SKEPTICISM
AND THE
BASIS OF MORALITY

by
Thomas McClintock
Abstract of *Skepticism and the Basis of Morality*

Part 1 (Skepticism) contains analyses of the basic varieties of ethical skepticism and culminates in the idea that the refutation of ethical skepticism—or, what is the same thing, the discovery of the rational basis of morality—consists of a proof of the factual thesis that there exists in human beings a common underivative moral self that consists of an innate normative-practical source (or principle-spring) of human moral judgment and behavior. Part 2 (The Basis of Morality) develops the methodology for establishing this factual thesis and develops as well an argument employing this methodology that actually establishes it. This argument is to the effect that nature through the process of evolution-by-natural-selection built into us humans the following principle as the rational basis of morality: We ought to act only in those ways whose universal performance is both possible and consistent with the rational self-interest of every member of our species.
For Ann, who knows what it meant and what it means.
Of the various departments of human inquiry which currently are in a state of methodological and substantive confusion and disorder, moral philosophy—the philosophical study of morality, or human moral judgment and behavior—provides a most noteworthy example. So advanced, in fact, is the mess in contemporary moral philosophy, that many people who know moral philosophy through contact with it—both those who would call themselves philosophers and those who would not—see moral philosophy as having little or no substance to it—as being, as my delightfully honest colleague David Welker once put it, a 'bag of gas'. This widespread critical reaction to the current mess in moral philosophy (see, e.g., the introduction to G. J. Warnock's Contemporary Moral Philosophy), though actually not warranted by the facts—some, if only minimal, solid sense can be found even in contemporary moral philosophy—certainly ought to provoke, at least in a dyed-in-the-wool moral philosopher, the question:

Just what question ought I as a moral philosopher to be trying fundamentally to answer and how as a philosopher can I go about answering it? What is the deepest question that I as a philosopher can raise about morality and how can I as a philosopher go about settling it?

The deepest philosophical question about morality—the question the addressing of which makes one a metaphysician of morals—evidently, is the question:

How is morality (human moral judgment and behavior) possible? What is the basis of human moral judgment and behavior?

But this subject—the basis of human moral judgment and behavior—is, at least at first, terribly obscure. So the methodologically more basic question is the methodological question:

How can I discover the basis of human moral judgment and behavior?

Now, in searching for an answer to this latter question, a dyed-in-the-wool moral philosopher is bound, sooner or later, to come up with the idea:

You can discover how to discover the basis of morality by discovering how to refute the moral skeptic, who maintains that human moral judgment has no rational basis, that moral knowledge is impossible in principle.

Thus the methodologically first question of moral philosophy is the question:
What is moral, or ethical skepticism and how can it be refuted?

If Plato's early dialogues provide an accurate picture of Socrates as the father of analytic ethics, or moral philosophy, as I think they do, then we can say that analytic ethics arose, in historical fact, as a response to this last question. Thus, whatever one may think of the efforts of Socrates and his successors in western moral philosophy to answer this question—I find them unsuccessful, but illuminating, experiments—one must concede at least that our tradition in moral philosophy set out originally from the right question and that we ought to return to it now if we hope to discover the basis of morality.

Hence the purpose and plan of this book. Part 1, Skepticism, is devoted to an analysis of ethical skepticism and culminates in an account of what must be proved to refute it. Part 2, The Basis of Morality, develops the methodology for its refutation and then proceeds to its actual refutation, which consists fundamentally of the proof and elucidation of the rational basis of morality: the one and only true, or correct supreme principle of morality.

I have had to strike out entirely on my own in part 1 and largely on my own in part 2, though I learned a great deal that I draw upon, especially in part 2, from the following moral philosophers, whom I regard as the greatest in our tradition: Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, Butler, Rousseau, Hume, Kant, Mill and Moore. For many years, I sifted through their works—in comparative fashion—saving, integrating and developing what I found to be methodologically or/substantively sound and discarding what I found to be otherwise. The result is a moral philosophy whose principal strands, though they can be found, at least in embryo, in the works of my major predecessors, are woven into a tapestry that I think will be found to be substantially new and original at least in overall design. I must leave its further introduction, however, to the specific introductory chapters to its two main parts and to the specific introductions to individual chapters.

My purpose and method throughout this book has been essentially constructive and I have, accordingly, avoided polemics wherever possible. All of its chapters, with the exception of introductory and concluding chapters, were written originally for publication as articles—whether they so appeared or not. So I have had to add notes to them in their original form to help integrate them into a whole. I might have started writing again from scratch, when I perceived the whole they were forming, but the boredom I would have suffered in doing so and the loss of freshness that would have resulted made that course undesirable. The main chapters were drafted in this order: 2, 3, 8, 4, 5, 10, 9 and 11 (as a single essay bearing the title of 9), 13, 12; and were completed in the following order: 2, 3, 8, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 13, 12. So, though these chapters do not appear overall in the order in which they were completed, they do appear in this order—with the exception of 13 and 12—within each of two main parts of the book. If there are inconsistencies among its various chapters that are not rectified in notes, I ask that the view expressed in the later-completed chapter be taken to represent what I currently believe and wish to be held accountable for.
CONTENTS

Foreword vi

Part 1: Skepticism
1. Introduction 2
2. The Basic Varieties of Ethical Skepticism 3
3. Skepticism About Basic Moral Principles 17
4. How to Establish or Refute Ethical Relativism 21
5. Noncognitivism 29
6. Conclusion 37

Part 2: The Basis of Morality
7. Introduction 40
8. The Egoist's Psychological Argument 41
9. Evolution and Autonomy 55
10. Promising and the Obligation to Keep a Promise 65
11. The Psychical Descent of Man 81
12. Relativism and Rational Self-Interest 108
13. Moral Development and Suicide 118
14. Conclusion 137

Afterword 142
FOREWORD

In the preface to his The Philosophy of the Enlightenment, Ernst Cassirer summarizes his account of that philosophy as follows:

This philosophy believes...in an original spontaneity of thought; it attributes to thought not merely an imitative function [to observe life and to portray it in terms of reflective thought] but the power and the task of shaping life itself. Thought consists not only of analyzing and dissecting, but in actually bringing about that order of things which it conceives as necessary, so that by this act of fulfillment it may demonstrate its own reality and truth.

It is very much in this spirit that I offer to the public Skepticism and the Basis of Morality as a work in enlightenment moral philosophy, as a work in analytic ethics whose mastery is designed to eventuate in a genuinely examined life. Though it contains no prescriptions for conduct and consists for the most part of analyzing and dissecting, its main thrust in the end is to produce a well-reasoned account of what it is to be a rationally self-directed and self-improving human being. Its principal thesis is that nature, through the process of evolution-by-natural-selection, constructed us to be (or become) such beings as normal and mature adults.

I seek, through my account of the nature and genesis of innate human practical reason, to hold up to mankind's practical reason a mirror in which it can see its own inherent nature and structure for what it truly is and what it surely can do when it fulfills the potential that nature built into it. I seek to do so because I have found through personal experience that our inborn powers of practical reason can function fully effectively only when they operate in conjunction with a conscious image (or conception) of their own nature and structure that corresponds fully to reality. Should my account of their nature and structure so correspond to reality, any reader who masters my account will find the ultimate proof of its full correspondence to reality, not so much in my supporting argument--an Ariadne's ladder I required to clamber my way out of the quick-sand slough of skepticism--as in a life according to it that he will discover for himself to be ever more fully worth living in genuinely human terms.
PART 1: SKEPTICISM
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Anyone who has more than a passing acquaintance with the history of western moral philosophy is bound to be aware of the central role played in it by the problem of ethical skepticism: the problem as to whether or not moral knowledge is possible in principle. A student of its history is bound to be aware, moreover, that, at least until the present century, the overwhelmingly dominant view in this tradition—which begins with Socrates's attempt to rescue rational morality from the relativistic clutches of his fellow sophists—is that moral knowledge is possible in principle. Thus, from at least an historical point of view, a satisfactory solution to the problem of ethical skepticism consists of a refutation of ethical skepticism: the general thesis that moral knowledge is impossible in principle.

Unfortunately, ethical skepticism has never been successfully refuted. The reason for this illustrates Moore's shrewd, if somewhat overstated, observation (in the preface to Principia Ethica) that "in Ethics ... the difficulties and disagreements, of which its history is full, are mainly due to a very simple cause: namely, to the attempt to answer questions, without discovering precisely what question it is which you desire to answer." For the truth is that no one who has endeavored to refute ethical skepticism has anywhere near fully understood the problem of ethical skepticism before he set out to refute it: exactly what he must prove to refute ethical skepticism. As a consequence, no one who has set out to refute ethical skepticism has anywhere near fully understood how to go about doing so: how to go about proving what he must prove to actually refute ethical skepticism. Thus arises the need to find a refutation of ethical skepticism—both content and method.

It is evident, at least to a person with good sense in such matters, that close analysis of skepticism and of the various points of opposition between it and nonskepticism—moral knowledge is possible in principle—is what is required to determine exactly what must be proved to refute skepticism. This analysis is provided by part 1, Skepticism, and reveals that what must be proved to refute skepticism is this thesis:

There exists in human beings a common underivative moral self which consists of an innate, perfectly general normative-practical source (principle-spring) of human moral judgment and behavior, whose normative half is an absolute rather than relative criterion of moral judgment.

Part 2, The Basis of Morality, provides a proof of this thesis, together with development and defense of the method of its proof, through a philosophical exposition of the basis of morality, which consists of our common innate moral self.
Chapter 2

THE BASIC VARIETIES OF ETHICAL SKEPTICISM

Ethical skepticism, as everyone knows, is an ancient and recurrent problem of vital concern to moral philosophy. It may even be said to be the central problem of analytic ethics. It is therefore surprising to find that the issues it embodies, so far have not been systematically and comprehensively cataloged; all we have are more or less incomplete bits and pieces. I propose therefore, as the necessary first step in this enterprise, to set forth here, in a systematic and comprehensive way, the basic varieties of ethical skepticism and the logical relations they have to one another. The picture to be drawn of this conceptual and logical terrain reveals the network of principal issues constituting the problem. It also reveals the startling fact that evidence for its basic varieties is incapable of providing cumulative support for ethical skepticism, so that the case for the latter can be no stronger than the strongest of the cases for its basic varieties. This should dispel the prevalent notion or fear that the case for ethical skepticism is overwhelming since there is nothing like a conclusive case for any of its basic varieties. This, in turn, should help to create an atmosphere in which serious consideration of the problem of ethical skepticism can take place.

To bring my task within manageable limits, I confine myself to skepticism about right and wrong conduct, right conduct being understood to be simply conduct which is not wrong. My account is independent of the distinguishing features of the concepts of a right and a wrong action; and any other ostensibly contradictory moral predicate-expressions such as 'is morally good' and 'is not morally good' can be substituted throughout for the expressions 'is right' and 'is wrong'. In this way my account can be generalized to any form of ethical skepticism, or evaluative skepticism for that matter, so I shall now use 'skeptic' and 'skepticism' as convenient abbreviations, respectively, for 'skeptic about right and wrong conduct' and 'skepticism about right and wrong conduct'.

We all believe, in our common-sense moments at any rate, that in some situations we know which actions are right and which are wrong, though in others we do not. In comparing them we come to believe that, with the exception of inherently indeterminate cases, our failure to know which actions are right and which are wrong is due either to shortage of information or to shortage of the wisdom to make sense of the information we have, or both. But these sources of failure seem to be contingent. Improvement in both respects seems to occur, and there seems to be no theoretical limit to either. In this way we come to believe that knowledge of right and wrong conduct is always possible in principle.

To this belief skeptics are opposed. They believe that knowledge of right and wrong conduct is always impossible in principle. On this everyone seems agreed. But those who are generally regarded as skeptics
do not support skepticism on just any grounds. Their grounds are con­ceptual, and in this sense philosophical, in character and relate speci­fically to ethics. So I think we should say, more specifically, that skeptics believe that knowledge of right and wrong conduct is always impossible in principle on conceptual grounds relating specifically to ethics. The issues between skeptics and nonskeptics, we should say, are conceptual in character and pertain specifically to ethics. On this there may be disagreement.

Whether skepticism and nonskepticism should be interpreted in this narrower way or broadly as the universal denial and assertion of the possibility in principle of knowledge of right and wrong conduct, is a question of some importance. For on the narrower interpretation the problem of skepticism has less bulk than on the broad interpretation since knowledge of right and wrong conduct, as we shall see, could be universally precluded in principle on nonconceptual grounds as well as on conceptual grounds not relating specifically to ethics, and the additional issues the broad interpretation embodies are important ones. But I think that the narrower interpretation fits better the theories most philosophers regard as forms of skepticism than does the broad interpretation, and that this is not overridden by the importance of these additional issues. Moreover, on the narrower interpretation the problem of skepticism consists of a hierarchy of issues into which these additional issues do not fit. For these reasons, I recommend and adopt the narrower interpretation.

Let us use 'possible*' as an abbreviation for 'possible in prin­ciple on conceptual grounds relating specifically to ethics' and 'im­possible*' as an abbreviation for 'impossible in principle on conceptual grounds relating specifically to ethics'. Then the thesis of nonskep­ticism is:

(1) It is possible* to know about any particular action whether it is right or wrong,

and the thesis of skepticism is:

(A) It is impossible* to know about any particular action whether it is right or wrong.

We now confront a further problem of interpretation. Both (1) and (A) admit of strong and weak formulations, depending on whether 'or' is construed exclusively or inclusively. They are:

(1s) It is possible* to know about any particular action whether it is right (rather than wrong) or wrong (rather than right);

(As) It is impossible* to know about any particular action whether it is right (rather than wrong) or wrong (rather than right);

(1w) It is possible* to know about any particular action whether it is right or wrong (or both right and wrong); and
(A<sub>w</sub>) It is impossible* to know about any particular action whether it is right or wrong (or both right and wrong).

(1<sub>l</sub>) entails, whereas (1<sub>w</sub>) does not, the thesis that it is impossible* for any particular action to be both right and wrong. Consequently (A<sub>l</sub>) is entailed by, whereas (A<sub>w</sub>) is not, the thesis that it is possible* for any particular action to be both right and wrong. Therefore on the strong formulation of (1) and (A) skepticism will have one variety—it is possible* for any particular action to be both right and wrong—which it will not have on their weak formulation. So we are forced to choose between them.

On what basis are we to choose? On a basis, of course, of how common-sense understands (1) and (A); and common-sense understands them in the way brought out in their strong formulation, for commonsense understands (1) to entail that it is impossible* for any particular action to be both right and wrong. So, dropping the sub-script 's', we have as the thesis of skepticism:

(A<sub>1</sub>) It is impossible* to know about any particular action whether it is right (rather than wrong) or wrong (rather than right),

and as the thesis of nonskepticism:

(1<sub>1</sub>) It is possible* to know about any particular action whether it is right (rather than wrong) or wrong (rather than right).

As the numerical subscripts indicate, these are only the first formulation they will be given.

To understand what the basic varieties of skepticism are, we must first understand what the basic logical implications of nonskepticism are since basic varieties of skepticism are definable, largely, through their opposition to these implications. But first several potential sources of confusion must be disposed of.

Though (A<sub>1</sub>) entails that no actions are in fact known to be right or known to be wrong, (1<sub>1</sub>) does not entail that any actions are in fact known to be so. This implication of (1<sub>1</sub>) therefore is incidental to the skeptic's position. His position is that knowledge of right and wrong conduct is impossible in principle, and not merely nonexistent in fact. Nor does the nonskeptic challenge the latter. Consequently skepticism cannot be based on contingent nonexistence of the information required for such knowledge--on, for example, universal sloth in obtaining it or universal malfunction of our sensory organs. But furthermore, and more importantly, it cannot be based on noncontingent nonexistence, or nonexistence in principle, of this information.

The common-sense belief that knowledge of right and wrong conduct always is possible in principle does entail that it always is possible in principle to obtain the information required for such knowledge. So, were we to construe skepticism broadly, we would have as a basic variety
of skepticism the thesis that it is impossible in principle ever to obtain this information. Its forms would be the various forms of theoretical skepticism about empirical knowledge, or skepticism about empirical knowledge resting on conceptual grounds. But this thesis is not a variety of skepticism on the narrower interpretation, for the issues it embodies, though conceptual in character, quite plainly do not pertain specifically to ethics. It was, in part, to exclude this thesis that I chose the narrower interpretation, for philosophers generally do not think of it as a variety of skepticism, even though aware of its implication for ethics.

It is a truism that it possible in principle to know about a particular action whether it is right or wrong only if the terms 'right' and 'wrong' are applicable to it, that is, only if it is fit to be judged right or wrong. As I understand this matter, an action is fit to be judged right or wrong only if it is a voluntary action of a moral agent. So, were we to construe skepticism broadly, we would have as a basic variety of skepticism the thesis that the terms 'right' and 'wrong' are in principle universally inapplicable to actions, and its forms would be the various forms of skepticism about the occurrence of voluntary actions or the existence of moral agents. However, this thesis, though there is not space to argue it adequately here, is not a variety of skepticism on the narrower interpretation; for the issues it embodies, though pertaining specifically to ethics, are not conceptual in character. They concern, as Hume would say, 'real existence and matter of fact'. It was, in part, to exclude this thesis that I chose the narrower interpretation, for philosophers generally do not regard it as a variety of skepticism, even though aware of its implication for ethics. So we are to understand the term 'action', in (1,) and (A-1), to mean 'action to which the terms "right" and "wrong" are applicable'.

One final matter before we proceed. It is at least possible for some particular actions to be morally indeterminate and on this ground neither right nor wrong. Borderline cases must be allowed for in morality, as in other areas. Nor is this an issue between the skeptic and nonskeptic. Hence the term 'action', in (1,) and (A-1), also is to be understood to mean 'action which is not morally indeterminate and on this ground neither right nor wrong'. This and the foregoing qualification are explicit in these expanded versions of (1,) and (A-1):

1. It is possible\* to know about any particular action (to which the terms 'right' and 'wrong' are applicable and which is not morally indeterminate and on this ground neither right nor wrong) whether it is right (rather than wrong) or wrong (rather than right);

2. It is impossible\* to know about any particular action (to which the terms 'right' and 'wrong' are applicable and which is not morally indeterminate and on this ground neither right nor wrong) whether it is right (rather than wrong) or wrong (rather than right).
It is clear from (l^ge) that nonskepticism entails^2:

(6l^e) Every particular action (to which the terms 'right' and 'wrong' are applicable and which is not morally indeterminate and on this ground neither right nor wrong) must* be either right (rather than wrong) or wrong (rather than right);

where 'must*' means 'must in principle on conceptual grounds relating specifically to ethics'. Plainly, (6l^e) is a conjunction of:

(3l^e) It is impossible* for any particular action (to which the terms 'right' and 'wrong' are applicable and which is not morally indeterminate and on this ground neither right nor wrong) to be both right and wrong

and

(7l^e) It is impossible* for any particular action (to which the terms 'right' and 'wrong' are applicable and which is not morally indeterminate and on this ground neither right nor wrong) to be neither right nor wrong.

(6l^e) asserts that 'right', or 'not wrong' and 'wrong' are contradictories, that is, that one or the other but not both of these terms must* apply to any particular action (to which they are applicable and which is not morally indeterminate). Now this might seem to be a formal tautology. But it is not. It is true that 'right', or 'not wrong' and 'wrong' are ostensible contradictories, one being formed from the other by the prefix 'not'. But some pairs of terms which are ostensible contradictories fail to be contradictories. 'To the left of' and 'not to the left of' are examples, since it is possible for an object to be simultaneously both to the left of and not to the left of another object, depending upon the frame of reference within which the relationship obtains. Hence that a pair of terms are ostensible contradictories— that one is formed from the other by the prefix 'not'— does not guarantee that it is impossible for both terms sometimes to apply simultaneously to the same state of affairs. Whether ostensible contradictories are in this respect contradictories or not depends entirely on their content. So the claim that ostensible contradictories are in this respect contradictories is never a formal tautology. Consequently that the terms 'right' and 'wrong' are ostensible contradictories does not guarantee (3l^e) and neither (3l^e) nor (6l^e), of which (3l^e) is an aspect, is a formal tautology. The tautological character of (3l^e), and to this extent the tautological character of (6l^e), depends entirely on the content of the terms 'right' and 'wrong'.

Plainly, though, that a pair of terms are even ostensible contradictories does guarantee that it is impossible for neither of them to apply to a state of affairs (to which they are applicable and which is not indeterminate). Consequently that the terms 'right' and 'wrong' are ostensible contradictories does guarantee (7l^e). Hence (7l^e) is a formal tautology and therefore does not assert anything capable of being
significantly contradicted. Consequently its denial, the formally inconsistent thesis:

\[(G_{le}) \text{ It is possible* for any particular action (to which the terms 'right' and 'wrong' are applicable and which is not morally indeterminate and on this ground neither right nor wrong) to be neither right nor wrong,}\]

does not constitute an intelligible variety of skepticism.

We are left then with \((3_{le})\) as a significant logical implication of nonskepticism, and consequently with:

\[(C_{le}) \text{ It is possible* for any particular action (to which the terms 'right' and 'wrong' are applicable and which is not morally indeterminate and on this ground neither right nor wrong) to be both right and wrong,}\]

the denial of \((3_{le})\), as a basic variety of skepticism. Their shorter, implicitly qualified versions are:

\[
(3_{1}) \text{ It is impossible* for any particular action to be both right and wrong; and } \\
(C_{1}) \text{ It is possible* for any particular action to be both right and wrong.}
\]

I shall refer to \((C_{1})\) by its traditional name 'relativism' about right and wrong conduct, and to \((3_{1})\) by the coordinate name 'absolutism' about right and wrong conduct.

Hereafter I shall not state expanded, or explicitly qualified versions of theses since omission of these qualifications should not lead to confusion in the matters subsequently to be discussed.

-5-

It is desirable at this point to introduce formulations of our several theses stated in terms of judgments of right and wrong conduct. Absolutism so formulated is:

\[
(3_{2}) \text{ It is impossible* for both of any possible pair of opposite judgments as to the rightness or wrongness of any particular action to be true.}
\]

\((3_{2})\) asserts that any judgment that a particular action is right is logically contrary to any judgment that the same action is wrong, no matter when or by whom they are made. Two judgments are logically contrary when it is impossible for both of them to be true. Plainly, \((3_{2})\) is equivalent to \((3_{1})\).

But we encounter a difficulty in settling on the formulation of relativism which corresponds to \((3_{2})\). It seems to admit of weak and strong formulations. These are:
(C\textsubscript{2w}) It is possible\textsuperscript{*} for both of some possible pair of opposite judgments as to the rightness or wrongness of any particular action to be true; and

(C\textsubscript{2s}) It is possible\textsuperscript{*} for both of any possible pair of opposite judgments as to the rightness or wrongness of any particular action to be true.

(C\textsubscript{2w}) asserts that at least one possible judgment that a particular action is right is not logically contrary to at least one possible judgment that the same action is wrong. Whereas (C\textsubscript{2s}) asserts that no possible judgment that a particular action is right is logically contrary to any possible judgment that the same action is wrong. The question is whether (C\textsubscript{1}) is equivalent to (C\textsubscript{2w}) or to (C\textsubscript{2s}).

(3\textsubscript{1}), it will be remembered, is not a formal tautology. Consequently (C\textsubscript{1}), its denial, is not a formal contradiction. But (C\textsubscript{2s}) is a formal contradiction, for 'right' and 'wrong' are ostensible contradictories—one being formed from the other by the prefix 'not'—so that at least one possible judgment that an action is right must be logically contrary to at least one possible judgment that the same action is wrong. Note that (C\textsubscript{1}) and (C\textsubscript{2w}) are consistent with this requirement. Hence (C\textsubscript{1}) is equivalent to (C\textsubscript{2w}). So, dropping the subscript 'w', we have as the required formulation of relativism:

(C\textsubscript{2}) It is possible\textsuperscript{*} for both of some possible pair of opposite judgments as to the rightness or wrongness of any particular action to be true.

The formulations of nonskepticism and skepticism which correspond to (3\textsubscript{2}) and (C\textsubscript{2}) are:

(1\textsubscript{2}) It is possible\textsuperscript{*} to know which of any possible pair of opposite judgments as to the rightness (rather than wrongness) or wrongness (rather than rightness) of any particular action is true (and which false); and

(A\textsubscript{2}) It is impossible\textsuperscript{*} to know which of any possible pair of opposite judgments as to the rightness (rather than wrongness) or wrongness (rather than rightness) of any particular action is true (and which false).

It can be seen without argument, I think, that (1\textsubscript{2}) and (A\textsubscript{2}) are equivalent, respectively, to (1\textsubscript{1}) and (A\textsubscript{1}).

As is clear from (1\textsubscript{2}), nonskepticism also entails:

(4\textsubscript{2}) Judgments of the rightness and of the wrongness of particular actions are true-or-false.

Hence its denial:
(D$_2$) Judgments of the rightness and of the wrongness of particular actions are not true-or-false

is a second basic variety of skepticism. I shall also refer to (D$_2$) by its traditional name 'noncognitivism' about judgments of right and wrong conduct, and to (4$_2$) by the coordinate name 'cognitivism' about judgments of right and wrong conduct.

As is also clear from (I$_2$), nonskepticism also entails:

(5$_2$) Judgments of the rightness and of the wrongness of particular actions are meaningful.

Hence its denial:

(E$_2$) Judgments of the rightness and of the wrongness of particular actions are not meaningful

is a third basic variety of skepticism. I shall refer to (5$_2$) by the name 'meaningfulism' about judgments of right and wrong conduct, and to (E$_2$) by the coordinate name 'nonmeaningfulism' about judgments of right and wrong conduct.

Let us now suppose that judgments of right and wrong conduct are meaningful and true-or-false, and that it is impossible* for both of any pair of opposite judgments of right and wrong conduct to be true, and let us ask what more would have to be the case for it to be possible* to know which of any pair of opposite judgments of right and wrong conduct is true (and which false). Now I have been using 'know' to mean, indifferently, 'to come to know' and 'to be in the state of knowing'. The reason is that to be in the state of knowing is the same as to be in the state at which one arrives in coming to know, so that it is possible to be in this state if and only if it is possible to come to be in this state. The logical implications of nonskepticism therefore are the same on either interpretation. Let us then, while making the suppositions mentioned, ask more pointedly what more would have to be the case for it to be possible* to come to know which of any pair of opposite judgments of right and wrong conduct is true (and which false). To answer this question, we need to answer first the broader question what more would be required for it to be possible in principle all things considered to come to know which of any pair of opposite judgments of right and wrong conduct is true (and which false).

For one thing, as we have seen, it would have to be possible in principle to obtain in any situation the empirical information relevant to determining an action's rightness or wrongness. But, as we also have seen, the denial of this is not a form of skepticism on the narrower interpretation; for the various issues it embodies, though conceptual in character, do not pertain specifically to ethics.

