ON THE DOING OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY

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THERE is a widespread dissatisfaction with moral philo-
sophy. Some think the source and indeed the ground of
the dissatisfaction lies in the way moral philosophy is currently
done. Others are inclined to think that it is rooted in the very
activity itself. I want to exhibit, for those who warily start on a
study of ethics, some viable conceptions of the proper office
and function of moral philosophy, to relate those conceptions
to moral perplexities we actually feel and, in doing this, show
something of the rationale for seriously engaging in moral
philosophy as well as some of the most serious challenges to that
rationale. My hope is to bring out something of the grounds for
the dissatisfaction with the subject and to do something to
show what moral philosophers must do to meet that dissatis-
faction, if, indeed, it can be met.

I

Many people believe that we live in an age of moral crisis.
Nietzsche long ago proclaimed the death of God and said that
the old morality was in shambles and that we must create new
tablets. Today even the mass media on occasion tell us that we
are witnessing the death of the old morality, that the established
moral guidelines have been yanked from our hands and that we
must, self-consciously and with 'struggle of soul' forge a new
morality.

It is indeed true that in one guise or another we repeatedly
ask moral questions, engage in moral arguments and experience
moral perplexity. People disagree heatedly and intensely over
moral questions. They are anxiety-arousing and they are
troubling. In the heat of argument we may clearly feel that
we are right, that we know without any doubt at all what should

be done. But when the dispute is over, when we are alone with ourselves in 'a cool hour', we are most often less sure that we were so right. And even where we do feel very confident about some live moral issue, we are faced with the fact that others on the opposite side of the argument—often people we have reason to believe are as conscientious as ourselves—feel equally confident about what ought to be done. Faced with a plethora of such cases, we come to wonder if there is any way whereby either party could show the other that they were mistaken. Can we rationally resolve such disputes? And can we answer the questions we put to ourselves in our own hearts?

Philosophers are apt to get too abstract too quickly. Already some may feel they are being led down easy street. Well, let us consider some specific moral problems that are repeatedly asked by plain people. We *may* agree about the correct answers to some of them, but the fact remains that people do very fundamentally disagree about what, if anything, counts as correct answers to them. Let us simply list some. And as I list them ask yourselves how you would answer them, how you would defend your answer and further ask if you think you could give an objective answer to such questions:

1. Our society is extremely competitive in school, in sports, for a mate, over a profession. What has been called 'possessive individualism' pervades our life. Is this a desirable thing? Is it even a necessary evil in order to enable us to have a tolerable standard of living or is it something we should get rid of as fast as we can or at least radically de-emphasize?

2. Given the fact that we now have such a competitive society, we can be quite confident that there are going to be losers and 'psychological casualties'. What obligations, if any, do those of us who are not losers have to them.

3. Some economists predict that in ten years we will be able to produce all of life's necessities with very few men on the assembly line. If these predictions are accurate, how are men to live without work? We, or at least those of us who have been caught up by the spirit of the Puritan work ethic, believe men ought to work. Should we reverse this judgment? Should we say instead that many at least ought to have a good income even though they do not work? Should it be the case that two representative men

     A and B—A with a job and B without a job—should have an equal income?

4. Should we develop a loyalty to the human race as a whole or should we still think of our country, our culture, our region or our religion as somehow coming first?

5. Should we here in Canada resist what has been called American imperialism, cultural and economic, or should we put aside such nationalistic considerations?

6. Is it immoral of us to develop a taste for sports cars and coloured T.V.'s while there is mass starvation in other parts of the world?

7. Are our old sexual codes repressive and outmoded? Should we be utterly permissive about sexuality? Or should we rather seek a new and better sexual morality? But what is our criteria for 'better' here?

8. Is it a good thing to divorce sexuality from love and treat it as a kind of entertainment and/or technique for tension reduction?

9. Is it the case that our society is a male dominated society in which women are exploited? If this is so or evenpa rtly so what should we do to alter the situation? Should there be a complete equality in every respect between the sexes?

10. What about egalitarianism in general? Should we work for a complete equality in every respect? Should we make no differentations at all between people? If we reject this radical egalitarianism and *alternatively* say that there are certain respects in which all human beings, irrespective of their merit, should be treated alike, we should ask: a) how do we know that is true and b) what are the respects in which all people should be treated equally?

11. What about keeping up life? With modern medicine we can keep a person alive longer and longer. How far, and under what conditions, should we keep this up?

12. In many cases judges can hardly avoid interpreting 'the moral intentions of our laws'. Ought they to do so without making their own moral preconceptions quite explicit?

13. If you go into a bank and the teller gives you ten dollars too much, is it your *obligation* to give it back?

14. Should Indians in Canada have complete control over their own systems of education or should the federal and/or provincial governments keep a partial control?

15. What about the use of violence to attain political change? When, if ever, is it justified? Are terrorist methods ever justified?

These questions—if we really consider them—give us a kind of vertigo. How can we answer them? Is any 'answer' in reality a *purely personal* answer? But if we say that any answer to such questions must be purely personal, isn't that to say in effect that there are no answers to such questions? If the answer is *purely personal*—if it is just an expression of how one happens to feel— then no one could give a *right* answer or for that matter a *wrong* answer. To say *any* answer can only be a personal one is to give one to understand that it is all a matter of 'you pays your money, you takes your choice' and that there really are no answers to such 'questions'. But why say that such answers are purely personal? Well consider how with modern medicine we can keep human beings alive longer and longer. How far and under what conditions should we keep this up? We make heart transplants now and we will learn to make workable synthetic hearts and solve problems of rejection; we will, as time goes on, learn to replace old organs so that they will become replaceable like old automobile parts. Indeed, after many a summer dies the swan can become a social reality. In short, it is becoming quite possible to keep human beings alive in some form or another much longer than we ever did before. But even without this and with expected population expansions, our globe will become more and more crowded and quite possibly more and more polluted. The lonely crowd will be more and more crowded together. Most of us do not want to die, but should we go on living indefinitely, most particularly when we become 'battered old machines'? Yet isn't it a doctor's job to prolong life, to heal the sick and mend the wounded? Should we let anyone die when he doesn't have to and doesn't want to? Yet it's hardly murder, even from a Catholic point of view, if we don't develop synthetic hearts. What are we to do? Wouldn't any moral decision here be a decision that each person must take individually? Is this too Protestant a view or is the necessity for decision in such a context something that is part of the very *nature* of morality? Perhaps moral questions in the very nature of the case are questions that each man must decide for himself.

