

CHAPTER 6

- Reading 6.1 **Russell, B. (1912). The Value of Philosophy. Ch XV in *The Problems of Philosophy*. London: Williams and Northgate. pp 237–239.**
- Reading 6.2 **Wittgenstein, L (1921) *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (trans. by D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness). London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, last page.**
- Reading 6.3 **Russell, B. (1962) *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth*. London: Penguin Books, page 23.**
- Reading 6.5 **Hare, R.M.(1952). Description and evaluation. Chapter 7, in *The Language of Morals*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pages 111–117.**
- Reading 6.6 **Hare, R.M. (1952). Description and evaluation. Chapter 7 in *The Language of Morals*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pages 121–126**
- Reading 6.7 **Foot, P. (1967). Moral Beliefs. Chapter VI in Foot, P. (Ed) *Theories of Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 83–84, 85–86**
- Reading 6.8 **Hare, R.M. (1972). Descriptivism. Ch 5, Pages 55–75 in *Essays on the Moral Concepts*. London: The Macmillan Press, pp. 70–73, 97–100**
- Reading 6.9 **Locker, D. (1981) The Construction of Illness. Chapter 5 in *Symptoms and Illness*. London: Tavistock Publications, pp. 95–96, 96–97, 100, 101**
- Reading 6.10 **Fulford, K.W.M. (1989) Illness and action. Chapter 7 in *Moral Theory and Medical Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pages 115–119**
- Reading 6.11 **Toombs, K. (1993). The Body. Chapter 3 in *The Meaning of Illness: a phenomenological account of the different perspectives of physician and patient*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic pp. 62–63, 63, 66–67, 70–71**
- Reading 6.12 **Fulford, K.W.M. (1989) Illness and action. Chapter 7 in *Moral Theory and Medical Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pages 126–127**
- Reading 6.13 **Fulford, K.W.M. (1989) Illness and action. Chapter 7 in *Moral Theory and Medical Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pages 135–136**
- Reading 6.14 **Austin, J.L. (1968). A Plea for Excuses. Chapter 1 in White A.R.(Ed) *The Philosophy of Action*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pages 33–34**

Reading 6.1**EXERCISE 2**

Extract from: Russell, B. (1912). *The Value of Philosophy*. Ch XV in *The Problems of Philosophy*. London: Williams and Northgate. pp 237–239.

Chapter XV**The Value of Philosophy**

Having now come to the end of our brief and very incomplete review of the problems of philosophy, it will be well to consider, in conclusion, what is the value of philosophy and why it ought to be studied. It is the more necessary to consider this question, in view of the fact that many men, under the influence of science or of practical affairs are inclined to doubt whether philosophy is anything better than innocent but useless trifling, hair-splitting distinctions, and controversies on matters concerning which knowledge is impossible.

This view of philosophy appears to result, partly from a wrong conception of the ends of life, partly from a wrong conception of the kind of goods which philosophy strives to achieve. Physical science, through the medium of inventions, is useful to innumerable people who are wholly ignorant of it; thus the study of physical

science is to be recommended, not only, or primarily, because of the effect on the student, but rather because of the effect on mankind in general. This utility does not belong to philosophy. If the study of philosophy has any value at all for others than students of philosophy, it must be only indirectly, through its effects upon the lives of those who study it. It is in these effects, therefore, if anywhere, that the value of philosophy must be primarily sought.

But further, if we are not to fail in our endeavour to determine the value of philosophy, we must first free our minds from the prejudices of what are wrongly called “practical” men. The “practical” man, as this word is often used, is one who recognises only material needs, who realises that men must have food for the body, but is oblivious of the necessity of providing food for the mind. If all men were well off, if poverty and disease had been reduced to their lowest possible point, there would still remain much to be done to produce a valuable society; and even in the existing world the goods of the mind are at least as important as the goods of the body. It is exclusively among the goods of the mind that the value of philosophy is to be found; and only those who are not indifferent to these goods can be persuaded that the study of philosophy is not a waste of time.

Philosophy, like all other studies, aims primarily at knowledge. The knowledge it aims at is the kind of knowledge which gives unity and system to the body of the sciences, and the kind which results from a critical examination of the grounds of our convictions, prejudices, and beliefs.

Reading 6.2

EXERCISE 3

Sections 6.51–7.00 from: Wittgenstein, L (1921) *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (trans. by D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness). London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, last page.

- 6.51 Scepticism is *not* irrefutable, but obviously nonsensical, when it tries to raise doubts where no questions can be asked.
 For doubt can exist only where a question exists, a question only where an answer exists, and an answer only where something *can be said*.
- 6.52 We feel that even when all *possible* scientific questions have been answered, the problems of life remain completely untouched. Of course there are then no questions left, and this itself is the answer.
- 6.521 The solution of the problem of life is seen in the vanishing of the problem.
 (Is not this the reason why those who have found after a long period of doubt that the sense of life became clear to them have then been unable to say what constituted that sense?)
- 6.522 There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They *make themselves manifest*. They are what is mystical.
- 6.53 The correct method in philosophy would really be the following: to say nothing except what can be said, i.e. propositions of natural science—i.e. something that has nothing to do with philosophy—and then, whenever someone else wanted to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he had failed to give a meaning to certain signs in his propositions. Although it would not be satisfying to the other person—he would not have the feeling that we were teaching him philosophy—*this* method would be the only strictly correct one.
- 6.54 My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them—as steps—to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it.)
 He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright.
- 7 What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence.

Reading 6.3**EXERCISE 3**

Extract from: Russell, B. (1962) *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth*. London: Penguin Books, page 23.

Here, as usually in philosophy, the first difficulty is to see that the problem is difficult. If you say to a person untrained in philosophy, 'How do you know I have two eyes?' he or she will reply, 'What a silly question! I can see you have.' It is not to be supposed that, when our inquiry is finished, we shall have arrived at any-

thing radically different from this unphilosophical position. What will have happened will be that we shall have come to see a complicated structure where we thought everything was simple, that we shall have become aware of the penumbra of uncertainty surrounding the situations which inspire no doubt, that we shall find doubt more frequently justified than we supposed, and that even the most plausible premisses will have shown themselves capable of yielding unpalatable conclusions. The net result is to substitute articulate hesitation for inarticulate certainty. Whether this result has any value is a question which I shall not consider.

Reading 6.5

EXERCISE 7

Extract from: Hare, R.M.(1952). Description and evaluation. Chapter 7, in *The Language of Morals*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pages 111–117.

Chapter 7

Description and Evaluation

7. 1. Of all the problems raised by the preceding argument, the key problem is as follows: there are two sorts of things that we can say, for example, about strawberries; the first sort is usually called *descriptive* the second sort *evaluative*. Examples of the first sort of remark are, 'This strawberry is sweet' and 'This strawberry is large, red, and juicy'. Examples of the second sort of remark are 'This is a good strawberry' and 'This strawberry is just as strawberries ought to be'. The first sort of remark is often given as a reason for making the second sort of remark; but the first sort does not by itself entail the second sort, nor vice versa. Yet there seems to be some close logical connexion between them. Our problem is: 'What is this connexion?'; for no light is shed by saying that there is a connexion, unless we can say what it is.

The problem may also be put in this way: if we knew all the descriptive properties which a particular strawberry had (knew, of every descriptive sentence relating to the strawberry, whether it was true or false), and if we knew also the meaning of the word 'good', then what else should we require to know, in order to be able to tell whether a strawberry was a good one? Once the question is put in this way, the answer should be apparent. We should require to know, what are the criteria in virtue of which a strawberry is to be called a good one, or what are the characteristics that make a strawberry a good one, or what is the standard of goodness in strawberries. We should require to be given the major premiss. We have already seen that we can know the meaning of 'good strawberry' without knowing any of these latter things—though there is also a sense of the sentence 'What does it mean to call a strawberry a good one?' in which we should not know the answer to it, unless we also knew the answer to these other questions. It is now time to elucidate and distinguish these two ways in which we can be said to know what it means to call an object a good member of its class. This will help us to see more clearly both the differences and the similarities between 'good' and words like 'red' and 'sweet'.

Since we have been dwelling for some time on the differences, it will do no harm now to mention some of the similarities. For this purpose, let us consider the two sentences 'M is a red motor-car' and 'M is a good motor-car'. It will be noticed that 'motor-car', unlike 'strawberry', is a functional word, as defined in the preceding chapter. Reference to the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* shows that a motor-car is a carriage, and a carriage a means of

conveyance. Thus, if a motor-car will not convey anything, we know from the definition of motor-car that it is not a good one. But when we know this, we know so little, compared with what is required in order to know the full criteria of a good motorcar, that I propose in what follows to ignore, for the sake of simplicity, this complicating factor. I shall treat 'motor-car' as if it did not have to be defined functionally: that is to say, I shall assume that we could learn the meaning of 'motor-car' (as in a sense we can) simply by being shown examples of motor-cars. It is, of course, not always easy to say whether or not a word is a functional word; it depends, like all questions of meaning, on how the word is taken by a particular speaker.