At this point, as everyone knows, theoreticians part company. Some would say that, in addition, it would have to be possible in principle to intuit, or apprehend immediately, or without proof, the rightness or wrongness of any particular action--based, of course, on comprehension
of its relevant empirical features. Others would say that, in addition, it would have to be possible in principle to derive a judgment as to the rightness or wrongness of any particular action from the relevant empirical information and basic principles of right and wrong conduct, and also that it would have to be possible in principle to know these principles to be true. Now I do not propose to tread again the well-worn and familiar path of argument about which of these alternatives is correct. I shall simply assume that the current overwhelming majority are right in believing the latter alternative to be the correct one. However, the first of the two additional requirements it involves is irrelevant to skepticism on the narrower interpretation since the thesis that it is impossible in principle to derive judgments of right and wrong conduct from the relevant empirical information and principles is not a form of skepticism in this sense. Though there is no space to argue it here, the issues this thesis embodies, though in a broad sense conceptual in character, concern general logical questions not pertaining specifically to ethics. Nor do philosophers, though aware of its implication for ethics, generally take it to be a variety of skepticism. This is an additional reason for the narrower interpretation.

We are left then with:

\[(2^*)\quad \text{It is possible}^{*} \text{ to know basic principles of right and wrong conduct to be true}\]

as a fourth and final logical implication of nonskepticism; and with

\[(B^*) \quad \text{It is impossible}^{*} \text{ to know basic principles of right and wrong conduct to be true,}\]

the denial of \((2^*)\), as a fourth and final basic variety of skepticism. I shall refer to \((2^*)\) as 'nonskepticism' about basic principles of right and wrong conduct, and to \((B^*)\) as 'skepticism' about basic principles of right and wrong conduct. (I am unable to state formulations of \((2^*)\) and \((B^*)\) which correspond to \((1^*)\) and \((A^*)\). The reason seems to be that the notion of a 'basic principle of right and wrong conduct' is a technical one introduced to analyze the idea of knowledge of right and wrong conduct.)

\[(2^*)\), as can be seen from what has been said so far, entails:

\[(9^*) \quad \text{It is impossible}^{*} \text{ for both of any possible pair of conflicting putative basic principles of right and wrong conduct to be true;}\]

\[(10^*) \quad \text{Putative basic principles of right and wrong conduct are true-or-false; and}\]

\[(11^*) \quad \text{Putative basic principles of right and wrong conduct are meaningful.}\]

They may be called, respectively, 'absolutism', 'cognitivism' and 'meaningfulism' about basic principles of right and wrong conduct. But since they are logically equivalent, respectively, to absolutism, cog-
nativism and meaningfulism about judgments of right and wrong conduct, it would be redundant to introduce them as implications of non skeptic-

I append here for convenient reference a table of the theses with which we shall now be concerned.

(1₂) It is possible* to know which of any possible pair of opposite judgments as to the rightness (rather than wrongness) or wrongness (rather than rightness) of any particular action is true (and which false).

(2₂) It is possible* to know basic principles of right and wrong conduct to be true.

(3₂) It is impossible* for both of any possible pair of opposite judgments as to the rightness or wrongness of any particular action to be true.

(4₂) Judgments of the rightness and of the wrongness of particular actions are true-or-false.

(5₂) Judgments of the rightness and of the wrongness of particular actions are meaningful.

(A₂) It is impossible* to know which of any possible pair of opposite judgments as to the rightness (rather than wrongness) or wrongness (rather than rightness) of any particular action is true (and which false).

(B₂) It is impossible* to know basic principles of right and wrong conduct to be true.

(C₂) It is possible* for both of some possible pair of opposite judgments as to the rightness or wrongness of any particular action to be true.

(D₂) Judgments of the rightness and of the wrongness of particular actions are not true-or-false.

(E₂) Judgments of the rightness and of the wrongness of particular actions are not meaningful.

The problem now is to make clear how (B₂) through (E₂) are logically related. Then statements can be given of the basic varieties of skepticism which make these relationships explicit.

Notice first (a) that (2₂) through (5₂) entail all of their numerical successors but none of their numerical predecessors. A denial of one of them is trivial therefore when it results from denying one of its numerical successors, and is nontrivial when it does not result from denying one of its numerical successors. Of course, (b) (B₂)
through (E_2)---the basic varieties of skepticism---are to be construed as nontrivial denials, respectively, of (2_2) through (5_2).

From (a) it follows (c) that (B_2) through (E_2) entail denials of all of (2_2) through (5_2) preceding, but none following, in numerical order the ones which they deny nontrivially. From (b) and (c) it follows that (B_2) through (E_2), relative to the claims made by (2_2) through (5_2), both (d) deny something not denied by their alphabetical predecessors and (e) do not deny something denied by their alphabetical successors. But it does not follow from (a) and (b), or from any of their logical consequences, that (B_2) through (E_2) do not entail any of (2_2) through (5_2) following in numerical order the ones which they deny nontrivially. This point can be settled only by examining the content of (B_2) through (E_2).

(B_2) is the nontrivial thesis that it is impossible* to know basic principles of right and wrong conduct to be true. Consequently it leaves open both the possibility that there are, and the possibility that there are not any, basic principles of right and wrong conduct. Now a basic principle of right and wrong conduct, in the sense relevant to an analysis of skepticism, by definition is a basic principle for determining which of any possible pair of opposite judgments as to the rightness (rather than wrongness) or wrongness (rather than rightness) of any particular action is true (and which false). So to assert that it is possible* for there to be such principles is tantamount to asserting the conjuction of (3_2) through (5_2)---or (9_2) through (11_2)---and to assert that it is impossible* for there to be such principles is tantamount to denying one of (3_2) through (5_2)---or (9_2) through (11_2). Consequently (B_2) neither asserts nor denies (3_2) through (5_2)---or (C_2) through (E_2). The neutrality of (B_2) with respect to (3_2) through (5_2)---or (C_2) through (E_2)---is made explicit in this expanded version of (B_2):

\[ B_{2e} \]

It is impossible* to know basic principles of right and wrong conduct to be true (whether or not it is possible* for there to be such principles, whether or not judgments of right and wrong conduct are absolute, cognitive and meaningful).

(C_2) asserts that it is possible* for both of some possible pair of opposite judgments as to the rightness or wrongness of any particular action to be true. It is plain that this thesis construes judgments of right and wrong conduct as making statements about actions, and therefore as being both true-or-false and meaningful. (C_2) entails both (4_2) and (5_2) and consequently is logically incompatible with both (D_2) and (E_2), each of which contradicts an essential part of what it asserts. This incompatibility is made explicit in this expanded version of (C_2):

\[ C_{2e} \]

It is possible* for both of some possible pair of opposite judgments as to the rightness or wrongness of any particular action to be true (so that such judgments are both cognitive and meaningful).
(D₀) is the thesis that judgments of the rightness and of the wrongness of particular actions are not true-or-false. Theories of this sort, as everyone knows, consist of interpretations of judgments of right and wrong conduct which are logically incompatible with their having assertive force, or with their saying something about particular actions—in saying that they are right or that they are wrong—admitting of truth and falsity. It is plain therefore that theories of this sort construe judgments of right and wrong conduct as being meaningful. (D₀) entails (Σ₂) and consequently is logically incompatible with (E₂), which contradicts an essential part of what it asserts. Their incompatibility is made explicit in this expanded version of (D₂):

(D₂ₑ) Judgments of the rightness and of the wrongness of particular actions (though meaningful) are not true-or-false (because they mean something not having assertive force).

(E₂) does not require expansion.⁷

-8-

The chief results so far are summarized in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skepticism about judgments of right and wrong conduct: It is impossible* to know which of any possible pair of opposite judgments as to the rightness (rather than wrongness) or wrongness (rather than rightness) of any particular action is true (and which false).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skepticism about basic principles of right and wrong conduct: It is impossible* to know basic principles of right and wrong conduct to be true (whether or not judgments of right and wrong conduct are absolute, cognitive and meaningful).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relativism about judgments of right and wrong conduct: It is possible* for both of some possible pair (but not all possible pairs) of opposite judgments as to the rightness or wrongness of any particular action to be true (so that such judgments are cognitive and meaningful).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noncognitivism about judgments of right and wrong conduct: Judgments of the rightness and of the wrongness of particular actions (though meaningful) are not true-or-false (because they mean something not having assertive force).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonmeaningfulism about judgments of right and wrong conduct: Judgments of the rightness and of the wrongness of particular actions are not meaningful.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is apparent from this table that each of its basic varieties is a logically sufficient ground for the general thesis of skepticism, and
that the basic varieties of skepticism are mutually independent in that they do not support one another. It follows that evidence for its basic varieties is incapable of providing cumulative support for skepticism, so that the case for the general thesis can be no stronger than the strongest of the cases for its basic varieties. Hence one who would like to support nonskepticism, as I would, can take some comfort from the fact that his opponents can be faced one at a time, and from the fact that presently there is nothing like a conclusive case for any of the basic varieties of skepticism.
This chapter is a reprint, with minor modifications, of an article with the same title, which appeared in METAPHILOSOPHY, Winter 1971.

The ensuing odd sequence of numbers and letters for propositions is justified by the symmetry of the end result.

Content, as we shall see in chapter 4, must be expanded to include criteria for correct application.

This claim and the corresponding claim for the equivalence of \((C_a)\) and \((C_b)\) are carefully qualified in my "Moore and Stevenson on a Certain Form of Ethical Naturalism," PERSONALIST, Summer 1971. This qualification is to the effect that they are equivalent if and only if relativism about (judgments of) right and wrong conduct is false. Since I do not wish even to appear to beg the question against ethical relativism, I shall, beginning with chapter 4 (How to Establish or Refute Ethical Relativism), stick consistently to formulating ethical relativism metaethically as a thesis about (particular) moral judgments rather than as a thesis formulated ethically in the object language.

I use the generic term 'derive', rather than some more specific term such as 'deduce', in order to avoid the troublesome question as to the exact logical relationship between empirical information and principles on the one hand and the particular judgments they justify on the other hand. Derivation can be thought of here as a disjunction of its species since this is adequate for an exposition of skepticism.

For a devastating criticism of the first alternative, see P. F. Strawson, "Ethical Intuitionism," PHILOSOPHY, January 1949—reprinted in R. B. Brandt, Value and Obligation.

It is expanded in chapter 6, however—and with the somewhat surprising result that nonmeaningfulism drops out as a variety of skepticism.

This conclusion holds even if skepticism is construed broadly as claiming that knowledge of right and wrong conduct is always impossible in principle. The three additional basic varieties skepticism embodies on this interpretation, as is fairly easy to see, are logically sufficient grounds for the general thesis and are, in the requisite sense, independent of each other and of \((B_2)\) through \((E_2)\).

Nevertheless, as we shall see in chapter 6, they can and must all be refuted, in the end, in one fell swoop.
Chapter 3

SKEPTICISM ABOUT BASIC MORAL PRINCIPLES

In Chapter 2 I defended the thesis "that the basic varieties of (ethical) skepticism are mutually independent in that they do not support one another." I was concerned particularly to point out that skepticism about the possibility of justifying basic moral principles—which I call for short skepticism about basic moral principles, or sometimes just justification skepticism—does not lend any credence to ethical relativism, ethical noncognitivism or what I call ethical nonmeaningfulism—these being the four basic varieties of ethical skepticism. The reason I gave was that skepticism about basic moral principles—being the nontrivial denial that it is possible to justify basic moral principles—is compatible with the impossibility of there being, as well as with the possibility of there being, basic moral principles; whereas relativism, noncognitivism and nonmeaningfulism are each tantamount to a denial that it is possible for there to be any such principles since basic moral principles are the means by which we are to know which of any pair of opposed particular moral judgments is true (and which false). But I did not describe any of the issues concerning the possibility of justifying basic moral principles over and above those concerning the possibility of there being such principles. I did not, in other words, describe the distinctive issues constituting the problem of skepticism about basic moral principles: those issues distinguishing it from the problems of ethical relativism, noncognitivism and nonmeaningfulism. My aim in this chapter thus is to fill this gap in my earlier account of the basic varieties of ethical skepticism. I shall confine myself, as I did in that account, to the representative case of skepticism about (judgments of) right and wrong conduct, right conduct being understood to be simply conduct which is not wrong.

What, then, are the distinctive issues constituting the problem of skepticism about basic principles of right and wrong conduct: those issues distinguishing it from the problems of relativism, noncognitivism and nonmeaningfulism about right and wrong conduct?

The general problem turns on three main subsidiary issues: (i) the implications of the conception of a basic principle of right and wrong conduct, (ii) whether basic principles of right and wrong conduct can be justified by definitions of the terms 'right' and 'wrong' and (iii) whether basic principles of right and wrong conduct can be cogently derived from extramoral premises other than definitions of the terms 'right' and 'wrong.' I am assuming, of course, that basic principles of right and wrong conduct cannot be known intuitively to be true.

I shall now simply describe the justification skeptic's position on these subsidiary issues and explain how it is neutral with respect to whether or not there can be any basic principles of right and wrong conduct, that is, with respect to relativism, noncognitivism and nonmeaningfulism.

(i) As we have seen, a basic principle of right and wrong conduct by definition is the moral basis, or an essential element of the moral
basis, of all sound reasoning about the rightness (rather than wrongness) or the wrongness (rather than rightness) of conduct. Consequently such principles cannot be justified, or be shown to be true—with or without the aid of extramoral premises—by means of other general or particular judgments of right and wrong conduct; that is, they cannot be derived noncircularly or without begging the question from any set of premises containing general or particular judgments of right and wrong conduct. This means that an epistemologically cogent argument for a basic principle of right and wrong conduct must contain only extramoral premises—assuming, of course, as it seems reasonable to do, that such principles are not derivable from other types of moral principles such as principles of good and evil.

It is plain, however, that the definition in question does not rule out the epistemological, or therefore the logical, cogency of arguments for basic principles of right and wrong conduct whose premises are composed exclusively of extramoral statements. So the justification skeptic cannot rest his case entirely on the conception of a basic principle of right and wrong conduct (as a basic moral principle). Nevertheless, this phase of his case does rest entirely on this conception, and this conception does not determine, one way or the other, whether it is an 'empty' one, that is, whether it is possible for there to be basic principles of right and wrong conduct.

(ii) The second main subsidiary issue concerns the possibility of justifying basic principles of right and wrong conduct by means of that range of extramoral statements which define the terms 'right' and 'wrong'—wholly or in part—in terms of (absolute) putative right- and wrong-making characteristics of actions. This issue divides into two.

(iiia) First, there is the issue as to whether or not it is possible in principle for any such definitions to be correct, that is, as to whether or not the meanings of the terms 'right' and 'wrong' are specific as to what are the fundamental right- and wrong-making characteristics of actions (and—given that they are—whether the relevant characteristics are absolute or relative—see note 3 infra). Skeptics about basic moral principles well may, and usually do, deny that their meanings are thus specific. But justification skeptics can, like some intuitionists, deny this—and must deny this if they are to avoid trivializing their position—without appealing to any positive theory as to the meaning of 'right' and 'wrong' which makes it impossible for there to be any basic principles of right and wrong conduct, that is, without appealing to some form of relativist or noncognitivist analysis of these terms. So this phase of the justification skeptic's position also has nothing essentially to do with whether or not it is possible for there to be basic principles of right and wrong conduct.

(iiib) Second, there is the issue as to whether or not reportive definitions of the terms 'right' and 'wrong' in terms of (absolute) putative right- and wrong-making characteristics entail corresponding (absolute) putative principles of right and wrong conduct. Skeptics about basic moral principles well may, but usually do not, deny that such entailments hold. Again, however, the logical issue here is quite independent of the issue as to whether or not it is possible for there
to be basic principles of right and wrong conduct. For the issue is as to whether or not reportive definitions of the terms 'right' and 'wrong' in terms of (absolute) putative right- and wrong-making characteristics—when considered hypothetically to be correct—entail corresponding (absolute) putative principles of right and wrong conduct—when these principles are considered hypothetically to be true; and this issue quite evidently depends only on the more general issue as to whether or not a reportive definition of a normative term, as specific as the ones in question, entails a criterion for the correct application of that term. So this phase of the justification skeptic's position, as well, has nothing at all to do with whether or not basic principles of right and wrong conduct are possible.

A skeptic about basic moral principles must either deny that there can be a correct reportive definition of 'right' and 'wrong' of the requisite sort or else deny that such definitions entail corresponding putative principles of right and wrong conduct. He may, of course, deny both.

(iii) The third and final main subsidiary issue concerns the possibility of cogently deriving basic principles of right and wrong conduct from extramoral statements of some range other than definitions of the terms 'right' and 'wrong': e.g., from those of biology, psychology, anthropology or sociology, theology or religion, or metaethics. Notice that such extramoral statements must be contingently, and not conceptually or formally, true or false; since, when basic principles of right and wrong conduct are based on premises other than definitions of the terms 'right' and 'wrong'—as they are in the kind of case in question—they are treated as contingently, and not conceptually or formally, true or false, so that the premises on which they are based will also have to be contingently, and not conceptually or formally, true or false. Thus this third (omnibus) issue, as contrasted with the second, has only one aspect, namely, whether or not any possible putative basic principles of right and wrong conduct—when considered hypothetically to be true—can, in any conceivable cogent way, be logically derived from any possible extramoral statements of the subrange in question—when these also are considered hypothetically to be true. For the justification skeptic must deny that cogent derivation is possible in cases of contingently true or false extramoral premises; since otherwise his contention is that it is contingently, or materially impossible, and not that it is impossible in principle, to justify basic principles of right and wrong conduct, that is, that they lack justification owing only to the material falsity of premises from which they are in fact cogently derivable. Now all of the particular logical and conceptual issues concerned with particular justificatory arguments of the sort in question—by parity with (iib) above—are of a general kind, having nothing whatever to do with whether or not it is possible for there to be basic principles of right and wrong conduct. So this final phase of the justification skeptic's position also is independent of whether or not it is possible for there to be such principles.
This chapter is a condensation, with minor modifications, of a paper with the same title, which appeared in METAPHILOSOPHY, Spring 1971.

This assumption is justified by the argument of chapter 5, which shows that basic moral principles are true in virtue of being innate, hence a priori true, and so require to be proved to be innate in order to be known to be true.

Absolute right- and wrong-making characteristics are ones which cannot, while relative right- and wrong-making characteristics are ones which can, make a particular action both right and wrong.

This point is explained further by chapters 4 and 5.

I know that this will seem an incredible conclusion to noncognitivists, who think that the practical, or action-guiding character of judgments of right and wrong conduct creates an unbridgeable logical-gap between them and any extramoral premises on which they might be based. But this illusion, from which all noncognitivists seem to suffer, will be dispelled by our subsequent discussion of noncognitivism in chapter 5 and application of its results in part 2.

NOTES

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2. This assumption is justified by the argument of chapter 5, which shows that basic moral principles are true in virtue of being innate, hence a priori true, and so require to be proved to be innate in order to be known to be true.

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Chapter 4

HOW TO ESTABLISH OR REFUTE ETHICAL RELATIVISM

Ethical relativism has not, of late, been in the foreground of controversy in ethics. This is regrettable since ethical relativism is a distinct fundamental variety of ethical skepticism which has neither been established in any of nor been refuted in all of its various forms and since it would be desirable to settle the issue of ethical relativism one way or the other. Three things are prerequisite to settling the issue. First, it must be understood exactly what the issue is. Second, it must be understood what portion of the issue can be settled on a basis of current results in ethics. And third, it must be understood what portion of the issue thereby remains to be settled. The purpose of this chapter is to supply these prerequisites. Its upshot will be that, to establish or refute ethical relativism, we must first figure out how to discover and then discover the foundation of ethics—something we have not yet done—so that, though it is no wonder that the issue of ethical relativism remains unresolved, we will know what must be done to resolve it.

'Ethical relativism' has been variously defined by various people, and there is no widely accepted meaning for the term. There is, however, a widely accepted referent for the term, namely, the theories about morality of such social scientists as William Graham Sumner, Edward Westermarck and Ruth Benedict. Moreover, these theories exemplify a certain distinctive philosophical thesis about morality: a thesis which, for philosophical purposes, should be taken to be the thesis of ethical relativism and to provide the definition of this term. This thesis is that ethical terms are relative in that it is logically possible for any ethical term and its ostensible contradictory—the term formed from it by the prefix 'not' or synonymous with the term so formed—to be correctly applied—by either the same or different persons, at either the same or different times—to any subject to which they are applicable. The thesis of ethical absolutism, then—'absolute' being the proper opposite of 'relative'—is that ethical terms are absolute in that it is logically impossible for any ethical term and its ostensible contradictory to be correctly applied—by either the same or different persons, at either the same or different times—to any subject to which they are applicable. Thus the issue of ethical relativism is whether it is logically possible or logically impossible for any ethical term and its ostensible contradictory to be correctly applied—by either the same or different persons, at either the same or different times—to any subject to which they are applicable.

It is important to distinguish between the general theses of ethical relativism and absolutism on the one hand and on the other hand relativist and absolutist theses about particular ethical terms. These latter theses have, respectively, the forms:

It is logically possible for any (a term denoting a type of subject of ethical judgment) to be correctly judged to be (an ethical predicate-term applicable to such a subject) and—by either the same or different—
ent persons, at either the same or different times—to be correctly judged to be (the ostensible contradictory of this ethical predicate-term); and

It is logically impossible for any (a term denoting a type of subject of ethical judgment) to be correctly judged to be (an ethical predicate-term applicable to such a subject) and—by either the same or different persons, at either the same or different times—to be correctly judged to be (the ostensible contradictory of this ethical predicate-term).

It is evident, moreover, that the overall issue of ethical relativism may be bogsus in that some ethical terms may be relative while others are absolute and, in either event, that it can be settled only by proving the truth or falsity of relativist and absolutist theses about particular ethical terms. Now this question is the same, in principle, regardless of which particular ethical term is in question. So we can explore it adequately in terms of what is the most frequently discussed form of ethical relativism and absolutism, namely, relativism and absolutism about right (or wrong) conduct. The theses of relativism and absolutism about right (or wrong) conduct assert, respectively:

It is logically possible for any particular action to be correctly judged to be right (or wrong) and—by either the same or different persons, at either the same or different times—to be correctly judged to be not right (or not wrong); and

It is logically impossible for any particular action to be correctly judged to be right (or wrong) and—by either the same or different persons, at either the same or different times—to be correctly judged to be not right (or not wrong).

So our question is how to establish or refute these theses.

This question divides into two. First, there is the question as to how to establish or refute relativist and absolutist definitions of the term 'right' (or 'wrong'). Second, there is the question as to how to establish or refute the theses entailed by these definitions as to what makes right acts right (or wrong acts wrong). As the first of these questions is more fundamental and lays the groundwork for the second, I shall take it up first.

A considerable number of relativist definitions of 'right' (or 'wrong') have been propounded and discussed in the long history of ethics. The ones most discussed in this century were propounded in this century by the cultural relativists Sumner and Benedict and by the individual relativist Westermarck. According to Sumner and Benedict, to say about a particular action that it is right (or wrong) is to say about it that it is required (or forbidden) by the moral rules subscribed to at the time he acts by the culture group to which its agent
belongs; while, according to Westermarck, to say about a particular action that it is right (or wrong) is to say about it that (at the time) one has the disposition to disapprove morally of its not being (or being) done. Both definitions still have many adherents, especially among social scientists and students of the social sciences. Another relativist definition, still adhered to by some religious persons, is the classical definition of theological ethics that to say about a particular action that it is right (or wrong) is to say about it that (at the time) it is required (or forbidden) by God.

Relativist definitions of 'right' (or 'wrong') have the form:

The terms 'right' (or 'wrong') and 'not right' (or 'not wrong') are synonymous with terms which denote nonnormative properties of actions, at least one token of both of which it is logically possible for any action to possess, simultaneously or at different times.

Thus they are reductivist in that they define the terms 'right' (or 'wrong') and 'not right' (or 'not wrong') by means of terms denoting nonnormative properties of actions—which would otherwise be called putative right- (or wrong-) and not right- (or not wrong-) making characteristics of actions—and are relativist in that it is logically possible for any action to possess tokens of both of these properties, simultaneously or at different times. Notice, however, that not all reductivist definitions of 'right' (or 'wrong') are relativist. Some are absolutist. Perhaps the most notorious of these absolutist definitions is the one propounded by some hedonistic utilitarians, to the effect that to say about a particular action that it is right (or wrong) is to say about it that it is (or is not) productive of a greater amount of pleasure than any alternative. Such definitions have the form:

The terms 'right' (or 'wrong') and 'not right' (or 'not wrong') are synonymous with terms which denote nonnormative properties of actions, only one token of either of which it is logically possible for any action to possess, simultaneously or at different times.

Thus the reductivist feature and the relativist or absolutist feature, of reductivist relativist and reductivist absolutist definitions of the term 'right' (or 'wrong'), can and ought to be kept separate in discussing their adequacy. These definitions may, of course, be mistaken in detail. But they may be mistaken in principle, either because they are reductivist or else because they are relativist or because they are absolutist. It is the possibility of this latter sort of mistake that we want to explore, beginning with the possibility that they are mistaken in virtue of being reductivist.

Reductivist definitions of 'right' (or 'wrong')—whether relativist or absolutist—are peculiarly vulnerable because of their reductivism: a proposition on which there would be near universal agreement among contemporary moral philosophers. The argument for this proposition
which I find most persuasive runs as follows:

No action can be right (or wrong) without a reason, so that a judgment that an action is right (or wrong) requires support by a judgment which points to something in the nature of the action which makes it right (or wrong). But these judgments can never be identical in meaning since it always is possible for there to be agreement in judgment that an action is right (or wrong) coupled with disagreement in judgment as to what it is in the nature of the action which makes it right (or wrong). Thus rightness (or wrongness) is a consequential characteristic of an action—-or a characteristic which an action possesses in virtue of possessing another characteristic—so that a characteristic which makes a right act right (or wrong act wrong) is never identical to the characteristic of rightness (or wrongness) itself. But every reductivist definition of 'right' (or 'wrong') equates the characteristic of rightness (or wrongness) with some putative right- (or wrong-) making characteristic of actions. Hence every such definition is mistaken in principle because it is reductivist.

What are we left with, if we subtract the reductivism from reductivist relativism and absolutism about right (or wrong) conduct? We are left, of course, with nonreductivist relativism and absolutism about right (or wrong) conduct. But just what are they? Well, corresponding to each possible form of reductivist relativism or absolutism about right (or wrong) conduct is a relativist or absolutist principle entailed by it as to what makes right acts right (or wrong acts wrong). For instance, Sumner's and Benedict's definition entails the relativist principle: An action is right (or wrong) if and only if it is required (or forbidden) by the moral rules subscribed to at the time he acts by the culture group to which its agent belongs; and the hedonistic utilitarian's definition entails the absolutist principle: An action is right (or wrong) if and only if it is (or is not) productive of a greater amount of pleasure than any alternative. Now none of these principles of right (or wrong) conduct, as the error of reductivism reveals, entail the definitions which entail them; and all of these principles of right (or wrong) conduct entail either the thesis of relativism or the thesis of absolutism about right (or wrong) conduct. Moreover, only these definitions and principles entail these theses. So we may say that nonreductivist relativism and absolutism about right (or wrong) conduct consist of these relativist and absolutist principles of right (or wrong) conduct, and we may say that our main issue now has come down to how to establish or refute these principles.