Perhaps they aren't! The rights and wrongs of this general philosophical claim will surely be one of the things to investigate in moral philosophy, but we must be clear about this: if moral

questions are '*purely personal* questions', then it is very question-able whether they can be genuine questions at all. But if this is so, what then is the point of doing moral philosophy? There is at least this much point: we will want to see if such 'questions' can be answered. We will want to see if they do admit of any-thing other than a purely personal 'answer'—an 'answer' which seems at least to be no answer at all. We want to know whether we can reason about and decide live moral issues with *any objectivity at all*. This, after all, is certainly a very fundamental question about the nature of morality.

To put it this way, however, is to neglect the important fact that there is, if you will, an existential urgency about such questions. Intellectual curiosity aside, we very much want to know, as human beings, if our moral convictions are at bottom *simply* a matter of feeling.

II

Let us take a look at what we are trying to do from a different direction. We all—given present technology and barring some not utterly unlikely holocaust—have some 40 to 100 years to get through. How should we live out our grubby lives? What things are finally *worth* seeking? Many things we think will satisfy us really won't. What then should we seek? Again we feel a kind of vertigo. These questions raise questions that call themselves into question. How (if at all)—we can hardly help asking—can such questions be answered? They are certainly desperately vague questions. Perhaps there is no answer to them. Perhaps they are in reality pseudo-questions; questions differing from 'What is the temperature of virtue?' only in that their senseless nature is disguised. Yet it remains the case that we all in certain moments pose them to ourselves. When we are in the grip of the stresses and strains of life, we all very much want to see if we can find any answers to them? Before we rest content in the belief that they are pseudo-questions obliquely expressing emotional harrassments, we should try most persistently to see if we can ascertain whether they are such pseudo-questions.

What, we ask, do we *really want*, what is *truly admirable*, what ultimate loyalties—if any—should we develop? Moreover, and

this moves us in a slightly different but still related direction, whether we like it or not we must live with people. Parents have duties to their children; children have duties to their parents; husbands have duties to their wives and wives to their husbands. Teachers and students have complex relations of this sort with each other. But just what are these duties and obligations and what weight should we give them?

Here again we are led into moral philosophy. In trying to answer these questions or in trying to find out if they are really questions rather than emotional harrassments or conceptual muddles that admit of no answer, we must engage in moral philosophy. *Asked what moral philosophy is, we could sensibly reply that moral philosophy is the attempt to get clear about and perspicuously display the foundations of—or, in case it has no foundations—the nature of the moral life. Beyond that, and revealing something of its complexity, moral philosophy is an attempt to systematically and comprehensively face and rationally examine the fundamental conflicts and dilemmas of the moral life.* (Part of our feeling for the complexity of the problem will lie in our recognition of the ambiguity and indeterminateness in such a context of the phrase 'rationally examine'.)

In trying to get clear about those opaque but strangely compelling moral questions, we, in effect at least, ask some very general questions. We ask, what if anything, is really worthwhile? What obligations, if any, must we recognize? And in asking such questions we may in turn find ourselves obliged, whether we like it or not, to ask what is *meant* by 'good', 'worthwhile, 'obligatory' and the like. Are these words but labels for emotions and do we, when we use them to make moral utterances, merely express our emotions—give voice to either our private or culturally defined upsets? Are all questions about what is good, obligatory, worthwhile and the like utterly subjective? Are they all a matter of where we were brought up? Are we in taking a moral stance simply *obliquely* exhibiting that we have certain customs? Or can we say that some moral claims are objective claims which bind all properly informed and reasonable human beings in ways such that there are some general constraints on what they rightly can and cannot do?

In moral philosophy we try to get clear about the nature of

these questions and we try to find answers to them. We try to gain some understanding of the nature of morality and we try to examine the rationale behind moral claims, if indeed there is such a rationale.

III

There have, however, been other characterizations of moral philosophy. Some have thought that a fundamental task, if not the fundamental task, of moral philosophy should be to provide us with a *moral critique of society*. Philosophy in general should provide us with the rationale for a critical theory which will help us unmask *destructive* and irrational ideologies and to see through cultural myths. In such a critical theory moral philosophy has a key role to play.

There are many philosophers—particularly many contemporary Anglo-American philosophers—who believe this is giving philosophy a task which is not its own. Philosophy can clarify concepts but it cannot provide a critique of society. It is understandable that this should be claimed, for if we reflect a bit, we can see that it is surely the case that the more traditional and the securer role of the philosopher has been that of a clarifier rather than a direct challenger of traditional values. Moreover, we also can see, if we reflect, that it is not so evident just how philosophy is to play this critical, vivisectional role.[1]

I am frankly ambivalent about what we should say about this critical role of the moral philosopher. On the one hand, I recognize the value of, indeed the human necessity of, social criticism and of developing carefully reasoned techniques for systematically doing this. These questions of a critical theory of society are questions which are close to my heart. Concern with them led me into philosophy in the first place. Yet, on the other hand, as I have come to understand more about philosophy, I am less sure and less happy about its role here. That is I wonder and worry whether philosophy can really do anything very significant here.

Why there is a problem here for philosophy in general and for moral philosophy in particular can be made evident by reflecting on some remarks of that often perceptive but non-

philosophical critic of our society, Paul Goodman. Goodman remarks that "contemporary conditions of life have certainly deprived people, and especially young people, of a meaningful world in which they can act and find themselves".[2] This may be in a way hyperbolic—but hyperbolic or not—it has considerable force when we consider the quality of our social life. Our social priorities are insane and when we look to our figures of authority —the people who mold and direct this culture—we find again and again that we have people in key positions who are incompetent to cope with modern times or even to see the madness around them. Yet these are the people who are making the key decisions. But they are people who have allowed things to get into such a state that we are in danger of becoming extinct— the biosphere is being destroyed and, unless something fairly radical is done, two-thirds of humankind in the not too distant future will not be far from starvation. And even in our generally well-fed (often overstuffed) part of the globe, there is an acceleration of the way human beings are becoming useless and there remains incredible poverty in the midst of plenty. "Old people", as Goodman puts it, are "shunted out of sight at an increasingly early age" while at the very same time "young people are kept on ice till an increasingly later age".[3] And while this goes on, along with all the exploitation of some men by others—indeed a tiny minority of men exploit, in one way or another, the vast majority—there is a spreading ugliness, filth and tension in our environment.