The first similarity between 'M is a red motor-car' and 'M is a good motor-car' is that both can be, and often are, used for conveying information of a purely factual or descriptive character. If I say to someone 'M is a good motor-car', and he himself has not seen, and knows nothing of M, but does on the other hand know what sorts of motor-car we are accustomed to call 'good' (knows what is the accepted standard of goodness in motor-cars), he undoubtedly receives information from my remark about what sort of motor-car it is. He will complain that I have misled him, if he subsequently discovers that M will not go over 30 m.p.h., or uses as much oil as petrol, or is covered with rust, or has large holes in the roof. His reason for complaining will be the same as it would have been if I had said that the car was red and he subsequently discovered that it was black. I should have led him to expect the motor-car to be of a certain description when in fact it was of a quite different description.

The second similarity between the two sentences is this. Sometimes we use them, not for actually conveying information, but for putting our hearer into a position subsequently to use the word 'good' or 'red' for giving or getting information. Suppose, for example, that he is utterly unfamiliar with motor-cars in the same sort of way as most of us are unfamiliar with horses nowadays, and knows no more about motor-cars than is necessary in order to distinguish a motor-car from a hansom cab. In that case, my saying to him 'M is a good motor-car' will not give him any information about M, beyond the information that it is a motor-car. But if he is able then or subsequently to examine M, he will have learnt something. He will have learnt that some of the characteristics which M has are characteristics which make people—or at any rate me—call it a good motor-car. This may not be to learn very much. But suppose that I make judgements of this sort about a great many motor-cars, calling some good and some not good, and he is able to examine all or most of the motor-cars about which I am speaking; he will in the end learn quite a lot, always presuming that I observe a consistent standard in calling them good or not good. He will eventually, if he pays careful attention, get into the position in which he knows, after I have said that a motor-car is a good one, what sort of a motor-car he may expect it to be—for example fast, stable on the road, and so on.

6 CHAPTER 6 READING 6.5

Now if we were dealing, not with 'good', but with 'red', we should call this process 'explaining the meaning of the word'—and we might indeed, in a sense, say that what I have been doing is explaining what one means by 'a good motor-car'. This is a sense of 'mean' about which, as we have seen, we must be on our guard. The processes, however, are very similar. I might explain the meaning of 'red' by continually saying of various motor-cars 'M is a red motor-car', 'N is not a red motor car', and so on. If he were attentive enough, he would soon get into a position in which he was able to use the word 'red' for giving or getting information, at any rate about motor-cars. And so, both with 'good' and with 'red', there is this process, which in the case of 'red' we may call 'explaining the meaning', but in the case of 'good' may only call it so loosely and in a secondary sense; to be clear we must call it something like 'explaining or conveying or setting forth the standard of goodness in motor-cars'.

The standard of goodness, like the meaning of 'red', is normally something which is public and commonly accepted. When I explain to someone the meaning of 'red motor-car', he expects, unless I am known to be very eccentric, that he will find other people using it in the same way. And similarly, at any rate with objects like motor-cars where there is a commonly accepted standard, he will expect, having learnt from me what is the standard of goodness in motor-cars, to be able, by using the expression 'good motor-car', to give information to other people, and get it from them, without confusion.

A third respect in which 'good motor-car' resembles 'red motor-car' is the following: both 'good' and 'red' can vary as regards the exactitude or vagueness of the information which they do or can convey. We normally use the expression 'red motor-car' very loosely. Any motor-car that lies somewhere between the unmistakably purple and the unmistakably orange could without abuse of language be called a red motor-car. And similarly, the standard for calling motor-cars good is commonly very loose. There are certain characteristics, such as inability to exceed 30 m.p.h., which to anyone but an eccentric would be sufficient conditions for refusing to call it a good motor-car; but there is no precise set of accepted criteria such that we can say 'If a motor-car satisfies these conditions, it is a good one; if not, not'. And in both cases we could be precise if we wanted to. We could, for certain purposes, agree not to say that a motor-car was 'really red' unless the redness of its paint reached a certain measurable degree of purity and saturation; and similarly, we might adopt a very exact standard of goodness in motor-cars. We might refuse the name 'good motor-car' to any car that would not go round a certain race-track without mishap in a certain limited time, that did not conform to certain other rigid specifications as regards accommodation, &c. This sort of thing has not been done for the expression 'good motor-car'; but, as Mr. Urmson has pointed out, it has been done by the Ministry of Agriculture for the expression 'super apple'.¹

¹ *Mind*, lix (1950), 152 (also in *Logic and Language*, ii, ed. Flew, 166).

It is important to notice that the exactness or looseness of their criteria does absolutely nothing to distinguish words like 'good' from words like 'red'. Words in both classes may be descriptively loose or exact, according to how rigidly the criteria have been laid down by custom or convention. It certainly is not true that value-words are distinguished from descriptive words in that the former are looser, descriptively, than the latter. There are loose and rigid examples of both sorts of word. Words like 'red' can be extremely loose, without becoming to the least degree evaluative; and expressions like 'good sewage effluent' can be the subject of very rigid criteria, without in the least ceasing to be evaluative.

It is important to notice also, how easy it is, in view of these resemblances between 'good' and 'red', to think that there are no differences—to think that to set forth the standard of goodness in motor-cars is to set forth the meaning, in all senses that there are of that word, of the expression 'good motor-car'; to think that 'M is a good motor-car' means neither more nor less than 'M has certain characteristics of which "good" is the name'.

7.2. It is worth noticing here that the functions of the word 'good' which are concerned with information could be performed equally well if 'good' had no commendatory function at all. This can be made clear by substituting another word, made up for the purpose, which is to be supposed to lack the commendatory force of 'good'. Let us use 'doog' as this new word. 'Doog', like 'good', can be used for conveying information only if the criteria for its application are known; but this makes it, unlike 'good', altogether meaningless until these criteria are made known. I make the criteria known by pointing out various motor-cars, and saying 'M is a doog motor-car', 'N is not a doog motor-car', and so on. We must imagine that, although 'doog' has no commendatory force, the criteria for doogness in motor-cars which I am employing are the same as those which, in the previous example, I employed for goodness in motor-cars. And so, as in the previous example, the learner, if he is sufficiently attentive, becomes able to use the word 'doog' for giving or getting information; when I say to him 'Z is a doog motor-car', he knows what characteristics to expect it to have; and if he wants to convey to someone else that a motor-car Y has those same characteristics, he can do so by saying 'Y is a doog motor-car'.

Thus the word 'doog' does (though only in connexion with motor-cars) half the jobs that the word 'good' does—namely, all those jobs that are concerned with the giving, or learning to give or get, information. It does not do those jobs which are concerned with commendation. Thus we might say that 'doog' functions just like a descriptive word. First my learner learns to use it by my giving him examples of its application, and then he uses it by applying it to fresh examples. It would be quite natural to say that what I was doing was teaching my learner the *meaning* of 'doog'; and this shows us again how natural it is to say that, when we are learning a similar lesson for the expression 'good motor-car' (i.e. learning the criteria of its application), we are learning its meaning. But with the word



'good' it is misleading to say this; for the meaning of 'good motor-car' (in another sense of 'meaning') is something that might be known by someone who did not know the criteria of its application; he would know, if someone said that a motor-car was a good one, that he was commending it; and to know that, would be to know the meaning of the expression. Further,

as we saw earlier (6. 4), someone might know about 'good' all the things which my learner learnt about the word 'doog' (namely, how to apply the word to the right objects, and use it for giving and getting information) and yet be said not to know its meaning; for he might not know that to call a motor-car good was to commend it.

Reading 6.6

EXERCISE 9

Further extract from: Hare, R.M. (1952). Description and evaluation. Chapter 7 in *The Language of Morals*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pages 121–126

7.5. Although with ‘good’ the evaluative meaning is primary, there are other words in which the evaluative meaning is secondary to the descriptive. Such words are ‘tidy’ and ‘industrious’. Both are normally used to commend; but we can say, without any hint of irony, ‘too tidy’ or ‘too industrious’. It is the descriptive meaning of these words that is most firmly attached to them; and therefore, although we must for certain purposes class them as value-words (for if we treat them as purely descriptive, logical errors result), they are so in a less full sense than ‘good’. If the evaluative meaning of a word, which was primary, comes to be secondary, that is a sign that the standard to which the word appeals has become conventional. It is, of course, impossible to say *exactly* when this has happened; it is a process like the coming of winter.