In seeing that reductivist relativism and absolutism about right (or wrong) conduct are mistaken in virtue of being reductivist, we have seen the futility of appealing directly to the meaning of the term 'right' (or 'wrong') to settle this residual issue; for we have seen that what one asserts about an action in calling it right (or wrong) does not determine what makes right acts right (or wrong acts wrong), and consequently does not determine whether what does so is a relativist or absolutist criterion of right (or wrong) conduct. The meaning of this term can be appealed to indirectly, however, to settle a certain portion of this issue.
There is considerable disagreement among contemporary moral philosophers as to the details of the meaning of the term 'right' (or 'wrong'). There is one thing about its meaning, however, upon which there is virtual universal agreement among them, namely, that it is a normative-practical term which applies to actions. It is a normative term which applies to actions in that, as we have seen, it denotes a consequential characteristic of actions, or a characteristic which actions possess in virtue of possessing other characteristics, so that it must be applied to actions in accordance with norms specified by these other characteristics; and it is a practical term which applies to actions in that it guides behavior with respect to actions to which it is applied. Thus 'right' (or 'wrong') is a normative-practical term which applies to actions in that it guides behavior with respect to actions to which it is applied in accordance with right- (or wrong-) making characteristics of these actions. It thus has what we may call performative applications in that it justifies doing certain things with respect to the actions to which it is applied. For example, any agent who judges one of his future actions to be right (or wrong) is justified—so far as his own judgment goes—both in deciding to do (or not to do) and, when the time comes, in doing (or not doing) it; and any agent who judges one of his future actions to be not right (or not wrong) is justified—so far as his own judgment goes—both in refraining from deciding to do (or not to do) and, when the time comes, in refraining from doing (or not doing) it. Numerous other examples could be given. But this one will suffice for our present purpose; since any performative application of the term 'right' (or 'wrong'), simply in virtue of being a performative application if it, is incompatible with a certain type of relativist principle for its correct application.

There are four distinguishable respects in which it is possible for a relativist (or absolutist) principle of right (or wrong) conduct to be relativist (or absolutist). It may imply that it is logically possible (or impossible) for a person to judge correctly about an action that it is right (or wrong) and:

1. at the same time, for the same person to judge correctly about the same action that it is not right (or not wrong);

2. at a different time, for the same person to judge correctly about the same action that it is not right (or not wrong);

3. at the same time, for a different person to judge correctly about the same action that it is not right (or not wrong); or

4. at a different time, for a different person to judge correctly about the same action that it is not right (or not wrong).

Any principle which is relativist in respect (1) also will be relativist in respects (2), (3) and (4), as is evident from the relativist principle:
An action is right (or wrong) if and only if it is required (or forbidden) by the moral rules subscribed to at the time he acts by the culture group to which its agent belongs.

This principle is relativist in respect (1), and consequently in respects (2), (3) and (4), because it is logically possible for any culture group to have in force simultaneously radically incompatible sets of moral rules which simultaneously yield with respect to any actions of any of their members both the judgment that they are right (or wrong) and the judgment that they are not right (or not wrong). But, on the other hand, it is possible for a principle to be relativist in respects (2), (3) and (4) without being relativist in respect (1), as is evident from the relativist principle:

An action is right (or wrong) if and only if I (the speaker) now have the disposition to disapprove morally of its not being (or being) done.

This principle is absolutist in respect (1) because it is logically impossible for any one to simultaneously have and not have the disposition to disapprove morally of an action's not being (or being) done. Yet it is logically possible for any one to have this disposition at one time and not to have it at another; and for one person to have this disposition and another not to have it, at the same or different times. So this principle is relativist in respects (2), (3) and (4).

Any principle which is relativist in respect (1)—which implies that it is logically possible for a person to correctly judge an action to be right (or wrong) and, at the same time, to correctly judge the same action to be not right (or not wrong)—thereby implies—in virtue of the performative application of the term 'right' (or 'wrong') described above—that it is logically possible for a person to be justified in simultaneously doing and refraining from doing (or not doing) the same action. But this implication is incoherent, and thereby renders incoherent any principle which is relativist in respect (1). For it is impossible for any one to be justified in doing anything that it is impossible for him to do, since it is possible for some one to be justified in doing something only if it is possible for him to do it. Thus it is possible for some one to be justified in doing two different things simultaneously only if it is possible for him to do them simultaneously. But deciding to do (or not do) and refraining from deciding to do (or not do) an action are two different things which it is logically impossible for any one ever to do simultaneously. The same holds for doing (or not doing) and refraining from doing (or not doing) an action. Thus it is logically impossible for any one ever to be justified either in simultaneously deciding and refraining from deciding to do (or not do) an action or in simultaneously doing and refraining from doing (or not doing) an action; so that it is logically impossible for any one to correctly judge an action to be right (or wrong) and, at the same time, correctly judge the same action to be not right (or not wrong).

It is evident, however, that this form of refutation can not be extended to any principle which is relativist only in respects (2), (3)
or (4), since it is logically possible for a person to engage in a performance at one time and to refrain from the same performance at another time, and for one person to engage in a performance and another person to refrain from the same performance, at the same or different times. Moreover, this is as far as we can go in establishing or refuting relativist and absolutist principles of right (or wrong) conduct on a basis—directly or indirectly—of the meaning of the term 'right' (or 'wrong'). For, in categorizing this term as a normative-practical term, we have said everything we can about its meaning which is relevant to determining the sort of criterion—relativist or absolutist—by means of which it can be correctly applied; and, in seeing the error of reductivism, we have seen that its meaning does not determine the particular criterion—relativist or absolutist—by means of which it can be correctly applied.

Thus the unresolved portion of the issue of relativism about right (or wrong) conduct is this:

(A) How—without appealing to the meaning of the term 'right' (or 'wrong')—can we discover the foundation of right (or wrong) conduct, or establish what the correct fundamental criterion is for the application of the term 'right' (or 'wrong') to particular actions, or prove the fundamental principle of right (or wrong) conduct?

(B) What, exactly—through use of this proof-technique—is this foundation, criterion, or principle? and

(C) Is this foundation, criterion, or principle relativist or absolutist in respects (2), (3) or (4)?

If it is relativist in any of these respects, relativism about right (or wrong) conduct is, to that extent, true; and if it is absolutist in all of these respects, absolutism about right (or wrong) conduct is true. Thus it is apparent that, to establish or refute relativism about right (or wrong) conduct, we must first figure out how to discover and then discover the foundation of right (or wrong) conduct. This is a big order, as anyone familiar with the history of analytic ethics can testify, but not one which I believe it impossible to fill.
NOTES

1 This chapter—which appeared under the same title in PERSONALIST, Summer 1973—is a summary and extension of the arguments of three earlier papers of mine on ethical relativism: "The Definition of Ethical Relativism," PERSONALIST, Autumn 1969; "Relativism and Affective Reaction Theories," JOURNAL OF VALUE INQUIRY, Spring 1971; and "Moore and Stevenson on a Certain Form of Ethical Naturalism," PERSONALIST, Summer 1971.

2 For an elaboration of this argument, see my "The Definition of Ethical Relativism," op. cit. and my "Moore and Stevenson on a Certain Form of Ethical Naturalism," op. cit.

3 This is only a theoretical and not an actual possibility since the univocal application of the term 'moral' requires that any moral concept either be or be derivable from a single ultimate concept the criterion of whose correct application enables us to identify it, and thus them, as moral, or superior (overriding). For more on this point, see chapter 6.

4 For an analysis of their versions of relativism about right and wrong conduct, and of why they are relativist, see my "The Definition of Ethical Relativism," op. cit.

5 For an explanation of why this definition is relativist, see my "Relativism and Affective Reaction Theories," op. cit.

6 For an elaboration of this point, see my "The Definition of Ethical Relativism," op. cit.
Noncognitivism (in ethics) is the view that moral judgments, though meaningful, are not true-or-false—do not admit of truth and falsity, or mean something incapable of being asserted. It has often been pointed out, by way of criticism of it, that noncognitivism flies in the face of common-sense in its interpretation of moral judgments. For, so the criticism continues, anyone can see that a moral judgment—such as a judgment of right or wrong conduct—appears to assert something about its subject, say something about its subject admitting of truth and falsity—in saying about it that it is right or that it is wrong—whose truth or falsity is the substance of the moral question about its subject, and the discovery of whose truth or falsity is the object of the moral reasoning (investigation, deliberation and judgment) about its subject which answers this question. Now noncognitivists, as is well-known, reply to this criticism, as they must, that appearances here actually are not the same as reality since they disguise (are the outward misleading guise of) an underlying noncognitive process of moral "reasoning" and "judgment" and then they present for their critics' consideration—in all of their intricacy and subtlety—their various 'emotive' or 'emotive-imperative' or 'imperative (prescriptive)' theories of moral "reasoning" and "judgment." So, what else can a sensible critic do but examine the details of these noncognitive theories of moral "reasoning" and "judgment" to show that they do not fit, or therefore serve as the source of, the cognitive appearance of moral reasoning and judgment, as their proponents advertised that they would? Well, evidently he can ask himself: how can one completely stop the, apparently unending, stream of noncognitive theories of the reality underlying the cognitive appearance of moral reasoning and judgment?

To answer this question, a critic of noncognitivism must answer the question: how does noncognitivism arise in the first place? How do noncognitivists come to think of the cognitive appearance of moral reasoning and judgment as the outward, and deceptive, guise of an underlying noncognitive process of moral "reasoning" and "judgment"? For, when he discovers the answer to the latter question, a critic of noncognitivism discovers the source of noncognitivism—the source of the noncognitivist's treatment of the cognitive appearance of moral reasoning and judgment as mere appearance disguising an underlying noncognitive reality—and so how this appearance can be shown not to be mere appearance but to be reality as well: a reality serving not as a disguise for underlying noncognitive processes of moral "reasoning" and "judgment" but as a faithful outward manifestation of inner cognitive processes of moral reasoning and judgment. Thus my object in this chapter is to discover: (1) the source of the noncognitivist's treatment of the cognitive appearance of moral reasoning and judgment as mere appearance disguising an underlying noncognitive reality—and so how this appearance can be shown not to be mere appearance but to be reality as well: a reality serving not as a disguise for underlying noncognitive processes of moral "reasoning" and "judgment" but as a faithful outward manifestation of inner cognitive processes of moral reasoning and judgment. Thus my object in this chapter is to discover: (1) the source of the noncognitivist's treatment of the cognitive appearance of moral reasoning and judgment as mere appearance disguising an underlying noncognitive reality, and thereby (2) what must be shown to show that this appearance actually is faithful to an underlying cognitive reality. The showing of this—a task I shall take up in part 2—will then constitute the general refutation of noncognitivism.
Noncognitivism, as anyone can find out by consulting an account of its origin and development, has its roots in the 'naturalistic fallacy' and in 'verificationism.' What is not made evident in these accounts, or anywhere else that I know of, is the fact that this "humble" origin of noncognitivism is no historical accident, but rather is a conceptual necessity, that the naturalistic fallacy and verificationism together give rise to the postulation of noncognitive underpinnings for the cognitive appearance of moral reasoning and judgment, so that it thereby becomes their disguise, in such a way that this postulation is unintelligible (has no rational basis) without them taken together. So let us first see how this fact is so. Then we will be able to see how it enables us to formulate the general refutation of noncognitivism.

The naturalistic fallacy is identical to what I call, less pejoratively, reductivism: the general thesis that basic moral terms—such as 'right' (or 'wrong')—are wholly definable by means of terms which, unlike themselves, patently denote nonnormative, including relational, properties of the subjects of which they are predicated in moral judgments: properties which otherwise would have to be called putative grounds for the truth of these moral judgments—ascriptural of their component basic moral terms to their subjects. Now much has been said, both by intuitionistic cognitivists such as Moore and Ross and by noncognitivists such as Stevenson and Hare, by way of refutation of reductivism: showing that the naturalistic fallacy indeed is a fallacy. But there is only one argument against it which goes directly to the point, and which can be accepted by cognitivists and noncognitivists alike because it holds for either a cognitive or a noncognitive interpretation of 'moral judgment' and 'moral reasoning.' Here is the argument for the representative case of right (or wrong) conduct:

No action can be right (or wrong) without a reason, so that a judgment that an action is right (or wrong) requires support by a judgment which points to something in the nature of the action which makes it right (or wrong). But these judgments can never be identical in meaning, since it always is possible for there to be agreement in judgment that an action is right (or wrong) coupled with disagreement in judgment as to what it is in the nature of the action which makes it right (or wrong). Thus rightness (or wrongness) is a consequential characteristic of an action—or a characteristic which an action possesses in virtue of possessing another characteristic—so that a characteristic which makes a right act right (or wrong act wrong) in never identical to the characteristic of rightness (or wrongness) itself. But every reductivist definition of 'right' (or 'wrong') equates the characteristic of rightness (or wrongness) with some putative right- (or wrong-) making characteristic of actions. Hence every such definition is mistaken in principle in virtue of being reductivist.
Now seeing through reductivism—seeing that a moral judgment is different in kind from, though intimately related to, a judgment providing a reason which supports it—is the beginning of wisdom in analytic ethics. But it by no means is the end of it, for it does not by itself provide a positive account of what a moral judgment is, or of how it differs from, and is related to, a judgment providing a reason which supports it: an account of moral judgment and reasoning or of moral "judgment" and "reasoning." Now here, obviously enough, is where verificationism comes into the picture to generate noncognitivism. But, to see exactly how it does generate noncognitivism, the seeing of which is crucial to our enterprise, we need to see first what sort of account a cognitivist—a fully informed and rational cognitivist—must give—in the light of what is wrong with reductivism—of a moral judgment, and of how it differs from, and is related to, a judgment providing a reason which supports it. For it is precisely this sort of cognitive account of moral judgment and reasoning which an antireductivist is led by verificationism into denying and supplanting by a (some) noncognitive account of them.

To fully appreciate the force for a cognitivist of rejection of reductivism, we must first see that there are two main types of reductivism about basic ethical terms: (a) simple reductivism and (b) compound reductivism. Now simple reductivism—such as the thesis that 'right' (or 'wrong') is synonymous with 'in accordance with (or contrary to) the moral rules subscribed to at the time he acts by the culture group of its agent'—simply substitutes for the content (meaning) of the basic ethical term in question a concept denoting some nonnormative property of the subjects to which it applies, which actually is only a property which putatively (according to the definition) grounds application of it to these subjects. Whereas compound reductivism—such as the thesis that 'right' (or 'wrong') is synonymous with 'not disapproved (or disapproved) of (by the speaker) morally (on a basis of pain it causes someone)'—not only substitutes a concept denoting some nonnormative property of the subjects to which it applies, which actually is only a property which putatively (according to the definition) grounds application of this term; it also incorporates within this property, and so within the meaning of this term, reference to a further concept denoting a nonnormative property of these subjects in such a way that it serves, in effect, as the ultimate ground for the application of this term. Thus we can see that, in rejecting reductivism—whether we are cognitivists or not—we reject both (1) the idea that the meaning (content) of a basic ethical term is like that of the nonnormative property-ascribing term which appears in a judgment used to support its application and (2) the idea that the meaning (content) of a basic ethical term determines what particular nonnormative property actually does support (is relevant to) its application. Thus our present question, more fully spelled out, is this: what must a cognitivist say, in the light of what is wrong with reductivism and of what he must reject in rejecting reductivism, about the nature of a moral judgment and about how it differs from, and is related to, a judgment providing a reason which supports it?
First, a cognitivist must say that the meaning (content) of a basic moral term is an a priori, because innate, concept. For he believes: (1) that a judgment containing a basic moral term, like any moral judgment, is true-or-false, so that the meaning (content) of the basic moral term it contains is some concept or other; (2) that this concept is unlike the nonnormative property concepts which appear as predicate-meanings in judgments used to support its ascription, and so is not an empirical concept, or a concept of experience (one deriving—in whole or in part—from items of inner or outer experience); (3) that this concept—as a basic normative concept—is a fundamental (underivative) concept (one not having its source in other concepts); so that (4) it must be an innate, hence a priori, concept. Next, a cognitivist must say that a basic moral concept, like any normative concept, is a supervenient (consequential) concept: a concept which applies to a subject in virtue of the applicability to it of another concept; so that a basic moral concept or term denoting it is unintelligible apart from a (some) criterion (norm) for its correct application. Then a cognitivist must say that the basic criterion, norm, or principle for the correct application of a basic ethical concept or term denoting it is innate, hence a priori true, because this concept is innate, hence a priori, and unintelligible apart from it. Finally, a cognitivist must say that, although a moral judgment and a judgment providing a reason which supports it differ radically in their meaning owing to the radical differences between the concepts constituting the meanings of their predicates, and so are not related to each other via the meanings of their predicates or via some empirical generalization connecting the meanings of their predicates, there nevertheless is a nonarbitrary connection between them which lies in the derivability of this judgment from this reason via an innate, hence a priori true, principle for the correct application of the basic ethical concept it contains; so that a basic ethical principle—an underivative principle for the correct application of a basic ethical concept or term denoting it—is one which is innate, hence a priori true.

Verificationism—and there are many varieties of it—basically is the view that every significant (synthetic) statement (every statement whose truth or falsity in principle cannot be decided by semantical or/and syntactical means alone) is either an empirical description (a statement whose truth or falsity is revealed directly by—in inner or outer—experience) or an empirical hypothesis (a statement whose truth or falsity is revealed indirectly by experience by means of inductive reasoning from empirical descriptions). Fortunately, it is not necessary to go into the details of the various forms of verificationism to see how verificationism—against a background of rejection of reductivism and awareness of the type of cognitive construction it dictates for moral judgment and reasoning—gives rise to noncognitivism. For it is easy to see that rejection of reductivism entails—for both cognitivists and noncognitivists—that moral judgments are neither empirical descriptions nor empirical hypotheses, and of course not discoverably true or false by semantical or/and syntactical means alone. Thus we at last can see both: (1) that it is verificationism per se which gives rise to noncognitivism (moral judgments are not statements at all) and thus (2)
that noncognitivism—given antireductivism—is equivalent to the thesis that there are no a priori, because innate, ethical concepts and so no a priori true, because innate, ethical propositions (basic principles for the correct application of these concepts). Thus noncognitivism is identical to verificationism in ethics and consists, so far, of the absolutely naked assertion that there are no innate ethical concepts or basic principles for their correct application.

Noncognitivism, looked at in this way, presents a pretty ridiculous appearance! For it is question-begging and obtuse to deny an antireductivistic cognitivist account of the reality underlying the real cognitive appearance of moral reasoning and judgment, simply on the ground that it is incompatible with one's cherished verificationism. The real appearance is all on the cognitivist's side! So why not give up verificationism, as a piece of hasty speculation, and embrace antireductivistic-antiintuitionistic cognitivism as reason's true child?

Well, this negative, and obviously ill-founded, use of verificationism—to generate the general thesis of noncognitivism—has always been accompanied—as no one seems yet to have noticed—by the positive use to which noncognitivists have—unwittingly—put it to generate their various particular noncognitivisms: their various particular accounts of moral "judgment" and "reasoning." For noncognitivists have invariably seized, if only in some confused way, upon the practical (action-guiding) character of moral judgment and reasoning—which, together with their cognitive character, forms their real appearance—as the real reason why we must reject cognitivistic antireductivism and embrace noncognitivistic antireductivism (noncognitivism). Thus 'action-guiding' is conceived by noncognitivists to be an essentially (basically) noncognitive process: a process which does not set out—even in part—from, or therefore essentially involve, belief in the truth of a general or particular-normative-practical judgment. Thus the practical character of moral judgments and the reasoning from which they issue—being of the very essence of what they are—guarantees—in the noncognitivist's mind—that at their heart moral judgment and reasoning are noncognitive in character: are really underneath only moral "judgment" and "reasoning."

Now this argument, which is very prominent in the writings of Stevenson and Hare, is about as naive, and unwitting, a duplication of an earlier, blatantly erroneous, step in reasoning as can be found anywhere in the literature of philosophy. For what it really amounts to is a conjunction of: (1) moral judgments are action-guiding with (2) no statement is action-guiding, which together yield (3) moral judgments are not statements (true-or-false); and (2) simply is verificationism in disguise! For to deny that there are any (significant) statements which are action-guiding is identical to asserting that all (significant) statements are either empirical descriptions or empirical hypotheses; for empirical descriptions and hypotheses—as anyone knows who has read the literature of noncognitivism—are all the (significant) statements there are, and none of them are action-guiding! Thus this argument—by which a verificationist veritably pounces upon the practical character of moral judgment and reasoning as the real reason why he was originally right in rejecting cognitivistic antireductivism in favor of noncognitivistic antireductivism—has always been accompanied—as no one seems yet to have noticed—by the positive use to which noncognitivists have—unwittingly—put it to generate their various particular noncognitivisms: their various particular accounts of moral "judgment" and "reasoning." For noncognitivists have invariably seized, if only in some confused way, upon the practical (action-guiding) character of moral judgment and reasoning—which, together with their cognitive character, forms their real appearance—as the real reason why we must reject cognitivistic antireductivism and embrace noncognitivistic antireductivism (noncognitivism). Thus 'action-guiding' is conceived by noncognitivists to be an essentially (basically) noncognitive process: a process which does not set out—even in part—from, or therefore essentially involve, belief in the truth of a general or particular-normative-practical judgment. Thus the practical character of moral judgments and the reasoning from which they issue—being of the very essence of what they are—guarantees—in the noncognitivist's mind—that at their heart moral judgment and reasoning are noncognitive in character: are really underneath only moral "judgment" and "reasoning."

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tivism (verificationistic antireductivism)—is just as question-begging—though not quite as obtuse since it is somewhat difficult to see exactly how belief in the truth of a moral judgment does guide conduct—as was its predecessor. For it only requires a cognitivistic antireductivist to supplement his cognitive account of moral judgment and reasoning with a practical account of moral judgment and reasoning: an account of how moral judgment and reasoning, as a species of normative-practical judgment and reasoning, are action-guiding (practical). For none, unless he is in love with, and so blinded by, verificationism, would ever think that just because a judgment asserts something (is true-or-false), it is incapacitated (has no intrinsic capacity) for guiding conduct. For not only are 'true-or-false' and 'action-guiding' not intrinsically incompatible predicate-expressions, they also really appear to find conjoint instantiation in any and all of our normative-practical, including our moral, judgments! So the only real problem is to explain in what their truth or falsity (normative basis) and their action-guiding capacity (practicality) consist!

Thus we at last can see that the general refutation of noncognitivism consists of (1) a proof that a moral concept and general principle for its correct application are in fact innate, hence a priori and a priori true and (2) an explanation of how belief in the truth of a moral judgment itself guides conduct. Of course this refutation will also constitute a general proof of antireductivistic-antiintuitionistic (or a priori) cognitivism (in ethics).
NOTES

1 This chapter is a reprint, with minor modifications, of an article with the same title, which appeared in PERSONALIST, Summer 1978.

2 Some philosophers, or so I am told by Joseph Margolis, use the term 'noncognitivism' simply to cover theories which reject both reductivistic and intuitionistic cognitivism. But this use of the term embodies a serious confusion, namely, the erroneous assumption that the only possible forms of cognitivism—in my, more standard, sense of the term—are varieties of either reductivism or intuitionism. This widely-held assumption is erroneous; for, as we shall see below, another—and, I think, the correct—form of cognitivism is possible, namely, what I now dub 'a priori (cognitivist-antireductivist-antiintuitionist) naturalism.' In fact, part of my purpose in this chapter is to bring it to the attention of frustrated cognitivists, who have given up on all varieties of reductivism and intuitionism and who think that they must thereby give up on cognitivism per se.

3 The best attack on noncognitivism in this vein that I know of is Carl Wellman's "Emotivism and Ethical Objectivity," AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL QUARTERLY, April 1968—reprinted in Sellars and Hospers, Readings in Ethical Theory (second edition).


5 This argument, which is taken from chapter 4, was designed for the ears of reductivists, who are cognitivists, and so may sound too cognitivist for a noncognitivist. If so, put in scare-quotes the too cognitive-sounding words and/or phrases and you will see that the distinction, and close relationship, the argument points to between a basic moral judgment and a reason which supports it remains intact.

6 which—in my view—rules out his being an ethical intuitionist.

7 Rejection of (1) is the source of Moore's claim (Principia Ethica, chapter 1) that goodness is a nonnatural property, and rejection of (2) is the source of his claim (same chapter) that ethics cannot be started off with (have its basis established by) a definition.

8 Thus concepts simply are the content, and in that sense the meaning, of significant predicate-expressions: what (that which) these expressions are used to say about subjects to which they are applied.

9 A normative concept or term, then, simply is any consequential, or supervenient concept or term.
10 The one being nonempirical and supervenient and the other being empirical and nonsupervenient.

11 It is self-evident, at least according to the argument of chapter 8, that one can validly infer the a priori truth of a normative-practical principle from the factual premiss that that principle is innate.

12 Stevenson, as is well-known, takes them to be processes for expressing and evoking moral attitudes, which then produce actions; and Hare, as is also well-known, takes them to be processes in which we prescribe and arrive at prescriptions for conduct, whose acceptance produces actions.

13 (1) is undertaken in chapter 9 and (2) in chapter 10.
Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

I shall summarize part 1, Skepticism, and prepare the way for part 2, The Basis of Morality, by means of the following deduction of the residual problem of ethical skepticism.

A moral concept—as a type of normative concept—is supervenient: applies to a subject in virtue of the conceptually prior application to it of another concept. Thus a moral concept must be applied to a subject on a basis of a norm, criterion or principle specifying its applicability to such a subject on a basis of such a concept. Thus all moral concepts and the criteria for their correct application must either be or be derivable from basic moral concepts and the basic principles for their correct application. Thus a basic moral principle—the basic principle for the correct application of a basic moral concept—is either the basis or an essential part of the basis of all sound moral reasoning (investigation, deliberation and judgment). Thus the full actuality of moral knowledge depends ultimately upon knowing, or proving true, a basic moral principle. The question thus arises: how is it possible to know, or prove true, a basic moral principle?