With many, Goodman points out, this rotten state of affairs provokes a revolt against science and rationality. Even the core ideals, generally accepted from the Enlightenment, come under serious question. What, it is natural to ask, is the use of patience and reason when in the meantime millions are being killed and starved and when nuclear weapons and nerve gas are being stockpiled. Moreover, the prevalence of phonies and Yesmen in Academia—along with entrepreneurial types—make blatantly evident the fake quality of much of the traditional appeal to reason and intelligence. We have, for example, the formation of so-called "University Centres for Rational Alternatives" which are in reality centres of reaction, and apology for those very forces which have allowed us to mire in such an absurd and

(in some countries) inhuman predicament in the first place. Such an abuse of rationality has put rationality at a discount among the young. That is to say, the standard authorities are discredited and we live in a time of massive social scepticism.

Goodman and many other critics of our society have pointed these things out to us. But it has not taken them into moral philosophy and indeed the moral ills that dehumanize our lives are so obvious that one hardly needs philosophy to point them out. They are just ills to be relentlessly fought against. (Does not a recognition of this in effect bring out that the moral scepticism I mentioned in the first two sections has something of an artificial quality?) But what then is the role of moral philosophy here or of philosophy period? Indeed does it even have a role?

I think one role is this. Philosophers can at least be of value in refuting some subtle apologist for the *status quo* or in exposing absurd and nonsensical formulations from political commentators or showing the senselessness of certain political fantasies. It can help us see through various dominant mystifications. But we are tempted to ask more of philosophy. Yet when we consider the 1) grave ills of society and 2) questions concerning what is the lever by which one can change that society to something more humane and less absurd, it is not evident how philosophy can be of any *direct* help in these most crucial undertakings. How can it, for example, figure out the best way to fight against these ills? Is this something we can legitimately expect of philosophy?

One thing, at least, that philosophers and philosophy can do is to remain concerned about the intellectual culture of our society and remain concerned in such a way that we repeatedly and continually examine critically this intellectual culture. We do possess the tools for the analysis of ideology and the critique of social knowledge and its use. We can, as Chomsky has done so effectively, challenge the New Mandarins with their claims to technical expertise and to beneficial human engineering.

Yet it is also true that 1) this negative and unmasking role is hardly a characteristic philosophical activity and it is not an activity at all distinctive of philosophers—that is, it does not distinguish them from social scientists or literary critics—and 2) we tend to want more of philosophers and indeed moral

philosophers in particular than just this negative unmasking role. Yet we must be sober-minded here, for it is not so evident that philosophy can even fulfil this negative and unmasking role. Indeed with a heightened sense of the confusion in them and around them and suffering from boredom and disgust with what we have, many people are trying to forge a new way of life—a 'new life style' as the idiom has it. And, as one might expect, we cannot but falter in such a staggering activity. Philosophers of extraordinary genius and imagination have said things of value for men in such crises, but usually either too early or more commonly too late. It is surely not a staple of everyday work in philosophy, though philosophy can show that simplistic solutions are delusions. The role of moral philosophers as critics of our society, important as it is, is at present at least a problematic one; and, yet demanding and puzzling as this role for moral philosophy is, it is *not* one we should put aside, though we should realize that historically speaking it is not its most typical activity.

IV

A third and somewhat more typical conception of the task of moral philosophy is to conceive of it as the criticism of our moral categories, i.e. those fundamental moral concepts in terms of which all our other moral concepts are definable. I have in mind the concepts of good and evil, right and wrong, justice and injustice, duty and obligation, and freedom and responsibility. These are our fundamental concepts and it is not unnatural—though perhaps mistaken—to think that such concepts as what it is to be nasty, inauthentic, inconsiderate, cruel, base and beastly as well as kind, considerate, understanding and generous could be defined or at least characterized by reference back to these more fundamental concepts.

To conceive of moral philosophy as the criticism of our moral categories is to give it a more generalized and abstract task than we have given it in conceiving of it as a moral criticism of society. But in viewing moral philosophy as a criticism of our moral categories, I am also saying something that includes but still goes beyond my earlier characterization of moral philosophy

as an attempt to get clear about and perspicuously display the foundations of or the nature of the moral life. Criticism includes analysis and clarification, but it also involves *assessment* of these categories. What we want to ask are questions like these: is the continued use of these categories in just the way we have them in our actual moralities compatible with what we know about man and the world? Do these sets of moral categories form a consistent and reasonable whole or are there elements of incoherence and irrationality in them? Can we replace them with better categories?

There is considerable sorting out that needs to go on here but at least this much can safely be said: moral philosophy involves the attempt to elucidate and clarify fundamental moral concep- tions and beliefs, and to systematically and comprehensively face and rationally examine the conflicts and perplexities of the moral life, including those involved in any fundamental moral criticism of society.

Someone might well demur concerning whether we need phi- losophy to answer such very general questions about the nature of good and evil. They might indeed be sceptical about the necessity of asking such mindbreakers to meet intelligently the specific moral problems which we first enumerated. We do not need, it has been argued, a moral theory to come to grips with them.

This contention about the lack of a cutting edge in moral philosophy may be justified, but surely it is not obviously justified. To see something of what is at issue consider the problem of nuclear warfare. Reflect first on the following snatch of a dialogue:

A. If one really studies about what a nuclear war can do, one will clearly see that under no circumstances should we fight a nuclear war. If it comes to that, better any kind of tyranny than millions killed and the earth contaminated.
B. Better the risk of a nulear holocaust than the destruction of human freedom and Western ideals.

Certainly it is plain that factual considerations enter in here. That is to say: there are many relevant questions in such a context that could be answered without taking any ethical stance at all. For example, is there any such intent on the part

of the U.S.S.R. and even assuming such an intent would a takeover by the U.S.S.R. actually lead to an annihilation of human freedom and to a destruction of Western ideals or would life in the West, after a time at least, go on much as it did before? Or would such a takeover in the long run actually enhance freedom? These questions—difficult as they are to answer— are factual, empirical questions. But there also remain around this issue very difficult to resolve moral questions and indeed what philosophers like to call conceptual questions, e.g. just what counts as 'enhancing freedom'. Moreover, fundamental philosophical questions are also involved. Even if we assume that the picture of the world of the most inflexible of Cold War warriors is a realistic one, we still need to ask whether, even so, it still would not be better to avoid nuclear war and to accept a Soviet takeover should this become a realistic possibility. (I am accepting for the discussion the paranoid mentality of Cold Warriors and treating this as something that might happen.) Would it not be the case that the loss of such central freedoms would still be a lesser evil than the death of millions of people resulting from nuclear warfare? As precious as freedom is—the argument would run—it is not as precious as life itself. Freedom is a very great good, but its value is still instrumental. When a defense of freedom would produce all around and everything considered more unhappiness than happiness, then it is not to be fought for. But not everyone would say this. Some would say that freedom, as well as happiness, is intrinsically good—is worth having for its own sake. They would not accept the claim that pleasure and happiness and only pleasure and happiness are intrinsically good. But whetever stance we take here we are involved in philosophy.