Although the evaluative meaning of ‘good’ is primary, the secondary descriptive meaning is never wholly absent. Even when we are using the word ‘good’ evaluatively in order to set up a new standard, the word still has a descriptive meaning, not in the sense that it is used to convey information, but in the sense that its use in setting up the new standard is an essential preliminary—like definition in the case of a purely descriptive word—to its subsequent use with a new descriptive meaning. It is also to be noticed that the relative prominence of the descriptive and evaluative meanings of ‘good’ varies according to the class of objects within which commendation is being given. We may illustrate this by taking two extreme examples. If I talk of ‘a good egg’, it is at once known to what description of egg I am referring—namely, one that is not decomposed. Here the descriptive meaning predominates, because we have very fixed standards for assessing the goodness of eggs. On the other hand, if I say that a poem is a good one, very little information is given about what description of poem it is—for there is no accepted standard of goodness in poems. But it must not be thought that ‘good egg’ is exclusively descriptive, or ‘good poem’ exclusively evaluative. If, as the Chinese are alleged to do, we chose to eat eggs that are decomposed, we should call that kind of egg good, just as, because we choose to eat game that is slightly decomposed, we call it ‘well-hung’ (compare also the expression ‘good Stilton cheese’). And if I said that a poem was good, and was not a very eccentric person, my hearer would be justified in assuming that the poem was not ‘Happy birthday to you!’

In general, the more fixed and accepted the standard, the more information is conveyed. But it must not be thought that the evaluative force of the word varies at all exactly in inverse proportion to the descriptive. The two vary independently: where a standard is firmly established and is as firmly believed in, a judgement containing ‘good’ may be highly informative, without being

any the less commendatory. Consider the following description of the Oxford Sewage Farm:

The method employed is primitive but efficient. The farm is unsightly, obnoxious to people dwelling near it, and not very remunerative, but the effluent from it is, in the technical sense, good.¹

Now here, as may be seen by consulting handbooks on the subject, there are perfectly well-recognized tests for determining whether effluent is good or bad. One manual² gives a simple field test, and another³ gives a series of more comprehensive tests which take up seventeen pages. This might tempt us to say that the word is used in a purely descriptive sense and has no evaluative force. But, although admittedly in calling effluent good in this technical sense we are commending it as effluent and not as perfume, we are nevertheless commending it; it is not a neutral chemical or biological fact about it that it is good; to say that it was bad would be to give a very good reason for sacking the sewage-farmer or taking other steps to see that it was good in future. The proper comment on such a lapse was made by a former Archbishop of York, speaking to the Congress of the Royal Sanitary Institute, 1912:

There is now, I hope, no need of the trenchant eloquence of that noble-hearted pioneer of sanitary science, Charles Kingsley, to insist that it is not religion, but something more nearly approaching blasphemy, to say that an outbreak of disease is God’s will being done, when patently it is man’s duty which is being left undone.⁴

It is true that, if the word ‘good’ in a certain sentence has very little evaluative meaning, it is likely that it has a fair amount of descriptive meaning, and vice versa. That is because, if it had very little of either, it would have very little meaning at all, and would not be worth uttering. To this extent the meanings vary inversely. But this is only a tendency; we may do justice to the logical phenomena by saying that ‘good’ normally has at least some of both sorts of meaning; that it normally has sufficient of both sorts taken together to make it worth uttering; and that, provided that the first two conditions are satisfied, the amounts of the two sorts of meaning vary independently.

There are, however, cases in which we use the word ‘good’ with no commendatory meaning at all. We must distinguish several kinds of such non-commendatory uses. The first has been called the *inverted-commas* use. If I were not accustomed to commend any but the most modern styles of architecture, I might still say ‘The new chamber of the House of Commons is very good Gothic revival’. I might mean this in several senses. The first is that in which it is equivalent to ‘a good example to choose, if one is seeking to illustrate the typical features of Gothic revival’ or ‘a good specimen of Gothic revival’. This is a specialized evaluative sense, with which we are not here

¹ *Social Services in the Oxford District*, vol. 1, p. 322.

² Kershaw, *Sewage Purification and Disposal*, pp. 213–14.

³ Thresh, Beale, and Suckling, *The Examination of Waters and Water Supplies*, 6th ed., ch. xx.

⁴ Kershaw, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

concerned. I might mean, on the other hand, 'genuinely preferable to most other examples of Gothic revival, and therefore to be commended *within* the class of Gothic revival buildings, though not within the class of buildings in general'. With this sense, too, we are not now concerned; it is a commendatory use, with a limited class of comparison (8. 2). The sense with which we are concerned is that in which it means, roughly, 'the sort of Gothic revival building about which a certain sort of people—you know who—would say "that is a good building"'. It is characteristic of this use of 'good' that in expanding it we often want to put the word 'good' inside inverted commas; hence the name. We are, in this use, not making a value-judgement ourselves, but alluding to the value-judgements of other people. This type of use is extremely important for the logic of moral judgements, in which it has caused some confusion.

It is to be noticed that it is easiest to use 'good' in an inverted-commas sense when a certain class of people, who are sufficiently numerous and prominent for their value-judgements to be well known (e.g. the 'best' people in any field), have a rigid standard of commendation for that class of object. In such cases, the inverted-commas use can verge into an *ironic* use, in which not only is no commendation being given, but rather the reverse. If I had a low opinion of Carlo Dolci, I might say 'If you want to see a really "good" Carlo Dolci, go and look at the one in . . .'

There is another use in which the absence of evaluative content is not sufficiently obvious to the speaker for us to call it either an inverted-commas or an ironic use. This is the *conventional* use, in which the speaker is merely paying lip-service to a convention,

by commending, or saying commendatory things about, an object just because everyone else does. I might, if I myself had no preference at all about the design of furniture, still say 'This piece of furniture is of good design', not because I wished to guide my own or anyone else's choice of furniture, but simply because I had been taught the characteristics which are generally held to be criteria of good design, and wished to show that I had 'good taste' in furniture. It would be difficult in such a case to say whether I was evaluating the furniture or not. If I were not a logician, I should not ask myself the questions which would determine whether I was. Such a question would be 'If someone (not connected in any way with the furniture trade), consistently and regardless of cost filled his house with furniture not conforming to the canons by which you judge the design of this furniture to be good, would you regard that as evidence that he did not agree with you?' If I replied 'No, I would not; for what furniture is of good design is one question, and what furniture one chooses for oneself is another', then we might conclude that I had not been really commending the design by calling it good, but only paying lip-service to a convention. We shall recur to this sort of cross-examination later (11. 2).

These are only some of the many ways in which we use the word 'good'. A logician cannot do justice to the infinite subtlety of language; all he can do is to point out some of the main features of our use of a word, and thereby put people on their guard against the main dangers. A full understanding of the logic of value-terms can only be achieved by continual and sensitive attention to the way we use them.

Reading 6.7**EXERCISE 12**

2 Extracts from: Foot, P. (1967). *Moral Beliefs*. Chapter VI in Foot, P. (Ed) *Theories of Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 83–84, 85–86

Extract 1: pages 83–84

To many people it seems that the most notable advance in moral philosophy during the past fifty years or so has been the refutation of naturalism; and they are a little shocked that at this late date such an issue should be reopened. It is easy to understand their attitude: given certain apparently unquestionable assumptions, it would be about as sensible to try to reintroduce naturalism as to try to square the circle. Those who see it like this have satisfied themselves that they know in advance that any naturalistic theory must have a catch in it somewhere, and are put out at having to waste more time exposing an old fallacy. This paper is an attempt to persuade them to look critically at the premises on which their arguments are based.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the whole of moral philosophy, as it is now widely taught, rests on a contrast between statements of fact and evaluations, which runs something like this: 'The truth or falsity of statements of fact is shewn by means of evidence; and what counts as evidence is laid down in the meaning of the expressions occurring in the statement of fact. (For instance, the meaning of "round" and "flat" made Magellan's voyages evidence for the roundness rather than the fiatness of the Earth; someone who went on questioning whether the evidence was evidence could eventually be shewn to have made some linguistic mistake.) It follows that no two people can make the same statement and count completely different things as evidence; in the end one at least of them could be convicted of linguistic ignorance. It also follows that if a man is given good evidence for a factual conclusion he cannot just refuse to accept the conclusion on the ground that in his scheme of things this evidence is not evidence at all. With evaluations, however, it is different. An evaluation is not connected logically with the factual statements on which it is based. One man may say that a thing is good because of some fact about it, and another may refuse to take that fact as any evidence at all, for nothing is laid down in the meaning of "good" which connects it with one piece of "evidence" rather than another. It follows that a moral eccentric could argue to moral conclusions from quite idiosyncratic premisses; he could say, for instance, that a man was a good man because he clasped and unclasped his hands, and never turned N.N.E. after turning S.S.W. He could also reject someone else's evaluation simply by denying that his evidence was evidence at all.

