical examples : " good " means *desired by me* (Hobbes) ; and " good " means *approved by most people* (Hume, in effect). It will be convenient to refer to definitions of this sort as " interest theories ", following Mr. R. B. Perry, although neither " interest " nor " theory " is used in the most usual way.

Are definitions of this sort relevant ?

It is idle to deny their *partial* relevance. The most superficial inquiry will reveal that " good " is exceedingly ambiguous. To maintain that " good " is *never* used in Hobbes's sense, and never in Hume's, is only to manifest an insensitivity to the complexities of language. We must recognize, perhaps, not only these senses, but a variety of similar ones, differing both with regard to the kind of interest in question, and with regard to the people who are said to have the interest.

But this is a minor matter. The essential question is not whether interest theories are *partially* relevant, but whether they are *wholly* relevant. This is the only point for intelligent dispute. Briefly : Granted that some senses of " good " may relevantly be defined in terms of interest, is there some *other* sense which is *not* relevantly so defined ? We must give this question careful attention. For it is quite possible that when philosophers (and many others) have found the question " Is X good ? " so difficult, they have been grasping for this *other* sense of " good ", and not any sense relevantly defined in terms of interest. If we

insist on defining " good " in terms of interest, and answer the
question wheri thus interpreted, we may be begging *their* question
entirely.   Of course this *other* sense of " good " may not exist,
or it may be a complete confusion ; but that is what we must
discover.

Now many have maintained that interest theories are *far*
from being completely relevant.   They have argued that such
theories neglect the very sense of " good " which is most vital.
And certainly, their arguments are not without plausibility.

Only . . . what *is* this " vital " sense of " good " ?   The
answers have been so vague, and so beset with difficulties, that
one can scarcely determine.

There are certain requirements, however, with which this
" vital " sense has been expected to comply—requirements which
appeal strongly to our common sense.   It will be helpful to sum-
marize these, showing how they exclude the interest theories :

In the first place, we must be able sensibly to *disagree* about
whether something is " good ".   This condition rules out Hobbes's
definition.   For consider the following argument :   " This is
good."   ": That isn't so ;   it's not good."   As translated by
Hobbes, this becomes :   " I desire this."   " That isn't so, for
I don't."   The speakers are not contradicting one another, and
think they are, only because of an elementary confusion in the
use of pronouns.   The definition, " good " means *desired by my
community*, is also excluded, for how could people from different
communities disagree ? [1]

In the second place, " goodness " must have, so to speak, a
magnetism.   A person who recognizes X to be " good " must
ipso facto acquire a stronger tendency to act in its favour then he
otherwise would have had.   This rules out the Humian type of
definition.   For according to Hume, to recognize that something
is " good " is simply to recognize that the majority approve of it.
Clearly, a man may see that the majority approve of X without
having, himself, a stronger tendency to favour it.   This require-
ment excludes any attempt to define " good " in terms of the
interest of people *other* than the speaker.[2]

In the third place, the " goodness " of anything must not be
verifiable solely by use of the scientific method.   " Ethics must
not be psychology."   This restriction rules out all of the tradi-
tional interest theories, without exception.   It is so sweeping
a restriction that we must examine its plausibility.   What are

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[1] See G. E. Moore's *Philosophical Studies*, pp. 332-334.
[2] See G. C. Field's *Moral Theory*, pp. 52, 56-57.

the methodological implications of interest theories which are here rejected ?

According to Hobbes's definition, a person can prove his ethical judgments, with finality, by showing that he is not making an introspective error about his desires. According to Hume's definition, one may prove ethical judgments (roughly speaking) by taking a vote. *This* use of the empirical method, at any rate, seems highly remote from what we usually accept as proof, and reflects on the complete relevance of the definitions which imply it.

But aren't there more complicated interest theories which are immune from such methodological implications ? No, for the same factors appear ; they are only put off for a while. Consider, for example, the definition : " X is good " means *most people would approve of X if they knew its nature and consequences.* How, according to this definition, could we prove that a certain X was good ? We should first have to find out, empirically, just what X was like, and what its consequences would be. To this extent the empirical method, as required by the definition, seems beyond intelligent objection. But what remains ? We should next have to discover whether most people would approve of the sort of thing we had discovered X to be. This couldn't be determined by popular vote—but only because it would be too difficult to explain to the voters, beforehand, what the nature and consequences of X really were. Apart from this, voting would be a pertinent method. We are again reduced to counting noses, as a *perfectly final* appeal.

