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Gilbert H. Harman

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R. M. HARE AND MORAL REASONING

DESPITE his explicit statements to the contrary,¹ R. M. Hare is often taken to be claiming that the logic of moral reasoning is essentially part of the logic of imperatives. One excellent reason for this interpretation of Hare is, as Castañeda has shown, that certain remarks Hare makes in *The Language of Morals* commit him to the view that "An ought-sentence is evaluative only if it is imperative".² But it is not true that Hare interprets particular moral judgements of the form, "A ought to do D", as imperatives. Hare analyses "A ought to do D" as "A's doing D is in accordance with an 'ought'-principle to which I hereby subscribe" (p. 191). Hare analyses a moral principle of the form, "Everyone in C ought to do D", as a general imperative that we may represent as "(Everyone in C doing D) please". Strictly speaking, then, the only moral statements that are imperatives are general moral principles.

On this analysis we must not take Hare literally when he claims that, if an "ought"-judgement is used evaluatively, then it entails an imperative (p. 168). For Hare, the relation between "A ought to do D" and "(A's doing D) please" is not strictly that of entailment but is analogous to the relation between "I believe something that entails P" and "P". It is only by taking Hare literally at this point that Castañeda is able to demonstrate Hare's commitment to the identification of all ought-sentences with imperatives (pp. 226-230).

How, then, are we to analyse the following argument?

- (1) Everyone in C ought to do D.

A is in C.

Therefore, A ought to do D.

A corresponding argument in the logic of imperatives would appear to be

- (2) (Everyone in C doing D) please.

(A is in C) yes.

Therefore, (A's doing D) please.

However, the conclusion of (2), "(A's doing D) please", is not, on Hare's analysis, the same as "A ought to do D". If we replace this conclusion with Hare's analysis of "A ought to do D", we obtain an argument not obviously in the logic of imperatives.

- (3) (Everyone in C doing D) please.

(A is in C) yes.

Therefore, A's doing D is in accordance with an "ought"-principle I hereby accept.

Furthermore, (3) is not valid.

¹ E.g. R. M. Hare, *The Language of Morals* (Oxford: 1952), page 2, "it is no part of my purpose to 'reduce' moral language to imperatives."

² Hector-Neri Castañeda, "Imperatives, Decisions, and 'Oughts': A Logico-Metaphysical Investigation" in Castañeda and Nakhnikian (eds.), *Morality and the Language of Conduct* (Detroit: 1963), page 230.

Apparently, if we are to give an argument with the correct conclusion, we must argue as follows :

(4) I hereby accept the "ought"-principle (*Everyone in C doing D*) please.

A is in C.

If A is in C, then A's doing D is in accordance with the "ought"-principle (*Everyone in C doing D*) please.

Therefore, A's doing D is in accordance with an "ought"-principle I hereby accept.

Although (4) is not based on a logic of imperatives, if (4) is taken to give an adequate account of the original moral reasoning (1), then there is a sense in which moral reasoning involves the logic of imperatives. For the third premiss of (4) may be construed as a remark about an inference in the logic of imperatives, saying in effect that argument (2), above, is valid in the logic of imperatives.

Princeton University

GILBERT H. HARMAN