From *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Vol. 59 (1958–9), pp. 83–104. Reprinted by courtesy of the author and the Editor of the Aristotelian Society.

¹ [This article has been criticized e.g. by M. Tanner, 'Examples in Moral Philosophy', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* (1964–5); D. Z. Phillips, 'Does it Pay to be Good?', *ibid*; D. Z. Phillips, 'On Morality's Having a Point', *Philosophy* (1965). Ed.]

'The fact about "good" which allows the eccentric still to use this term without falling into a morass of meaninglessness, is its "action-guiding" or "practical" function. This it retains; for like everyone else he considers himself bound to choose the things he calls "good" rather than those he calls "bad". Like the rest of the world he uses "good" in connexion only with a "pro-attitude"; it is only that he has pro-attitudes to quite different things, and therefore calls them good.'

Extract 2: pages 85–86

The crucial question is this. Is it possible to extract from the meaning of words such as 'good' some element called 'evaluative meaning' which we can think of as externally related to its objects? Such an element would be represented, for instance, in the rule that when any action was 'commended' the speaker must hold himself bound to accept an imperative 'let me do these things'. This is externally related to its object because, within the limitation which we noticed earlier, to possible actions, it would make sense to think of anything as the subject of such 'commendation'. On this hypothesis a moral eccentric could be described as commending the clasping of hands as the action of a good man, and we should not have to look for some background to give the supposition sense. That is to say, on this hypothesis the clasping of hands could be commended without any explanation; it could be what those who hold such theories call 'an ultimate moral principle'.

I wish to say that this hypothesis is untenable, and that there is no describing the evaluative meaning of 'good', evaluation, commending, or anything of the sort, without fixing the object to which they are supposed to be attached. Without first laying hands on the proper object of such things as evaluation, we shall catch in our net either something quite different such as accepting an order or making a resolution, or else nothing at all.

Before I consider this question, I shall first discuss some other mental attitudes and beliefs which have this internal relation to their object. By this I hope to clarify the concept of internal relation to an object, and incidentally, if my examples arouse resistance, but are eventually accepted, to show how easy it is to overlook an internal relation where it exists.

Consider, for instance, pride.

People are often surprised at the suggestion that there are limits to the things a man can be proud of, about which indeed he can feel pride.

I do not know quite what account they want to give of pride; perhaps something to do with smiling and walking with a jaunty air, and holding an object up where other people can see it; or perhaps they think that pride is a kind of internal sensation, so that one might naturally beat one's breast and say 'pride is something I feel *here*'. The difficulties of the second view are well known; the logically private object cannot be what a name in the public language is the name of.² The first view is the more

² See Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, especially §§ 243–315.

plausible, and it may seem reasonable to say that given certain behaviour a man can be described as showing that he is proud of something, whatever that something may be. In one sense this is true, and in another sense not. Given any description of an object, action, personal characteristic, etc., it is not possible to rule it out as an object of pride. Before we can do so we need to know what would be said about it by the man who is to be proud of it, or feels proud of it; but if he does not hold the right beliefs about it then whatever his attitude is it is not pride. Consider, for instance, the suggestion that someone might be proud of the sky or the sea: he looks at them and what he feels is *pride*, or he puffs out his chest and gestures with *pride* in their direction. This makes sense only if a special assumption is made about his beliefs, for instance that he is under some crazy delusion and believes that he has saved the sky from falling, or the sea from drying up. The characteristic object of pride is something seen (*a*) as in some way a man's own, and (*b*) as some sort of

achievement or advantage; without this object pride cannot be described. To see that the second condition is necessary, one should try supposing that a man happens to feel proud because he has laid one of his hands on the other, three times in an hour. Here again the supposition that it is pride that he feels will make perfectly good sense if a special background is filled in. Perhaps he is ill, and it is an achievement even to do this; perhaps this gesture has some religious or political significance, and he is a brave man who will so defy the gods or the rulers. But with no special background there can be no pride, not because no one could psychologically speaking feel pride in such a case, but because whatever he did feel could not logically be pride. Of course, people can see strange things as achievements, though not just anything, and they can identify themselves with remote ancestors, and relations, and neighbours, and even on occasions with Mankind. I do not wish to deny there are many far-fetched and comic examples of pride.

Reading 6.8

EXERCISE 13

Two extracts from: Hare, R.M. (1972). *Descriptivism*. Ch 5, Pages 55–75 in *Essays on the Moral Concepts*. London: The Macmillan Press, pp. 70–73, 97–100

Extract 1: pages 70–73

This seems to be the best point at which to deal with another common descriptivist manoeuvre. The manoeuvre is rendered attractive by the following fact, which I think we can all admit. There are some things which, if wanted or thought good by somebody, seem to call for no explanation (for example, food, a certain degree of warmth, etc.). Other things, if wanted or thought good, require explanation. The explanation can perhaps be given: a man who wants a flat pebble may want it to play ducks and drakes with, and think it good for this purpose; but, as we progress to more and more bizarre examples, the explanation gets harder and harder to give. It therefore seems to be open to the descriptivist to take a very extraordinary imaginary example, and ask rhetorical questions about it, such as ‘Suppose that a man says that somebody is a good man because he clasps and unclasps his hands, and never turns NNE. after turning SSW.; could we understand him?’¹ It is implied that an anti-descriptivist has to claim that he can understand such an absurd statement, and this is treated as a *reductio ad absurdum* of his position.

This type of argument rests on a confusion between, on the one hand, logical absurdity and its various weaker analogues, and, on the other, various sorts of contingent improbability. That is why I said earlier that the problem about the distinction between descriptive and evaluative is an offshoot of the problem about the distinction between analytic and synthetic. It is contingently extremely unlikely to say the least, that I should become able to lift a ton weight with my bare hands; but it is not logically impossible for this to happen, nor is it logically absurd, in any weaker way to claim that it has happened. By this I mean that if a man claimed to be able to do this, there would be no ultimate obstacle to our understanding him. Admittedly, we might well think at first that we had misunderstood him; it is so improbable that anybody should even think that it had happened, that, if a person claimed that it had happened, we should think at first that he could not be meaning the words in their literal senses. We might think that he meant, for instance, that the weight in question was counter-balanced, so that he could put his hands underneath it and lift, and make it go up. That is to say, when a man says something which is sufficiently improbable (as we think the universe to be constituted), we tend to assume that he cannot mean it literally, and that therefore we have to search for some non-literal meaning if we are going to understand him. But for all that, what he says has in its literal sense nothing *logically* wrong with it. It follows that no conclusions whatever are to be drawn

concerning the meanings or uses of words from the oddity of such a remark; what is odd is not the use of words, but that anybody should think such a thing.

The case before us is much the same. If a man said that somebody was a good man because he clasped and unclasped his hands, we should, indeed, at first find ourselves wondering whether we had understood him. But the reason is that, although what has been said is perfectly *comprehensible* in its literal sense, it is very odd indeed for anybody to think it. We should therefore look around for non-literal senses or contrived explanations, and should be baffled if we failed to find any. Why would it be odd for anybody to think this? For a reason which can, indeed, be gathered from the writings of descriptivists, who have given a tolerably correct account of it, vitiated only by their assumption that it can teach us anything about the uses or meanings of words, and that therefore it can support, or discredit, logical theses. The reason is that very few of us, if any, have the necessary ‘pro-attitude’ to people who clasp and unclasp their hands; and the reason for this is that the pro-attitudes which we have do not just occur at random, but have explanations, albeit not (as the descriptivists whom I am discussing seem to think) explanations which logic alone could provide. To think something good of its kind is, let us say, to have at least some disposition to choose it when, or if, choosing things of that kind in actual or hypothetical circumstances. After what I have said earlier, you will not, I know, confuse this thesis with the thesis that for something to *be* good is for us to have a disposition to choose it. Now we do not have, most of us, any disposition to choose, or to choose to be, men who clasp and unclasp their hands. We do not, accordingly, think that men who do this are good.

The explanation of our not thinking this is that such choices would hardly contribute to our survival, growth, procreation, etc.; if there have been any races of men or animals who have made the clasping and unclasping of hands a prime object of their pro-attitudes, to the exclusion of other more survival-promoting activities, they have gone under in the struggle for existence. I am, I know, being rather crude; but in general, to cut the matter short, we have the pro-attitudes that we have, and therefore call the things good which we do call good, because of their relevance to certain ends which are sometimes called ‘fundamental human needs’.