In sum, it seems to me that practical questions such as the one about nuclear warfare or questions about demography—questions that in some form or another exercise all of us—lead quite naturally to the posing of these bedeviling philosophical questions.[4]

To answer many of the questions boiling up out of our practical life, do we need some genuine insight into what is good, what is just and into what is ultimately worth seeking? But these questions seem staggering. How would we begin to answer

them? What would such an answer look like? How, if at all, could we decide such questions? Again we are led to ask: is it all just a matter of how we happen to feel?

V

Many might agree that a careful consideration of the practical moral problems that face us in everyday life will indeed force us to consider the bases of our moral beliefs. But they will then go on to argue that when we do so consider such questions we should come to see, if we reason carefully and objectively, that our moral beliefs *cannot* be shown to rest on firm foundations. It is not just that Catholic morality or Communist morality or liberal morality is myth-eaten, but that no philosophical or theological ethic or 'rationalistic scientific ethic' has been able to show that its foundations are firm. Moreover, it will be argued, that the very notion of 'foundations' here, firm or otherwise, is just a useless metaphor.

There is in our time a vast amount of scepticism about the very possibility or any knowledge of good and evil. It comes from many sources and it needs to be faced with intellectual candor and seriousness. There are those who will say that since moral ideas are in the last analysis simply expressions of feelings or attitudes, moral judgments can have no objective ground. They simply express the whims of anguished mortal will. When someone lays moral claim on us, he simply evokes the attitudes generated by our tribe and, perhaps, our viscera. We ask what is good, what we should do, but when we try to find *goodness* or *oughtness* or *value* in the world, we discover instead only a neutral world in which humans strive endlessly, often voraciously, after one damn thing after another until their striving finally 'ceaseth in death'. This, it is sometimes argued, is exemplified in the very predicament of our desiring. When we get what we want, we don't want it anymore. Nothing would make us more miserable than to have everything we desire. We don't know what is good. We don't even know how we want to live and we haven't any idea how we would go about discovering what is good or how we ought to live. Some of you may indeed *think* you know, but just what would it be like to determine,

with any objectivity at all, that something is good or bad or right or wrong? It may well be that 'moral knowledge' like 'round square' is a contradiction in terms. Man is without a knowledge of good and evil.

Some would try to meet such a sceptical challenge by arguing that in every culture there are certain 'do's and don'ts' that in reality give a moral agent in that culture adequate guide lines for moral action. We need not embrace some highly speculative and highly utopian philosophical theory to discover such guide lines. Such rationalist theories, it is claimed, will always over-simplify the rich texture of moral experience. Human beings have lived together for a long time and they have slowly amassed a set of rules and guides for moral action that are much more reliable than anything a philosopher or anyone else might think up on a Sunday afternoon.

There is wisdom and hard-headed realism in much of this. But if we actually look at these rules, these 'do's and don'ts', will they turn out to be sufficient? The most obvious difficulty with such an appeal to the *de facto* moral rules of our culture or any culture is that the various rules in certain contexts give conflicting directives and there are no agreed-on priority rules to follow in such circumstances. Where two rules conflict, people can't follow them both. In their resultant perplexity about what to do, they are led to question the moral rules of their respective tribes or at least to realize that they, in certain circumstances at least, are inadequate action-guides. In reflecting on these quite understandable reactions, we need also to ask if any of these rules are rules which actually always hold—rules which have no exceptions so that we should act in accordance with them come what may?

That our actual rules are so exceptionless seems very questionable and indeed questionable even from a thoroughly common-sensical point of view. Consider such rules as 'Never lie', 'Never break a promise' and 'Do not kill.' Suppose you are going to have a surprise party for P. And L—the dorm gossip—asks you if you are going to have a surprise party for P. You know that if you tell L that everyone in the dorm, including P, will soon know about it and that even if you keep quiet that everyone in the dorm will know about it, for L is sufficiently

shrewd to take your silence as a tacit assent. Should you not lie to L in such a cricumstance? Or suppose—to take another example—I promise you to let you borrow a book and further promise that I will bring it to the next lecture. On my way to class, I suddenly remember that I have promised you the book but I also know that if I now go back to get it I shall be twenty minutes late for class. Is it not evident that in such a circumstance I should break my promise? Consider—to take still another example—the rule against killing. Indeed we should all respect the injunction not to kill, but does this mean in all circumstances? Isn't it really evident enough that the attempt on Hitler's life in 1944 was quite justified—even though five thousand people were executed by Hitler's henchmen as a result—and that it would have been a good thing if he had been killed?

Can you—to generalize quickly from this—think of any moral rule to which there are absolutely no exceptions? In asking that question I am asking whether there are any substantive, non-tautologous, non-analytic moral rules which are self-evidently certain moral directives in accordance with which we must always act. To explain what I mean here I should work with an example. Compare 'Killing is wrong' and 'Murder is wrong.' The first is a substantive moral rule of the kind I have in mind. The second, I shall argue, is analytic and non-substantive. (What the difference is here will come out as we examine them.) Compare these two rules. There clearly are, most people would agree, situations in which killing, everything considered, is *not* wrong. That is to say, there are tragic or horrible situations where, given the alternatives open to us, it is the thing we must do or at least forebear from preventing. But, to this it may be replied, 'It isn't killing *per se* but murder which is always wrong.' It in turn is surely natural, in asking for the rationale for that claim, to ask what the person making that claim intends by 'murder' and how he distinguishes it from 'non-murderous killing'. Suppose he says that to say Y murdered X is to say that Y deliberately killed X and Y didn't do it in self-defense or X was not an enemy national of a country with which Y's country was at war. But that clearly will not do, for on that definition *if* those German generals who made the famous

attempt on Hitler's life would have succeeded, we would have to say that they had murdered him *and* that they did something wrong, since murder is something which is by definition wrong. It is, however, questionable whether we should want to describe such an act as murder, but even if we do, it is surely questionable whether we should want to characterize it as wrong. That is to say, if we call such killings 'murders', we will then come to wonder whether we should persist in saying that murder is *by definition* wrong.