Now we need not scorn voting entirely. A man who rejected interest theories as irrelevant might readily make the following statement : " If I believed that X would be approved by the majority, when they knew all about it, I should be strongly *led* to say that X was good." But he would continue : " *Need* I say that X was good, under the circumstances ? Wouldn't my acceptance of the alleged ' final proof ' result simply from my being democratic ? What about the more aristocratic people ? They would simply say that the approval of most people, even when they knew all about the object of their approval, simply had nothing to do with the goodness of anything, and they would probably add a few remarks about the low state of people's interests." It would indeed seem, from these considerations, that the definition we have been considering has presupposed democratic ideals from the start ; it has dressed up democratic propaganda in the guise of a definition.

The omnipotence of the empirical method, as implied by interest

theories and others, may be shown unacceptable in a somewhat
different way.   Mr. G. E. Moore's familiar objection about the
open question is chiefly pertinent in this regard.   No matter what
set of scientifically knowable properties a thing may have (says
Moore, in effect), you will find, on careful introspection, that it
is an open question to ask whether anything having these pro-
perties is *good*.   It is difficult to believe that this recurrent ques-
tion is a totally confused one, or that it seems open only because
of the ambiguity of "good".   Rather, we must be using some
sense of "good" which is not definable, relevantly, in terms of
anything scientifically knowable.   That is, the scientific method is
not sufficient for ethics.[1]

These, then, are the requirements with which the "vital"
sense of "good" is expected to comply : (1) goodness must be
a topic for intelligent disagreement ; (2) it must be "magnetic" ;
and (3) it must not be discoverable solely through the scientific
method.

II.

Let us now turn to my own analysis of ethical judgments.
First let me present my position dogmatically, showing to what
extent I vary from tradition.

I believe that the three requirements, given above, are perfectly
sensible ;   that there is some *one* sense of "good" which satisfies
all three requirements ;   and that no traditional interest theory
satisfies them all.   But this does not imply that "good" must be
explained in terms of a Platonic Idea, or of a Categorical Impera-
tive, or of an unique, unanalyzable property.   On the contrary,
the three requirements can be met by a *kind* of interest theory.
*But we must give up a presupposition which all the traditional
interest theories have made.*

Traditional interest theories hold that ethical statements are
descriptive of the existing state of interests—that they simply
give information about interests. (More accurately, ethical
judgments are said to describe what the state of interests is, was,
or will be, or to indicate what the state of interests *would* be under
specified circumstances.)   It is this emphasis on description,
on information, which leads to their incomplete relevance.
Doubtless there is always *some* element of description in ethical
judgments, but this is by no means all.   Their major use is not
to indicate facts, but to *create an influence*.   Instead of merely
describing people's interests, they *change* or *intensify* them.

[1] See G. E. Moore's *Principia Ethica*, chap. i. I am simply trying to
preserve the spirit of Moore's objection, and not the exact form of it.

They *recommend* an interest in an object, rather than state that the interest already exists.

For instance : When you tell a man that he oughtn't to steal, your object isn't merely to let him know that people disapprove of stealing.   You are attempting, rather, to get *him* to disapprove of it.   Your ethical judgment has a quasi-imperative force which, operating through suggestion, and intensified by your tone of voice, readily permits you to begin to *influence*, to *modify*, his interests.   If in the end you do not succeed in getting *him* to disapprove of stealing, you will feel that you've failed to convince him that stealing is wrong.   You will continue to feel this, even though he fully acknowledges that you disapprove of it, and that almost everyone else does.   When you point out to him the consequences of his actions—consequences which you suspect he already disapproves of—these *reasons* which support your ethical judgment are simply a means of facilitating your influence.   If you think you can change his interests by making vivid to him how others will disapprove of him, you will do so ; otherwise not.   So the consideration about other people's interest is just an additional means you may employ, in order to move him, and is not a part of the ethical judgment itself.   Your ethical judgment doesn't merely describe interests to him, it directs his very interests.   The difference between the traditional interest theories and my view is like the difference between describing a desert and irrigating it.