To call them this, however, is already to make a *logical* connexion between them and what it is good for a man to have. This indeed is why descriptivists have fallen into the trap of supposing that because the word good is logically tied in certain contexts to the *word* needs, it is therefore logically tied to certain concrete *things* which are generally thought to be needs. But since this mistake is the same mistake as I discussed at length in connexion with desires, it need not detain us. The two words ‘desires’ and ‘needs’ have both misled descriptivists in the same way—and that because there is an intimate logical relation between what is needed and what is desired, so that in many contexts we could say that for a thing to be needed is for it to be a necessary condition for satisfying a desire. It follows that if ‘things desired’ do not form

¹ The example comes from Mrs Foot’s article in *Ar. Soc.*, LIX (1958–9) 84.

a closed class, 'things needed' will not either. If, as I said, logic does not prevent us from coming to desire new things, or ceasing to desire old ones it cannot, either determine what we do or do not need.

A man who used the word 'good' of things which were unrelated to those ends which most of us call 'needs' might, nevertheless, be using it, quite correctly, to express the thought which he had; but this might be (if a sufficiently crazy example were taken) a very extraordinary thought for a man to have, because most of us have a high regard for our survival, and for such other things as I mentioned, and our pro-attitudes are fairly consistently related to these. It is not, indeed, logically necessary that they should be. Those of some people are not. And it would not affect my argument (though it would obviously affect gravely that of the opposite party) if there were some things which some people just do, unaccountably, have a high regard for, like the music of Beethoven.

In short, our disposition to call only a certain range of things good (and to choose and desire them) can be explained—in so far as it can be explained—without bringing in logic: and therefore the explanation contributes nothing to logic either, and, specifically, tells us nothing about the meanings or uses of the evaluative words, except that they have certain common *descriptive* meanings.

Extract 2: pages 97–100

I do not think that either the naturalist or I can do without a deeper analysis of the notion of 'harm' itself. There seem to be some quite close conceptual connexions between this notion and certain others, which both the naturalist and I would be bound to accept, and which may be of help to us. To harm somebody is to act against his interests. What then are his interests? It is fairly obvious that the notion of interests is tied in some way or other to the notion of desires and that of wanting. Admittedly, it is not universally the case that if we want something, it is in our interest to have it, nor that if something is in our interest, we want it. I do not think that anyone would maintain so crude a connexion as this between the notions. But a connexion there surely is. In *Freedom and Reason* I expressed the connexion thus: 'to have an interest is for there to be something which one wants (or may want), or which is (or may be) a means, necessary or sufficient, for the attainment of something which one wants (or may want)' (p. 157). Earlier I used the expression 'is likely to' instead of 'may' (p. 122); I do not think that either formulation is entirely satisfactory, and probably something more complicated is required. But these complications need not concern us here. I hope it may be granted that there is some such connexion as this between the notions. That there is, is evident from the fact that it would be scarcely intelligible to claim that a certain thing was in a man's interest, although he neither wanted it, nor had ever wanted it, nor would ever want it, nor anything that it was a necessary or sufficient means to, nor might any of these things be the case.

I need to say something about the very general notion of *wanting* here employed. I intend it to be the equivalent of Aristotle's most

general notion in this area, *oregesthai*, to be motivated towards the doing or having of. The noun corresponding to this verb is *orexis*, which is his most general word for 'desire', or 'being motivated towards'. It is, we might say, to be defined in a completely formal way: a man has an *orexis* to do or get or retain a certain thing if and only if, other things being equal, he will seek to do or get or retain it. *Orexis* thus includes what in *Freedom and Reason* I called 'ideals' (see p. 170 of that—book). If we follow a policy which I am sure is the only one that can bring much clarity to this area, and insist always on giving the linguistic expression of these psychological states wherever possible, we shall say that to have an *orexis*, to want something, is to assent to a prescription of some sort, for example a universal or singular imperative.² If it is a desire to do something, the imperative will be self-addressed; if it is that someone else should do something, it may be addressed to him—as when I express the desire that the waiter should bring me some mustard by saying 'Please bring me some mustard'.

If there are, as I am sure there are, these conceptual links between interests and wanting, and between wanting and the assent to prescriptions, then the notion of harm, which in its turn is linked to interests, can be understood in the same terms. To speak very crudely and inexactly, to say that some act would harm somebody is to say that it would prevent some interest of his being satisfied; and this, in turn, is to say that it would, or might in possible circumstances, prevent some desire of his being realised. And if we are allowed to put this in linguistic terms, this is to say that there is some prescription to which he assents or might assent, whose fulfilment would be or might be prevented by the act in question.

This is too crude, because, if 'might' is taken in the sense of logical possibility, then on this analysis absolutely any act can be called harmful; but it is hard to say how we ought to restrict the notion of 'might' so as to give the doctrine some content. I am not going in this paper even to explore these problems. I propose to assume for the sake of argument that there is some conceptual link between harm and the frustration of prescriptions which are, will or would be assented to. It is perhaps worth while digressing to point out that if there is this link, then only creatures which can assent to prescriptions can be harmed in the strict sense. This runs counter to our ordinary way of speaking. But I see no reason why the notion of harm, once established for creatures which can do this, should not be extended by analogy—and this in two ways. First of all, things like motor cars can be harmed when something is done to them which prevents their *users* from realising their prescriptions. This extension will be admissible in the case also of animals which are used, like horses, and of useful plants (e.g. apple trees, which we use to get apples from). But even where there is no question of a user outside the creature itself, there is a second way of extending the notion. We can speak analogically of the creature wanting things, and, as in the case of people, treat its goal-directed behaviour as evidence of this (provided that we also

² See my article 'Wanting: Some Pitfalls', in *Agent, Action and Reason*, ed. R. Binkley, reprinted in my book *Practical Inferences* (esp. p. 51).

pay attention to the dangers in the analogy). And then it becomes only a pardonable artificiality to say that the creature is acting on what, if it could express them, would be expressed in the form of prescriptions. Aristotle, as is well known, extended the notion of wanting right into the inanimate world; he says at the beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics* that the good is what *all things* desire.

It is only if we extend the notion of wanting in this way that we can reveal the origins of expressions like 'good roots' from which naturalists have drawn such sustenance; the apple tree's good roots, if they are not good for helping it produce the sort and the quantity of apples that *I* want, must be good for helping it to grow into the kind of apple tree that *it* wants to be—i.e. to achieve the *telos* or end of apple trees by putting on as perfectly as possible their *eidos* or form. If we had not inherited a great deal of this teleological language, we should not speak of good roots in the case of trees not serving a human purpose.

To return then to our argument: my imaginary naturalist opponent will not—or so it seems to me—be able to get much further with his project of showing the conceptual connexion between harmfulness and wrongness unless he makes use of the intermediate connexions which I have just been discussing, and in particular of that between wanting and prescriptions. In conjunction with the universalisability of propositions containing the word 'wrong' (to which, as I have already said, he is committed by his naturalism) this prescriptivist element in his doctrine, which has come in inescapably with his introduction of the word

'harm', does help him to do something that he and all of us want to do—namely, show how the fact that an action would harm other people gives us a reason for abstaining from it. But it helps him only if he travels very far from his naturalism in the direction of my own theory.

Let me clarify this if I can, by explaining in my own terms how I would accomplish the task which, up till now, I have been trying to help the naturalist accomplish in his terms of 'harm'. One might state my own view, summarily and formally, as follows: to say that an action would be wrong is to express a prohibition on it and on any similar action in similar circumstances. Now let us suppose that an action of mine would harm somebody else, and that nobody besides the two of us is affected. If the conceptual connexions which I have mentioned hold, then to say that it would harm him is to imply that the action would or might prevent the realisation of prescriptions which *he* does or will or might assent to. I should like to stress at this point that it is a *fact* that he does or will or might assent to these prescriptions; this is what gives colour to the claims of naturalists that the premisses about harm which they use are factual. And indeed they are factual, if interpreted in this way as statements about what prescriptions people do or would or might assent to. We shall have to attend carefully to this point when we come to ask whether the method of moral argument which I am proposing provides an example of an 'is'-'ought' derivation. It is very important that, although prescriptions are not statements of fact, there can be statements of fact to the effect that prescriptions are issued or assented to.

Reading 6.9**EXERCISE 16**

4 Extracts from: Locker, D. (1981) *The Construction of Illness*. Chapter 5 in *Symptoms and Illness*. London: Tavistock Publications, pp. 95–96, 96–97, 100, 101

Extract 1: pages 95–96

(R21) (Mrs R) 'A friend of mine is ill. I spoke to her this morning, she's got erm . . . she's been ill before, something the matter with her blood, she's very anaemic and she has extremely low blood pressure and apparently the two combined aren't very good. She's been feeling quite ill since before Christmas but when I spoke to her today she said at last she is feeling a bit better, but it's been you know, she's erm as I say before Christmas, it's only now she's beginning to feel better and she's really been quite ill.'

