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Roger Hancock

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light on the problems of metaphysics. There might occur an instructive movement from self to man to nature or reality. For instance, can we really ask so many forthright questions about our suppositions without a resultant crystallization of some attitude toward freedom and necessity? Can we detect our suppositions without uncovering also a conception of what factors in the world are the ultimate causes of things? Again, could clarification of suppositions occur without some bearing of these upon our view of law and chance, rationality and irrationality, in nature? In short, because of man's relation to the world, the inquiry into one may throw light on the other.

To conclude, what is claimed for the analysis of suppositions is not that it affords a new key for finding solutions to philosophical problems, nor that it is a new bid for reaching agreement in philosophy, but that it is a significantly different and interesting way of approaching some of the traditional questions.

DONALD WALHOUT

ROCKFORD COLLEGE

THE REFUTATION OF NATURALISM IN MOORE AND HARE

HARE has expressed the view that although Moore's refutation of naturalism was badly stated and has been widely criticized, it nevertheless rests on secure foundations: "there is indeed something about the way in which, and the purposes for which, we use the word 'good' which makes it impossible to hold the sort of position which Moore was attacking, although Moore did not see clearly what this something was."¹ In the following discussion I would like, first, to restate and criticize one of Moore's arguments against naturalism, and second, similarly to restate and criticize Hare's refutation of naturalism. Third, I would like to question the possibility of any conclusive refutation of naturalism.

1.

Hare remarks that the word 'naturalism' has been used loosely, and suggests that it be restricted to "those theories against which Moore's refutation (or a recognizable version of it) is valid."²

¹ R. M. Hare, *The Language of Morals* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1952), pp. 83-84.

² Hare, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

But this suggestion can hardly be understood as a definition of naturalism; so understood it would be trivially true that naturalistic theories are false, and no further argument would be required. And Moore himself could not have used this suggestion as a definition in setting out to refute naturalism.

'Naturalism' as used by Moore and Hare might be defined as the view that ethical words such as 'good' or 'right' are synonymous with expressions designating natural properties. But what is a natural property? It might be suggested that a natural property is one that can be observed. Yet Moore himself holds that 'good' designates a property which in some sense can be observed. And some properties which are not observable, e.g., the property of being conducive to life in self or others, are natural properties according to Moore. A better way to define 'naturalism' as used by Moore and Hare might be, simply, that naturalism is the view that ethical words are synonymous with non-ethical words. This is not entirely satisfactory, since there seems to be no way of picking out ethical from non-ethical words. Until a criterion is given, the decision to call a given theory 'naturalistic' is somewhat arbitrary; in practice Moore and Hare seem agreed that such expressions as 'pleasant' or 'conducive to life in self or others' or 'forbidden by the ruler of our State' are non-ethical.

The general outlines of Moore's open-question argument are clear, and the argument can be paraphrased as follows:

1. If naturalism is true, then some sentence of the form 'Whatever is F is good' is analytic, where 'F' is replaceable by a non-ethical expression.
2. If ethical sentences of the form 'Whatever is F is good' are analytic, then we cannot significantly ask 'Are F's good?'
3. But we can always significantly ask 'Are F's good?'
4. Therefore no sentence of the form 'Whatever is F is good' is analytic, and hence naturalism is false.

Formally the argument is valid, and superficially at least, it is clear. But there are difficulties in the notion of 'significance.' What does it mean to say that a statement can or cannot be significantly questioned, and why is it impossible to significantly question an analytic statement? One ordinary sense of 'significance' can probably be ruled out. This is the sense in which a question 'Is S P?' is significant if it is important; the sense in which events and actions as well as statements are significant. In this sense a question 'Is S P?' can be insignificant although 'S is P' is not analytic; e.g., the question 'Is the number of words in

Principia Ethica greater than 100,000?' On the other hand the question 'Is a rhombus a parallelogram?' might very well be significant, although 'A rhombus is a parallelogram' is analytic. Moore probably would have wanted to say that questions like 'Are all pleasures good?' are significant in the sense of important. But that cannot be the sense in which he holds that such sentences can be significantly questioned, in the course of his refutation of naturalism.