Another example : A munition maker declares that war is a good thing. If he merely meant that he approved of it, he would not have to insist so strongly, nor grow so excited in his argument. People would be quite easily convinced that he approved of it. If he merely meant that most people approved of war, or that most people would approve of it if they knew the consequences, he would have to yield his point if it were proved that this wasn't so. But he wouldn't do this, nor does consistency require it. He is not *describing* the state of people's approval ; he is trying to *change* it by his influence. If he found that few people approved of war, he might insist all the more strongly that it was good, for there would be more changing to be done.

This example illustrates how " good " may be used for what most of us would call bad purposes. Such cases are as pertinent as any others. I am not indicating the *good* way of using " good ". I am not influencing people, but am describing the way this influence sometimes goes on. If the reader wishes to say that the munition maker's influence is bad—that is, if the reader

wishes to awaken people's disapproval of the man, and to make him disapprove of his own actions—I should at another time be willing to join in this undertaking.   But this is not the present concern.   I am not using ethical terms, but am indicating how they *are* used.   The munition maker, in his use of " good ", illustrates the persuasive character of the word just as well as does the unselfish man who, eager to encourage in each of us a desire for the happiness of all, contends that the supreme good is peace.

Thus ethical terms are *instruments* used in the complicated interplay and readjustment of human interests.   This can be seen plainly from more general observations.   People from widely separated communities have different moral attitudes.   Why ? To a great extent because they have been subject to different social influences.   Now clearly this influence doesn't operate through sticks and stones alone ;   words play a great part.   People praise one another, to encourage certain inclinations, and blame one another, to discourage others.   Those of forceful personalities issue commands which weaker people, for complicated instinctive reasons, find it difficult to disobey, quite apart from fears of consequences.   Further influence is brought to bear by writers and orators.   Thus social influence is exerted, to an enormous extent, by means that have nothing to do with physical force or material reward.   The ethical terms facilitate such influence. Being suited for use in *suggestion*, they are a means by which men's attitudes may be led this way or that.   The reason, then, that we find a greater similarity in the moral attitudes of one community than in those of different communities is largely this :   ethical judgments propagate themselves.   One man says " This is good " ;   this may influence the approval of another person, who then makes the same ethical judgment, which in turn influences another person, and so on.   In the end, by a process of mutual influence, people take up more or less the same attitudes.   Between people of widely separated communities, of course, the influence is less strong ;   hence different com- munities have different attitudes.

These remarks will serve to give a general idea of my point of view.   We must now go into more detail.   There are several questions which must be answered :   How does an ethical sentence acquire its power of influencing people—why is it suited to sug- gestion ?   Again, what has this influence to do with the *meaning* of ethical terms ?   And finally, do these considerations really lead us to a sense of " good " which meets the requirements mentioned in the preceding section ?

Let us deal first with the question about *meaning*. This is far from an easy question, so we must enter into a preliminary inquiry about meaning in general. Although a seeming digression, this will prove indispensable.

III.

Broadly speaking, there are two different *purposes* which lead us to use language. On the one hand we use words (as in science) to record, clarify, and communicate *beliefs*. On the other hand we use words to give vent to our feelings (interjections), or to create moods (poetry), or to incite people to actions or attitudes (oratory).

The first use of words I shall call " descriptive "; the second, " dynamic ". Note that the distinction depends solely upon the *purpose* of the *speaker*.

When a person says " Hydrogen is the lightest known gas ", his purpose *may* be simply to lead the hearer to believe this, or to believe that the speaker believes it. In that case the words are used descriptively. When a person cuts himself and says " Damn ", his purpose is not ordinarily to record, clarify, or communicate any belief. The word is used dynamically. The two ways of using words, however, are by no means mutually exclusive. This is obvious from the fact that our purposes are often complex. Thus when one says " I want you to close the door ", part of his purpose, ordinarily, is to lead the hearer to believe that he has this want. To that extent the words are used descriptively. But the major part of one's purpose is to lead the hearer to *satisfy* the want. To that extent the words are used dynamically.