(Int.) 'Has she sort of been in hospital or er . . . has she had to stay in bed?'

(Mrs R) 'Erm no . . . she hasn't had to stay in bed but in fact she has been in bed most of the time because she's been too ill to get up, she's resting at home most of the time. The main thing is she musn't walk because walking lowers her blood pressure, she just walks a very little bit, erm she really does very little, she rests.'

These extracts are taken from parts of interviews where the respondents were asked if they, members of their families or others known to them had been ill. All three contain references to disorders and the behavioural consequences of those disorders.

Extract 2: pages 96–97

(Mrs S) 'In fact, it's rather funny, oh it's all coming back to me, you know, I'm terrible, yes, she had it on the Tuesday she had that and the next day as I say I woke up feeling a bit sick myself and erm . . . I wasn't sick at all all day but I felt pretty rough and in the morning Joanna went off to nursery school and I was going to take her up to nursery and then go on to Michael's school where they were having their school concert in the afternoon and erm . . . I couldn't go because I felt so sick and I thought oh I'm going to be ill and all I wanted to do was to lay down. So my friend said to me oh you're silly, while Joanna's at school you want to go and lay down for a little while . . . so I did.'

(R22) (Int.) 'Have you had anything you can remember you haven't been to the doctor with or . . .'

(Mrs R) 'Yes, oh yes. I was terribly sick one night which is quite unusual erm . . . I felt this terrible nausea and just felt absolutely terrible and had to go to bed and I was really very sick and had diarrhoea and felt absolutely awful.'

In both of these cases illness-relevant behaviours are presented as the unavoidable consequences of subjective experience such

as feeling 'absolutely awful' and 'pretty rough'. When Mrs says 'I couldn't go to the concert in the afternoon' and 'all I wanted to do was to lay down . . . so I did' her acts are not to be seen as motivated by desired ends. Rather, they are actions imposed upon her and explained by her subjective state, 'because I felt so sick'. Similarly, when Mrs R says 'I had to go to bed', this is to be read as a direct product of an underlying disorder and not as an act that was motivated by any specific purpose on her part.

Extract 3: page 100

Many of the disorders experienced by the respondent's husbands did not challenge their status as healthy since explanations could be found which enabled them to be routinized. As Mrs F went on to say of her husband:

(F16) (Mrs F) 'He occasionally gets a headache . . . but then I persuaded him to get glasses which he doesn't take to work with him . . . but I think this is all it was, you know . . . I think he gets strained with his job when he has a heavy day and it's very complicated and he's seeing lots of people and talking technicalities and he tends to come home with a sort of sick headache then.'

(Int.) 'I see . . .'

(Mrs F) 'But that's . . . it can always be put down to that.'

Here, Mrs F is able to offer reasons for her husband's sick headaches which identify them as part of the normal order of things. Since they are caused by his not wearing his glasses and job strain they are to be expected rather than matters relevant to health.

Extract 4: page 101

At the previous interview she described how her son had 'A mild dose of tonsillitis' the week before; 'he had just a shortish course of antibiotics and er . . . he wasn't ill with it'. Mrs P had not known about the tonsillitis until Martin told the doctor about it at one of her daughter's visits. I take it that Mrs P had not been alerted to the problems because it did not lead to any modification of his behaviour.

Some problematic experiences the respondents talked about were not located within the category 'illness' because of the way they had arisen. For example, though Mrs R's daughter had recently been taken to hospital the problem was not defined as an illness:

(R23) (Int.) 'Have your children had any problems since I last saw you?'

(Mrs R) 'My daughter fell over and hurt her leg . . . and er . . . but that's not an illness, that was an accident and she went to hospital to have the leg dressed.'

Reading 6.10

EXERCISE 17

Extract from: Fulford, K.W.M (1989) *Illness and Action*, Chapter 7, in *Moral Theory and Medical Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pages 115–119

‘“Intentional” doing’, defined in this way, is of particular interest here. For, like ‘illness’, it is characteristic of, but not exclusive to, people. Up to the introduction of intention, everything that had been said of me *vis-à-vis* raising my arm could have been said not only of other people but of organisms in general. Even the most lowly organisms serve their own purposes in what they do. In this, indeed, organisms in general differ from functional objects. Similarly, the purposes of even the most lowly organisms, though contingently limited, are not logically restricted (that is, by definition of what it is for an object to be an organism or an organism of a particular kind) as are the purposes of functional objects: an amoeba, say, whose purposes in doing something were as a matter of fact *not* to survive and/or reproduce (cf. chapter 3) would none the less still itself and *qua* amoeba, be doing something. But consciousness, and hence the possibility at least of doing things (in the sense here defined) intentionally, is normally attributed only to people and other organisms like people relatively high in the animal kingdom. So there is a (rough) correlation here between “intentional” doing, as a kind of doing characteristic of but not exclusive to people, and illness. Of course, there is more to the full sense of ‘do’ in which people may do things than just intention (as here defined). Even the very simple movement of raising one’s arm may, depending on circumstances, involve voluntariness and free choice, together or separately, and in varying combinations with knowledge, foresight, self-control and so on. And most of the things people do are not as simple as this. They involve complex bodily movements and, as will be considered in detail later on, mental elements such as attention and perception (for example, listening to music). Austin, in a well-known paper (1956/7), drew attention to the variety of human action and to the relative neglect of this variety in the philosophy of action. Moreover, he pointed to abnormal psychology as an important and largely untapped resource for philosophies of action. Here, taking Austin’s point the other way around, as it were, the variety of human action will emerge later on as a crucial factor determining the logical properties of ‘illness’. But what matters for the moment is simply the correlation between the attribution of ‘illness’ and that of “intentional” doing’.

Now, however, it may seem that something of a retreat is called for. Thus, the conclusion that is invited by this correlation is that it is “intentional” doing’ that stands in relation to ‘illness’ as ‘“functional” doing’ stands in relation to ‘dysfunction’. But if this is so, then the original example of arm raising may appear to have been inappropriate. For if I raise my arm in, as was said, the “everyday way in which people do things”, I will hardly be involved in anything so ponderous as intending to raise it, in

“having or calling my purposes before my mind”, let alone choosing voluntarily, acting with free will and the rest. On the contrary, if I raise my arm in the everyday way in which people do things, I will, in Austin’s words, “just get on and do it”. And in this respect, indeed, it may seem that the (philosophically standard) choice of a small-scale, substantially trivial example as a starting-point has been positively misleading. The reason for starting from such an example was sound enough: namely, that it is by examples of this kind that the essentially logical points with which philosophy is primarily concerned are most likely to be displayed (cf. chapter 3). But in this case, at least, if it is “intentional” doing’ which is relevant to ‘illness’, then doing of this kind is normally associated with somewhat larger-scale and less substantially trivial things that people do than raising their arms. ‘“Intentional” doing’, along with any other full sense of ‘do’, is normally associated with things like being helpful to someone or writing an article or winning a prize.

However, any retreat at this stage should not be too ready or too far. In the first place, “ordinary” doing, as it will now be called, is really not so different from “intentional” doing. To say, with Austin, that in doing something one “just gets on and does it”, is really to say no more than that one is not, at the time, reflecting *on* one’s intentions, or indeed on any other element of the full sense of ‘do’. One reflects on these elements only when one’s attention is *drawn* to them. This may happen, as in the example above, if I am asked what I am doing; I may then, as was said, more or less readily call my purposes before my mind. Or it may happen when I seek to excuse something that I have done, pointing retrospectively to some respect in which my “machinery of action” (Austin’s phraseology again) was somehow not fully engaged—I did not, as we say, intend to do it, or I did not do it voluntarily. The foregoing analysis of my raising my arm should thus be understood as an extension of this ordinary capacity for reflecting on, and becoming aware of, what one is doing. And it should thus be understood as showing not, as it was originally taken to be showing, that the sense of ‘do’ in which people ordinarily do things is the full sense of ‘do’, but rather as showing that this sense of ‘do’ is one in which the full sense is latent.