To avoid such complexities and to find a definition such that we would be able rightly to regard 'Murder is wrong' as an exceptionless and indeed a self-evidently true moral rule, we might try characterizing 'murder' as 'unjustified killing'. But now 'Murder is wrong' is plainly a tautology, for 'unjustified killing' is 'wrong killing' and—since 'murder' means 'unjustified killing'—in saying 'Unjustified killing is wrong' we are merely saying 'Wrong killing is wrong' and that is hardly news. Moreover, it is not only not news, but such a self-evidently true and tautologous moral principle is utterly useless and empty for it does not tell us what to do. For we still are not told *which* killing is unjustified killing or wrong killing. Has, for example, a soldier murdered his comrade-in-arms when he kills a fellow soldier who is a) trapped in a burning tank which will explode in minutes and b) when this soldier begs him to kill him? There is (legal contexts aside) surely no universal agreement about whether such killing is unjustified killing or murder.

There are moral utterances other than 'Murder (wrong killing) is wrong,' such as 'You ought to do what is right,' 'What is good is desirable,' 'You should always do what is your duty,' or 'Do good and avoid evil,' which are also self-evidently true. But it is also the case that like 'Murder is wrong' they are empty—devoid of substance. That is to say, they to not tell us what we are to do. We do not know from them what actions to undertake or avoid.

Consider another, rather different example of an allegedly substantive but still self-evident moral rule: 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.' But this as it stands is not, to put it mildly, self-evident at all. As George Bernard Shaw observed: people are different with different desires, needs and

interests. They—or at least many of them—may not at all want me to do unto them what I would have them do unto me. Suppose a given individual is the sort of person who very much wants to be left alone so that she can work and study. If she goes to the country for a few weeks, she does not want people dropping by or bringing her their spare T.V. so that she can watch the late show, even in that remote cabin. But other people are more gregarious. They may want plenty of company and a T.V. so they can see the late show. One must find out something about the persons involved before it is reasonable to decide that we should do unto others as we would have them do unto us.

Someone might respond that that is reading the golden rule too literally and woodenly. What is really intended by it is the following and that is self-evidently true: 'If A is right for B to do in situation C, it is right for anyone exactly like B to do in another situation of exactly the same type.' Here, we indeed have something which may be self-evidently true, but again it is something which is utterly empty and probably inapplicable to boot. Situations and people are never exactly alike. If we retreat to *'relevantly* similar' then we leave room for differing judgments and areas of disagreement. In short, we no longer have something which is self-evident. Moreover, we are only told *'If* A is right for B . . .', but then we cannot know, from assenting to that rule, that A actually is right for B, so we still cannot know from the golden rule categorically and certainly what it is that we should do in any given situation.

Finally, consider an example of a quite different type: 'Any kind of thing is bad if it, or the pursuit of it, increases the misery of living beings upon the whole.' Suppose someone claimed that that rule is a rule which self-evidently and categorically holds. Someone might respond: 'Well, how do we know that misery is always bad? Suffering is a source of misery but sometimes at least it is also the source of creativity.' It might be hard for us to know how to respond to this claim, but we feel it to be either somehow sophistical or a claim resting on a confusion between something's being good as an end and good as a means. But, that apart, there are other contentions, standing in opposition to that general ethical contention, which we may feel are less sophistical and less easily disposed of, though we will, conside-

ring our own moral feelings, find such contentions very distasteful. I have in mind contentions to the effect that there are some people or some living beings which exist to serve an elite culture of superior men who are the preservers of the values of civilization. Finally, there is the quite different objection that what constitutes the misery of all living things upon the whole is something extremely difficult if not impossible to assess. Indeed it is not something which is independent of the distinctive social structures and of the other moral conceptions of different human groups. There are in sum simply too many incommensurables here for that general rule to be self-evidently certain and exceptionless.

I could multiply examples of allegedly self-evidently certain moral rules. Work out for yourselves what should be said about 'We are never justified in killing the innocent,' 'A mother ought never to maltreat her child', or 'No amount of good to be achieved is worth a human life.' And these examples apart, what I am asking you here is: Are there any substantive, non-tautological moral rules which are self-evidently true and exceptionless? Try very carefully to see if you can think of any. I predict that you will fail.

VI

What generalizations do our consideration of these examples suggest? First, they give us some reason to believe that ordinary substantive rules such as 'Never tell a lie,' 'Do not break promises,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not kill' and the like all have exceptions. That is to say, circumstances can arise when we should not act in accordance with these rules. Our definitive cases of exceptionless rules appear to be rules—assuming, what is questionable, that we should even call them 'rules'—which are analytic and empty. There are indeed some very general and abstract rules such as 'Misery is bad' and 'Happiness is good' which appear at least to be exceptionless and non-analytic—though they are hardly paradigmatic cases of exceptionless and self-evident rules. But they are very vague and indefinite action-guides; they do not tell us specifically what to do. What

seems to be the case is that we do not have any definite, clear-cut action-guides which are also self-evident, substantive and exceptionless.

Thus, it appears at least to be the case: a) that there are no substantive moral rules which are plainly and evidently excep-tionless and b) that, certain determinate circumstances apart, there are no moral rules with which we should always act in accordance. But this does not mean that we cannot describe situations in which it would be correct to say that doing a certain thing was categorically and unequivocally wrong, that in such situations there simply is no sound reason for being sceptical about what we ought to do. We can, that is, quite definitely know in such situations that we ought not to do a certain thing or, as the case may be, that we ought to do a certain thing. Consider these examples:

1. "Two youths with a car offered a girl a lift home from a dance. They turned off the route to a desolate spot where each took it in turn to rape her while the other held her down, after which they robbed her of her money—that is to say, of the three shillings or so which was all she had in her purse. Then they threw her out of the car to find her way home."[5]

2. Nazi doctors in a concentration camp performed 'medical experi-ments' on live human beings transferring male sexual organs to females and *vice-versa* without the use of any anaesthesia and to no known scientific purpose.

Such actions are quite plainly and unequivocally wrong and totally without even the simulacrum of being justified or even being tolerable. In short, we know quite definitely and unequi-vocally that these acts are wrong and any ethical theory which cannot account for this is in this respect at least sadly defective. And here I am not merely moralizing or expressing my emotions but I am reminding you of something that you quite definitely know.