It very frequently happens that the same sentence may have a dynamic use on one occasion, and may not have a dynamic use on another ; and that it may have different dynamic uses on different occasions. For instance : A man says to a visiting neighbour, " I am loaded down with work ". His purpose may be to let the neighbour know how life is going with him. This would *not* be a dynamic use of words. He may make the remark, however, in order to drop a hint. This *would* be dynamic usage (as well as descriptive). Again, he may make the remark to arouse the neighbour's sympathy. This would be a *different* dynamic usage from that of hinting.

Or again, when we say to a man, " Of course you won't make those mistakes any more ", we *may* simply be making a prediction. But we are more likely to be using " suggestion ", in order to

encourage him and hence *keep* him from making mistakes. The first use would be descriptive; the second, mainly dynamic.

From these examples it will be clear that we can't determine whether words are used dynamically or not, merely by reading the dictionary—even assuming that everyone is faithful to dictionary meanings. Indeed, to know whether a person is using a word dynamically, we must note his tone of voice, his gestures, the general circumstances under which he is speaking, and so on.

We must now proceed to an important question : What has the dynamic use of words to do with their *meaning?* One thing is clear—we must not define " meaning " in a way that would make meaning vary with dynamic usage. If we did, we should have no use for the term. All that we could say about such " meaning " would be that it is very complicated, and subject to constant change. So we must certainly distinguish between the dynamic use of words and their meaning.

It doesn't follow, however, that we must define " meaning " in some non-psychological fashion. We must simply restrict the psychological field. Instead of identifying meaning with *all* the psychological causes and effects that attend a word's utterance, we must identify it with those that it has a *tendency* (causal property, dispositional property) to be connected with. The tendency must be of a particular kind, moreover. It must exist for all who speak the language ; it must be persistent ; and must be realizable more or less independently of determinate circumstances attending the word's utterance. There will be further restrictions dealing with the interrelation of words in different contexts. Moreover, we must include, under the psychological responses which the words tend to produce, not only immediately introspectable experiences, but *dispositions* to react in a given way with appropriate stimuli. I hope to go into these matters in a subsequent paper. Suffice it now to say that I think " meaning " may be thus defined in a way to include " propositional " meaning as an important kind. Now a word may *tend* to have causal relations which in fact it sometimes doesn't ; and it may sometimes have causal relations which it *doesn't tend* to have. And since the tendency of words which constitutes their meaning must be of a particular kind, and may include, as responses, dispositions to reactions, of which any of *several* immediate experiences may be a sign, then there is nothing surprising in the fact that words have a permanent meaning, in spite of the fact that the immediately introspectable experiences which attend their usage are so highly varied.

When " meaning " is defined in this way, meaning will not

include dynamic use.   For although words are sometimes accompanied by dynamic purposes, they do not *tend* to be accompanied by them in the way above mentioned.   *E.g.*, there is no tendency realizable independently of the determinate circumstances under which the words are uttered.

There will be a kind of meaning, however, in the sense above defined, which has an intimate relation to dynamic usage.   I refer to " emotive " meaning (in a sense roughly like that employed by Ogden and Richards).[1]   The emotive meaning of a word is a tendency of a word, arising through the history of its usage, to produce (result from) *affective* responses in people.   It is the immediate aura of feeling which hovers about a word.   Such tendencies to produce affective responses cling to words very tenaciously.   It would be difficult, for instance, to express merriment by using the interjection " alas ".   Because of the persistence of such affective tendencies (among other reasons) it becomes feasible to classify them as " meanings ".

Just *what* is the relation between emotive meaning and the dynamic use of words ?   Let us take an example.   Suppose that a man is talking with a group of people which includes Miss Jones, aged 59.   He refers to her, without thinking, as an " old maid ".   Now even if his purposes are perfectly innocent—even if he is using the words purely descriptively—Miss Jones won't think so.   She will think he is encouraging the others to have contempt for her, and will draw in her skirts, defensively.   The man might have done better if instead of saying " old maid " he had said " elderly spinster ".   The latter words could have been put to the same descriptive use, and would not so readily have caused suspicions about the dynamic use.