A basic moral concept—being a basic supervenient, or normative concept—also is both a nonempirical concept (a concept lacking in even partial derivation from items of inner or outer experience) and an underivative concept (a concept underivative from other concepts). Thus a basic moral concept has no derivation at all, or is an innate concept. But no basic supervenient, or normative concept is intelligible apart from a basic principle for its correct application; so that a basic moral concept is innate in virtue of being embedded in an innate, hence a priori true, basic principle for its correct application. Hence knowing, or proving true, a basic moral principle is identical to proving it to be innate, hence a priori true.

This leads to the question: are basic moral principles absolute or relative? Can their correct application to particular subjects lead to opposite, or ostensibly contradictory judgments about these subjects (made by the same or different persons, at the same or different times) both of which are true? Well, this is a question of detail which simply must wait for its answer upon actual discovery of the basis of morality.

Thus we are left with the question raised by the fact that a moral concept is a practical as well as a normative concept: how is it that a normative concept is practical, or action-guiding, as well? How is it—to state the question for the basic case—that belief in a basic normative-practical principle guides a person in fulfilling its content? The only possible answer—in view of the fact that a basic normative concept and basic principle for its correct application are innate—is that possession of, which is identical to belief in, a basic normative principle—when its central concept is practical as well as normative—goes naturally, or innately with the capacity, or active power, to comply with it; for otherwise its normative half would be shorn of the practical half without which it loses its intelligibility as a basic normative-
practical principle.

Thus the residual—and factual, or not purely conceptual—problem of ethical skepticism is this:

(1) How is it possible to prove a basic moral principle to be innate, hence a priori true?

(2) What, exactly—through use of this proof-technique—is the normative basis of morality?

(3) Is this normative basis absolute or relative? and

(4) In what does the innate capacity, or active power, to comply with the normative basis of morality—the practical basis of morality—consist?

For it can easily be seen that at this level—the innate level—the problem of ethical nonmeaningfulism—the problem as to whether or not moral judgments are meaningful, or have a regular place in human language—drops out of the problem of ethical skepticism, and therefore actually never had any substance to it in the first place.
PART II: THE BASIS OF MORALITY
Chapter 7

INTRODUCTION

The thesis, whose proof and explanation refutes ethical skepticism by providing a satisfactory answer to the residual problem of ethical skepticism—set forth in chapter 6—is this:

There exists in human beings a common underivative moral self which consists of an innate, perfectly general normative-practical source (principle-spring) of human moral judgment and behavior, whose normative half is an absolute rather than relative criterion of moral judgment.

The refutation of ethical skepticism therefore is identical to the philosophical exposition (proof and explanation) of the basis of morality: the innate and absolute normative-practical source, or principle-spring of human moral judgment and behavior. Its philosophical exposition, together with the philosophical exposition of the method of its exposition, is the substance of part 2, The Basis of Morality; and the philosophical theory of morality which emerges from it—whose metaethical foundation is laid down in part 1—can be called evolutionary, a priori (or cognitivist-antireductivist-antiintuitionist) naturalism. Moreover, if this philosophical theory of morality and the substantive theory of morality based on it are sound, then they together constitute the one true metaphysic (philosophical account of the basis) of morals. So part 2 could just as well be titled: The Metaphysic of Morals.
Chapter 8

THE EGOIST'S PSYCHOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

Psychological egoism is the view, roughly, that it is our nature to be egoistic, or self-interested in everything we do. This conception of human nature, though now a dead issue in philosophy, remains of philosophical interest in virtue of the question of its logical relation to normative egoism: the view, roughly, that we ought to be egoistic, or self-interested in everything we do. Some think that the psychological doctrine is relevant to the normative doctrine, while others deny that this is so. The thesis I defend is that psychological egoism, when suitably formulated, entails normative egoism, when suitably formulated, and otherwise is irrelevant to it. I defend it in particular against the view of the relation between them according to which psychological egoism either (a) is completely irrelevant to normative egoism in virtue of is-statements not entailing ought-statements or (b) nevertheless justifies normative egoism in virtue of ought implying can. But more than this, I also argue that, when normative egoism is based on psychological egoism, it is the psychological and not the normative doctrine that constitutes the threat to morality, inasmuch as psychological egoism implies that morality is devoid of practical import and therefore cannot be contradicted by normative egoism.

The egoist's psychological thesis:

It is our nature to be egoistic, or self-interested in everything we do

can be expanded to read:

Everyone is so constituted by nature that his aim in acting always is to maximize (or maximally satisfy) his own interests.

This thesis—call it the generic thesis—is ambiguous, or indefinite in a very important respect. The ambiguity concerns the phrase "his aim in acting always is to maximize his own interests." One might mean by it either "his motive in acting always is to maximize his own interests" or "he always acts on the principle 'I ought to act so as to maximize my own interests'." One might use, instead, the principle "Everyone ought to act so as to maximize his own interests." But the principle "I ought to act so as to maximize my own interests," as it is the exact analog of the motive of self-interest, is more in keeping with the spirit of egoism. The generic thesis, accordingly, might mean either

Everyone is so constituted by nature that his motive in acting always is to maximize his own interests

or
Everyone is so constituted by nature that he always acts on the principle "I ought to act so as to maximize my own interests."

These two theses, as I understand them, are compatible with one another; for the second entails the first, though not vice versa.

The first thesis asserts that it is our nature to be moved to act by the belief, thought or awareness that an action of ours will maximize our own interests. It asserts, in other words, that it is our nature to direct our actions to the realization of one specified goal--maximization of personal interest--because desire to achieve it is what moves us to act; so that we choose, when we do, between alternative actions, or decide which alternative to do on a basis of this goal or objective, and are thereby moved to act and do act accordingly. We may say, in sum, that it characterizes us as being, by nature, practical agents of an egoistic sort.

But the first thesis does not assert that in choosing between alternative actions we are in doubt as to what we ought to do, or are seeking an answer to the question "What ought I to do?" It asserts only that we are in doubt as to what to do, or are seeking an answer to the question "What am I to do?" It is precisely in this respect that the second thesis differs from the first, that the second goes beyond the first. For the second thesis asserts, not merely that we are, by nature, practical agents of an egoistic sort, but that we are, by nature, normative-practical agents of an egoistic sort; that is, that it is our nature always to act on the principle "I ought to act so as to maximize my own interests." It asserts, by implication, everything asserted by the first thesis with respect to our motive and corresponding objective in choosing and acting. But in addition to this, it asserts that, in choosing between alternative actions, we are in doubt fundamentally as to what we ought to do, and only derivatively as to what we are to do; and consequently that fundamentally we decide, or judge what we ought to do, and then derivatively choose the corresponding alternative and act accordingly. Therefore the second thesis entails the first, though not vice versa, and is compatible with it.

Let us call the first thesis motive egoism, and the second thesis principle egoism.

Normative egoism, we have seen, claims, roughly, that we ought to be egoistic, or self-interested in everything we do. But, we must now ask, exactly what principle does it claim to be the principle specifying how everyone ought to behave? Is it "Everyone ought to act so as to maximize his own interests" or the systematically ambiguous

New pagination for online edition: 233
"I ought to act so as to maximize my own interests"?

Surely not the first, inasmuch as to claim that "Everyone ought to act so as to maximize his own interests" is the principle specifying how everyone ought to behave, is to contradict the claim made by principle egoism since the latter asserts that it is the principle "I ought to act so as to maximize my own interests" which everyone is so constituted by nature as always to act on. So we must take the egoist's normative thesis to be:

"I ought to act so as to maximize my own interests"

is the principle specifying how everyone ought to behave.

However, if principle egoism is construed in terms of the principle "Everyone ought to act so as to maximize his own interest," then—by parity of reasoning—normative egoism also is to be construed in terms of this principle. Which construction is adopted is immaterial to the success or failure of the egoist's psychological argument.

-3-

Consider the inference from motive egoism—Everyone is so constituted by nature that his motive in acting always is to maximize his own interests—to normative egoism—"I ought to act so as to maximize my own interests" is the principle specifying how everyone ought to behave. Is it valid? I think not, and for several related reasons. Two of them I shall discuss now, reserving discussion of the third for later.

In the first place, so far as motive egoism goes, all of us might be merely practical agents of an egoistic sort and therefore not be normative-practical agents of an egoistic sort; we might, that is to say, be merely persons who choose and act from the motive of self-interest and who therefore lack the capacity to decide what we ought to do, choose and act on a basis of the egoistic principle—"I ought to act so as to maximize my own interests". Of course, motive egoism is consistent with our being normative-practical agents of an egoistic sort. But the point is that it is consistent with our not being such agents. For if we are not normative-practical agents of an egoistic sort, if we lack the capacity to decide what we ought to do, choose and act on a basis of any ought-principle, then this principle will be for us practically void.

In the second place, so far as motive egoism goes, it might be that none of us are normative-practical agents at all; all of us might, that is to say, lack the capacity to decide what we ought to do on a basis of any ought-principle. Again, motive egoism is consistent with our being normative-practical agents. But the point is that it is consistent with our not being such agents. For if we are not normative-practical agents at all, if we lack the capacity to decide what we ought to do, choose and act on a basis of any ought-principle, then any principle as to how we ought to behave such as the egoistic principle will be for us meaningless.
Hence, so far as motive egoism goes, the egoistic principle—I ought to act so as to maximize my own interests—might be for us either practically void or, worse, meaningless. It must, of course, be practically void if it is meaningless. Consequently normative egoism, as it implies, or asserts by implication that this principle is for us a practical, and therefore meaningful principle, is not entailed by motive egoism.

I cannot here explain what makes an ought-principle, and in particular the egoistic principle, for us a practical, and therefore meaningful principle. This is partly because I do not yet anywhere near fully understand the topic and partly because it is a very long one. I shall say only that the explanation seems to lie in an analysis of certain of our conceptual and behavioral capacities and in what must be true about us and the world in which we live our practical lives in order for us to possess these capacities, and that in the present state of philosophy we have only scratched the surface of these difficult matters.

Even so, it is clear that the foregoing mode of reasoning is inapplicable to the logical relation between principle egoism and normative egoism. For principle egoism does claim that we are normative-practical agents of an egoistic sort. It does claim therefore that we have the capacity to decide what we ought to do, choose and act from the egoistic principle, and consequently that this principle is for us a practical, and therefore meaningful principle. Hence, if the inference from principle egoism to normative egoism is invalid, it is so for some other reason.

This inference reads:

Everyone is so constituted by nature that he always acts on the principle "I ought to act so as to maximize my own interests."


"I ought to act so as to maximize my own interests" is the principle specifying how everyone ought to behave.

The principle mentioned in both premiss and conclusion

"I ought to act so as to maximize my own interests"

varies systematically in meaning from person to person, owing to the systematic ambiguity of 'I'. So the inference can be formulated more perspicuously to read:

\[ (x) \ x \text{ is so constituted by nature that } x \text{ always acts on the principle } "x \text{ ought to act so as to maximize } x\text{'s interests}". \]

\[ \therefore (x) "x \text{ ought to act so as to maximize } x\text{'s interests}" \text{ is the principle specifying how } x \text{ ought to behave; } \]
where 'x' ranges over persons, and their names—not the systematically ambiguous 'I'—instantiate 'x'. So let us look into its validity in this form.

Notice that the premiss is not to be construed to entail the conclusion immediately. For the premiss can be expanded to read:

\[(x) \ x \text{ is so constituted by nature that } x \text{ always decides what } x \text{ ought to do, chooses and acts on a basis of the principle } "x \text{ ought to act so as to maximize } x\text{'s interests};"
\]

and from this it is evident that what the premiss immediately entails is:

\[(x) \ x \text{ is so constituted by nature that the principle on a basis of which } x \text{ decides what } x \text{ ought to do, chooses and acts is } "x \text{ ought to act so as to maximize } x\text{'s interests}."
\]

The corresponding valid, immediate inference reads:

\[(x) \ x \text{ is so constituted by nature that } x \text{ always decides what } x \text{ ought to do, chooses and acts on a basis of the principle } "x \text{ ought to act so as to maximize } x\text{'s interests}."
\]

\[\therefore (x) \ x \text{ is so constituted by nature that the principle on a basis of which } x \text{ decides what } x \text{ ought to do, chooses and acts is } "x \text{ ought to act so as to maximize } x\text{'s interests}."
\]

So the question is whether the conclusion of this intermediate inference immediately entails the conclusion of the main inference, that is, whether the immediate inference is valid which reads:

\[(x) \ x \text{ is so constituted by nature that the principle on a basis of which } x \text{ decides what } x \text{ ought to do, chooses and acts is } "x \text{ ought to act so as to maximize } x\text{'s interests}."
\]

\[\therefore (x) \ "x \text{ ought to act so as to maximize } x\text{'s interests}" \text{ is the principle specifying how } x \text{ ought to behave.}
\]

This inference has the form:

\[(x) \ x \text{ is so constituted by nature that the principle on a basis of which } x \text{ decides what } x \text{ ought to do, chooses and acts is } 'p'.
\]

\[\therefore (x) \ 'p' \text{ is the principle specifying how } x \text{ ought to behave,}
\]
where 'p' has the form: "x ought to act so as to . . ." and, as is evident, whether this form of inference is valid turns on whether the dequantified form of inference is valid which reads:

\[ x \text{ is so constituted by nature that the principle on a basis of which } x \text{ decides what } x \text{ ought to do, chooses and acts is } 'p'. \]

'. 'p' is the principle specifying how x ought to behave.

So the issue of the main inference's validity reduces to whether this last form of inference is valid.

Whether it is valid depends entirely, I think, on what its conclusion:

'p' is the principle specifying how x ought to behave

is taken to mean. It is, perhaps, most natural to take it to mean:

'p' is the principle valid for everyone, as to how x ought to behave.

But if taken to mean this, then it is not entailed by the premiss.

A practical principle is unavoidable for one if and only if it is materially impossible for there to be conditions under which one fails to have it as a practical principle. Moreover, it is materially impossible for there to be such conditions if and only if one's having it as a practical principle is a function of unalterable elements of one's inborn nature (or conditions of practical life which are universal); for the unalterable elements of one's inborn nature (or the universal circumstances of practical life) constitute the unavoidable, or inescapable conditions determining the practical principles one has. Now the egoist's psychological claim, that it is our nature to be egoistic in everything we do, is precisely the claim that there is universal egoism in our behavior which is a function of unalterable elements of our inborn nature. Hence the premiss:

\[ x \text{ is so constituted by nature that the principle on a basis of which } x \text{ decides what } x \text{ ought to do, chooses and acts is } 'p'. \]

asserts in effect:

For x 'p' is unavoidable, as the principle on a basis of which x decides what x ought to do, chooses and acts.

But this quite plainly does not entail:
'p' is the principle valid for everyone, as to how x ought to behave.

For 'p' is not asserted by the premiss to be unavoidable for anyone but x, and the inference quite plainly turns on 'p's being unavoidable for x, on x's having 'p' being a function of unalterable elements of x's inborn nature.

This suggests, however, that the conclusion be taken to mean:

'p' is the principle valid for x, as to how x ought to behave.

Moreover, when so taken, it does seem to me to be entailed by the premiss, so that the form of inference does seem to me to be valid which reads:

x is so constituted by nature that the principle on a basis of which x decides what x ought to do, chooses and acts is 'p'--or, alternatively, for x, 'p' is unavoidable, as the principle as to how x ought to behave.

'p' is the principle valid for x, as to how x ought to behave.

Now I must confess that I do not know how to prove the claim that this form of inference is valid. For I am unable to discover any more fundamental considerations from which its validity can be derived. Yet I cannot escape the sense, that if a certain principle 'p' is for a certain person x unavoidable, as the principle as to how x ought to behave, then for x--and I do not mean: according to x--'p' is valid, as the principle as to how x ought to behave; that is, then x can quite correctly say, believe, or think: p. Moreover, I can think of no sound objection to this principle. So I shall just remark upon certain features of the inference, failure to notice which is bound to obscure vision in this matter.

First, the conclusion does not assert that 'p' ought to be accepted by x, as this implies that 'p' is avoidable for x--"ought" implying avoidability--and therefore contradicts the premiss.

Second, the premiss does not assert that x's having 'p' is a consequence of x's having accepted 'p', as this also implies that 'p' is avoidable for x--accepting presupposing ability to accept and therefore ability to reject--which would make the premiss self-contradictory. X's having 'p' is depicted by the premiss either as an inescapable innate actuality or else as growing on, or happening to, x as an inevitable aspect of x's maturation as a human being.

Third, the premiss does not represent x as being compelled by his human nature to have 'p'. For a factor which compels is one which impinges on from without, and interferes with the operation of the self as--practical or normative-practical--agent; and one's human nature, as
a factor determining what one is as an agent, is not a factor thus
impinging on and interfering with the self as agent. Thus, though the
premise represents x as unfree, or unable to reject 'p,' it does not
represent x as compelled to have 'p'; rather, it represents x as having
'p' as a matter of the natural and, for x, unavoidable, or inescapable
course of events making x what x is as a normative-practical agent.

Fourth, in accepting the conclusion on a basis of the premise, one
accepts 'p' as valid for x, but only for x, with respect to x's conduct,
but only with respect to x's conduct. One does not accept 'p' as valid
for oneself, or anyone else other than x, with respect to x's conduct;
or does one accept 'p' as valid for anyone, including x, with respect
to the conduct of anyone other than x. If the principle in question is
"Everyone ought to act so as to maximize his own interests," then one
accepts it as valid for x, but only for x, with respect to everyone's
conduct, and not just with respect to x's conduct. Thus the scope of
the principle in question determines for whose conduct it is valid for
x. Thus it is begging the question to criticize the inference on the
grounds of the alleged universal truth of the principle: Valid, or true
for one, valid, or true for all. For the inference implies that this
principle is applicable only to propositions which we are free to accept
or reject as we see fit, and the premise asserts that x is not free to
accept or reject 'p,' even if x sees fit.

Thus the only valid formulation of the egoist's psychological
argument reads:

(x) x is so constituted by nature that x always acts
on the principle "x ought to act so as to maximize
x's interests."

\[\therefore (x) "x ought to act so as to maximize x's interests"
\]

\[\text{is the principle valid for x, as to how x ought to
behave} \]

\[\therefore "I ought to act so as to maximize my own interests"
\]

\[\text{is the principle valid for each person, as to how he
himself ought to behave.}\]

-5-

We may now pick up the loose threads from an earlier line of
thought. Earlier we saw that motive egoism--Everyone is so constituted
by nature that his motive in acting always is to maximize his own inter-
ests--does not entail normative egoism--which we have now formulated to
read: "I ought to act so as to maximize my own interests" is the prin-
ciple valid for each person, as to how he himself ought to behave. The
reason for this was that normative egoism asserts that the egoistic

E-1
principle—I ought to act so as to maximize my own interests—is for us a practical, and therefore meaningful principle; whereas motive egoism does not assert that it is for us either a meaningful or a practical principle. But now suppose we add to motive egoism the thesis—call it the practicality thesis—that the egoistic principle is for us a practical, and therefore meaningful principle: that we have the capacity to decide what we ought to do, choose and act on a basis of the egoistic principle. Will they together entail normative egoism?

I think that this is a fair representation of the question other philosophers have asked in wondering whether psychological egoism entails normative egoism. For other philosophers identify psychological egoism with motive egoism and implicitly assume that the egoistic principle is for us a practical, and therefore meaningful principle. It is true that they think of normative egoism, and would correspondingly think of principle egoism, in terms of the principle "Everyone ought to act so as to maximize his own interests." But the question is the same whether they are construed in terms of this principle or, as I have, in terms of the principle "I ought to act so as to maximize my own interests." Moreover, as our discussion of the relationship between principle and normative egoism makes clear, the question here is whether these theses taken together entail that the egoistic principle is unavoidable, or inescapable for us, that is, whether they together represent us as having the egoistic principle as a function of unalterable elements of our inborn nature.

The answer is that they do not. For motive egoism does not thus represent us, and the practicality thesis says nothing about elements of our inborn nature—alterable or unalterable. Thus, so far as these two theses go, our having the egoistic principle might be a function of the education we have received, an education which, so far as our inborn and unalterable nature goes, might have been otherwise. This point can perhaps be more readily appreciated by noticing that the conjunction of:

(1) We are so constituted by nature that our motive in acting always is to maximize our own interests,

(2) "I ought to act so as to maximize my own interests" is for us a practical, and therefore meaningful principle and

(3) We are so constituted by nature that we always act on some ought-principle or other

is equivalent to:

(4) We are so constituted by nature that we always act on the principle "I ought to act so as to maximize my own interests."

(1) and (2) are, respectively, motive egoism and the practicality thesis, and (4) is principle egoism. Thus, to motive egoism and the practicality thesis, (3) must be added to obtain a thesis which represents us as having the egoistic principle as a function of unalterable elements of
our inborn nature; and in the absence of (3)—that is, so far as motive egoism and the practicality thesis go—we are free to assume that our having an ought-principle, and in particular the egoistic principle, is a function of an education which, so far as our unalterable, inborn nature goes, could have been otherwise. Thus nothing short of principle egoism—or the conjunction of (1), (2) and (3)—will entail normative egoism. Here, then, is a third reason why motive egoism does not entail normative egoism, namely, it does not assert that we are so constituted by nature that we always act on some ought-principle or other.

So let us consider the weaker thesis that motive egoism and the practicality thesis justify normative egoism, or show it to be valid, even though they do not entail it.

It is clear that if nonegoistic ought-principles are to have practical import for us, then we must have the capacity to decide what we ought to do, choose and act on a basis of them, and that motive egoism entails that we lack this capacity. Motive egoism thus entails that nonegoistic ought-principles are for us practically void. It is to this fact that one appeals, in appealing to ought implying, or presupposing can, in the attempt to justify normative egoism on a basis of motive egoism—the idea being that normative egoism is justified by the practical vacuity of all the alternatives. But it does not follow from the practical vacuity of nonegoistic ought-principles—or therefore from motive egoism—even when conjoined with the practicality thesis, that the egoistic principle is valid for our conduct. For one thing, it is being assumed, without any warrant whatever, that some ought-principle or other is valid for our conduct. For another, the practical vacuity of nonegoistic ought-principles does not mean that they are invalid; it means, as we shall see shortly, that they are neither valid nor invalid. So the practical vacuity of the whole set of ought-principles but one does not imply the validity of the remaining one—the belief that it does being the error at the heart of the attempt to justify normative egoism on a basis of motive egoism.

Our discussion of the attempt to deduce normative egoism from or to justify it on a basis of motive egoism makes clear the character of the threat to morality posed by motive egoism. Morality consists at least of a certain range of nonegoistic ought-principles, and motive egoism entails that all such principles lack practical import, that none of us are capable of deciding what we ought to do, choosing and acting on a basis of any of them. Thus, even though motive egoism does not support normative egoism, it cuts the ground from under morality by denying morality's applicability to our conduct.

Principle egoism also entails that none of us are capable of deciding what we ought to do, choosing and acting on a basis of any nonegoistic ought-principles—including moral ought-principles—so that moral ought-principles are for us devoid of practical import. Thus principle egoism also undercuts morality by denying its applicability to our conduct.
But, unlike motive egoism, principle egoism does support normative egoism. This may seem to mean that it poses an additional threat to morality; for, when applied to oneself, normative egoism entails for oneself the egoistic principle— I ought to act so as to maximize my own interests—and this certainly seems to contradict moral ought-principles, at least if—as I think—living in accordance with them sometimes involves sacrifice of one's own interests. But appearances here are deceptive. For in the same breath in which principle egoism validly yields normative egoism, it entails the practical vacuity of moral ought-principles; and if moral ought-principles are practically void, if we are incapable of deciding what we ought to do, choosing and acting on a basis of them, then we cannot derive particular judgments from them in virtue of which they can contradict judgments derived from the egoistic principle and thus contradict the egoistic principle itself, and they therefore are neither valid nor invalid.

Thus the threat to morality posed by psychological egoism—whether of the motive or the principle variety—lies solely in its denying the applicability of morality to our conduct. The result is that, when normative egoism is—validly or invalidly—based on psychological egoism, it is the psychological and not the normative doctrine that constitutes the threat to morality. Of course this is not to deny, what is true, that normative egoism is a threat to morality, in virtue of contradicting its content, when normative egoism is not based on psychological egoism.

But, it may be objected, in claiming that normative egoism is entailed by principle egoism, I am claiming that an is-statement entails an ought-statement—principle egoism being an is-statement, and the egoistic principle being an ought-statement entailed by normative egoism when applied to oneself—whereas an is-statement never entails an ought-statement. Thus, the objection will conclude, I am mistaken in thinking that principle egoism entails normative egoism, since the latter when applied to oneself very definitely entails the egoistic principle. There are two alternatives to consider.

One could concede the dictum that an is-statement never entails an ought-statement: an ought-statement being one which employs or entails a statement employing an ought, an is-statement being one which neither employs nor entails a statement employing an ought. For on this interpretation the dictum makes the tautological assertion:

A statement which neither employs nor entails a statement employing an ought never entails a statement which employs or entails a statement employing an ought.

Now the egoistic principle employs an ought, and normative egoism when applied to oneself entails the egoistic principle, even though it does not employ but only mentions an ought. Thus both the egoistic principle and normative egoism are ought-statements on this interpretation. Moreover, principle egoism does not employ, but only mentions, an ought, and
is so far not an ought-statement on this interpretation. This much must be admitted. But then the question at issue on this interpretation is whether principle egoism is an ought-statement in virtue of entailing a statement employing an ought; that is, whether it entails normative egoism, and thus, when the latter is applied to oneself, the egoistic principle. This clearly is a question of the individual merits of the logical relation between principle and normative egoism. Thus on this interpretation the objection begs the question by simply assuming that principle egoism is an is-statement and inferring from this that the entailment in question violates the dictum and therefore does not hold. But more than this, the logical merits of this case, as I have argued, are in favor of the entailment holding; so on this interpretation principle egoism actually is an ought-statement and the inference in question therefore actually does not violate the dictum.

Alternatively, one could deny the dictum that an is-statement never entails an ought-statement: an ought-statement being one which employs, an is-statement being one which does not employ, an ought. For on this interpretation the dictum makes the contingent assertion:

A statement which does not employ an ought never entails a statement which does employ an ought;

and this assertion is quite definitely false, even according to the objection. For the objection contends, what is certainly true, that normative egoism—which does not employ, but only mentions, an ought and therefore is an is-statement on this interpretation—when applied to oneself entails the egoistic principle—which does employ an ought and therefore is an ought-statement on this interpretation. Thus on this interpretation the dictum cannot be used to argue that principle egoism—though it is an is-statement because it only mentions an ought—does not entail normative egoism because the latter when applied to oneself entails the egoistic principle. For on this interpretation the dictum has exceptions, so that whether an is-statement entails an ought-statement depends entirely on the individual merits of the logical relationship between them. To repeat the point, the merits of this case favor principle egoism entailing normative egoism.

The general lesson to be learned or reinforced is that the is-ought problem cannot be fruitfully treated along general lines but rather must be dealt with in terms of particular cases—a sound lesson even if I am wrong in claiming that principle egoism entails normative egoism.
This chapter is a reprint, with minor modifications, of an article with the same title, which appeared in AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL QUARTERLY, January 1971.