However, while this is true, it still remains the case that we are talking about definite actions in certain situations and not about rules. The recognition that these actions are quite unequivocally and categorically wrong is not the same thing as the recognition

that there are substantive moral rules which we should invariably follow no matter what the circumstances. That is, in accepting 1 and 2 above as characterizing situations which never ought to be tolerated, we are not saying that the rules 'Never force a girl to have intercourse against her will' or 'Never perform medical experiments on people' always hold. (The above rules must not be confused with the empty but invariable [exceptionless] 'Never perform *beastial* medical experiments' and 'Never *senselessly* and *brutally* rape'. The italicized terms function in such a manner that when they are used in such utterances it is by definition true that what is talked about is the wrong thing to do. In characterizing an act as 'a beastial act' we have already implied that it is wrong to do it. Saying 'Never do it' adds nothing here, for it is analytically true that 'What is, everything considered, wrong to do ought never to be done.'

It might be objected that since the acts described in 1 and 2 are always in those situations, wrong, it would be possible to characterize those situations in the form of very complicated rules which are substantive and, since it is always wrong to so act, exceptionless. But even if it is possible to do so without using terms such as 'beastial', which function in the rule in question to make the rule empty in the way 'Murder is wrong' is empty, we would still have very odd rules, for they would not function like actual workaday moral rules, e.g. 'Promises are to be kept' and 'Do not simply use people for your own ends'. This is so because they are so detailed and so specific that they in fact simply recount in something like a rule-form the situation in question. They do not function as fairly generalized action-guides and so hardly function as rules at all.

However, what we can see from the above is that there are these tolerably concrete moral situations in which, if people behave in a certain way, we can quite categorically and justifiably claim that what they did was wrong: was something that through and through ought not to be done. Thus there is plainly some limitation to the subjectivity of moral beliefs.

This last claim seems to me a reasonable and correct claim to make, but all the same it has at least these problems connected with it. a) Though we may *feel* quite certain that the things described in 1 and 2 above are wrong, can we prove—in some

way rationally demonstrate or establish—that what we feel to be
wrong and indeed believe we know to be wrong is wrong?
(Beware of this question, it may be taking us down the garden
path. Yet, if it is a mistaken question to ask, we need to know
exactly why it is mistaken and if it is not mistaken we very much
need to know the answer to it.) b) What if there are cultures or
subcultures in which people do not feel the way we do about 1
and 2—do not share with us even these very basic moral con-
victions—can we establish, i.e. in *some way* prove or show, that
they are wrong (mistaken) and that we are right? Or are we
somehow being ethnocentric? (But is 'ethnocentric' even the
right word here?) Even within a rather atypical subculture of
our culture, such as the one Robert Selby brings alive in his
Last Exit to Brooklyn, we have people quite capable of doing
things of the sort characterized in 1 above without the slightest
pang of guilt or even regret. Perhaps this shows that it is simply
the case that there are some callous and indeed irrational people
who are indifferent to morals and indeed even to their own
welfare. (Consider Selby's unforgettable character Tralala.)

Given the diversity of moral beliefs from tribe to tribe and
even within certain tribes and given the complexity of moral
claims, we should not rest easy that such paradigm cases of
certainty about what we ought to do settles much. For even if
we are really justified in having that certainty in such situations,
even if we attain cross-cultural agreement about such cases, we
are still not carried very far *vis-a-vis* establishing the objectivity
of moral claims and undermining the lament that *alles ist
relativ*, for we have at best shown that there are *some limiting
cases* concerning which all representative members of all tribes
agree. But this leaves us with vast areas of disagreement without
pointing to any method for rationally resolving that disagree-
ment. Moreover, we have not been given grounds for believing
that we have established that there are any moral rules, let alone
a system or even a coherent cluster of moral rules, which will
definitively guide our actions so that in every situation we will
know what it is that we ought to do.

We indeed might be able to make out a case for claiming that
it is always true that good is to be done and evil is to be avoided
or that we ought always try to do the best thing possible under

the circumstances. The rationale of this is very plain, for, as one author puts it, "it is good to do what is good; it is better to do what is better; and it is best to what is best." But while all this may be true, it is perfectly vacuous, for we still do not know from any such rule, rules or principles *what* we are actually to do in any living situation. Where we get certainty, we get emptiness. Where we have some content—some substance—and a normal generality to our moral rules, we do *not* get certainty.

<h1 style="text-align:center">VII</h1>

At this point we ought to take note of three different ways philosophers have often taken the phrase 'ethical absolutism.'[6] Sometimes the term is meant to designate the affirmation of what we have been denying above, namely to be an ethical absolutist is to believe that there are moral rules or principles of conduct which are substantive and yet admit of no exceptions. That is to say, what these moral rules enjoin—if indeed they are 'true' or correct at all—always holds no matter what the circumstances or situation. Such an ethical absolutist would maintain that there are some rules, such as the rule that it is always wrong to break a promise or that it is always wrong to steal, which are always true or (if it does not make sense to say rules are true) always to be followed no matter what the circumstances. If my above arguments are correct such a form of ethical absolutism is mistaken.

However, that is only one way 'ethical absolutism' is taken; and, it has been pointed out, that it is doubtful whether any philosophers of note, with the possible exception of Kant, have ever been ethical absolutists in that sense. But, there are two distinct and more plausible senses in which 'ethical absolutism' can be taken which have many defenders.

First it has been claimed that to be an 'ethical absolutist' is to maintain that there is a set or cluster of moral norms valid for all mankind. This presupposes that there is some way of showing that there is a rational cross-cultural method for finding out which moral beliefs are justified and which are not. But, in believing that there is a set of moral norms valid for all

mankind, this second kind of ethical absolutist need not at all commit himself to the belief that there are any substantive moral rules which are exceptionless and should always be acted on no matter what the circumstances. Rather in asserting, as this second kind of absolutist actually does, that there are moral norms correctly applicable to all mankind, he does not give one to understand or in any way commit himself to the belief that these universally valid norms have such specifications that there is a certain definite kind of act which is always right or always wrong to do.