“Ordinary” doing is thus “latent full” doing. And the reason for this is clear enough—namely, that in regard to the everyday things that people do, the elements of the full sense, by which their machinery of action is comprised, operate largely trouble-free. Indeed, although one’s attention may be drawn to these elements in the self-reflecting ways just described, it is most commonly and most powerfully drawn to them by difficulty. Difficulty, though, not in the task itself, for then the task itself, being inherently difficult, would *a fortiori not* be among those which one would ordinarily just get on and do. Rather, it would be something which, ordinarily, one would choose carefully to do or not to do, and which, if one chose to do it, one would do with one’s purpose (to do that difficult thing) firmly before one’s mind. And hence indeed the setting of one’s experience of the “full” sense of ‘do’ mainly among the larger-scale and substantially

non-trivial things that one does; these being, on the whole, the more difficult things that one does. Difficulty, then, not in the task itself, but difficulty external to it, that is to say, difficulty arising from obstruction and/or opposition. And difficulty of this external kind may arise not only in respect of things like signalling a taxi (for example, in the rain) or making a bid (for example, against competition), but even in respect of things as small-scale and substantially trivial as raising an arm. My hand may be stuck in my pocket, and raising my arm then becomes (momentarily) something that I do with my purpose (here just to raise my arm) before my mind—that is, it becomes something that I do (in this sense of the word) intentionally. Our understanding of the sense of ‘do’ in which people ordinarily do things is thus taken a step further. For this sense of ‘do’ is now seen not only to be one in which the full sense is latent, but also one in which the full sense is made overt—most commonly and most powerfully made overt—by obstruction and/or opposition.

This brings the argument back to ‘illness’. Thus, to the extent that ‘ordinary’ doing’ is a sense of ‘do’ in which the elements of the full sense are latent, the attribution of ‘ordinary’ doing’ follows that of ‘intentional’ doing’ in being correlated with the attribution of ‘illness’. To this extent, then, ‘ordinary’ doing’ is as good a candidate as ‘intentional’ doing’ to stand in relation to ‘illness’ as ‘functional’ doing’ stands in relation to ‘dysfunction’. When it comes to *failure* of doing, however, ‘ordinary’ doing’, as a sense of ‘do’ in which the elements of the full sense are made overt by obstruction and/or opposition, has a distinct edge. For a failure to do something which is inherently difficult will normally be experienced as just that—as a failure, usually in some full sense of ‘do’, to do that difficult thing. But a failure to do something which is *not* inherently difficult, a failure to do something which one

would ordinarily just get on and do, will normally be experienced as something one has been prevented from doing by obstruction and/or opposition. Hence, “obstruction and/or opposition” comes out on both sides of the experiential fence. In the face of obstruction and/or opposition, *successfully* doing something which one would ordinarily just get on and do, is normally experienced as really *doing* something, i.e., as doing something in the full sense of ‘do’; whereas *failing* in these circumstances is normally experienced as being *prevented* from doing it. But this latter experience translates into the terminology used earlier in respect of ‘illness’, as the experience of something being done (opposition) or happening (obstruction) *to* one. I go to raise my arm, and someone, say, tries to stop me: then either I succeed in raising it, in which case I really do (in the full sense) *do* something; or I fail, in which case something is done *to* me. Hence, the experiences of “doing” and of “done/happens to” will tend, in respect of the things one ordinarily just gets on and does, to become contrasted. And consider, therefore, the experience of failing to do something which one would ordinarily just get on and do, but in the *absence* of obstruction and/or opposition. This, like the experience of illness, will be a somewhat paradoxical experience. For, like illness, it will be experienced neither as something that one *does* nor as something that is done or happens *to* one.

The retreat, therefore, of a few pages back, is now seen to have been no more than a tactical retreat, leading as it has not only to a clearer understanding of the sense of ‘do’ in which people ordinarily do things, but also, and by the same token, to a closer approach to the target concept of ‘illness’. For ‘ordinary’ doing’ is now seen to be correlated with ‘illness’ not only in its attribution, but also in respect of the properties of the experience of failure.

Reading 6.11**EXERCISE 18**

4 Extracts from: Toombs, K. (1993). *The Body*. Chapter 3 in *The Meaning of Illness: a phenomenological account of the different perspectives of physician and patient*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic pp. 62–63, 63, 66–67, 70–71

Extract 1: pages 62–63**3. Living Body in Illness**

Having examined the manner in which the body is experienced at the prereflective level under normal circumstances, I shall now explore the way in which the lived body is experienced when one is ill. In particular, it will be noted that illness strikes at the fundamental features of embodiment which have been identified above. Consequently, at the level of immediate experience (prior to any reflective objectification of body) illness manifests itself essentially as a disruption of lived body.

Bodily dysfunction necessarily causes a disturbance in the various and varying interactions between embodied consciousness and world. Thus, the very nature of body as being-in-the-world is transformed. First and foremost illness represents dis-ability, the “inability to” engage the world in habitual ways. A headache is not experienced simply as a pain in the head, but as the “inability to” concentrate on the book I am reading, enjoy the music I am listening to, have an animated conversation with my spouse, and so forth. Arthritis represents not so much an inflammation of the joints as it does the “inability to” button my shirt, swing a golf club, play tennis. In the event that the illness is chronic or life-threatening this experience of dis-ability relates not only to one’s immediate engagement in the world but portends the “inability to” carry out future projects or to complete anticipated goals.

In illness bodily intentionality is frustrated. Objects which were formerly grasped as utilizable (and were thus largely taken-for-granted and unnoticed) now present themselves as problems to the body. For the person with angina, for example, a flight of stairs which in health was simply there “to be climbed,” is now perceived as an obstacle “to be circumvented,” “avoided,” or even “feared.” Habitual acts (such as walking, running, lifting, sitting up, eating, talking, and so forth), which were hitherto performed unthinkingly, now become effortful and must be attended to. Thus, the sphere of bodily action and practical possibility becomes circumscribed. The “I can” is rendered circumspect.

Extract 2: page 63

Body image changes, not only in terms of such things as posture, gait, and so forth, but in the sense that one no longer has available “an open system of an infinite number of equivalent positions directed to other ends.” The possibilities for action shrink. If I am ill I simply do not have available to me all the alternatives that are available in health. Whether I like it or not,

there are certain activities, postures, gestures, and so forth, which are no longer within my bodily scope.

Additionally, the primary meaning provided by the body may be disrupted. The multiple sclerosis patient who trips on the stair and the visually impaired person who walks into the table, for example, both find their body’s intuitive sense ineffective, indeed deceptive. The primitive spatiality of the body has been disturbed. The body no longer correctly

Extract 3: pages 66–67

In illness the character of lived spatiality changes in significant ways. As the foregoing description of lived body reveals, the spatiality of the body is not a spatiality of physical location but a spatiality of situation. If I place my arm on the table, for example, I do not think of the arm as being “beside” the ashtray in the same way that I consider the mug to be “beside” the ashtray. Rather, my body appears to me as “an attitude directed towards a certain existing or possible task” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, pp. 98–100). I place my arm on the table “in order to”—in order to reach for the mug, to put a cigarette in the ashtray, and so forth.

Physical space is thus for my body an oriented space. The objects which surround me necessarily refer back to my bodily placement, my orientation, within the world. The placement of objects is not defined simply by purely spatial coordinates but rather is defined in relation to axes of practical reference. “The glass is on the coffee table” means I must be careful not to upset it if I move the table. “The chair is to the right of the desk” means that I must avoid bumping into it when I walk past the desk to go to the door (Sartre, 1956a, p. 424).

Physical space is thus presented to me as functional space, as that milieu within which I am able to perform my various activities. Points in space do not represent merely objective positions in relation to the objective location of my body. Rather they mark the varying range of my aims and gestures. For example, the narrow doorway through which I must pass presents itself to me not as an object but as a “restrictive potentiality” for my body requiring modification of my actions (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 143). My embodying organism is always experienced as “in the midst of enviroing things, in this or that situation of action, positioned and positioning relative to some task at hand” (Zaner, 1981, p. 97).

In the experience of illness the character of lived spatiality changes. In the normal course of events locomotion continually opens up space, allowing one freely to change position and move towards objects in the world. Illness and debility exert a centripetal force anchoring one in the Here.

Extract 4: pages 62–63**4. Body as Object in Illness**

As has been noted, under normal circumstances the body appears as an object both in the experience of being an object for another and in certain “limit situations” in which the body is apprehended

as a material, physical entity. Such bodily objectification separates self from body and, depending upon the circumstances, may result in a deep sense of alienation from one's body. In examining the manner in which the patient apprehends the body-as-object, it will be noted that the objectification of body is an integral element in illness. Such objectification is necessarily accompanied by feelings of both alienation from, and unwilling identification with, the body.

Illness represents a "limit situation" in which the body is apprehended both as a material, physical entity and as a being-for-the-Other. In the first place, illness engenders a shift of attention. The disruption of lived body causes the patient explicitly to attend to his or her body *as* body, rather than simply living it unreflectively. The body is thus transformed from lived body to object-body.¹⁰⁴ This objectification results in the apprehension of the corporeal nature of the body as a physical encumbrance, as an oppositional force, as a machine-like entity and as a physiological organism.