" Old maid " and " elderly spinster " differ, to be sure, only in emotive meaning.   From the example it will be clear that certain words, because of their emotive meaning, are suited to a certain kind of dynamic use—so well suited, in fact, that the hearer is likely to be misled when we use them in any other way. The more pronounced a word's emotive meaning is, the less likely people are to use it purely descriptively.   Some words are suited to encourage people, some to discourage them, some to quiet them, and so on.

Even in these cases, of course, the dynamic purposes are not to be identified with any sort of meaning ; for the emotive meaning accompanies a word much more persistently than do the

[1] See *The Meaning of Meaning*, by C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards. On p. 125, second edition, there is a passage on ethics which was the source of the ideas embodied in this paper.

dynamic purposes. But there is an important contingent relation between emotive meaning and dynamic purpose : the former assists the latter. Hence if we define emotively laden terms in a way that neglects their emotive meaning, we are likely to be confusing. *We lead people to think that the terms defined are used dynamically less often than they are.*

IV.

Let us now apply these remarks in defining " good ". This word may be used morally or non-morally. I shall deal with the non-moral usage almost entirely, but only because it is simpler. The main points of the analysis will apply equally well to either usage.

As a preliminary definition, let us take an inaccurate approxima-tion. It may be more misleading than helpful, but will do to begin with. Roughly, then, the sentence " X is good " means *We like X.* (" We " includes the hearer or hearers.)

At first glance this definition sounds absurd. If used, we should expect to find the following sort of conversation : A. " This is good." B. " But I *don't* like it. What led you to believe that I did ? " The unnaturalness of B's reply, judged by ordinary word-usage, would seem to cast doubt on the relevance of my definition.

B's unnaturalness, however, lies simply in this : he is assuming that " We like it " (as would occur implicitly in the use of " good ") is being used descriptively. This won't do. When " We like it " is to take the place of " This is good ", the former sentence must be used not purely descriptively, but dynamically. More specifically, it must be used to promote a very subtle (and for the non-moral sense in question, a very easily resisted) kind of *suggestion.* To the extent that " we " refers to the hearer, it must have the dynamic use, essential to suggestion, of leading the hearer to *make* true what is said, rather than merely to believe it. And to the extent that " we " refers to the speaker, the sentence must have not only the descriptive use of indicating belief about the speaker's interest, but the quasi-interjectory, dynamic function of giving direct expression to the interest. (This immediate expression of feelings assists in the process of suggestion. It is difficult to disapprove in the face of another's enthusiasm.)

For an example of a case where " We like this " is used in th dynamic way that " This is good " is used, consider the case of a mother who says to her several children, " One thing is certain,

we all like to be neat ". If she really believed this, she wouldn't
bother to say so. But she is not using the words descriptively.
She is *encouraging* the children to like neatness. By telling them
that they like neatness, she will lead them to *make* her statement
true, so to speak. If, instead of saying " We all like to be neat "
in this way, she had said " It's a good thing to be neat ", the
effect would have been approximately the same.

But these remarks are still misleading. Even when " We like
it " is used for suggestion, it isn't quite like " This is good ".
The latter is more subtle. With such a sentence as " This is
a good book ", for example, it would be practically impossible
to use instead " We like this book ". When the latter is used,
it must be accompanied by so exaggerated an intonation, to
prevent its becoming confused with a descriptive statement, that
the force of suggestion becomes stronger, and ludicrously more
overt, than when " good " is used.

The definition is inadequate, further, in that the definiens
has been restricted to dynamic usage. Having said that dynamic
usage was different from meaning, I should not have to mention
it in giving the *meaning* of " good ".