Moore suggests two clues as to what might be meant by saying that a statement can or cannot be significantly questioned. The first is contained in the following passage:

Moreover anyone can easily convince himself by inspection that the predicate of this proposition [whatever we desire to desire is good]—'good'—is positively different from the notion of 'desiring to desire' which enters into its subject: 'That we should desire to desire A is good' is *not* merely equivalent to 'That A should be good is good.' It may indeed be true that what we desire to desire is always also good; perhaps, even the converse may be true; but it is very doubtful whether this is the case, and the mere fact that we understand very well what is meant by doubting it, shews clearly that we have two different notions before our minds.³

Moore is arguing that no non-ethical expression is synonymous with the ethical predicate 'good.' His argument is that if this were so, then (for some non-ethical expression 'F') the sentence 'Whatever is F is good' would be equivalent to the tautology 'Whatever is F is F' which, Moore holds, it is not. And such sentences are never equivalent because while the former can always be doubted, the latter cannot be doubted. By saying that sentences of the form 'Whatever is F is F' cannot be doubted, Moore presumably means simply that their denials are self-contradictory. This suggests the possibility that when Moore says we can always significantly ask 'Are F's good?' he means that 'F's are not good' is never self-contradictory. Moore's argument, then, might be restated in the following way:

1. If naturalism is true, then (for some non-ethical expression 'F') the sentence 'F's are not good' is self-contradictory.
2. But sentences of the form 'F's are not good' are never self-contradictory.
3. Hence naturalism is false.

How does Moore know that it is never self-contradictory to deny sentences of the form 'Whatever is F is good'? To say this is, after all, only another way of saying that 'F's are good' is not

³ G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929), p. 16.

analytic. And this is precisely what the naturalist affirms. The hedonist, for example, will surely have no trouble with Moore's argument; having defined 'good' as 'pleasant' and holding that 'Whatever is pleasant is good' is analytic, he will simply reply that in point of fact it is self-contradictory to say that something is pleasant and yet not good. Moore would have no answer; at the very most his argument only pushes the dispute back a step, without doing anything to settle it. I conclude that the above interpretation is not a satisfactory explanation of what Moore means by 'significant question'; if it is, then Moore's open-question argument is unconvincing.

A second clue to what Moore might have meant by 'significant question' is contained in the following passage:

But whoever will attentively consider with himself what is actually before his mind when he asks the question 'Is pleasure (or whatever it may be) after all good?' can easily satisfy himself that he is not merely wondering whether pleasure is pleasant. And if he will try this experiment with each suggested definition in succession he may become expert enough to recognize that in every case he has before his mind a unique object, with regard to the connection of which with any other object, a distinct question may be asked.⁴

Again Moore is attacking the view that ethical words are synonymous with non-ethical expressions. And his argument is that when we ask 'Are F's good?' we can recognize on reflection that there are two distinct things before our minds, with regard to whose connection we are asking. The question 'Is S P?' is significant, then, if S and P designate two distinct things; it is not significant if they designate only one thing. Moore's argument, interpreted in this way, can be paraphrased as follows:

1. If naturalism is true, there are sentences of the form 'Whatever is F is good' in which 'F' and 'good' designate the same properties.
2. But whenever we ask 'Are F's good?' we can see, on reflection, that 'F' and 'good' designate two distinct properties.
3. Hence naturalism is false.

Understood in this way the dispute between Moore and naturalism reduces to the question of what is "before our minds" when we ask questions such as 'Are all pleasures good?' Frankena has pointed out that such questions reduce to "inspection or intuition"; the error of the naturalist would be a certain kind of "blindness" which prevents him from noting what in fact is before his mind.⁵

⁴ Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

⁵ W. K. Frankena, "The Naturalistic Fallacy," reprinted in Hospers and Sellars, *Readings in Ethical Theory*, p. 113.

But we can ask what the consequences are if the dispute is viewed in this way. First, the dispute between Moore and the naturalists might be an empirical question, a question of what in fact is observed to be before our minds when we make certain statements, or ask certain questions. If this is an empirical question then Moore has certainly given no evidence for saying that when we ask, for instance, 'Are all pleasures good?' we always have two distinct things before our minds. It might well be that some do and others, like Moore, do not; it might then be that naturalism is true for some and false for others. Or, it might be that sometimes we do and sometimes we do not have two distinct things before our minds, with the absurd result that naturalism is sometimes true and sometimes false. Further, what sort of evidence would be required to show that we have distinct things before our minds? In fact it is doubtful if this is an empirical question, in any simple sense. Many naturalists would question the very notion of properties, in the sense of mental entities which are designated by the words we use.

I conclude that Moore's argument, interpreted in either of the two ways discussed above, is not a convincing refutation of naturalism. In the following section I would like to consider some objections to Hare's refutation of naturalism.

2.