For example, in the normal course of events when reaching for my cup of coffee to take a drink, I do not explicitly focus on the action of my hand. Rather, my attention is directed to the task at hand (lifting the cup). However, should I injure my hand, then my attention is focused on my hand *as* hand. I must observe how it is that my fingers grasp the handle of the cup and I am conscious of my hand's unaccustomed ineffectiveness as an instrument of my actions. In illness the body intrudes itself into lived experience. It becomes the focus and object of scrutiny.

Furthermore, with the breakdown of function, the instrumentality of the body announces itself. For example, if I cannot see properly I perceive my eye explicitly as an instrument-for-seeing and, more particularly, as a *defective* instrument-for-seeing.

In apprehending the body explicitly as an "instrument-for" actions within the world, the patient perceives it to be a material, "physico-biological thing." Furthermore, with dysfunction it is perceived as a defective "physico-biological thing." Therefore, the patient objectifies the body not only as a physiological organism but as a *malfunctioning* physiological organism. As is the case with "disease," this apprehension of the object-body will reflect the particular lifeworld in which the patient is situated (and indeed the stage of illness). For example, initially the body-as-object may simply be conceived in terms of faulty mechanism (i.e., there is an apprehension that the machine-like, physical body simply doesn't "work right"). The patient's conception of the dysfunctional body will, however, reflect the theoretical understandings that are embedded in a particular lifeworld. If, for example, I have blurred vision I will recognize my eye not only as a defective "instrument-for-seeing" but I will incorporate into my understanding of the eye's "not working right" some conception (albeit sketchy and incomplete) of the anatomy and physiology of vision. If I have chest pain and I have a history of heart disease, I may incorporate into my conception of physiological body some explicit reference to narrowed coronary arteries. This understanding necessarily reflects my particular cultural background and the meanings inherent in my unique biographical situation.

Reading 6.12**EXERCISE 20**

Extract from: Fulford, K.W.M. (1989) *Illness and action*. Chapter 7 in *Moral Theory and Medical Practice*. Cambridge University Press, pages 126–127

This second retreat however, is, as the first turned out to be, only a tactical retreat. For it leads directly back to one of two main questions left outstanding at the end of chapter 5—namely, how the relationship between ‘dysfunction’ and ‘illness’ should be understood. The key to this is that just as failure of arm raising is equivocal as to ‘dysfunction’ and ‘illness’, so arm raising itself is equivocal as to ‘“functional” doing’ and to ‘“ordinary” doing’. Failure to move my arm may be construed either as something wrong with me—I am ill—or as something wrong with my arm—my arm is not functioning properly. Similarly, movement of my arm may be construed either as me “ordinarily” doing something—I move my arm—or as my arm “functionally” doing something—my arm moves. And from this matching of equivocations it follows that if ‘illness’ is indeed derived from ‘“ordinary” doing’ in the way suggested in this chapter and

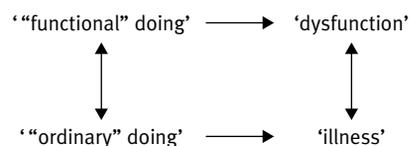


Figure *The relationship between ‘illness’ and ‘dysfunction’*

If ‘dysfunction’ is derived (logically) from ‘“functional” doing’ and ‘illness’ from ‘“ordinary” doing’, then the equivocation between ‘illness’ and ‘dysfunction’ in ordinary usage corresponds with (and is to be understood in terms of) that between ‘“functional” doing’ and ‘“ordinary” doing’.

‘dysfunction’ from ‘“functional” doing’ in the way suggested in chapter 6, then the relationship between ‘illness’ and ‘dysfunction’ is to be understood in terms of the relationship between ‘“ordinary” doing’ and ‘“functional” doing’. And this, indeed, amounts to further first outcome-criterion support for the existence of a logical link between ‘illness’ and ‘“ordinary” doing’. For, if ‘“ordinary” doing’ and ‘“functional” doing’ are equivocal this way, then the equivocal relationship of ‘illness’ and ‘dysfunction’, as a feature of the ordinary use of the medical concepts, drops irresistibly out of a theory placing ‘“ordinary” doing’ in much the same relationship to ‘illness’ as ‘“functional” doing’ stands in relationship to ‘dysfunction’.

Reading 6.13**EXERCISE 22**

Extract from: Fulford, K.W.M. (1989) *Illness and action*. Chapter 7 in *Moral Theory and Medical Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pages 135–136

The essential point (limiting feelings and sensations to movements) is that although feelings and sensations are not things that we *do*, they are things we do something *about*—withdrawing from pain, scratching an itch, steadying ourselves when we feel dizzy, changing position with paraesthesiae, catching our breath with breathlessness, going to sleep when tired and so on. Hence, feelings and sensations are built into the structure of our actions, albeit differently from movements. Though in this respect, indeed, they are really rather like movement conceptually. For movement, too, so far as “ordinary” or any other species of purposive doing is concerned, is not (simply) something we do. *Non*-purposive movement, such as a stone rolling down a hillside, is something the stone (simply) does. But for a movement to be something we (in the sense of “ordinary” doing) do, it too has to be built into the structure of our actions. This is the burden of much of this chapter and the last, that there is more to purposive movement (such as cars moving or people moving their arms) than the movement alone: there is purpose, and, in the case of people at least, there is more even than purpose; as noted previously there is consciousness, voluntariness, self-control, knowledge, foresight and so on, all the elements, indeed, of Austin’s “machinery of action”.

In relation to ‘“ordinary” doing’, therefore, which in the present theory is the kind of doing from which ‘illness’ is derived, movement and feelings and sensations are alike in being built into the structure of our actions. There is thus in the present theory at least the possibility—there is the conceptual wherewithal—for ‘illness’ constituted by feelings and sensations to be derived from the experience of failure of “ordinary” doing in the absence of obstruction and/or opposition (“action failure”, for short), much as, according to the argument presented here, ‘illness’ constituted by movement is so derived. There are differences between the two kinds of illness constituent, of course. Movement, for example, is executive; it is that, *inter alia* (see next chapter), *by* which we do things. But this is all par for the course. For if there are differences in the ways in which movements on the one hand, and feelings and sensations on the other, are built into the structure of our actions, this provides in principle for there to be differences—conceptual differences, of course—in the kinds of illnesses which are derived from the two kinds of “action failure”. The broad picture that emerges, then, is not of an assimilation of illness constituted by feelings and sensations to illness constituted by movement, but rather of the two kinds of illness being equal subspecies of a general concept defined in terms of “action failure”. The similarities between them are then explicable in terms of their common origin in “action failure”, while the differences come from differences in the ways in which their respective illness constituents are built into the structure of our actions in the first place.

Reading 6.14

EXERCISE 23

Extract from: Austin, J.L. (1968). A Plea for Excuses. Chapter 1 in White A.R. (Ed) *The Philosophy of Action*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (Extract pp 33–34.)

(4) *The machinery of action*.—Not merely do adverbial expressions pick out classes of actions, they also pick out the internal detail of the machinery of doing actions, or the departments into which the business of doing actions is organized. There is for example the stage at which we have actually to *carry out* some action upon which we embark—perhaps we have to make certain bodily movements or to make a speech. In the course of actually *doing* these things (getting weaving) we have to pay (some) attention to what we are doing and to take (some) care to guard against (likely) dangers: we may need to use judgement or tact: we must exercise sufficient control over our bodily parts: and so on. Inattention, carelessness, errors of judgement, tactlessness, clumsiness, all these and others are ills (with attendant excuses) which affect one specific stage in the machinery of action, the *executive* stage, the stage where we *muff* it. But there are many other departments in the business too, each of which is to be traced and mapped through its cluster of appropriate verbs

and adverbs. Obviously there are departments of intelligence and planning, of decision and resolve, and so on: but I shall mention one in particular, too often overlooked, where troubles and excuses abound. It happens to us, in military life, to be in receipt of excellent intelligence, to be also in self-conscious possession of excellent principles (the five golden rules for winning victories), and yet to hit upon a plan of action which leads to disaster. One way in which this can happen is through failure at the stage of *appreciation* of the situation, that is at the stage where we are required to cast our excellent intelligence into such a form, under such heads and with such weights attached, that our equally excellent principles can be brought to bear on it properly, in a way to yield the right answer.¹ So too in real, or rather civilian, life, in moral or practical affairs, we can know the facts and yet look at them mistakenly or perversely, or not fully realize or appreciate something, or even be under a total-misconception. Many expressions of excuse indicate failure at this particularly tricky stage: even thoughtlessness, inconsiderateness, lack of imagination, are perhaps less matters of failure in intelligence or planning than might be supposed, and more matters of failure to appreciate the situation. A course of E. M. Forster and we see things differently: yet perhaps we know no more and are no cleverer.

¹ We know all about how to do quadratics: we know all the needful facts about pipes, cisterns, hours and plumbers: yet we reach the answer '3½ men'. We have failed to cast our facts correctly into mathematical form.