Rejecting ethical absolutism in that first sense does not mean or give us good grounds for believing that we should reject the ethical absolutism propounded in the second sense I just characterized. Many philosophers would reject ethical absolutism taken as the claim that there are substantive moral rules to which there are no exceptions and accept it as the denial of normative ethical relativism; that is, accept it as the claim that there is a universally valid system of moral norms generally, though not exceptionlessly, applicable in varying ways, given the differing conditions of human life, to all men everywhere. Such an absolutist might be (though he need not be) a utilitarian operating on the general principle that we should seek to maximize human welfare and minimize human illfare, e.g. pain, misery, suffering and degradation. But he could all the same reject the belief that there are universally valid, specific 'do's and don'ts' serving as correct action-guides that must always be acted on no matter what the consequences. His claim is: a) that we have a general, rational cross-cultural method for ascertaining how we should act and b) that there are generally applicable moral norms which are reasonable action-guides, though this should not be taken to imply that we should always act in accordance with them in every circumstance.

There is a third way of construing 'ethical absolutism' which is distinct from the two senses just discussed yet compatible with either of them. It can best be understood if we attend to a distinction drawn by Ludwig Wittgenstein between *judgments of relative value* and *judgments of absolute value*. Wittgenstein maintains that in ethics we are most fundamentally concerned with judgments of absolute value. In asking about the right way

of living, about what is ultimately worth seeking and having and about what is morally speaking good, we are using these phrases in ways such that they are expressions of absolute value. Wittgenstein explains his distinction this way:

If for instance I say that this is a good chair this means that the chair serves a certain predetermined purpose and the word good here has only meaning so far as this purpose has been previously fixed upon. In fact the word good in the relative sense simply means coming up to a certain predetermined standard. Thus when we say that this man is a good pianist we mean that he can play pieces of a certain degree of difficulty with a certain degree of dexterity. And similarly if I say that it is *important* for me not to catch cold I mean that catching a cold produces certain describable disturbances in my life and if I say that this is the right road I mean that it's the *right* road relative to a certain goal. Used in this way these expressions don't present any difficult or deep problems. But this is not how Ethics uses them. Supposing that I could play tennis and one of you saw me playing and said ".Well, you play pretty badly" and suppose I answered "I know, I'm playing badly but I don't want to play any better," all the other man could say would be "Ah then that's all right." But suppose I had told one of you a preposterous lie and he came up to me and said "You're behaving like a beast" and then I were to say "I know I behave badly, but then I don't want to behave any better," could he then say "Ah, then that's all right"? Certainly not; he would say "Well, you *ought* to want to behave better." Here you have an absolute judgment of value, whereas the first instance was one of a relative judgment.[7]

The difference comes out sharply when we consider what would naturally bring an argument to an end or at least could reasonably bring it to an end. To say someone does something badly or that so and so is evil is to criticize them but if you say to me 'You play ping-pong badly' and I reply 'I know I do. I don't care if I do not play very well. I only do it for enjoyment' that would naturally end the matter. My wants, desires, enjoyments here are in the normal case king and, where this is so, we have a judgment of relative value. It takes the form: if you want to do such and such or have such and such or if such and such is your goal, then do so and so or then so and so is the thing to have or experience. But it says nothing about what you *ought* to want or what *should* be your goals. However, and by contrast, if you say to me 'Treating her that way is evil. She has her rights and

her dignity too' and I answer 'I know it is evil to treat her that
way. Persons ought not to be so treated, but I don't want to
treat her any better' my remark will be taken to be outrageously
irrelevant. Indeed, it will be taken as a remark of a man who
clearly either doesn't understand what morality is all about or
proposes in this situation simply brashly to trample moral
considerations underfoot. In asserting 'Treating her like that is
evil' a judgment of absolute value has been made. Pointing out
what I want—that I do not want to treat her any better—is
utterly irrelevant. The structure of such judgments of value are
not: if you want such and such or if your goal is such and such,
then do such or such. Rather the form is that whetever you or
any group may wish or not wish, want or not want, such and
such *must* be tried or sought. Judgments of absolute value are
judgments which hold independently "of whatever happened
to be the wishes, choices and attitudes of people either as
individuals or in groups . . .."[8] Judgments of absolute value are
judgments which are "absolutely binding and certain actions
are ruled out as impossible, unthinkable, out of the question,
never to be done whetever the circumstances."[9]

We surely as moral agents do on occasion and indeed quite
self-consciously and reflectively say things like that. If I do
something beastly, as Wittgenstein points out, I do not get off
the hook by saying that I have no desire to behave better or that
behaving better is not my aim at all. The response is that I
should—quite categorically should—*want* to behave better.
Judgments of absolute value—as Wittgenstein calls them—
have that stringency about them.

Do we know that any such judgments of absolute value are
true or that they actually hold? Is it some kind of cultural,
psychological or perhaps even conceptual mystification to
believe that any are actually true or actually hold? Wittgenstein
and Kant think that there are such judgments of absolute value
which indeed are true, but Kant worried that they might all in
some hidden way turn out to be hypothetical, relative judgments
of value after all. We feel strongly about those judgments of
value which we are tempted so to classify as 'absolute judgments
of value', we feel more strongly about them than we do about
relative judgments of value.

However, our talk of *feeling* here should make us suspicious. Perhaps it is just that we *feel* so strongly about them that we cannot bring ourselves to treat them as matters which finally rest on the choices we would make or the wants or desires we happen to have. We must—so to speak—read them into the universe, into human nature as such (not just our human nature) or say perplexingly (as many Wittgensteinians have) that goodness has a reality of its own. To view them as resting finally on our desires or choices would make them seem just too subjective and—given the strength of our feelings about them—that is something we cannot tolerate. But—it is natural to respond—doesn't this very thing show that they are not absolute values after all but rest finally on feelings? If a human being did not have these feelings, he or she would not feel so categorically committed or in any way be able to convince himself or herself that these principles must be adhered to come what may. Belief in the truth of such absolute judgments of value is belief in a myth. All that obtains in reality is that many people—perhaps most people—have the sort of feelings such that they are categorically committed to something. But this is just an interesting psycho-sociological fact about most people, it does nothing at all to show that there are any true absolute judgments of value. A fact of human psychology is not a normative truth.