5 Motive egoism collapses into (disappears as a thesis separate from) principle egoism, according to the argument of chapter 9, since a normative-practical principle (an ought-principle) is the vehicle for the application of reason to the solution of practical problems. Thus a practical agent really is just an artificially stripped-down normative-practical agent. Nevertheless, the distinction between a practical agent and a normative-practical agent--artificial though it is--is an extremely useful one for the purpose of explaining what the only possible rational basis is for a basic normative-practical principle such as the Principle of Rational Self-Interest (see chapter 9) or--as it is called in the present chapter--the egoistic principle.

6 Actually, it is a very short topic, as chapter 10 reveals.

7 For a suggestive preliminary exploration of them, see A. E. Murphy, The Theory of Practical Reason (Lasalle: Open Court, 1964), chs. 6 and 8.

8 Actually, the universal circumstances of practical life determine only what derivative practical principles are unavoidable, and then only in relation to some basic practical principle which makes their derivation under these conditions (circumstances) unavoidable. Thus the only absolutely (unconditionally) unavoidable conditions determining the practical principles one has are unalterable, species-specific elements of one's inborn nature.

9 Actually, as the argument of chapter 5--written some time after the present chapter--reveals, one can move validly and directly from a normative-practical principle's being innate to its being valid for, or being a priori truly assertable or thinkable by, the person in whom it is innate.

10 Thus I am claiming, in effect, what is only implied in chapter 5, that this sort of inference is--on reflection--self-evidently valid.

11 It follows from the argument of chapter 5 that there is nothing but principle egoism to base normative egoism on! Moreover, the argu-
ment of chapter 9 shows that no such psychological doctrine could possibly be true! It follows that normative (ethical) egoism is a doctrine that can be only baldly, or gratuitously asserted.

12 Note here that, even though principle egoism and normative egoism do not use but only mention an ought, nevertheless they both contain an ought, so that there is no concept contained in the conclusion that is not contained also in the premiss.
Autonomy has been variously defined by various individuals, and there is no widely accepted meaning for this concept. It is therefore important to specify at the outset what one is going to mean by it. Autonomy, as I understand it, is the same thing--fundamentally--as will, or practical reason: the power to (decide what one ought to do, choose and) act from ought-principles. Now the rudiments of this power, as is evident on reflection, are innate, or inborn in any being who possesses them. For the concept ought in its application to actions is a primitive, or underivative concept--one not having its origin in other concepts--which cannot be explicated empirically in terms of items of inner or outer experience. Thus ought in its application to actions is a concept which has no origin at all, or is an innate, or inborn concept, and hence is an a priori concept as well. But ought in its application to actions also is a normative concept: a concept which is unintelligible apart from a (some) norm, criterion or principle for its correct application. Thus the fundamental principles for the correct application of ought to actions also are underivative, innate, or inborn, and hence are a priori true normative principles. Thus the rudiments of autonomy--the power to (decide what one ought to do, choose and) act from fundamental (or underivative) and perfectly general ought-principles--are innate or inborn in any being possessing them.

This argument for the innate character of the rudiments of autonomy is developed further in chapters 5 and 6. Only the rudiments of autonomy--the concept ought and the underivative and perfectly general (or basic) principles for its correct application to actions--are of sufficient generality to be free of particular environments and thereby of circumstances for their application and thereby are universally applicable: a feature necessary to the fundamental principles of autonomy if they are to constitute an advance in organism guidance over the guidance provided by instincts, which have a structure tying them in their operation to particular environments or types of environments. Nor will it do to conclude merely that the conceptual materials of autonomy are innate so that the fundamental principles of autonomy are developed out of them and are thereby acquired. For these conceptual materials must be articulated and organized, as they are in fundamental ought-principles, if they are to be adequate to their function of organism guidance; and natural selection could not fulfill this function adequately if it left to chance or whim the manner in which the conceptual materials of autonomy are articulated and organized. Natural selection does not work arbitrarily but always for survival of a species; nor is it arbitrary what, at a given stage of its development and in a given environment, is necessary for survival of a species or for its transmutation genetically into a species that survives.

It is clear, from the fact that the rudiments of autonomy are innate, that the normative propositions and concepts of which they are made up are not linguistic entities but rather are common to all the
various languages in which they can be expressed. This means that we need to distinguish between what we may call a minimal and what we may call a maximal autonomous being. A minimal autonomous being is a being who possesses the power to (decide what he ought to do, choose and) act from ought-principles, but who does not possess the power to formulate in language his nature as an autonomous being or therefore the power to act self-consciously from his ought-principles; whereas a maximal autonomous being is a minimal autonomous being who also possesses these two further powers. Thus maximal autonomy arises out of powers of linguistic self-consciousness and ought therefore not to be confused with minimal autonomy. Now our concern throughout will be with the fundamental case of minimal autonomy; so I shall henceforth use the concept autonomy synonymously with minimal autonomy.

It is to be noted that autonomy compares, in this respect, with three more primitive modes of organism guidance: reflex, instinct and pure trial and error (trial and error guided by instinct rather than autonomy). For, evidently, none of these more primitive modes of organism guidance involves powers of linguistic self-consciousness either.

It is evident, from what has been said so far, that autonomy is an innate and irreducible feature of the nature of beings who possess it. Moreover, the nature of beings who possess autonomy is determined for them, as earthly creatures, by the operation of evolution, or natural selection. Thus if we are to say anything further about the nature of autonomy, from a naturalistic point of view, we must take up the concept natural selection and investigate its connection with the concept autonomy.

The workings of evolution-by-natural-selection are in principle quite simple and straightforward. The reproductive genetic material of a living entity—an entity structured by its own genetic material so that it can reproduce its kind in an environment to which this material adapts it for this purpose—undergoes a modification. This modification—in this (changing or unchanging) environment and in relation to its offspring's capacity to reproduce its kind, and thereby to bring about survival of the offspring's species—is either advantageous or disadvantageous. If it is (sufficiently) disadvantageous, it is eliminated; the entity bearing it fails to reproduce it owing to genetically-determined inability to reach reproductive age or to consummate reproduction in that environment. If, on the other hand, the modification is advantageous, it is retained; the entity bearing it reproduces it owing to genetically-determined improvement in ability either to reach reproductive age or to consummate reproduction in that environment. Thus the positive principle of natural selection is this: retention of any genetically-determined modification which better equips a living entity to reach reproductive age or to consummate reproduction in its environment.

Now, in the process of equipping living entities genetically to reach reproductive age in their environments, natural selection adapts them to their environments in such a way that they acquire the genetically-based capacity to achieve satisfaction and ultimately, if adaptation is close and complete enough, maximal satisfaction of their natural
interests, or drives. Thus, from a naturalistic point of view, it is
the function of reflexes, instincts, pure trial and error (trial and
error guided by instincts) and autonomy—as genetically-based fundamental
modes of organism guidance—to bring it about that these natural inter­
ests, or drives are satisfied, especially and in the first instance
those drives such as hunger and thirst that are life needs of the
individual.

I am, of course, assuming—safely, I think—that natural selection
can give rise to nothing other than a guidance-system to fulfill this
function, and that natural selection must fulfill this function somehow
to guarantee survival of a species; so that this is the function of an
organism guidance-system. Moreover, it is inconceivable that, at the
dawn of autonomy, natural selection could provide the means, via a
restricted principle of autonomy, for the satisfaction of merely those
natural interests that are life needs of the individual organism. The
distinction between natural interests that are life needs and those that
are not life needs is not a palpable one lying in an introspectible
difference between the felt urges through which these two classes of
natural interests manifest themselves in consciousness. The distinction
between them can in fact be made out systematically and reliably only in
terms of a sophisticated and elaborate body of scientific, specifically
biological, knowledge containing both observation and theoretical
statements, some of which can be arrived at only through experimentation.
Moreover, it is preposterous to suppose that any autonomous being could,
at the dawn of its autonomy, come into possession of more than the
barest rudiments of this body of scientific knowledge.

Thus we can expand our previous primitive conception of autonomy,
in view of its relation to the process of natural selection, to incor­
porate the idea that autonomous beings are beings in whom (the resources
of) reason, operating through ought-principles, has supplemented or
supplanted reflex, instinct and pure trial and error as genetically
based means of achieving satisfaction and ultimately, if adaptation is
close and complete enough, maximal satisfaction of their natural inter­
ests, or drives.

Now human beings, to get down to cases, are evidently not only
autonomous, in the sense just described, they also are essentially-
social in that they stand in need of cooperation and aid from each other
throughout life to achieve satisfaction and maximal satisfaction of
their natural interests. Thus it is evident that human beings are a
species of autonomous beings who are essentially-social. But this fact,
despite what has just been said about the relationship between evolution
and autonomy, renders doubtful the idea that we owe our origin as a
species to natural selection.

There is no problem about natural selection's being the origin of
our species so far as our essential-sociality goes. We see necessary
life-long cooperation and aid among many higher animal species such as
elephants and apes and even among some insect species such as bees and
ants. The problem concerns natural selection's being the origin of our
autonomy. For the various forms of cooperation and aid found among
other animate species are determined by instinct—being species-wide and
group-invariant—whereas ours are determined, at least in part, by autonomy—either not being species-wide or being variable from group to group. Our autonomy stands out in nature like a sore thumb. What a gulf we find here between ourselves and the rest of animate nature! So we are bound to ask:

What is the place of autonomy in the economy of animate nature?

The answer to this question lies, of course, in the nature of autonomy and its relationship to the positive process of natural selection. Now autonomy, as we have seen, is the power to apply the resources of reason through ought-principles to achieve satisfaction or maximal satisfaction of the natural interests of the members of the autonomous species in question, especially and in the first instance their life needs connected with sustenance and security, so that they at least reach reproductive age and consummate reproduction, by converting any environment in which they live into one which provides for the satisfaction or maximal satisfaction of the natural interests of the members of their species. Thus autonomy is the consummation (most advanced possible product) of the process of natural selection. For it is autonomous beings alone who transcend dependence on further environmentally-determined modifications in their specific natures (natural selection), as the means to the satisfaction or maximal satisfaction of the natural interests of the members of their species, by means of their distinctive and unique ability to understand how their—natural and/or social—environment works and to put this understanding to work by changing this environment so that it yields satisfaction or maximal satisfaction of these interests.

Thus autonomy—like any other type of advance in guidance of organisms in utilizing their environments to achieve continuing reproduction of their species—is a straight-forward exemplification of natural selection. But, unlike other previous genetically-based advances in organism guidance—from reflex to instinct and from instinct to pure trial and error—autonomy perfects the work of natural selection in organism guidance. For autonomy is the form of guidance in which the principle, or structure of the guidance is perfectly general, consisting of a basic normative principle, and so is free from any particular environment for its application. Nevertheless, natural selection will not allow autonomous beings to continue to exist, the exercise of whose autonomy works for an end other than the promotion of the well-being (satisfaction of the natural interests) or maximal well-being (maximal satisfaction of the natural interests) of the members of their species; for such beings would lack characteristics essential to their survival as a species. This is evident at least in connection with those natural interests such as hunger and thirst connected with the sustenance and security of individuals.

An argument I developed earlier in this section proves, mutatis mutandis, that it is inconceivable that, at the dawn of an advance in autonomy, natural selection could equip a natural interested autonomous species (see section 2 for an account of natural interested autonomy) on the verge of extinction with the means, through a further restricted
principle(s) of autonomy, for maximally satisfying and thereby for satisfying merely those natural interests that are life needs of the individual organism. I now hypothesize in this connection, what I shall argue in chapter 11, that the instincts and/or natural interested autonomy of such a species are operating in the natural environment in which they live so as to destroy the instinct-based and trial-and-error-amplified way of life they have, which adapts them reproductively to their environment; so that the step natural selection must take to ensure survival of the species is an advance in autonomy which brings both instincts and natural interested autonomy under control of this advance in autonomy, to the end that the endangered species develop a--solitary or social--way of life which enables the species emerging from this necessary genetically-based transmutation to maximally satisfy all of their natural interests including, of course, those that are life needs, and in any environment whatever. Hence will come about, I think, the perfecting of autonomy for either essentially-solitary or essentially-social species through their closer and completer adaptation to their environments. Let me add to this argument, transmuted from my earlier argument, the observation that explication of the notion of the maximal satisfaction of one's own natural interests is a thorny problem requiring not only the conceptual resources of philosophy but also the empirical and theoretical resources of both biology and psychology. It is, of course, preposterous to suppose that any being could have even these resources, let alone this explication application of them, at the dawn of the evolution of the final (perfecting) step into autonomy. This explication is provided by chapter 12.

Consequently, the function of any innate (hence a priori true) principle of autonomy, or basic ought-principle is to promote the well-being or maximal well-being of the members of the species in which it is innate. Thus autonomy is the only conceivable functional equivalent of natural selection itself; for it is by autonomy alone that a species can--in any environment whatever--achieve the actual end (terminus) of natural selection--satisfaction and ultimately maximal satisfaction of life needs and other natural interests--without undergoing natural selection (environmentally-determined modification as a species). Thus the gulf we perceive between ourselves as autonomous beings and the rest of animate nature is due entirely to our failure to see autonomy and the positive process of natural selection for the functionally equivalent processes that they are, neither of which fully makes sense without the other.

It is time to look at the functional equivalence of autonomy and natural selection in terms of the three conceivable types of autonomous beings: natural interested, rational self-interested and moral beings. Now every line of animate development must be toward either the essentially-solitary or the essentially-social: toward either life-long independence of or life-long dependence on intra-species cooperation and aid to achieve well-being (satisfaction of natural interests) or maximal well-being (maximal satisfaction of natural interests) of the members of the species in question. For these are mutually exclusive and exhaustive types of lines of animate development. Now the consummation of either,
because of any, type of line of animate development is autonomy. Thus the consummation of the former type of line of animate development is autonomous beings who are essentially-solitary, or rational self-interested beings--beings whose autonomy consists of the Principle of Rational Self-Interest:

I ought to act so as to maximally satisfy my own natural interests in normative-practical superiority to the Principle of Natural Interest:

I ought to act so as to satisfy my own natural interest \( x \).

While the consummation of the latter type of line of animate development is autonomous beings who are essentially-social, or moral beings--beings whose autonomy consists of the Principle of Morality:

We ought to act only in those ways whose universal performance is both possible and consistent with the rational self-interest (maximal satisfaction of the natural interests) of all the members (of each and every member) of our species, or kind.

in normative-practical superiority to the Principle of Rational Self-Interest:

I ought to act so as to maximally satisfy my own natural interests

in normative-practical superiority to the Principle of Natural Interest:

I ought to act so as to satisfy my own natural interest \( x \).

Thus autonomy makes its first appearance, in either an essentially-solitary or an essentially-social line of animate development, in the form of natural interested beings--beings whose autonomy consists solely of the Principle of Natural Interest:

I ought to act so as to satisfy my own natural interest \( x \).

For natural interested autonomy is the only unitary (singular or hierarchically-unified) form of autonomy which essentially-solitary and essentially-social lines of animate development can have in common, and so must be the only form of autonomy that can arise directly out of non-autonomy.

It is to be noted that natural interested autonomy, whether it occurs in an essentially-solitary or an essentially-social line of animate development, is defective or incomplete. For essentially-solitary and essentially-social natural interested beings possess the capacity to satisfy their natural interests, in whatever order these interests present themselves for consideration, but not the capacity to develop solitary and social ways of life which make possible their
maximal satisfaction; so that their way of life is one that is still controlled fundamentally by instinct amplified, of course, by pure trial and error. Only a rational self-interested or moral being possesses this further unique and distinctive capacity; and it is the distinctive function of the Principle of Rational Self-Interest in essentially-solitary beings, or of the Principle of Morality in essentially-social beings, to generate solitary or social ways of life which make possible the maximal satisfaction of the natural interests of the members of the autonomous species in question. Thus the members of a species of essentially-solitary or essentially-social natural interested beings are bound to evolve in time, if doing so is necessary for survival of the species, into rational self-interested or moral beings, as the final step in the evolution of their autonomy.

Now the theory of the factual details of the evolution of autonomy, it goes almost without saying, is a dark and difficult subject which merits further attention, and one which goes far beyond a discussion, such as this one, of the conceptual relationship between evolution and autonomy. We must note, however, that the main purpose of such a theory is to explain the origin of moral beings such as ourselves who are autonomous and essentially-social, and that we know that such beings can arise through natural selection because we exist as living proof of the fact. Thus the problem of explaining the origin of moral beings through natural selection is a problem of detail. But is the problem of explaining the origin of rational self-interested and natural interested beings who are essentially-solitary one of detail? We certainly encounter in nature no examples at all of rational self-interested beings, nor even any of natural-interested beings who are essentially-solitary. Is this an accident of the particular course evolution has taken on earth or do the processes of animate nature themselves preclude the existence of these two conceivable species of autonomous beings? A discussion of this question will provide a fitting climax to our examination of the conceptual relationship between evolution and autonomy.

The two things any animate being must have to reach reproductive age are sustenance (the means of bodily and/or psychic growth to reproductive maturity) and security (the means of prevention of bodily and/or psychic damage sufficient to prevent reproductive maturity). Now an animate being who is essentially-solitary must bear the whole burden of its sustenance and security from birth, and must be adapted genetically to do so in any environment in which it succeeds in reaching reproductive age. But this is a heavy burden indeed for an animate being to bear alone, so we must wonder how in general natural selection equips essentially-solitary beings with the means of their own sustenance and security from birth. What, we may well ask, is the principle of natural selection's adaptation of essentially-solitary beings to their environments?

Well, the only possible answer is this: make essentially-solitary beings at birth merely physically immature versions of what they will be upon reaching reproductive age. For only so can natural selection equip them from birth with what they need for sustenance and security in the
environments to which it adapts them. For if a new-born essentially-solitary being differs from an adult member of its species in any essential respect other than size not directly connected to the process of its growth to reproductive age, then it is missing some attribute upon which its sustenance and security depends, and so must perish. Thus a new-born and an adult member of an essentially-solitary species, out of the necessities of having to shoulder the entire burden of sustenance and security in the environment they share, are virtually duplicates of each other psychically.

This means that an essentially-solitary line of animate development is precluded—by the very principle of its operation—from ever rising to autonomy. For the benefits of autonomy—even of natural interested autonomy—are available to the possessors of it only over time and only as they undergo the growth in knowledge and skills its continuing successful employment requires; whereas there simply is no room in the way of life of an essentially-solitary being for any such processes of psychic development as those involved in the successful employment of autonomy. Thus the farthest an essentially-solitary line of animate development can go in organism guidance is instinct, coupled with pure trial and error learning if it can produce a brain with sufficient storage capacity to make it worthwhile. We may therefore conclude (and with considerable relief, in view of how awesome their physical powers would be) that the absence from animate nature of rational self-interested beings and natural interested beings who are essentially-solitary is a function of the processes of animate nature themselves and not of evolutionary accident.

We may say, in sum, that both of these types of essentially-solitary autonomous beings, though conceivable in principle, are biologically impossible and therefore are materially inconceivable. This means, of course, that essentially-social natural interested beings and moral beings are the only types of autonomous beings that are biologically possible and are thereby materially conceivable. Thus the theory of the factual details of the evolution of autonomy may and ought to confine itself to the evolution (descent) of these two essentially-social types of autonomous beings.

We can now see clearly, moreover, that autonomy and essentially-sociality are concepts intrinsically and inseparably connected with each other via the mediating concept of evolution-by-natural-selection. This result alone, it seems to me, makes the arduous conceptual-path we have traveled eminently worthwhile; but it is a doubly-fruitful path in that it yields the further conclusion that the Principle of Morality is the only biologically possible and thereby materially conceivable supreme principle of rational conduct for essentially-social autonomous beings such as ourselves (homo sapiens).
I regard other animate beings (if there are any) with which it competes for food or which prey upon it for food as being elements of the environment of an animate being to which natural selection must adapt it for reproductive purposes, that is, for purposes of its own sustenance and security.

Maximal satisfaction of an animate being's natural interests is equivalent, at least roughly, to its flourishing, or thriving.

It is possible--the empirical evidence seems to me unclear or indecisive--that porpoises and some great apes, notably gorillas and chimpanzees, are what I later call natural interested autonomous beings. Note that all three species (in the wild) are essentially-social; on this point the evidence does seem to me to be clear and decisive.

It is biologically possible for there to be pairs of mutually exclusive and exhaustive traits other than solitary versus social, for example, nonsymbiotically related to another species versus symbiotically related to another species. But, since none of them are as fundamental, from the perspective of evolution-by-natural-selection, they will not define types of lines of animate development. For, unlike solitary versus social, these other pairs of mutually exclusive and exhaustive biological traits do not admit of continuous and progressive development (so as to define types of lines of animate development).

Normative superiority is superiority in judgment as to what ought to be done, and practical superiority is superiority in action pursuant to judgment as to what ought to be done.

The object of rational self-interest is one's own maximal well-being: the maximal satisfaction of one's own natural interests, i.e., of one's own innate and acquired drives. I argue in chapter 10 that it is this principle and not the extensionally-equivalent principle--we ought to act so as to make possible achievement of maximal well-being by every member of our species--that natural selection builds into moral beings such as ourselves. By 'consistent with rational self-interest' I mean both (i) not positively contrary to rational self-interest and (ii) not denying (taking away or not providing) the necessary means to rational self-interest. It is evident, upon reflection, that the Principle of Morality builds upon and presupposes, though it transcends, the Principle of Rational Self-Interest and that the latter principle builds upon and presupposes, though it transcends, the Principle of Natural Interest. Thus, though none of the reverse entailments hold, the Principle of Morality entails the Principle of Rational Self-Interest, the Principle of Rational Self-Interest entails the Principle of Natural Interest and the Principle of Morality therefore entails the Principle of Natural Interest.

Essentially-solitary species such as some insects--which first have a larval stage, then a pupal stage, followed by an adult stage--appear to contradict this statement (and biological principle). In point of fact, however, they merely exhibit it step-wise. For the
behavior of such an insect's larval stage is uniform throughout and appropriate to its development physically to the point where it can pupate, it exhibits no behavior relating to its environment during its pupal stage, and during its adult stage its behavior is once again uniform throughout and appropriate to its development physically to the point where it can mate.

8 This theory is developed in chapter 11.

9 This latter conclusion constitutes, along with the result of chapter 10 mentioned in note 6 infra, the proof of the basic (supreme) principle, or normative basis, of morality: one half of the general refutation of noncognitivism (in ethics) I developed in chapter 5. It also follows from this latter conclusion and from the supporting array of argument developed in the present chapter that natural selection builds into moral beings such as ourselves the only possible correct, or true supreme principle of morality, so that this principle can aptly be called the Principle of Morality, or the supreme principle of rational conduct for essentially-social autonomous beings. On this final point, see also the argument of chapter 8.
Chapter 10

PROMISING AND THE OBLIGATION TO KEEP A PROMISE

Promising and the obligation to keep a promise to which it gives rise have played a central role recently in the is-ought controversy and in the controversy over utilitarian theories of obligation. What could be more factual, say the opponents of an absolute dichotomy between is- and ought-statements, than the statement that someone did make a promise; and what could be less utilitarian as the reason why he is obligated to keep his promise, say the opponents of utilitarianism, than the fact that he did make it? Clearly, however, the answer to this question depends on the nature of promising; for promising is what one claims to have taken place, in stating that someone did make a promise, and what transpires in promising is what gives rise to the obligation to do what is promised. But an adequate account of the nature of promising is what I find missing fundamentally in the views of those who dispute this question on one side or the other: an account which makes clear just how the obligation to keep a promise arises out of promising. So my purpose is to supply an account of promising which genuinely accounts for the obligation to keep a promise. But, since promising and the obligation to keep a promise are exemplifications of the basis of morality, which lies in the innate structure of human normative-practical reason, what I shall be doing fundamentally is exploring the innate structure of human normative-practical reason as it manifests itself in promising and the obligation to keep a promise. This exploring will enable us to see that, although the statement that someone did make a promise is a factual one, what it claims to have taken place is a moral transaction which is not susceptible of utilitarian analysis.

-1-

The most elementary case of promising is the one in which one person (the promisor) offers and another person (the promisee) accepts an offer to do something for the promisee or the promisor (the beneficiary). For no one can literally promise himself to do something for himself or another, or promise another to do something without that person, at least tacitly, accepting his offer of a promise. Moreover, the case in which one person promises another to do something for that person or himself is more elementary than the case in which one person promises another to do something for a third person, or the case in which two persons promise each other (covenant) to do some independent or joint thing for each other or a third person, or any of the myriad cases which arise from these when one or more of the parties involved in the promissory arrangement—the promisor, promisee, or beneficiary—consists of more than one person. Thus promising basically (at its simplest) is a voluntary transaction between two persons in which an offer is made and accepted to do something for the benefit of one or the other of the parties to the transaction. For example, Mike, who is cooperative, says, when he sees that his mother has insufficient time to keep up the house, "I'll wash and wax the floors every week for you," and his mother replies, "Thank you! That'll help me out a lot!" and Jack, who is lax about personal hygiene, says, when pressed by his
mother, "I'll brush my teeth every night from now on," and his mother replies, "Okay, but see that you do!" And "they all live happily ever after."

It is primarily upon cases of this sort—straightforward cases of promising in which nothing goes wrong—that all of the accounts of promising with which I am familiar have been built. And so, in a sense, must an adequate account of promising be built; for it must account for these straightforward cases. But it also must account for cases of promising which are not straightforward, cases of promising in which something does go wrong; and it is primarily through cases of promising of this sort, cases in which something does go wrong, that we are able to see in detail what really does go on in promising, including what goes on in straightforward cases of it. For straightforward cases of promising are fundamentally misleading in that they suggest that promising basically is a linguistically-conventionalized voluntary transaction between two persons in which an offer is made and accepted to do something for the benefit of one of the two parties to the transaction; since this is all that such cases themselves reveal promising to be. Whereas the truth is that the linguistic conventions governing "promising" only reflect, and serve as the vehicle through which a promisor and promisee invoke, with respect to the matter at hand, the underlying set of moral conventions whose invocation by them constitutes the moral substance of their promissory transaction: a fact which is revealed, and in detail, only through examination of cases of promising in which something does go wrong. So to this examination we evidently must now turn our attention.