It is in connection with this last point that we must return to
emotive meaning. The word " good " has a pleasing emotive
meaning which fits it especially for the dynamic use of suggesting
favourable interest. But the sentence " We like it " has no such
emotive meaning. Hence my definition has neglected emotive
meaning entirely. Now to neglect emotive meaning is likely to
lead to endless confusions, as we shall presently see ; so I have
sought to make up for the inadequacy of the definition by letting
the restriction about dynamic usage take the place of emotive
meaning. What I should do, of course, is to find a definiens
whose emotive meaning, like that of " good ", simply does *lead*
to dynamic usage.

Why didn't I do this ? I answer that it isn't possible, if the
definition is to afford us increased clarity. No two words, in
the first place, have quite the same emotive meaning. The most
we can hope for is a rough approximation. But if we seek for
such an approximation for " good ", we shall find nothing more
than synonyms, such as " desirable " or " valuable " ; and these
are profitless because they do not clear up the connection between
" good " and favourable interest. If we reject such synonyms,
in favour of non-ethical terms, we shall be highly misleading.
For instance : " This is good " has something like the meaning
of " I *do* like this ; do so as well ". But this is certainly not
accurate. For the imperative makes an appeal to the conscious

efforts of the hearer.   Of course he can't like something just by
trying.   He must be led to like it through suggestion.   Hence
an ethical sentence differs from an imperative in that it enables
one to make changes in a much more subtle, less fully conscious
way.   Note that the ethical sentence centres the hearer's atten-
tion not on his interests, but on the object of interest, and thereby
facilitates suggestion.   Because of its subtlety, moreover, an
ethical sentence readily permits counter-suggestion, and leads
to the give and take situation which is so characteristic of
arguments about values.

Strictly speaking, then, it is impossible to define " good " in
terms of favourable interest if emotive meaning is not to be dis-
torted.   Yet it is possible to say that " This is good " is *about*
the favourable interest of the speaker and the hearer or hearers,
and that it has a pleasing emotive meaning which fits the words
for use in suggestion.   This is a rough description of meaning,
not a definition.·   But it serves the same clarifying function that
a definition ordinarily does ; and that, after all, is enough.

A word must be added about the moral use of " good ".   This
differs from the above in that it is about a different kind of interest.
Instead of being about what the hearer and speaker *like*, it is
about a stronger sort of approval.   When a person *likes* something,
he is pleased when it prospers, and disappointed when it doesn't.
When a person *morally approves* of something, he experiences a
rich feeling of security when it prospers, and is indignant, or
" shocked " when it doesn't.   These are rough and inaccurate
examples of the many factors which one would have to mention
in distinguishing the two kinds of interest.   In the moral usage,
as well as in the non-moral, " good " has an emotive meaning
which adapts it to suggestion.

And now, are these considerations of any importance ?   Why do
I stress emotive meanings in this fashion ?   Does the omission of
them really lead people into errors ?   I think, indeed, that the
errors resulting from such omissions are enormous.   In order to
see this, however, we must return to the restrictions, mentioned
in section I., with which the " vital " sense of " good " has been
expected to comply.

<div align="center">V.</div>

The first restriction, it will be remembered, had to do with dis-
agreement.   Now there is clearly some sense in which people
disagree on ethical points ; but we must not rashly assume that
all disagreement is modelled after the sort that occurs in the
natural sciences.   We must distinguish between " disagreement

in belief " (typical of the sciences) and " disagreement in interest ".
Disagreement in belief occurs when A believes p and B dis-
believes it.   Disagreement in interest occurs when A has a
favourable interest in X, when B has an unfavourable one in it,
and when neither is content to let the other's interest remain
unchanged.

Let me give an example of disagreement in interest.   A. " Let's
go to a cinema to-night."   B. " I don't want to do that.   Let's
go to the symphony."   A continues to insist on the cinema, B
on the symphony.   This is disagreement in a perfectly conven-
tional sense.   They can't agree on where they want to go, and
each is trying to redirect the other's interest.   (Note that im-
peratives are used in the example.)