Hare, like Moore, uses an argument of this general form in refuting naturalism: naturalism, if true, implies that certain ethical sentences are analytic; but ethical sentences are never analytic; hence naturalism is false. Hare sometimes argues as if it were evident, and needed no further argument, that ethical sentences are not analytic. Thus, he asserts:

Suppose that someone were to maintain that 'It is not right to do A' is entailed by 'A has been forbidden by the ruler of our State', we should only need to point out that in that case 'It is not right to do what has been forbidden by the ruler of our State' would be entailed by the analytic sentence 'What has been forbidden by the ruler of our State has been forbidden by the ruler of our State', and would therefore be itself analytic, which in ordinary usage it is not.⁶

Generally, Hare's argument in this passage is that no ethical sentence, in ordinary usage, is analytic. But if this were Hare's argument, his refutation of naturalism would hardly be an improvement over Moore; Moore, too, held that ethical sentences are never analytic. Further, what sort of evidence would go to show

⁶ Hare, *op. cit.* p. 155.

that in ordinary usage ethical sentences are never analytic? It is certainly true that naturalists have used sentences such as 'Whatever is pleasant is good' in order to make analytic statements, and there seems to be no good reason for excluding such usages from what is called "ordinary usage."

The clearest statement of Hare's refutation of naturalism is contained in the following passage:

Now our attack upon naturalistic definitions of 'good' was based on the fact that if it were true that 'a good A' meant the same as 'an A which is C', then it would be impossible to use the sentence 'An A which is C is good' in order to commend A's which are C; for this sentence would be analytic and equivalent to 'An A which is C is C.'

By saying that we use sentences of the form 'An A which is C is good' to commend A's which are C, Hare presumably means more than saying that we apply an ethical word to A's which are C. If this were all that commending means, it would be trivially true that by commending A's that are C's we are not saying that A's that are C are C (when C is replaceable by a non-ethical expression). In order to evaluate Hare's argument we have to know what Hare means by commending.

Hare describes commending as follows: "When we commend or condemn anything, it is always in order, at least indirectly, to guide choices, our own or other people's, now or in the future."⁷ Hare's refutation of naturalism might, then, be restated as follows:

1. If naturalism is true, then some ethical sentences of the form 'Whatever is F is good' are equivalent to 'Whatever is F is F.'
2. Sentences of the form 'Whatever is F is F' are never used to guide choices.
3. But ethical sentences of the form 'Whatever is F is good' are used to guide choices.
4. Hence sentences of the form 'Whatever is F is good' are never equivalent to 'Whatever is F is F' and, hence, naturalism is false.

Formally the argument is valid. But what evidence does Hare have for saying that sentences of the form 'Whatever is F is good' are used to guide choices? A naturalist could say (for some non-ethical expression F) such sentences are analytic, and hence do not guide choices. In reply to this, Hare might simply argue that in fact such sentences do guide choices. How is such a dispute to be settled; how is one to go about deciding whether a given sentence

⁷ Hare, *op. cit.*, pp. 90-91.

⁸ Hare, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

does or does not guide choices? Hare gives no way of deciding such a question.

A further objection to Hare's argument can be made. Hare holds that sentences of the form 'Whatever is F is F' cannot be used to guide choices, whereas sentences of the form 'Whatever is F is good' are used to guide choices. But is it impossible for a sentence of the form 'Whatever is F is F' to be used in order to commend F's? It would probably be granted by anyone, naturalist or intuitionist, that such sentences are not used in order to guide choices. But it is not so clear that sentences of the form 'All F's are good' are never used to guide choices when 'F' and 'good' are synonymous. A hedonist, for example, might want to say that since 'pleasant' and 'good' are synonymous, the sentence 'All and only pleasures are good' is equivalent to 'All and only pleasures are pleasant.' But he might also want to say that while the latter sentence does nothing to guide choices, the former sentence does guide choices, because the word 'good' guides choices in a way in which no synonym of 'good' does or can do. In general, a naturalist might argue, two expressions can be synonymous even if sentences containing one expression are not equivalent to sentences containing the other expression. For example, it might be argued that the sentence 'She is an elderly unmarried woman,' and the sentence 'She is a spinster' are not equivalent, in the sense that the latter conveys overtones and suggestions, and hence guides choices, in a way in which the former sentence does not, in spite of the fact that 'elderly unmarried woman' and 'spinster' are synonymous. Similarly, the naturalist could argue that the expressions 'pleasant' and 'good' can well be synonymous, even though replacement of 'pleasant' by 'good' might result in a sentence which guides actions in a way in which the former sentence does not.