-2-

The cases we must consider first are those we may call cases of promising which 'misfire': cases of promising in which a promisor offers to do something but in which the promisee rejects the offer. Assuming, as we shall throughout, that both the promisor and the promisee are rational, the promisee may reject the promisor's offer on one or the other of three general grounds: (a) facts about the promisor, (b) facts about the content of the promisor's offer, and (c) facts about the offer's purpose. Facts about the promisor which justify rejection of his offer are facts which tend to show either (i) that he is insincere (has no intention or cannot be relied on to maintain his intention to go through with his offer) or (ii) that, even though sincere, he is non-competent (has not and will not in trying develop the ability to fulfill his offer). For if the promisee believes that the promisor is sincere and competent, then he must believe that the promisor's offer will be fulfilled if he accepts it—that all that stands in the way of its fulfillment is his having yet to accept it—so that the only objections he can have left to accepting it are objections to its content or to its purpose. Now facts about the content of a promisor's offer which justify rejection of it are facts which tend to show that its fulfillment would be morally wrong, either because its fulfillment conflicts with fulfillment of some antecedent moral obligation the promisor or promisee has or because its fulfillment is "intrinsically" morally wrong. For if the promisee believes that fulfillment of the promisor's sincere and competent offer would not be morally wrong, then the only
objection he can have left to accepting it is that its fulfillment will
not serve any useful purpose, because its fulfillment will not be or
contribute to the promisor's doing something that he ought to do.

This makes it seem as if the promisee is the one who is in the
driver's seat. And so—in a sense—he is. For he is the one who—
conceptually speaking—has the last word. But he cannot have the last
word without someone else—the promisor—having the first word. So,
what the promisor and the promisee "word" about must be—in addition to
the specific content of the offer, which varies from case to case—a
body of moral understanding which they share and bring to bear upon the
specific content of the offer by entering into a promissory relationship
with respect to it.

Thus the grounds on which a potential promisor may, and must,
rationally reject making his contemplated offer, in the first place,
correspond exactly—step by step—to the grounds on which his prospec-
tive promisee may, and must, rationally reject accepting his offer,
when—and if—it is made. So the promisor and the promisee really are
equally in the driver's seat so far as making and accepting the offer—
the promising—goes. And so the first phase—conceptually and morally
speaking—of a promissory transaction consists of the promisor's and
promisee's mutual indicating and acknowledging of the conviction that
the rationale is fully satisfied for their not refraining from entering
into a promissory relationship; and therefore is fully satisfied for
their actually entering into it, by actualizing the second phase of the
promissory transaction, owing to the mutual obligation they recognize to
cooperate with each other, when this rationale is satisfied, by actual-
izing the second—and final—phase of the promissory transaction: the
phase for which the first phase was the preparation, and which therefore,
together with the first phase, completes the promissory-transaction
phase of the promissory arrangement.

To determine the nature of this second, and final, phase of the
promissory transaction, we need to begin again with the undifferentiated
statement that a promissory transaction is a making and accepting of an
offer to... to what? Well, in general, as we have seen, to act in a
certain way for the benefit of the promisor—in the sense of its being
or contributing to the doing of something the promisor ought to do.
Thus the promisor, in making his offer, really is asking for the help of
the promisee in doing something that he ought to do; and the promisee,
in accepting the promisor's offer, really is agreeing to so help the
promisor. But this means that what the promisor ought to do, for the
doing of which help is sought and given, is what fundamentally is "in
the driver's seat" in the promissory transaction, and so in the promis-
sory state which issues from it. Now what the promisor ought to do
cannot be—in reality—in the driver's seat—in the driver's seat for
all normative and practical purposes—without all of the condition
being fulfilled for a valid promissory transaction's having taken place.
But these conditions, which we shall shortly be looking into further,
come down to but a single underlying condition: namely, that the body
of moral understanding shared by the promisor and the promisee—the
rationale they share for making and/or accepting a promissory offer
(and—as we shall shortly see—for what to do in the aftermath of
invoking this primary rationale)—has been invoked by them with respect to the content of the offer; so that its performance is subject between them to the conditions of this rationale. Thus—morally speaking—the joint invoking of this rationale is what the promissory transaction consists of, and its being and continuing in an invocated state what the promissory state consists of.

But what, exactly, beyond the first phase, does the promise (the promising, or invoking) consist of? Well, the answer can only be the lightning-like, or virtually-instantaneous process in which the promisor and promisee mutually express and recognize their commitment to the principle: performance of this promissory content ought to be subject between us to the conditions of the rationale for promising—a process which, when terminated, becomes the continuing state of mutually expressed and recognized commitment to this ought-principle. For the continuing state of mutually expressed and recognized commitment to this ought-principle is what the rationale for promising's being morally in force between a promisor and promisee consists of; and it is by mutual appeal to the rationale for promising morally in force between them that a promisor and promisee together make it possible for the promisor to do the thing that he ought to do, for the sake of which they entered into a promissory relationship.

A promissory relationship thus consists, to put it in specific moral terms, of the mutual obligation the promisor and the promisee have to abide—in their judgment and conduct—by what the rationale for promising says about the content of the offer made and accepted, and in the correlative mutual right they have to have the other so abide. Now this obligation and correlative right arise out of the particular promissory transaction in question, and so reside in the participants in this transaction. This makes clear why no one can possibly be obligated to keep to the terms of a promissory arrangement he was compelled to make or accept. For the arrangement consists of a mutually expressed and recognized moral conviction and coordinate commitment to a moral principle, and no such conviction or commitment can be compelled, as it would then not emanate from the moral self. A promissory transaction in which compulsion exists on either side thus is literally a nonentity. So also, then, is a promissory transaction which would not have occurred but for unavoidable ignorance; for unavoidable ignorance consists of compulsion (what could not have been avoided) with respect to the conviction that the promissory content met fully the rationale for promising. Thus it also is true that no one can possibly be obligated to keep to the terms of a promissory arrangement he would not have made but for unavoidable ignorance, including ignorance stemming from deception on his partner's part.

This brings us to the type of case we must consider last in which something goes wrong with a promise, namely, promises which 'dissolve': promises which become discontinued owing to the promisor's and/or promisee's withdrawal from the promissory relationship on the ground that the promissory transaction which gave rise to it actually was not, as it originally seemed to be, valid. Now we have seen that the con-
ditions for a valid promissory transaction come down to the underlying condition that the body of moral understanding shared by the promisor and promisee—the rationale they share for making and/or accepting a promissory offer—has been invoked by them with respect to the content of the offer. But ascription of this description of a valid promissory transaction to a promissory transaction presupposes that the content of the promissory offer actually meets fully this shared rationale, so that this rationale has been validly (morally permissibly and requiredly) invoked (second phase) by the promisor and promisee with respect to the content of the offer. Thus a valid promissory transaction is one in which nothing at all is objectionable in either its first or its second phase. And thus we can see that the grounds which invalidate a promissory transaction divide into two main types: (a) grounds which invalidate consummating, or therefore continuing, the promissory transaction (or state)—show the transaction never to have been, and therefore the state now not to be, morally an entity—and (b) grounds which "invalidate" the promissory transaction (or state) per se—show the transaction never to have been, and therefore the state now not to be, literally an entity at all.

The grounds either originally or subsequently discovered which invalidate continuing the promissory state, as can be seen from the rationale for entering into the promissory transaction which issues in the promissory state, are themselves of two sorts: (i) facts which tend to show that the promissory content is either (a) something the promisor ought not to do because it conflicts with an antecedent obligation of the promisor or promisee or else is "intrinsically" morally wrong or (b) something the promisor ought not to do, even though it is not something he intrinsically ought not to do, because it is a waste of his time or his effort (not something he ought to do or something it is impossible for him to do), and (ii) facts which tend to show that, even though the promissory content is not something the promisor ought not to do, and so is something he ought to do, the promisor does not need the promisee's help through the promissory arrangement to do what it is that he ought to do, so that the promissory arrangement is a waste of the promisor's and promisee's time and effort, and so is something they ought not to create.

There are also two types of grounds, as we have recently seen, which "invalidate" the promissory state per se: (i) facts which tend to show that the promisor and/or promisee was compelled into the "promissory transaction," first and/or second phase, by forces beyond his control and (ii) facts which tend to show that the promisor and/or promisee was entrapped into the "promissory transaction," first and/or second phase, by ignorance beyond his control, including ignorance stemming from deception by his promissory partner. If either of these conditions is the case, then the word of the promisor and/or promisee did not emanate from his moral self, and so cannot be obligatory upon it, or therefore on him as a whole person. The word he spoke either was not literally his word, being produced by forces beyond his control, or else was not literally his word (what he can stand by morally in the light of all the relevant facts), being produced by ignorance of relevant facts beyond his control.
Now this means, and we must face it for the seemingly paradoxical result that it is, that it literally is impossible for either a promisor or a promisee to be bound by a promissory transaction in which either party is guilty of a deception which is a material factor in the other party's going through with the transaction. For neither party can be bound without the other being bound—owing to the mutuality of their obligation—and the party who was deceived went through with the transaction because of ignorance beyond his control: ignorance of facts, deliberately hidden from him by his partner, which pertain adversely to the promisor's sincerity and competence or to the promissory content's morality and usefulness or to the promissory arrangement's necessity. And nothing can possibly override these considerations about the promisor and his promissory program in the moral structure of promising and the obligation to keep a promise; for it is through these considerations that the promisor and promisee give determinate form to their joint aim of cooperating morally to enable the promisor to do the thing that he ought to do!

But the seeming paradox in this result—that the deceitful promisor and/or promisee is released from any further obligation to his partner when his ruse is disclosed or found out—disappears when we realize that so far we are dealing with only the first phase—the invalidation phase—of the dissolution phase of the promissory state: the phase in which the promisor and/or promisee overtly recognizes the invalidity of the promissory transaction and sets in motion with his partner the final phase—the termination phase—of the dissolution of the promissory state. For so far we have seen only the grounds on which a promisor and/or promisee morally may, and must, seek with his partner to terminate satisfactorily their promissory relationship.

Thus we can see that the primary rationale for promising, the structure of which determines the contours of the conviction and the commitment phases of the promissory transaction phase, as well as the contours of the invalidation phase of the dissolution phase, of the promissory arrangement, is, out of the necessities of human imperfection, supplemented by the secondary rationale for promising: the rationale specifying what the promisor and/or promisee ought to do, when either of them has revealed to the other the invalidity of their promissory transaction, to get rid of all the vestiges of their promissory transaction which they ought to get rid of. Thus in participating in the promissory transaction, whether in good faith or bad about the promissory content being performed, the promisor and promisee obligate themselves to abide, in their judgment and conduct, by the primary and, if it becomes necessary to employ it, the secondary rationale for promising; and in the process acquire the correlative right to have the other so abide. Thus a deceitful promisor or promisee who confesses to or is found out by his partner can, at least partially, redeem himself by really sticking, when he confesses or is found out, to the secondary rationale for promising; and thus denominates himself, when he fails to do so, a, to some degree, totally untrustworthy person.

Just what is this secondary rationale? To begin at its beginning, its moral point, as we have seen, is to bring it about that the promisor and/or promisee get rid of all the vestiges of their promissory trans-
action which they ought to get rid of. But just what sorts of vestiges are these? Well, to begin with, they must be (a) vestiges for which the promisor and/or promisee are responsible (brought or allowed to be brought voluntarily into existence) and (b) vestiges which the promisor and/or promisee can get rid of; for otherwise they cannot be vestiges which they ought to get rid of: morally objectionable vestiges for which they are responsible, and which they can expunge. Thus these vestiges also must be (c) vestiges which are morally objectionable.

Just what sorts of vestiges are morally objectionable? Well, since they must be intrinsic to the promissory arrangement, they must be those vestiges which involve either (i) deprivation of a good (something advanced or lost) or (ii) incursion of an evil (something undergone or suffered) on the part of either the promisor or the promisee. Now for either deprivation of a good or incursion of an evil, either restoration, if possible, or, if not, compensation is morally required. Thus we can see that the secondary rationale for promising consists of the requirement that any deprivation of a good or incursion of an evil, which a promisor or promisee voluntarily has caused or allowed an invalid promisory transaction to visit upon his partner, ought by him to be restored or, if restoration proves impossible, compensated: provided that it is within his power to do so.

We now can see why a deceitful promisor, when he is found out, is not relieved of his obligation to perform the content of his promise: provided that he is able to perform it and either its performance is a good to, or else its nonperformance an evil to, the promisee. For, under these conditions, performance amounts to restoration! Thus a deceitful promisor who gets out of his obligation to perform because he is unable to do so, only does so by getting into his obligation to compensate his victim for the good his victim has lost or the evil his victim has incurred owing to his inability to perform; and thus denominates himself, when he also is unable to compensate his victim, a, to some degree, totally incompetent person: a self-denomination we effect when in any cooperative matter such as promising we are found, especially knowingly and without compulsion, not to have the personal and/or natural resources to see the matter through to its morally proper conclusion.

Beyond misfires and dissolutions, there are promises which 'trans­fire' or turn into cases of morally justified compulsion upon the promisor or promisee, for failure to see the promisory arrangement through to its morally proper conclusion, to exact from him either restoration or compensation. But compulsion signifies loss of the cooperative relationship that a promissory arrangement morally is at its best and at its worst and so ends our account of promises in which something goes wrong (which either misfire or dissolve), and so also ends our account of promises in which nothing goes wrong (which neither misfire nor dissolve, and are performed).

But, though our account of the overall structure of promissory transactions and states is thereby finished, our account of promising is not. For we have yet to determine how a promissory arrangement is possible: what the innate resources of human normative-practical reason are which are the source of the moral structure of promising and which
bring this moral structure into and maintain it in play in the promissory transaction and ensuing promissory state, until the morally proper conclusion of the matter has been reached. So to the determination of the nature of these resources we evidently must now turn our attention.

We have to begin by looking at the skeleton of what we have discovered so far about the nature of a promissory transaction: a skeleton which outlines the practical powers of human normative-practical reason manifested in a promissory transaction. Then, by filling in the outlines of these powers, we will be able to understand their inherent natures. This will then enable us to understand how—"dynamically" speaking—a promissory transaction and its coordinate promissory state are possible.

A promissory transaction consists of the promisor's and promisee's mutual expression and recognition of a moral conviction (this promissory content meets fully the primary rationale for promising) and coordinate commitment to a moral principle (this promissory arrangement ought to be subject between us to the primary and—if necessary—the secondary rationale for promising); for therein lies the substance of the meeting of their innate moral minds out of which arises the mutual obligation and correlative right which constitute the abiding, or time-spanning, moral substance of their promissory relationship: their obligation to abide and right to have the other abide—in judgment and conduct—by what the primary and secondary rationale for promising say about the promissory arrangement.

Now we can see, from this description of it, that—abstractly conceived—a promissory transaction consists of the promisor's and promisee's mutual expression and recognition of a moral conviction they share and coordinate commitment they share to a moral principle. But we also can see from the material in this description thus left out that this moral conviction, since it might—on a variety of grounds—turn out to be false, gets its substance as fully incorporated as possible within its coordinate commitment to a moral principle; so that the promissory state can be treated for all practical purposes as if it consisted of the promisor's and promisee's continuing mutual expression and recognition of a commitment they share to a moral principle. Now this means that the promissory transaction can be treated for all practical purposes as if it consisted of everything that led up to the moment at which the promissory transaction is succeeded instantly by the promissory state: the moment at which mutual expression and recognition of commitment to one and the same moral principle—the promissory bonding—takes place. But let us leave the transaction phase for a moment, and return to the state phase to find out what, practically speaking, fills the gap between them.

The state phase consists, for all practical purposes, of the promisor's and promisee's continuing mutual expression and recognition of a commitment to one and the same moral principle. Now commitment to a moral principle is identical to active belief in it; and active belief in a moral principle is identical to manifesting its requirements in
behavior. But manifesting the requirements of a moral principle in behavior is identical to deciding what one ought to do, choosing and acting from it. Thus the crucial moment, the moment at which promissory bonding takes place, consists of the promisor's and promisee's mutual expression and recognition of wholehearted moral willingness to decide what they ought to do, choose and act from the principle: this promissory arrangement ought to be subject between us to the primary and, if necessary, the secondary rationale for promising. This mutual wholehearted moral willingness is what the promissory bond ultimately consists of, and thus is what carries the promisor and promisee through to the most satisfactory completion possible of their promissory arrangement.

Thus it can be seen that the transaction phase consists, for all practical purposes, of the process of moral reasoning (investigation, deliberation and judgment) by which the promisor and promisee each reach the moral conviction: this promissory arrangement ought to be subject between us to the primary and, if necessary, the secondary rationale for promising. Thus we can see that the transaction phase culminates in a moral conviction which, when mutually expressed and recognized, turns, owing to its distinctive content, instantly into the promise: the promisor's and promisee's instantly mutually expressed and recognized wholehearted moral willingness to decide what they ought to do, choose and act from the principle "This promissory arrangement ought to be subject between us to the primary and (if we must use it) the secondary rationale for promising."

But how on earth is this piece of legerdemain possible? How can belief in the truth of a moral principle be transformed instantly, and therefore without mediation, into moral willingness to decide what one ought to do, choose and act from that principle? Well, the only possible answer is that belief in the truth of a moral principle actually is the normative half of a natural normative-practical process whose practical half is active belief in that principle: moral willingness to decide what one ought to do, choose and act from it. So it really is not legerdemain at all, but only standard operating procedure for a moral agent: an agent who can think out morally what he ought to do and transform the result into reality. Thus what the promisor's and promisee's mutual expression and recognition of their shared moral conviction does in giving rise instantly to the promissory bond between them is to release instantly within each of them the naturally accompanying, but until then restrained, moral willingness to abide—in judgment and conduct—by this conviction: a release of willingness which converts it from an inactive (believed to be true) to an active (believed in) moral conviction which, because of its distinctive content, constitutes, when instantly mutually expressed and recognized, a promissory bond.

The solution is thus staring us in the face to the current problem as to how a particular moral judgment results in (guides the agent in doing) the action which fulfills it. It does so owing to the agent's active belief in, or moral willingness to fulfill, it: a willingness released in him by termination of the reasoning process through which he arrived at belief in its truth. For belief in the truth of a particular moral judgment, like belief in the truth of a general one such as a moral principle, is the terminus of the normative half of a natural
normative-practical process whose practical half is active belief in that judgment: a practical process whose unimpeded terminus is fulfillment of that judgment's content.

Thus we can see that the normative-practical "dynamics" of a promissory transaction correspond exactly in form to the normative-practical "dynamics" of a promissory state; so that--"dynamically" speaking--one and the same innate moral self is manifesting itself in both phases of a promissory arrangement. Thus we can see how--"dynamically" speaking--a promissory arrangement is possible.

But we cannot yet see how--"statically" speaking--a promissory arrangement is possible: how the conviction is possible that (a) this promissory content meets fully the primary rationale for promising so that (b) this promissory arrangement ought to be subject between us to the primary and, if we must employ it, the secondary rationale for promising. So to the investigation of how this conviction is possible we evidently must now turn our attention.

-5-

We have to begin by looking, as before, at the skeleton of our conviction: a skeleton which outlines the normative powers of human normative-practical reason manifested in it. Then, by filling in the outlines of these powers, we will be able to see their inherent natures. This will then enable us to understand how this conviction is possible:

(a) this promissory content meets fully the primary rationale for promising by being: (i) something the promisor is sincere about doing, (ii) something the promisor is competent to do, (iii) something it would not be morally wrong for the promisor to do and (iv) something the promisor ought to do, so that (b) this promissory arrangement ought to be subject between us, the promisor and promisee, to the primary and (if we must use it) the secondary rationale for promising because: (i) [a] its promissory content meets fully the primary rationale for promising and (ii) a promissory bond between us is essential to performance of the promissory content.

Let us, for the time being, drop out of this skeletal picture everything that depends for its rationale on human imperfection, so that we can uncover the perfection-oriented normative aspect of human normative-practical reason present in this picture. The skeletal-fragment which remains is this: (a) this promissory content meets fully the primary rationale for promising by being (i) something it would not be morally wrong for the promisor to do and (ii) something the promisor ought to do, so that (b) this promissory content ought to be subject between us to the primary rationale for promising because (i) it does meet fully the primary rationale for promising and (ii) a promissory bond between us is essential to its performance.

Now this skeletal-fragment can be rendered more perspicuous for present purposes by assuming that in (a) (i) is incorporated within (ii) and by eliminating (i), which is redundant, from (b). The resulting schema is this: since (a) this promissory content is something

F-13
the promisor ought to do, (b) his doing it ought to be subject between us to a promissory bond because a promissory bond between us is essential to his actually doing it.

We can see from this schema that—morally speaking—a promissory arrangement is a cooperative arrangement through which a promisee helps a promisor to do something that he ought to do and cannot do without the help of the promisee through the promissory arrangement. Thus cooperation can be seen to be intentionally-interrelated mutual help: mutual help which is intended by the cooperating parties to produce a certain result(s); so that a promissory arrangement is a type of formal (conventionally produced) cooperative arrangement, as contrasted with an informal (spontaneously produced) cooperative arrangement.

But we can also see from this schema, if we further neglect the sort of human imperfection that made it necessary for Jack to promise his mother to brush his teeth every night, that the object of the cooperation of a promisor and promisee is to enable the promisor to do something for the benefit of the promisee which he cannot do for him without a promissory bond between them. So promising basically is a type of formal cooperative arrangement which makes it possible for one person (the promisor) to confer a benefit upon another (the promisee) which cannot be conferred without a promissory bond between them.

But what can the benefit to a promisee be, if a promisor's bond to him is essential to its being conferred? Well, evidently, it must be a kind of benefit which can be conferred only via a promissory bond, and so must be some specific cooperative arrangement, such as Mike's helping his mother with housework on a regular basis, which requires the moral formalism of a promissory bond to exist, and which works out for the benefit of the promisee.

So promising—conceptually speaking—is the first formal cooperative arrangement in that (a) its form is the form of all formal cooperative arrangements, and (b) it is the only formal cooperative arrangement whose content is devoid of further formal moral structure. Thus morally more elaborate formal cooperative arrangements, such as compacts constituting governments, differ from promises in that their contents (what they are designed to achieve) are framed within specific formal moral structures which go beyond, but do not supercede, that of promising, and resemble promises in that they are brought into play by what are essentially "promissory" (formal moral) transactions. Thus we can see that, when we understand the source of the conviction constituting the "statics" of a promissory arrangement, we thereby will understand the source of the whole of the "statics" (cognitive content) of morality, including the whole of morality's content as exhibited in the "statics" of formal cooperative arrangements!

But just what is the source of this conviction, the conviction that: since (a) this promissory content is something the promisor ought to do, (b) his doing it ought to be subject between us to a promissory bond because a promissory bond between us is essential to his actually doing it? Well, as is by now evident, this problem actually is a particular form of the general problem: what is the source of our
conviction that we ought to cooperate, formally and informally, where required in doing what we ought to do? Now it is not enough to answer that, when cooperation is indispensably necessary to our doing what we ought to do, it thereby becomes something that we ought to do. For, though this much of the answer is obvious, it does not enlighten us at all about what we need basically to know, namely: (1) what ought all of us to do, the doing of which requires cooperation on the part of all of us? and (2) what is the source within us of the conviction that all of us ought to do it?

The answer to (1) must be this: promote the maximal well-being of every one of us. For the maximal well-being of every human being is the only perfectly-general, pertaining-to-human-beings, end of human conduct conceivable whose realization requires the cooperation of every human being through the cooperatively-interrelated contributions they make to the production and/or distribution to every human of his share of the means of maximal well-being. Thus we can see that we are beings who are essentially-social (beings who stand in need of cooperation and help from each other throughout life to achieve maximal well-being) and who possess a capacity for morality which goes with our essential-sociality. And thus we are brought to (2): what is the source within us of the conviction that all of us ought to promote the maximal well-being of every one of us?

Why not say that it has no source within us, because it is the source within us of morality: that it constitutes the normative half of an innate normative-practical self whose practical half is wholehearted willingness per se—wholehearted unconditional, or moral willingness to fulfill it(s intention)? Well, because the end in question—the maximal well-being of all of us—though definitely not devoid of content, definitely is much too abstract to serve as a concrete guide to conduct: something our innate moral principle definitely must serve as. So natural selection, in giving rise to our innate moral mind, had to build into our progenitors, as essentially-social beings, something that is functionally equivalent to this end: a principle which provides a concrete guide to conduct and which, when fully realized in all of our lives, makes possible achievement of maximal well-being, by each of us. But there is only one principle conceivable which meets this requirement, namely, the Principle of Morality:

We ought to act only in those ways whose universal performance is both possible and consistent with the rational self-interest—maximal well-being—of every human being.

Thus the immediate source within us, of the conviction that all of us ought to promote the maximal well-being of every one of us, is the conviction that all of us ought to cooperate formally and informally where required in doing what we ought to do to achieve our maximal well-being. For the natural terminus of this cooperative process, when abstractly conceived and invested with moral energy as the terminus of this cooperative process, rises to consciousness as unconditional, or moral wholehearted belief in—as the supreme end of human conduct—the continuing cooperatively-interrelated state in and through which each
and every one of us continues throughout his life to achieve maximal well-being. Thus we are left with the derivation of (2)—all of us ought to cooperate (formally and informally) where required in doing what we ought to do (to achieve our maximal well-being)—from The Principle of Morality.

But this derivation, as it would have to be, is as simple as can be. For no (rationality complete) autonomous being who is essentially-social can fail to see that universal failure to cooperate, where cooperation is required to enable some one (any one) to contribute to some one's (any one's) maximal well-being, would encompass collapse of all the (formal and informal) cooperative arrangements of human social life upon which the maximal well-being of each and every one of us depends: a state of affairs so radically incompatible with the maximal well-being of each and every one of us, that all of us (and that includes me!) ought! to cooperate (formally and informally) where required in doing what we ought to do to—erueka!—achieve our maximal well-being!

This brings us back to the rationale for the imperfection-oriented aspect of human normative-practical reason present in our original skeletal picture of a promissory conviction: for a promissory arrangement being subject to satisfactory termination should it subsequently prove to have been invalid. Now this requirement amounts, as we have seen, to this: any morally objectionable vestige of an invalidated promissory transaction ought to be expunged by the party to the transaction who is responsible for and able to expunge it. Thus our problem, to cast it in general terms, is this: what is the source of the conviction that any morally objectionable vestige of an invalidated formal or informal cooperative arrangement ought to be expunged by the party to the arrangement who is responsible for and able to expunge it? But this problem evidently can be cast, in even more general terms, as follows: what is the source of the conviction that any morally objectionable vestige of a de facto wrong act ought to be expunged by its agent, if he is responsible for and able to expunge it?

The answer of course is: the Principle of Morality. For the universal failure of moral agents to expunge the morally objectionable vestiges of their wrong acts, which they are responsible for and able to expunge, is both: (1) intrinsically incompatible with the rational self-interest of the victims of their wrong acts—by consisting of deprivations of goods or incursions of evils on their parts and (2) instrumentally incompatible with the rational self-interest of all of us—by consisting of deprivations their victims suffer of all or part of the means of their contributions to the common good (the maximal well-being of all of us).