It is disagreement in *interest* which takes places in ethics.
When C says " This is good ", and D says " No, it's bad ",
we have a case of suggestion and counter-suggestion.   Each
man is trying to redirect the other's interest.   There obviously
need be no domineering, since each may be willing to give ear to
the other's influence ; but each is trying to move the other none
the less.   It is in this sense that they disagree.   Those who
argue that certain interest theories make no provision for dis-
agreement have been misled, I believe, simply because the tra-
ditional theories, in leaving out emotive meaning, give the im-
pression that ethical judgments are used descriptively only ; and
of course when judgments are used purely descriptively, the only
disagreement that can arise is disagreement *in belief*.   Such
disagreement may be disagreement in belief *about* interests ; but
this is not the same as disagreement *in* interest.   My definition
doesn't provide for disagreement in belief about interests, any
more than does Hobbes's ; but that is no matter, for there is
no reason to believe, at least on common-sense grounds, that
this kind of disagreement exists.   There is only disagreement *in*
interest.   (We shall see in a moment that disagreement in interest
does not remove ethics from sober argument—that this kind of
disagreement may often be resolved through empirical means.)

The second restriction, about " magnetism ", or the connection
between goodness and actions, requires only a word.   This
rules out *only* those interest theories which do *not* include the
interest of the speaker, in defining " good ".   My account does
include the speaker's interest ; hence is immune.

The third restriction, about the empirical method, may be
met in a way that springs naturally from the above account of
disagreement.   Let us put the question in this way :   When
two people disagree over an ethical matter, can they completely

resolve the disagreement through empirical considerations, assuming that each applies the empirical method exhaustively, consistently, and without error?

I answer that sometimes they can, and sometimes they cannot; and that at any rate, even when they can, the relation between empirical knowledge and ethical judgments is quite different from the one which traditional interest theories seem to imply.

This can best be seen from an analogy. Let's return to the example where A and B couldn't agree on a cinema or a symphony. The example differed from an ethical argument in that imperatives were used, rather than ethical judgments; but was analogous to the extent that each person was endeavouring to modify the other's interest. Now how would these people argue the case, assuming that they were too intelligent just to shout at one another?

Clearly, they would give " reasons " to support their imperatives. A might say, " But you know, Garbo is at the Bijou ". His hope is that B, who admires Garbo, will acquire a desire to go to the cinema when he knows what play will be there. B may counter, " But Toscanini is guest conductor to-night, in an all-Beethoven programme ". And so on. Each supports his imperative (" *Let's* do so and so ") by reasons which may be empirically established.

To generalize from this : disagreement in interest may be rooted in disagreement in belief. That is to say, people who disagree in interest would often cease to do so if they knew the precise nature and consequences of the object of their interest. To this extent disagreement in interest may be resolved by securing agreement in belief, which in turn may be secured empirically.

This generalization holds for ethics. If A and B, instead of using imperatives, had said, respectively, " It would be *better* to go to the cinema ", and " It would be better to go to the symphony ", the reasons which they would advance would be roughly the same. They would each give a more thorough account of the object of interest, with the purpose of completing the redirection of interest which was begun by the suggestive force of the ethical sentence. On the whole, of course, the suggestive force of the ethical statement merely exerts enough pressure to start such trains of reasons, since the reasons are much more essential in resolving disagreement in interest than the persuasive effect of the ethical judgment itself.

Thus the empirical method is relevant to ethics simply because our knowledge of the world is a determining factor to our interests.

But note that empirical facts are not inductive grounds from which the ethical judgment problematically follows. (This is what traditional interest theories imply.) If someone said "Close the door", and added the reason "We'll catch cold", the latter would scarcely be called an inductive ground of the former. Now imperatives are related to the reasons which support them in the same way that ethical judgments are related to reasons.

Is the empirical method *sufficient* for attaining ethical agreement? Clearly not. For empirical knowledge resolves disagreement in interest only to the extent that such disagreement is rooted in disagreement in belief. Not all disagreement in interest is of this sort. For instance: A is of a sympathetic nature, and B isn't. They are arguing about whether a public dole would be good. Suppose that they discovered all the consequences of the dole. Isn't it possible, even so, that A will say that it's good, and B that it's bad? The disagreement in interest may arise not from limited factual knowledge, but simply from A's sympathy and B's coldness. Or again, suppose, in the above argument, that A was poor and unemployed, and that B was rich. Here again the disagreement might not be due to different factual knowledge. It would be due to the different social positions of the men, together with their predominant self-interest.