In reply to the above objections, Hare might, of course, reply that if one sentence, S_1 , guides choices, while another, S_2 , does not guide choices, and the two sentences only differ because S_1 contains an expression E which does not occur in S_2 , then the expression cannot be synonymous with the expression E_1 which replaces E in S_2 . In other words, Hare might want to make the choice-guiding usage of expressions a criterion of synonymy, so that it can never be the case that one of a pair of synonyms guides choices while the other does not. This criterion, plus the empirical fact (if it is a fact) that ethical words such as 'good' or 'right' guide choices whereas non-ethical expressions such as 'pleasant' do not, would be sufficient to refute naturalism.

In reply to Hare's argument, as sketched above, a naturalist could reply (1) that he does not accept choice-guiding usage as a criterion of synonymy, and (2) that it is not in fact true that ethical words guide choices whereas non-ethical expressions never do. As regards (1), there seem to be good reasons for rejecting choice-guidance as a criterion of synonymy. Consider, for instance, the expressions '*x* told a lie' and '*x* knowingly uttered a falsehood'; dictionaries tell us these are interchangeable and synonymous, but it is at least plausible to hold that the first has an effect on choices which the second does not have. In general, there are many expressions which are interchangeable without change of truth-value, and in that sense synonymous, which affect listeners in different ways and guide their choices in different ways: one might say that advertising is made possible by this fact. Of course Hare can still contend that interchangeability without changing truth-value is not a sufficient criterion of synonymy. But Hare's argument would then rest on an unusual and arbitrary proposal about synonymy. As regards (2), a naturalist might well argue that non-ethical expressions do in fact guide choices. (It is assumed that guiding choices is not a criterion of being an ethical word; if it were then it would of course be trivially true that no non-ethical expressions guide choices.) When someone says, for example, 'There is a law against *x*,' he usually intends to, and often does, guide our decision to do or not to do *x*. Hare might reply that this is so only because we understand the speaker to have implied an additional premise to the effect that whatever is illegal is wrong, the inference then being that *x* is wrong. But what reason is there to suppose that such an inference takes place in all cases? The assertion that it must take place seems to amount to nothing more than saying, in a complicated and misleading way, that the sentence 'There is a law against *x*' does in fact guide choices. I conclude that the naturalist has good reasons for rejecting Hare's argument; it does not seem to be generally true that, since ethical words guide choices and non-ethical expressions never do, the two sorts of expressions are never synonymous. Hence I conclude that Hare has not been successful in showing that sentences of the form 'Whatever is F is good' are never analytic.

In conclusion I would like to say something about the possibility of ever conclusively refuting naturalistic ethical theories. Underlying every naturalistic theory is an assertion that an ethical expression is synonymous with a non-ethical expression. Thus Hobbes, for example, asserts that 'just' and 'he that in his actions

observeth the laws of his country' are "equivalent" and in fact "make but one name."⁹ In general, an assertion that expressions are synonymous can be understood as an empirical assertion about ordinary language, or as a proposal which is one of the rules of an artificial language. In neither case, however, is the truth of naturalism a simple empirical question. The assertion that, e.g., 'good' and 'pleasant' are synonymous in ordinary language cannot be decided without deciding on a criterion of synonymy, and in the previous discussion I have tried to show that disputes about synonymy are an important part of disputes about naturalism. If, on the other hand, naturalism is viewed as based on a rule in an artificial language, acceptance of naturalism depends on adopting an artificial language. In neither case is the acceptance or rejection of naturalism a straightforward empirical issue; the refutation of naturalism, then, cannot be an argument that naturalistic theories are contradicted by the facts.

ROGER HANCOCK

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

BOOK REVIEWS

The Logic of Moral Discourse. PAUL EDWARDS. With an Introduction by Sidney Hook. Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1955. 248 pp. \$4.00.

Paul Edwards has written an extremely lively analysis of the nature of moral discourse, which, in his own terms, rejects "intuitionism and all forms of subjectivism, combines features of objective naturalism with features of emotive theories . . . [but which] insofar as it falls under objective naturalism . . . differs greatly from all classical forms of that theory" (p. 47). The text, broadly, falls into two sections: various important, but mistaken, meta-ethical theories that Edwards explores sympathetically (Chs. II-IV); and a detailed presentation of Edwards' own meta-ethics (Chs. VII-IX), prefaced by a more general account of taste and of imperatives (Chs. V-VI). The positive features of the inadequate alternate meta-ethics Edwards conveniently summarizes at the end of each chapter, as a challenge, in effect, to any would-be meta-ethical proposal (in particular, his own—cf. Ch. IX). The inadequate views he examines closely, in the company of their chief advocates, include "naive subjectivism" (Edward

⁹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Part I, Chapter IV.