Thus we can see that our innate moral self deals with the morally objectionable products of our imperfection, which we are responsible for and able to correct, by obligating us to correct them both (1) because their victims have a right to have us correct them and (2) because all of us have a right to the moral progress to which their correction is essential. Now this is only half of our innate moral self's program for correcting our mistakes. For, in addition to this program for remedying the morally objectionable effects of our mistakes, we also have a
program, as we have seen at least dimly through our analysis of the invalidation phase of a promissory state, for remedying the causes of these mistakes. But this dual-aspected program of correction, which is so fundamental to the normal development of our moral selves and to the moral progress of our species that it becomes literally our second nature—morally speaking—is a complex topic whose further development must be left for another occasion.

There is one remaining aspect of a promissory conviction whose derivation from the Principle of Morality we have yet to uncover, namely: this promissory content is not something it would be wrong to do because either (i) its performance conflicts with some antecedent obligation of the promisor or promisee or (ii) its performance is "intrinsically" morally wrong. But by now its derivation is not at all difficult to see. For its incorporation within the primary rationale for promising really amounts to "nothing more" than planning ahead to avoid performance of a promise having two very fundamentally morally objectionable effects of its own, namely, effects which: (a) prevent fulfillment of an already existent obligation of the promisor or promisee or (b) violate some general standing requirement of the Principle of Morality; and this is a form of planning ahead in which we evidently ought to and must engage, so as to remain consistent with ourselves (maintain, or keep coherent our moral intent) through time!

Thus we at last can see that, although the statement that someone did make a promise is a factual one, what it claims to have taken place is a formal moral transaction which is not susceptible of utilitarian analysis because its ultimate normative-practical source is the (deontological, or nonteleological) Principle of Morality!
NOTES

1 The thesis that the basis of morality is innate is defended in chapters 5 and 9.

2 There actually, as we shall see, is a fourth general ground for rejecting a promisor's offer, namely, facts which tend to show that a promissory arrangement is not necessary to achievement of the promisor's purpose. But we will fail to see how central it is to promising if we bring it in now as just one of four horsemen in control of promising, for it actually is the horse, and a horse with a mind of its own, the other three are riding.

3 Promising, like any human activity, is subject to moral judgment. Thus a promise is binding (obligatory) if and only if it is a valid promise: a promise which ought to be kept; and no person is ever bound by a promise merely because he made it. Nor is a person ever even merely prima facie bound to keep a promise merely because he made it. For a promise is prima facie binding if and only if it is prima facie valid.

4 Strictly speaking, or in actual moral fact, this concluding claim presupposes that the content of the promissory offer actually meets fully the conditions of this rationale, so that this rationale has been (morally) validly (or morally permissibly and requiredly) invoked—second phase—with respect to the promissory content. For more on this necessary qualification to this transitional conclusion, see infra p. 69. Evidently, to speak even more strictly, this transitional concluding claim also presupposes that the rationale for promising in question is a morally sound one. Moreover, the moral soundness of the rationale for promising I have so far laid out is defended where it seems to require further defense in section 5 of this chapter.

5 See note 3 infra.

6 See note 2 infra.

7 It should go without saying that an apology ought to be made and accepted, to achieve or restore a meeting of their minds.

8 I use the term 'willingness' to designate the innately based and immediate active power (impulse) to conform conduct to a general or particular normative-practical judgment (belief).

9 Thus belief in the truth of a general or particular normative-practical judgment is the necessary starting point (basis) of the process whereby it guides conduct. This fact constitutes one-half of the general refutation of noncognitivism in ethics that I developed in chapter 5.

10 Social life at its best occurs when moral formalism is at its necessary minimum, and so abounds with informal cooperative arrangements: a fact illustrated best by family life at its best.
For more on the innate structure of practical reason in human beings, see chapter 9. The end in question is embodied in the (teleological) Principle of Maximal Collective Well-Being: We ought to act so as to make possible achievement of maximal well-being by every member of our species. So my point is that it is the (deontological) Principle of Morality, rather than the extensionally-equivalent (teleological) Principle of Maximal Collective Well-Being, that natural selection builds into our species (homo sapiens) as our supreme principle of rational conduct. For more on this point, see the final pages of chapter 9.

The proof that this end and this principle are functionally equivalent runs as follows. The existence of a community (system of social structures) which makes possible achievement of maximal well-being by its members is coordinate with absence among its members of all actions—whether commissions or omissions—which, were they to come universally to fruition, would be incompatible with achievement by all its members of maximal well-being; and the Principle of Morality requires absence of all such actions among its members in requiring them to act only in those ways whose universal performance is both possible and consistent with the rational self-interest of its members. Let me add, by way of explanation, that one's own maximal well-being, the object of rational self-interest, consists of the maximal satisfaction of one's own innate and acquired natural interests, or drives. This latter notion is explicated in chapter 12.

This moral emotion (sentiment) seems to be the analytically dissected content of Hume's notorious 'sentiment of humanity' when fused with the 'moral approbation' which is channeled (directed upon objects) through it.

In this derivation, we must at first suppress the end; for, as we have seen, its rise to consciousness requires grasping it as the terminus of moral cooperation.
Chapter 11
THE PSYCHICAL DESCENT OF MAN

In chapter 9, Evolution and Autonomy, I argued that, as moral beings, we humans—homo sapiens—are a species of autonomous beings who are essentially-social: autonomous in that we possess the capacity (or active power) to apply the resources of reason through ought-principles to achieve the satisfaction or maximal satisfaction of the natural interests, or drives of the members of our species, and essentially-social in that we stand in need throughout life of aid and cooperation from each other to achieve the satisfaction or maximal satisfaction of our natural interests. Moreover, I argued further, pursuant to this conclusion, that the innate autonomy of moral beings such as ourselves is tripartite and hierarchical in character, with the Principle of Morality:

We ought to act only in those ways whose universal performance is both possible and consistent with the rational self-interest (or maximal satisfaction of natural interests) of each and every member of our species (or kind)
in normative superiority (or superiority in judgment as to what ought to be done) and practical superiority (or superiority in action pursuant to judgment as to what ought to be done) over the Principle of Rational Self-Interest:

I ought to act so as to maximally (or optimally and exhaustively) satisfy my own natural interests
in normative-practical superiority over the Principle of Natural Interest:

I ought to act so as to satisfy my own natural interest x (whatever x may happen to be and as x presents itself for consideration).

Furthermore, I left completely up in the air, as a dark and difficult subject deserving further attention, the factual details of the evolution-by-natural-selection, or descent of the innate behavior-guidance-system of moral beings such as us human beings. It is to this subject that the present essay in, what I shall call, 'conceptual paleoanthropology' is devoted. But, before I turn to its substantive detail, let me emphasize that it is an essay in conceptual paleoanthropology.

While I have abstracted much from the accounts I have read by empirical paleoanthropologists of the physical and psychical—mostly physical—descent of Man, my account—being predicated fundamentally on conceptual considerations alone and consisting, as it does, of the conceptually-controlled imaginative-reconstruction of events such a method makes both possible and necessary—abstracts from the details of events that actually took place eons ago on our planet—the planet Earth—and from the fossil-record deposited along with them. My account is designed to apply to the descent, or evolution-by-natural-selection of moral
beings (who are, after all, animals of a very peculiar and distinctive sort who sit—or, better, stride—on primate evolution) wherever they (or it) may occur in the Universe. I will be completely satisfied if my account illuminates, for those concerned and competent to illuminate it in detail, the fossil-record left by our preprimate, primate and hominid progenitors, but I will be minimally satisfied if it does not conflict irreconcilably with this record.

I shall begin with those conceptual considerations that seem to me to provide the framework for the controlled imaginative-reconstruction of the events that illuminate the psychical descent of moral beings such as Man. Then I shall turn to the imaginative-reconstruction of these events, filling in as I proceed the details of the conceptual-controls I employ in this reconstruction-process.

As I explain in chapter 9, natural interested autonomy, being the only unitary (singular or hierarchically-unified) form of autonomy which solitary and social types of lines of animal development can have in common, must be the only form of autonomy that can arise directly out of nonautonomy. So it is to the evolution, in social lines of animal development, of natural interested autonomy out of nonautonomy that we must turn our attention first. Then we can take up the evolution of moral autonomy out of natural interested autonomy.

The state of nonautonomy out of which the state of natural interested autonomy arises must be the one which provides natural selection with the right opportunity, or gap to fill. Hence it must be one in which a nonautonomous species possesses a way of life—derived from a set of social instincts and random trial-and-error-learning within the framework they establish—which has given it sufficient overall control of its environment for the purpose of reaching reproductive age and consummating reproduction that it has room in its life for the attention to the refined satisfaction of the natural interests with which natural selection has so generously provided it, but for which its instinct and random trial-and-error-learning based way of life does not provide. But the refined satisfaction of the natural interests of their possessor is a perfectly-general objective, and so can find embodiment for the purpose of behavior-guidance only in a basic principle of autonomy (in a basic, or underivative and perfectly-general, ought-principle). Consequently autonomy makes its first appearance in the form of natural interested autonomy and as something which complements (or completes) the work of natural selection, through instinct and random trial-and-error-learning, in enabling an advanced species of social beings to achieve well-being (satisfaction of natural interests) and maximal well-being (maximal satisfaction of natural interests) of the members of their species.

Thus it is evident that the life-style of natural interested autonomous beings is one which is controlled by instinct, amplified by random trial-and-error-learning within the framework these instincts provide, and only supplemented by autonomy; so that these beings are pinned-down to the environment to which their instinct-based way of life (or lifestyle) adapts them. Now so long as this environment does not change
significantly, or in such a way that a step in natural selection is required to save the species, these beings will have a highly stable and successful way of life. But suppose a significant change in their environment does occur! What then?

Well, the step natural selection takes may be an alteration in the instinctual-basis of the way of life of the endangered species which adapts this way of life to their significantly changed environment. But, if the endangered species is at (or near) the apex of its line of animal development--having the most general and integrated set of instincts a social animal can have--the only step natural selection can take which will save the species is the one that constitutes the ultimate advance in organism behavior-guidance: supplementation of instinct's control by autonomy's control of life-style. For the members of the endangered species require some change in their life-style (or way of life) that can be produced only by a form of autonomy, going beyond natural interested autonomy, which can perceive the source of the danger to their species and alter their way of life to meet it.

But what sort of alteration in the environment of highly advanced natural interested autonomous beings could both endanger them as a species and require for its correction that they perceive the source of the danger and alter their way of life to meet it? Well, it must be an alteration they are constitutionally incapable of correcting without this final step in autonomy, and which is endangering them as a species because its specific adverse effect is upon their ability to reach reproductive age; for they are highly advanced natural interested autonomous beings for whom nothing in their natural environment can pose a serious threat to their survival as a species by depriving them of the ability to reach reproductive age, and any species this advanced can consummate reproduction if it can reach reproductive age. Hence the species-endangering alteration with which we are confronted must be an alteration in their way of life produced and endorsed by the joint operation of their instinctual and natural interested selves, and into which they are locked by the joint operation of these selves so that they require the genetically-based (or innate) ability to perceive what is wrong with their way of life and to correct it, in order to reach reproductive age. Thus the question we must answer, to explain the evolution of moral autonomy out of natural interested autonomy, is this:

What alteration in the way of life of a species of highly advanced social natural interested autonomous beings that can be produced and enforced by the joint operation of their instinctual and natural interested selves will interfere significantly with their capacity to reach reproductive age?

We can see, from the foregoing, that our overall problem in explaining the evolution-by-natural-selection of moral beings breaks down into two main subsidiary explanatory problems: (1) the problem as to how natural interested autonomy arises in essentially-social beings out of nonautonomy and (2) the problem as to how moral autonomy arises in essentially-social beings out of natural interested autonomy. Now we have already discovered the general solution to the first problem, and
have even seen the principle of the solution to the second. So, what we need to discover next is the general solution to the second problem. To discover it, we need to review and amplify what we have already learned that is relevant to its discovery.

The theory of the evolution of autonomy sets out from the idea of a species of essentially-social beings who possess a way of life—derived from an advanced (or general and integrated) set of instincts and from random trial-and-error-learning within the framework this set of instincts establishes—which has given it such overall control over its natural environment, for the purpose of reaching reproductive age and consummating reproduction, that its members have room in their lives for the attention to the refined satisfaction of the diverse natural interests with which natural selection has liberally provided them, but whose refined satisfaction is not provided for by their present way of life. Now this general need (or gap to fill), which has arisen in the lives of all of the members of this species of essentially-social beings, can be met only by natural selection's initial—random exploratory and experimental—step in autonomy. For the refined satisfaction of the natural interests of their possessor—as they happen to present themselves for his consideration through the felt-urges to which they give rise—is a perfectly-general (or particular environment free) objective, and so can be embodied, for practical purposes, only in the form of natural interested autonomy:

I ought to act so as to satisfy my own natural interest x (whatever x may happen to be and as x presents itself for consideration).

Now this origin of natural interested autonomy in advanced essentially-social beings shows that initially, at any rate, it plays an ancillary role in the lives of its possessors, whose instinct and random trial-and-error-learning based way of life it can only complement initially, at any rate, because this way of life equips them so admirably in their present natural environment for reaching reproductive age and consummating reproduction. Thus initially, at any rate, natural interested autonomy operates within the framework laid down by the advanced instinct and random trial-and-error-learning based essentially-social way of life of its possessors, and as the means by which each of its possessors achieves for himself the refined satisfaction of his natural interests for which his social-group's essentially-social way of life is too gross to provide.

But natural environments can change, and any autonomous being has—as an essential part of the substance of his autonomy—some ability to understand (see or/and figure out) how his environment works and to use this understanding to change his environment to fulfill the requirements perceived by his autonomy. Moreover, the environment of any essentially-social being who is with his kind includes whatever essentially-social way of life they share, as the vehicle through which they interact so as to convert their natural environment into one in which they can reach reproductive age and consummate reproduction. Thus the natural interested autonomy of a species of essentially-social beings, advanced enough in intelligence to understand the basic workings of their essen-
tially-social way of life, could—and, if a change in their natural environment required it, would—be employed quite willingly by their instinctual self for the purpose of its own gratification, either within or without the framework of their present essentially-social way of life; for autonomy cannot, at this primitive stage of development of its understanding of the ways of the world, tell the difference between the felt-promptings of natural interest and the felt-promptings of instinct.

Now in this capacity of advanced natural interested beings we see the source of the threat to their survival as a species that gives rise to the need for natural selection's final-corrective-step in autonomy. For in this capacity lies the ability of advanced natural interested beings to alter the way of life that adapts them reproductively to their natural environment, and in such a way that they literally rob themselves of the ability to reproduce in this environment, and so must either perish or evolve into moral beings who can perceive what is wrong with their present way of life and reorganize it so that they are able in this environment at least, at least to reproduce their kind.

Thus our problem now is to discover in what sort of advanced natural interested beings exercise of this socially-dangerous synthetic-capacity can take the path that leads to their evolution into moral beings and—in light of its origin in their nature and its fruition in moral autonomy—exactly what the steps are in the path of their evolution into moral beings.

It is obvious that a social line of animal development arises out of a solitary one, owing to the inherently greater complexity of a social way of life in comparison to a solitary one. A social being usually relates to his natural environment through his social environment, while a solitary being always relates directly to his natural environment. What is not so obvious is that any social line of animal development must use sex-differentiation as the vehicle for introducing the role-differentiation-and-specialization that makes sociality the extraordinary instrument for reproduction of the species it is when it has reached a tolerably advanced level of development. For the young of an advancing social line of animal development, unlike those of a solitary one, take longer and longer and require more and more help to develop physically and psychically from infancy to reproductive age: a process of nurturing so complex and time-consuming, in relation to their present individual physical capacities, that it simply must, at least at first, be divided-up on an instinctual basis between the male and the female of the species. Thus the psyche of a tolerably advanced social species which has just achieved specialization in the nurturing of its young is one in which the primitive part, consisting of the essential-instincts of a solitary being, is in subordination to the advanced part, consisting of complementary, sex-related sets of social instincts determining the male and the female shares of the cooperative-aiding way of life through which they successfully nurture their young to reproductive age. But on what principle will natural selection apportion the sex-related and instinct-determined shares of the cooperative-aiding way of life through which a tolerably advanced social species succeeds in
Well, the answer depends entirely on how the species in question feeds its young in infancy. For if it feeds them food gathered from the natural environment, then natural selection can, and so will, distribute the nurturing and protection of their young equally between the two sexes, with both sexes playing equally prominent—though complementary—roles in both capacities. But if the species in question suckles its very young, then the principle of distribution changes; for the female of the species—the one who gestates and then suckles their young—is the prime candidate biologically for specialization in instinctual nurturing of the young. This means that the male of the species, to keep pace, must specialize in instinctual protection of the entire nurturing process, and thus of the group within which it takes place. Thus the principle of sex-related, instinct-determined role-distribution in species which suckle their young is this: put the burden of nurturing the young on the female of the species and the burden of protecting the nurturing process on the male of the species. Thus these two distribution principles are functionally-equivalent, in that both produce complementary, specialized, sex-related, instinct-based roles in the process of successful nurturing of the young within the cooperative-aiding way of life through which a tolerably advanced social species succeeds in bringing its young to reproductive age, and yet each describes a distinctive type of line of social animal development. So we must ask: within which of these two types of lines of social animal development can autonomy arise?

Now the answer, in principle, must be: the type of line of development out of which the next advance in behavior-guidance—random trial-and-error-learning within the framework of instinct—can arise; for autonomy is the successor of random trial-and-error-learning and the ever increasing storage capacity which necessarily goes with its development, and so can arise only on the base it provides. But random trial-and-error-learning (trial-and-error-learning guided by instinct rather than autonomy) can exist only in a species whose way of life makes room for and requires it, and therefore can exist only in a species whose psyche-structuring instincts are quite general in relation to the details of the determinate natural-social environment to which these instincts adapt them for the purpose of reproduction of their species. Now such a species, evidently, will have to learn a great deal about how to behave in their natural-social environment, in order to reach reproductive age.

But how are they to learn it? On their own? Well, perhaps, if they are a very low-order random trial-and-error-learning species in which instinct leaves little of importance to be learned. But, certainly, not on their own if they are very far along the road toward generality of species-determining psychical-characteristics. For this is the road toward a life-time of teaching and learning about the natural-social environment in which they live; and a species cannot be very far along this road without having built up, through random trial-and-error-learning, a determinate way of life, in the determinate environment of the type to which they are instinctually-adapted, which is so highly advantageous to their survival as a species that they have evolved the ability to teach it to their young as the substance of their
psychical-nurturing. Thus the type of line of social animal development out of which autonomy can arise is the one which makes possible psychical-nurturing of the young, in conjunction with young to nurture psychically. So our present question comes down to this: in which of the two main types of lines of social animal development can psychical-nurturing of the young arise as the next step in its development?

Now the answer can only be: in the type of line which suckles its very young—its infants—on mothers' milk. For nourishing the young on what comes from the head—nourishing them psychically—is the next step biologically beyond nourishing them, merely, on what comes from the body—nourishing them physically on mothers' milk; because both the process of physical nourishing from the mother's body and the process of psychical nourishing from the family-group require and develop the feelings of intimacy and warm affection within the family-group which supply the social cohesiveness, left increasingly unprovided for by their increasingly more general social-nature, species-specific instincts as they advance toward autonomy. Thus autonomy arises out of the type of line of social animal development which suckles its very young (on mothers' milk) and nurtures its young physically and psychically until they reach (the appropriate degree of) maturity within a family-group in which the (adult) male of the species plays the predominant role in protecting the family-group, and thereby the nurturing process that goes on within it.

But just what sort of family-group can this be, if the main line of its development is to result in autonomy? Can it be a single-family-group—a family-group in which a single breeding-pair are responsible for the rearing of their young—or must it be a, more social, multiple-family-group—a family-group in which a number of breeding-pairs are responsible collectively for the rearing of their young collectively? Now this is essentially the question: which type of line of family-group development—the single or the multiple—can give rise to a family-group which has enough control over its natural environment for successful reproduction—through very general social-nature instincts and the very considerable learning that they, together with the capacity for random trial-and-error-learning and the very large storage capacity that accompany them, make possible—that they have both the room in their lives and the psychical basis—capacity for random trial-and-error-learning plus very large storage capacity for the results of its exercise—for natural interested autonomy? For this, as we have seen, is the condition in which a group of nonautonomous essentially-social beings must be who are on the verge of developing into natural interested autonomous beings.

Now it is clear that the high degree of generality, and integration, of the social-nature instincts which are the basis of such an advanced family-group's way of life—a factor functionally-coordinate with very considerable average storage capacity in its members—is the controlling factor in this problem. For a set of very general, and integrated, social-nature instincts is what adapts them fundamentally to an extremely varied natural environment so that they are required to evolve—in the process of their random trial-and-error-learning close adaptation to this environment—a very considerable average storage capacity for the
very considerable amount of learning this close adaptation requires. But it is evident that only a multiple-family-group can have a set of very general, and integrated, social-nature instincts. For it is an inviolable rule of animate nature, that the heavier the burden a single individual bears in the reproductive success of its species, the more specialized (or particularized) that individual is in relation to its natural environment—and the lighter the burden it bears, the less specialized in relation to that environment; and the members of single-family-groups—in the nature of the case—bear a heavier burden than do members of multiple-family groups in the reproductive success of their species.

Thus it is only within a multiple-family line of animal development that the social-nature instinct-based, random trial-and-error-learning-amplified overall way of life can arise whose possessors have sufficient control over their natural environment for reproductive purposes that they have developed the very large storage capacity and the room in their individual lives for its exercise which make the step into natural interested autonomy both possible and worthwhile.

But just what sort of overall multiple-family way of life will this most advanced of all possible types of nonautonomous species have? Well, to begin with, a multiple-family way of life evolves out of a single-family way of life when the need for it arises; and the need for it arises along with the capacity-need for psychical-nurturing on the part of both the male and the female of a breeding-pair. For only a species with this capacity-need possesses a way of life in which all the members of the family-group—through the nurturing process—develop for each other the feelings of intimacy and warm affection which make possible the growth of a nuclear-family—a single breeding-pair and their young—into an extended-family—a group of continually interbreeding parents and their offspring. For the cohesiveness, and enormous reproductive advantage and increase in capacity for development of advantageous genetic-modifications, of an extended-family stems primarily from these feelings of intimacy and warm affection, and an extended-family is the necessary basis for evolution of the basic type of multiple-family: a group of continually interbreeding parents and their progeny who are instinctually-organized to collectively rear (or nurture and protect) their young collectively.

But exactly what structure must such a thoroughly collective way of life have if it is to evolve into the most advanced of all possible nonautonomous ways of life? Well, evidently, it must be one in which the (adult) males are organized for the purpose of protecting the nurturing-process in such a way that they not only participate in it, as is characteristic of multiple-family groups, but participate increasingly in it, as there is more and more for the young males to learn from them about protection of the family-group. But what sort of overall group organization enables its defense-structure to meet this description?

Well, the only possible answer is: the sort in which the nurturing-process is at the center and the defense-process is at the perimeter. For this is the only arrangement conceivable which enables the adult males to train the young males in the growing art of the continuous col-
lective defense of the group, through continuous exhibition of their specialty in the life of the group, which at the same time enables the adult females to train the young females in the growing art of the continuous collective nurturing of the group, through continuous exhibition of their specialty in the life of the group; and it thereby is the only arrangement conceivable through which the overall nurturing-process can grow longer and longer, as the descending species in the line of development it makes possible capitalize, through random trial-and-error-learning, on the evolutionary advances in their basic physical structure, made possible by their advancing overall way of life, so as to build-up both the physical capacity and the storage capacity which go with their eventual mastery of their natural environment for the purpose of successful reproduction of these descending species.

Thus the question that arises next is: in what sort of natural environment—aquatic or terrestrial—can a center-perimeter multiple-family arise out of an extended-family? And the answer is: only in a terrestrial one. For only a terrestrial environment provides all three of the requisites for development of the one type of family-group out of the other: (1) the relatively stable geographical configurations which make possible a territory for the group to defend; (2) the necessity of having such a territory because the nucleus of the group continuously is a relatively delicate and unwieldy entity, consisting of nursing-females and young requiring constant attention, which cannot be on the move much of the time relative to what they have to do daily in their successful nurturing of the group; and (3) the means of having such a territory through an instinct-based, perimeter defense-system. Now a perimeter defense-system is impossible both beneath the surface of the ground—there simply is no room for its proper operation—and in the air—flight of the males takes them away from the nucleus of the group. Hence center-perimeter, multiple-family life arises, and develops, either on the ground or in the trees.

So the next question is: in what sort of terrestrial environment—ground or arboreal—can center-perimeter, multiple-family life evolve to the threshold of autonomy? Well, a ground environment is a very poorly-qualified candidate for the title. For ground-dwelling puts a premium—as a means, at least, of escape from predators—on such things as size, speed, strength, agility, camouflage, armor, and armament: all of which are physical attributes whose development tends to inhibit rather than promote coordinate development of storage capacity, by compensating for the advance in random trial-and-error-learning and accompanying advance in storage capacity which, otherwise, would have to occur to enable a threatened species to make better use for defense purposes of its existing physical assets. So it must be in an arboreal environment that center-perimeter, multiple-family life evolves to the threshold of autonomy: a fact confirmed by the origin of arboreal life among center-perimeter, multiple-family mammals.

Center-perimeter arboreal-mammals arise from center-perimeter terrestrial-mammals who take to the trees as a means of escape from terrestrial predators, and find adequate food there to their liking, or as a means of escape from terrestrial hunger, and find adequate refuge there from predators. Moreover, these transitional center-perimeter
mammals are herbivorous-gathers rather than carnivorous-predators; for only herbivorous-gatherers can, and must, carry their center-perimeter organization into the trees with them to secure the territory they require continuously for nurturing and protecting their group. Thus center-perimeter arboreal-mammals arise from relatively-small, center-perimeter, herbivorous terrestrial-mammals who are adept enough with their four limbs, and especially with their forelimbs, to climb small trees supplying them with adequate food and safety from predators. Now such animals as these—who are suited minimally to arboreal life by a body adapted basically for life on the ground—cannot undergo—on an extensive evolutionary scale—any very radical alterations in their bodies in the process of adapting to arboreal life; because the constraints of arboreal life place a premium on developing the bodily-structures which enable them to leave life on the ground for life in the trees—primarily forelimbs adapted for reaching-grasping-retrieving and more centrally-located eyes which make these limbs so useful—and these bodily-structures must be their leading physical characteristics, inasmuch as evolution of these bodily-structures is what enables them to take up life in the trees. Thus they are going to depend more and more heavily on their developing leading characteristics as they evolve into various species who live more and more successfully in their arboreal environment. These characteristics are their crudely handed-forelimbs, with which they reach-grasp-retrieve, and their more centrally-located eyes, which make binocular vision and thereby the more refined use of their handed-forelimbs possible: characteristics whose development and coordination thereby becomes a, if not the, central feature of their evolutionary development.