To this it can—and indeed has—been responded that this only shows something about the conditions under which such judgments of absolute value can arise and will continue to be held by people; it shows nothing about their truth or falsity. We do not generally appeal to feelings or wants to ascertain when a value judgment is true. If I assert 'The innocent must be protected' or 'It is evil to treat a person simply as a means' or 'Allowing people to starve in a world of plenty is vile' my claims are neither confuted nor established by people appealing to what they want. We do not—in trying to justify such claims—count how many people desire that they be done or not be done, but we appeal to things in the character of the action or situation itself. In arguing, for example, that it is evil to allow people to starve in a world of plenty we point to the misery of starvation, the blight of human hopes and aspirations, and the hopeless

lassitude. We point to considerations of this sort and to the fact
that food could be made available if there existed different
distribution techniques and fairer principles of distribution. We
do not try to take an opinion pole about how people feel about
these matters.

Moreover, without some extremely unusual context, if
someone really did not understand that there was something
vile and thus wrong—absolutely and categorically wrong—
about starvation in the midst of plenty, the Nazi medical
experiments I described, or the rape I described, then we could
not find our feet with him, as Wittgenstein would have put it.
We would feel that such a person did not understand morality
or evil at all. We would not know what to say to him. If he does
not see that these things are evil, then he has no understanding
of evil at all and probably no capacity for understanding. We
have hit rock bottom and in this way it is plausible to say that
goodness has a reality of its own. (Must it be the case that he has
no understanding at all or may it be the case that he may have a
very stunted, undeveloped, or warped understanding? Did
Eichmann have *no* understanding of morality?)

We can often sketch out the context in a fuller way, but to
show that these acts are evil acts or that other acts are fine or
generous acts, there is nothing further we can appeal to. We
simply are at bed-rock as far as morality is concerned with such
absolute judgments of value. Roy Holland, who philosophizises
very much in the manner of Wittgenstein, brings this out very
well when he remarks:

I might say, in the case of a deed that has struck me as wonderful, that
it was not only the courage but even more the magnanimity of it; or
in the case of another action I might say that there was an element of
duplicity and also of meanness alongside the brutality. In speaking
thus I should be substituting more specific terms of evaluation for the
unspecific term with which perhaps I had begun. What I should be
doing here would be distinguishing and characterizing certain forms
or typical faces of good and evil. But I should not be making plain
what makes them forms of good and evil, nor should I be offering any
explanation of the nature of that of which these forms are forms—I
should not be explaining this however much detail I were able to go
into. Suppose for example that I spoke of someone who, while he was

himself in a vulnerable position, had disregarded his own danger in
the exertions by which he succeeded in getting a victim of injustice
out of harm's way. In so describing what he did I should be employing
evaluative terms anyway; and if someone were then to ask what was
so good about it I should think there must be something wrong with
him. I should certainly not try to tell him what was good about it and
if I were to try I should not succeed. To understand the description I
gave is to understand it already as the description of a deed on which
an absolute value is placed. I mean especially the part about getting a
victim of injustice out of harm's way, for the vulnerability of the agent
and the exertions involved are significant considerations only to the
extent that they bear on this. Otherwise, they might have amounted to
nothing more than a stunt.[10]

Here we have an important conflict between ethical absolutists
and their relativist and subjectivist opponents and an important
specification of what it is to be an ethical absolutist and what it
would be like not to reject ethical absolutism. And in a culture
in which—and not without reason—we are increasingly scep-
tical of all forms of ethical absolutism this is an appealing and
plausible way to state a case for ethical absolutism. Perhaps the
sort of things that Wittgenstein and Holland are saying here are
all we can say and perhaps after all that is enough, but the kinds
of considerations that arose to plague us when we discussed
earlier the rape case and the Nazi experiments return like the
repressed. Put succinctly: a) do we have even the faintest idea
of what it would be like for any such absolute judgment of value
to be true? We have some understanding of what it would be
like for 'The book is on the desk' to be true, but it is unclear
that we have any understanding of what it is for judgments of
absolute value to be true or false? b) What do we say when we
have whole cultures of people who are not so categorically
committed to such principles or have different and conflicting
absolute judgments of value? How can we know or show or can
we know or show that we are right and they are wrong? Perhaps
feelings and indeed culturally and historically variable feelings
at that are decisive here after all? c) Even if there are some
bedrock places where we have universal rational assent to such
absolute judgments of value does this, in view of the great sea
of disagreement concerning moral principles generally, carry

us very far in undermining relativism? Perhaps there are some things which we cannot intelligibly question but there remain many more things—and indeed things crucial to us—which we can and do question. How, if at all, are these disputes to be rationally resolved? And can they be resolved convincingly and reasonably in a non-relativist or non-subjectivist manner? To consider how, if at all, we can either answer such a question or dissolve it—showing there is in reality nothing there to be answered—is one of the main concerns and one of the most baffling concerns of moral philosophy.[11]

[1] That philosophy should do just this is powerfully argued by Friedrich Nietzsche. See most particularly his *Götzen-Dämmerung.* I have examined this aspect of his thought in my "Nietzsche as a Moral Philosopher," *Man and World*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (May, 1973), pp. 182-205.

[2] Paul Goodman, "The New Reformation," *The New York Times Magazine* (Spetember 14, 1969), p. 33.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] See Robert L. Heibroner's discussion of the issues of demography and nuclear war against the background of large scale moral issues. Robert L. Heibroner, "The Human Prospect," *The New York Review of Books*, Vol. XX, No. 21 & 22 (January 24, 1974), pp. 21-35.

[5] R. F. Holland, "Moral Scepticism," *Aristotelian Society Proceedings*, *Supplementary Vol.* 1967. But see here as well Christopher Cherry, "Scepticism and Morality," *Philosophy*, Vol. 48 (January, 1973).

[6] Paul Taylor (ed.), *Problems of Moral Philosophy* (Encino, California and Belmont, California: Dickenson Publishing Co., Inc., 1972), pp. 48-50.

[7] Ludwig Wittgenstein, "A Lecture on Ethics," *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. LXXIV, No. 1 (1965), p. 5.

[8] R. F. Holland, "Morality and Moral Reasoning," *Philosophy*, Vol. 47. (1972), p. 270.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 273.

[10] R. F. Holland, "Is Goodness a Mystery?," *The Human World*, No. 9 (November, 1972), pp. 3-4.

[11] I have tried to say something further about various facets of this in my "On the Diversity of Moral Beliefs", *Cultural Hermeneutics*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (1975), "Varieties of Ethical Subjectivism", *Danish Yearbook of Philosophy*, (1972), "Does Ethical Subjectivism Have a Coherent Form?", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol, XXXV, No. 1 (September, 1974), "On Locating the Challenge of Relativism", *Second Order*, (July, 1972) and "Morality and Commitment", *Idealistic Studies*, forthcoming.