When ethical disagreement is not rooted in disagreement in belief, is there *any* method by which it may be settled? If one means by "method" a *rational* method, then there is no method. But in any case there is a "way". Let's consider the above example, again, where disagreement was due to A's sympathy and B's coldness. Must they end by saying, "Well, it's just a matter of our having different temperaments"? Not necessarily. A, for instance, may try to *change* the temperament of his opponent. He may pour out his enthusiasms in such a moving way—present the sufferings of the poor with such appeal—that he will lead his opponent to see life through different eyes. He may build up, by the contagion of his feelings, an influence which will modify B's temperament, and create in him a sympathy for the poor which didn't previously exist. This is often the only way to obtain ethical agreement, if there is any way at all. It is persuasive, not empirical or rational; but that is no reason for neglecting it. There is no reason to scorn it, either, for it is only by such means that our personalities are able to grow, through our contact with others.

The point I wish to stress, however, is simply that the empirical method is instrumental to ethical agreement only to the

extent that disagreement in interest is rooted in disagreement in belief. There is little reason to believe that all disagreement is of this sort. Hence the empirical method is not sufficient for ethics. In any case, ethics is not psychology, since psychology doesn't endeavour to *direct* our interests; it discovers facts about the ways in which interests are or can be directed, but that's quite another matter.

To summarize this section : my analysis of ethical judgments meets the three requirements for the " vital " sense of " good " that were mentioned in section I. The traditional interest theories fail to meet these requirements simply because they neglect emotive meaning. This neglect leads them to neglect dynamic usage, and the sort of disagreement that results from such usage, together with the method of resolving the disagreement. I may add that my analysis answers Moore's objection about the open question. Whatever scientifically knowable properties a thing may have, it *is* always open to question whether a thing having these (enumerated) qualities is good. For to ask whether it is good is to ask for *influence*. And whatever I may know about an object, I can still ask, quite pertinently, to be influenced with regard to my interest in it.

VI.

And now, have I really pointed out the " vital " sense of " good " ?

I suppose that many will still say " No ", claiming that I have simply failed to set down *enough* requirements which this sense must meet, and that my analysis, like all others given in terms of interest, is a way of begging the issue. They will say : " When we ask ' Is X good ? ' we don't want mere influence, mere advice. We decidedly don't want to be influenced through persuasion, nor are we fully content when the influence is supported by a wide scientific knowledge of X. The answer to our question will, of course, modify our interests. But this is only because an unique sort of *truth* will be revealed to us—a truth which must be apprehended *a priori*. We want our interests to be guided by this truth, and by nothing else. To substitute for such a truth mere emotive meaning and suggestion is to conceal from us the very object of our search."

I can only answer that I do not understand. What is this truth to be *about ?* For I recollect no Platonic Idea, nor do I know what to *try* to recollect. I find no indefinable property, nor do I know what to look for. And the " self-evident " deliverances

of reason, which so many philosophers have claimed, seem, on examination, to be deliverances of their respective reasons only (if of anyone's) and not of mine.·

I strongly suspect, indeed, that any sense of " good " which is expected both to unite itself in synthetic *a priori* fashion with other concepts, and to influence interests as well, is really a great confusion. I extract from this meaning the power of influence alone, which I find the only intelligible part. If the rest is confusion, however, then it certainly deserves more than the shrug of one's shoulders. What I should like to do is to *account* for the confusion—to examine the psychological needs which have given rise to it, and to show how these needs may be satisfied in another way. This is *the* problem, if confusion is to be stopped at its source. But it is an enormous problem, and my reflections on it, which are at present worked out only roughly, must be reserved until some later time.

I may add that if " X is good " is essentially a vehicle for suggestion, it is scarcely a statement which philosophers, any more than many other men, are called upon to make. To the extent that ethics predicates the ethical terms of anything, rather than explains their meaning, it ceases to be a reflective study. Ethical statements are social instruments. They are used in a co-operative enterprise in which we are mutually adjusting ourselves to the interests of others. Philosophers have a part in this, as do all men, but not the major part.

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