But this is the type of line of evolutionary development that—in its very nature—is coordinate with development of the maximum storage capacity of which a nonautonomous species is capable, and which thereby provides the basis for the evolution of natural interested autonomy out of nonautonomy. For a pair of handed-forelimbs, together with binocular vision for their use, are as bodily organs in a class all by themselves in the enormous variety of possible uses they have in the lives of their possessors; and thereby are the only bodily organs whose evolutionary and random trial-and-error-learning development requires coordinate development of storage capacity for the increasing volume of increasing-ly-complex skills to which their development leads, until the maximum storage capacity of a nonautonomous being is reached! So let us imagine this line of evolutionary development brought to its arboreal perfection through a center-perimeter, multiple-family way of life; and let us seek to describe this way of life and the characteristics of the species possessing it, so that we can see just what condition natural interested beings are in on the eve of their evolution into moral beings.

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Random trial-and-error-learning, within the framework of the instincts of a line of animal development, produces successive overall ways of life which encourage further development along this line until it produces an overall way of life whose possessors dominate their natural environment for reproductive purposes, so that further development of this line through instinct, and the guidance it provides for
trial-and-error-learning, ceases. Now the instinctual framework of the line of animal development leading to autonomy, owing to the order of the evolution of its elements, consists of: (1) the instinct to destroy/flee a mortal enemy; subordinate to (2) the instinct-drive for (indiscriminate, or promiscuous) sexual-intercourse; subordinate to (3) the instinct to give-receive physical and psychical nourishment and to develop coordinately feelings of intimacy and warm affection within the nurturing-group; subordinate to (4) the instinct to gain and control a territory for the group by means of a collective male defense-perimeter protecting a collective female nurture-center. Moreover, this instinctual framework comes to its perfection, at the dawn of natural interested autonomy, in the--very advanced--bodies of the descendants of a species of relatively-small, herbivorous terrestrial-mammals with the crudely handed-forelimbs and the more centrally-located eyes required to turn these limbs and eyes, and coordinately the rest of their body, into ones which adapt their possessors so well for life in the trees that they are able--through their instinct-based and random trial-and-error-learning-amplified way of life--to so dominate their total arboreal environment for reproductive purposes that they have evolved the storage capacity and the way of life which enable them to evolve into a species of natural interested autonomous beings, as the final step in their close adaptation to this environment. So, what we need to find out is what advances in bodily structure, and in coordinate random trial-and-error-learning within the framework of the instincts of their line of animal development, enables such primitive arboreal mammals to evolve into such advanced ones; for this is what will provide the picture we seek of the characteristics and general condition of natural interested beings on the eve of their evolution into moral beings.

The advances in bodily structure and in random trial-and-error-learning we need to discover are determined by the character of the arboreal environment in which they take place and consist of improvements in overall ability of the successive species in the line of development they represent to nurture and defend themselves in this environment. So, to find the starting point, and from there the pattern, of this line of development, we must answer the question, left hanging earlier: do terrestrial, herbivorous, center-perimeter mammals become arboreal to secure a better permanent food supply or to secure a better permanent refuge from predators?

Well, the answer must be: to secure a better permanent refuge from predators. For a ground environment provides a much greater total food supply for herbivorous mammals than does an arboreal environment, so that a prolonged period of overall food scarcity drives terrestrial herbivores into more efficient use of terrestrial food sources--near, on or under the ground--rather than into permanent use of arboreal ones.

Thus the environment in which center-perimeter mammals become arboreal to secure a better permanent refuge from predators must be one that provides them with an adequate food supply year round both on the ground and in the trees! For if it did not provide an adequate food supply year round on the ground, it would provide an even less adequate food supply year round in the trees; and it must provide an adequate food supply year round in the trees to permit the year-round, or continu-
ous deployment of center-perimeter, multiple-family life that is essential to development by the successive species who possess it into a species who dominate their overall arboreal environment. Thus the environment in which this species of herbivorous, arboreal mammals arises is a tropical (or semi-tropical) one, lush everywhere with the fruits and vegetation on which its various herbivorous species feed to contentment, and so multiply in profusion to supply the food on which its various predatory species also feed to contentment. So the next question we must answer is: what type of predator drives the terrestrial ancestors of our herbivorous, arboreal mammals into the trees permanently as the only means of escape from extinction by them?

The answer, in principle, must be: a type of predator capable of driving these herbivores, from both the ground on which they are adapted basically to live and the small trees in which they are adapting increasingly to climb and feed, into trees big enough so that they cannot, for a time at least, be caught by this predator. For only such a predator can cut off access by these herbivores on a year-round basis to the ground, so that the environment for their further development is a wholly arboreal one, and at the same time fail to exterminate them, so that they have a future in which to undergo arboreal development. But what predator meets these qualifications? What predator can deny to these herbivores both daytime and nighttime access to the ground and small trees they need for sustenance and security, so as to force them permanently into bigger, food-bearing, trees where it is unable to catch them?

Small trees grow, most plentifully, on the perimeter of a tropical forest, where they can get enough sunlight to develop properly. Therefore they are, more or less, out in the open where our herbivores during the day can see well the surrounding terrain and approaching predators. Thus the only predator that can approach them successfully during the day on a regular basis is one which approaches them very stealthily and camouflages itself in this terrain. But it must also be a predator that lies in wait near these small trees for an unwary herbivore to come within striking range; for these herbivores can easily detect any daytime entry on its part into their small trees and then leap from them to the ground to escape. Thus the overall ability of this predator, to stalk and lie camouflaged in wait for and catch them on the ground near the small trees they leave and enter during the day for sustenance and security, encourages in these herbivores round-the-clock small-tree-dwelling as the means of avoiding altogether the ground where its increasingly lethal presence is being felt. But, in the process of encouraging round-the-clock small-tree-dwelling in these herbivores, this predator lays the basis for their jump to round-the-clock big-tree-dwelling, to avoid entirely the small trees where its increasingly lethal presence also begins to be felt. For, as these herbivores spend more and more time in these small trees during the day and at night, this predator is forced more and more to enter these trees from the ground stealthily at night, so that it still can take one of them by surprise. Thus these small-tree-dwelling herbivores are trapped in a dark-alley and can avoid extinction, by the terror that strikes by day and by night, only by moving permanently into significantly-bigger, food-bearing trees, more toward the interior of the forest, where they
cannot be caught by this skillful tree-climbing predator because it is unable to detect their presence there!

But what skillful tree-climbing predator—which can camouflage itself during the day and which hunts by stealth and lying in wait during the day and night--can fail to detect the presence of these herbivores--during the day and during the night--in the bigger trees into which they have permanently moved? Well, the answer, evidently, is: one whose powers of day-perception are not acute enough to enable it to locate them where they are in these trees during the day, and whose powers of night-perception are not acute enough to enable it to locate them where they are in these trees at night. Thus our predator climbs trees to hunt small warm-blooded animals both by day and by night and yet cannot detect their presence unless it is fairly close to them! This means that it has poor long-range vision and good short-range vision, supplemented by the ability to locate warm-blooded animals by the heat they give off--a perceptual faculty which is quite short-range in a tropical climate but still very useful for night hunting. Thus our herbivores have (re)located themselves near the extremities of the main limbs of the significantly-bigger, fruit-bearing, trees into which they have moved permanently: limbs whose, fruit-bearing, branches are far enough off the ground and far enough away from the trunk so that this predator cannot see or heat-detect them, either from the ground or from the trunks of their trees, as it searches for the sight or the heat of a small, warm-blooded animal.

What, we may well ask, brings--because it long has brought--this predator into trees in search of small, warm-blooded animals to eat? And what, we may well also ask, prevents this predator from approaching our herbivores along their main limbs--in its search for a small, warm-blooded animal to eat--until it is close enough to see or/and heat-detect them? Now the answer to both questions can only be: a tree-top-dwelling--small--warm-blooded animal--a bird--which our predator--a snake--long ago became adapted to hunt when, to escape starvation into extinction, it followed them into the trees! For only such a pattern of predatory behavior could equip our predatory snake with both the ability to drive our herbivores permanently into the extremities of the main limbs of significantly-bigger trees and the inability to enter onto these limbs as its first (or instinctual) option upon entering these trees to hunt.

Now this inability complements perfectly the center-perimeter reaction natural to our herbivores when one of them sights one of our predators in their tree. The nurture-center moves quickly to the utmost extremities of the branches of their limb, where they are screened from the trunk by the defense-perimeter. Thus, though our herbivores know not what they are doing, what they are doing--putting as much distance as possible between themselves and our predator--is exactly what they need to do to maximize the likelihood of escaping detection by it. So let us imagine our herbivores living for a time in relative isolation and safety in their new arboreal environment, to see what developments they will undergo in adapting to it.
If development and coordination of crudely handed-forelimbs and more centrally-located eyes lead our primitive arboreal herbivores physically in their ascent to eventual mastery of their tropical arboreal environment, as we have seen they do, then coordinate development and coordination of the remainder of their body support them physically in this ascent. Now the keynote of this development overall is improvement overall in physical ability to nurture and defend themselves in this environment by means of their center-perimeter social-system. Thus the keynote of their overall physical development is improvement overall in physical ability to deploy and operate their center-perimeter social-system in a tropical arboreal environment. Now improvement overall in this ability will consist, so long as our arboreal herbivores go undetected by our arboreal predatory snake, of improvement overall in physical ability to move, rest and feed readily and safely on their main limb and in its branches. Thus one need only imagine our arboreal herbivores living for a time in this environment to see that their body will undergo the following developments:

(1) Hands--thumb more in opposition to and better articulated with fingers for better branch holding and food picking and eating
   (a) fingers--longer, stronger, better articulation and tip-sensitivity
   (b) thumb--longer, much stronger, much better articulation, much better tip-sensitivity;

(2) Arms--longer, stronger and better articulated at wrist, elbow and shoulder to facilitate--through hands--safe movement, feeding and rest;

(3) Head--larger, with incipient face (and flatter ears more toward side)
   (a) eyes--more acute (especially at short range) and even more centrally located for better binocular vision
   (b) cranium--expanded for increased storage capacity, processing of visual and somatic data and for coordination of bodily movements;

(4) Feet--longer, broader, more perpendicular to legs and articulated between heel and (articulated) toes for standing and walking on and gripping limbs;

(5) Legs--longer, stronger and better articulated at ankle, knee and hip to facilitate--through feet--safe movement, feeding and rest; and

(6) Torso--smaller in relation to larger extremities, internal organs rearranging and securing themselves for both upright and horizontal posture and movement, chest and back more heavily muscled to complement omni-purpose handed-forelimbs, lower back and abdo-
men more heavily muscled to complement multi-purpose footed-legs.

These overall physical developments mean that our primitive arboreal herbivore, if not so already, has at last become a primate: a member of the most highly developed order of animals. So our problem now is to find out how this—relatively—primitive primate comes into complete mastery of its arboreal environment through further physical development and coordinate random trial-and-error-learning along primate lines. Now their increasing size and mobility makes our primitive primates—individually and collectively—more easily and readily detectable during the day and at night—by our, ever present, arboreal predatory-snake, who will (of course) grow in size to keep pace with their growth. So we must begin by considering how our primitive primates behave when they are once again confronted by the terror that strikes by day and by night.

To be discovered at night, bunched together in the branches at the tip of their main limb, our primates will have to grow considerably in overall size, so as to emit enough heat collectively to make possible their heat-detection from the trunk of their tree. So, initially, they again confront our snake during the day, when their center-perimeter social-system is deployed along their main limb for nurturing and protecting their group; for dominant males soon are of sufficient size to be, visually or/and calorically, detected by our snake when they are stationed as close to its trunk as they are during the daytime deployment of their social-system. Thus it is that the herbivores of our story once again come under stealthy and camouflaged daytime attack by the predators of our story!

The results of this attack are predictable enough. The male on guard, if caught napping, is put permanently to sleep by his attacker, who plummets with him to the ground where he is killed and devoured, while the remainder of the group huddle in fear and horror at the tip of their limb. But napping on guard soon enough is extinguished, and along with it vision not acute enough to detect a stealthily-stalking, camouflaged snake soon enough to permit escape, so that the male on guard is able to sound the alarm for and trigger a quick retreat, for safety, to... to where? Well, to the only place they can safely reach where they can find safety from their attacker: the nearby branches of another tree, into which they can safely jump and the snake cannot follow. Thus our primates acquire the ability to move laterally, for safety and for food, throughout the main-limb branches of fairly-sizeable, fruit-bearing, trees somewhat toward the interior of their tropical forest, and the ability to locate themselves in these branches for these purposes.

Acquisition of this latter ability brings with it immediately a development in random trial-and-error-learning of considerable importance to their subsequent development as primates. For they immediately observe that the noisy and boisterous entry of their troop into the branches of a getaway tree—led by the males who happened to be in the extremities of the gotaway tree—dislodges, and otherwise drives, from them the snakes they fear, and in the bargain any snake-attracting birds

New pagination for online edition: 286
that might be there. This observation leads to development of the day­time getaway into a fine art of vocally-coordinated exit-and-entry, in which the increasingly-cumbersome nurture-center follows a dominant-male assault-force--which takes over and renders secure the branches and limb to be occupied--and is followed by a dominant-male rear-guard--which harrasses and confuses the attacking snake until the nurture-center is safely on its way into the getaway tree; and it also leads, of course, to the refinements in bodily-structure--for jumping and for rapid sure­handed and sure-footed movement along limbs and branches--required to bring this art to perfection. Thus our advancing primates are now admirably equipped to find continuous new food supplies and refuge from day-hunting predatory snakes.

Hence a troop of such primates is bound to increase both in numbers and in average size; so that the male assault-force is bound some time--owing to its size and to opportunity--to occupy simultaneously several adjoining limbs of a getaway tree, and thus bring about expansion of the total space their troop occupies to fit the requirements of their increasing numbers and size. Now multiple-limb occupancy enables a troop of advancing primates to live and feed comfortably in a tree for a considerable period of time, providing them with the space and food to do so and with the dispersal of their sleep-groups required to compensate for the increase in their size which, otherwise, would make them heat-detectable collectively from the trunk of their tree. But multiple­limb occupancy through a getaway is limited by the physical possibilities with which the male assault-force finds itself presented on executing entry into a getaway tree, so that night-hunting snakes are bound to keep the average size and number of our troop of advancing primates well within the limits required for safety at night by the conical section of main limbs and branches as they occupy them for sleep. Thus, at this point, there will occur a great dispersal and specialization of primate populations, within this type of way of life, as various troops of them spread throughout the main limbs of the various types of fruit-bearing trees of their tropical forest in which they are so admirably equipped by this type of way of life to live comfortably and to escape predation by both day-hunting and night-hunting snakes.

This process of dispersal and specialization, though it takes place within a type of way of life in which its possessors do not have mastery of their arboreal environment, nevertheless eventuates, as it must, in a primate species who are able to live in the main limbs of the very largest, fruit-bearing, trees in their forest. Thus they will be the most advanced primates in this forest--physically as well as psychi­cally--who can drive any thing--snake, bird or primate--from the branches and limbs of the very sizeable conical portion of any tree when they occupy it. Now the ability to seize control, for living purposes, of the entirety of any tree when they occupy it is the necessary next step in the mastery by any primate species of their entire arboreal environ­ment. So the question we need to answer now is this: what development in random trial-and-error-learning must our troop of most advanced primates undergo to be able to seize control of the entirety of any tree upon occupying it for food and for safety?
The answer, in principle, evidently, is: the development in random trial-and-error-learning which enables them to drive all of the snakes—and, in the process, all of the birds and other primates—from any tree they occupy, so that the whole tree is safe for occupancy by their troop. But what, exactly, is this development and how does it come about?

It is the height of afternoon heat in the forest. So our troop of most advanced primates are well spread-out—for heat-relief and napping—in the sizeable section of main-limb branches of a fruit-bearing climax-tree which, we may suppose, they occupied earlier that afternoon, in their customary noisy-and-boisterous but organized-and-disciplined fashion. The male guards of our troop are as usual stationed along the main limbs they occupy at the points where the fruit-bearing branches begin. All of the troop are drowsy, even the guards. Besides, what have they to fear? The rain of snakes on the ground induced by their recent entry into their tree bordered on a monsoon! So drowsing and fruit-nibbling—with occasional glances down the limbs they are "guarding"—is much in evidence among the guards. Now here, obviously enough, is where the villain of our story once again puts in a timely appearance.

For the most isolated of our guards is being approached stealthily and cautiously along his limb by a large day-hunting arboreal snake! This snake came to the base of his limb from the other side of the tree to find the source of the violent vibrations induced in it by the earlier entry of our troop of primates. From there it spotted our isolated guard on duty—what a dominant and self-confident male he is—and immediately hid to wait for an opportunity to move on him undetected. See how obliging our isolated "guard" is, as he continues to doze while our snake draws almost within striking range. But then he stirs and wakens, freezing our snake where it is.

He lazily picks a piece of fruit from a nearby branch in front of him and then slowly turns his head to glance down the limb he is "guarding," at which point he sees our self-immobilized snake ready, so far as he can tell, to strike at him at any moment! So he, too, freezes, for an instant, while the overall organism that he is readies his response to the—life and death—emergency he is in.

If he remains immobile or attempts to flee he will be struck, probably with fatal results. It has usually happened that way before. But he does not know of anything else to do! So his response is the spontaneous act—well within his physical and psychical capabilities—of hurling the piece of fruit in his hand at our snake. The snake is struck and—being ready to strike and so not firmly perched on their limb—tumbles from the tree toward the ground!

This event sets off in our dominant male an instinctual response—connected with leadership in psychical nurturing—of sounds and movements signaling a great new triumph over a dreadful and powerful enemy. These sounds and movements galvanize the troop into the corresponding instinctual response—connected with followership in psychical nurturing—of undivided attention upon the emitter of these sounds and movements and
the event to which they draw attention. They see our snake strike the
ground and then beat a hasty retreat! This then sets off in them an
instinctual response of correlated sounds and movements signaling their
recognition and approval of our dominant male's, claimed, great new
triumph over a dreadful and powerful enemy, and then in the dominant
males' sounds and movements signaling our dominant male to demonstrate
to them how it is done! He then responds instinctually by conducting a
demonstration of how it is done that is fully expressive of the expansive
and personally-and-socially-triumphant frame of mind he is in, whose
focus is the ferocity roused in him toward snakes, and which fully
incorporates everything he already knows about driving snakes from
trees. Here is how the demonstration goes:

Our dominant male grabs a piece of fruit in either hand and races
down his limb to its base where he vaults—with the other dominant males
from his limb in imitative hot-pursuit—onto the nearest vacant main
limb where, under his direction, they race noisily and boisterously up
the limb, furiously picking and hurling fruit at every snake, and other
living thing, in sight—real or imagined—until they have cleared every
branch along the limb to occupy triumphantly its tip.

This triumphant and, by its perpetrators, much-touted demonstration
sets off in the other groups of dominant males, under the leadership of
their respective dominant members, imitation of the demonstration they
have just witnessed. Thus there is set off among the various groups of
dominant males an orgy of organized fruit-throwing snake-removal, which
is not spent until they have rid their tree entirely of snakes, and
other animals, and are occupying triumphantly the extremities of all the
limbs of their tree! For the prime-mover of this orgy is the individ-
ually-and-socially-fueled ferocity toward snakes which has dissipated
and supplanted their long-time fear of them, and which can be set at
rest only by absence of further snakes upon which to vent it!

The total demonstration being over, the expansive-and-territorial-
minded males signal the nurture-center to join them as they spread and
organize themselves throughout all the limbs of their! tree, so as to be
able to execute from anywhere fruit-throwing dispersal of any snakes
that might be coming (back) up their tree from their ground.

Thus our well-dispersed troop of most advanced primates dine and
sleep that night in greater comfort and safety from night-hunting snakes
than any primate has ever before enjoyed: the frosting on the cake of
their newly-acquired whole-tree, center-perimeter way of life. Now
these primates will undergo rapid physical development—including hand-
eye coordination, storage capacity, overall size and strength—to enable
them to take maximum advantage—through random trial-and-error-learned
refinements in it—of their, so far, uniquely-possessed (monkey-see,
monkey-do) new type of way of life. So let us project this total devel-
opment process to its completion, to see what the last step is in our
most advanced primate troop's total mastery of their arboreal environment
for the purpose of nurturing and protecting their group.

The collective male assault-force's highly organized-and-disciplined
total take-over of a tree—and from there of the ground surrounding it—
is so swift, certain and aweful-to-be-caught-in that our most advanced
primates become known to the other animals of their forest—especially to
its snakes—as the Terror of the Forest! So snakes, and other animals,
quickly learn to avoid the trees they inhabit like the plague. Both the
trees they take over and the ground around them are virtually free of
snakes, and of other animals, so long as they occupy them! Thus our
most advanced primate troop have at last come into complete mastery of
their arboreal environment for reproductive—sustenance and security—
purposes, and so can—and will—evolve into natural interested autonomous
beings, as the final step in their close (and complete) adaptation to
this environment. So the relevant question becomes: what pattern will
development of their natural interested autonomy display?

There are two areas of natural interest, not provided for by the
shared arboreal way of life of our troop of forest-masters, whose satis-
faction requires the services of natural interested autonomy—and the
consciously-directed, purposive trial-and-error-learning intrinsic to
it—and whose satisfaction is sufficiently important to their well-being
and sufficiently pressing to rouse their natural interested autonomy
from dormacy. One is the security and comfort they require at night,
which can be provided for such large arboreal-primates only by nests
woven among the branches in which it is their wont to sleep; for nest-
building is not instinctive among primates as such and, even if the idea
for their nests is derived by analogy from bird nests, their nests
cannot result from random trial-and-error-learning since they are multi-
purpose pieces of furniture which must be consciously invented and
developed by our forest-masters for their own security and comfort!
The other is the refined (or noninstinctual) treatment of their wounds,
which requires much experimentation and care in the selection, prepara-
tion (or chewing) and application of various vegetable-substances to
stop bleeding, to keep annoying insects away and to stop, and eventually
prevent, painful, and sometimes fatal, inflammations.

But the rousing from dormancy of natural interested autonomy en-
compasses the rousing from dormancy of both (1) general powers of—
analytical and analogical—reason for understanding how the world works
and (2) unbounded curiosity about how it does work to keep these powers
continually in operation. Thus the scene is set for extension of natural
interested autonomy to other areas of natural interest, not provided for
by the shared arboreal way of life of our troop of forest-masters, as
they encounter the means for the more refined satisfaction of these
natural interests in the process of their rational exploratory-and-
experimental behavior. The most notable of these areas will be the
delectation of their palate. For, having complete control of their tree
as well as the ground around it, dominant-male forest-masters are
bound—out of great self-confidence—to be led by their unbounded curi-
osity to descend to the ground around their tree and to try out the
various fruits and succulents they find there. Now our forest-masters
are great teachers-to and learners-from each other who also have great
affection for one another, so that it is not long before the entire
collective male defense-force is on the ground for considerable periods
during the day, using the materials they find there—such as sticks and

New pagination for online edition: 290
stones—to seize and hold a sizeable perimeter around their tree within which it is safe for the entire female nurture-center to descend and delectate on these same fruits and succulents.

Thus it is that our primitive arboreal herbivores—who were forced into arboreal life to escape extinction by predators—have evolved into arboreal herbivores so advanced—physically and psychically—that they can take up partial terrestrial life again simply for their own amusement and the delectation of their palate! And thus it is that arboreal-terrestrial primates achieve a way of life so satisfactory overall that it leaves virtually nothing to be desired! So, at long last, we have arrived at the big question: what sequence of events brings about the evolution of our natural interested forest-masters into moral beings?

While our natural interested forest-masters were in the process of taking up again and developing partial life on the ground, a planet-wide drought—spreading-and-intensifying gradually from its equator toward its gradually-expanding polar ice-caps—began encroaching upon their tropical forest. This drought has now reached the point where the total territory controlled year-round by our natural interested forest masters—a territory which, at the time of their evolution, was the most lush in their entire area of the forest owing to its vast underground water-supply—is being isolated as an oasis—along with other similar areas in their forest—as the surrounding forest first thins and then dies out around it. But this transformation of their territory, from an especially lush area in a tropical forest into a semi-arid oasis increasingly isolated from the shrinking forest it once epitomized, is a very gradual one—neither noticed nor understood by our natural interested forest-masters who, generation after generation, gradually, through their natural interested autonomy, change their life-style to suit its changing climate and topography.

No other species native to their territory can possibly compete with them for control of its trees and increasingly-seasonal food supplies. So their territoriality keeps them riveted to it until it has become an oasis, and then rivets them even more tightly (or possessively) to it as the average annual seasonal-food-supply available in it continues to shrink year by year, and as they are thereby forced more and more to grub in the ground with sticks to find edible roots and tubers to supplement what they can gather from trees and shrubs. Thus they eventually force out of their gradually shrinking-territory every species of animal which competes with them for their gradually shrinking-food-supply, and along with these herbivores every species of animal adapted to hunt them; so that our natural interested oasis-masters are the only animals, of any consequence, left at their oasis. Thus it is that the herbivores of our story once again are isolated in and pinned-down to their natural environment for the purpose of natural selection! Hence the question arises: what happens when our oasis-masters are confronted—as, sooner or later, they are bound to be—by plains animals who encroach on their territory for food and water?
An oasis-master differs physically from his forest-master forebearer in four principal respects: (1) thinning and shortening body-hair for more efficient evaporation of perspiration in an increasingly-torrid climate; (2) larger cranium, and accompanying face, for increased storage capacity and increased capacity for gathering and processing of data by natural interested autonomy (increased perceptual-agility and increased capacity for both analytical and analogical reasoning); (3) more upright posture for movement on the ground which leaves the hands free for other purposes; and (4) improved voice-box for speech expressive of the increasing-volume of fully-articulated thoughts development of natural interested autonomy brings with it. These physical improvements enable our oasis-masters to meet easily the threat to their territory, and to its meagre supply of food and water, posed by the arrival throughout the day—especially in the early morning and the evening—of the smaller plains herbivores and pursuing carnivores who are the first plains animals to arrive at their oasis. Here is how they do it:

The nurture-center, whose dominant female and young male members organize and arm themselves with sticks and stones to guard the trees their troop need for sleep and food, grubs and forages in their area of the oasis; while the male defense-perimeter organizes itself into—dominance-determined--groups which patrol their oasis for intruders they easily frighten away with their, by now customary, initial, very skillfully feigned, but awful-to-behold, stick-and-stone-brandishing attack.

But it must be noted that the collective male defense-force rapidly evolves—under these conditions--into a male-collective defense-force. For the urge dominant males, especially group-leaders, feel constantly to drive all other animals from their oasis—an urge made possible by their de facto oasis-mastery and generated and constantly fueled by their territoriality and warm affection for the members of their nurture-center--increases in intensity, with increasing pressure from plains animals on their oasis, until it borders on a mania. The total male defense-force thus gradually becomes more and more preoccupied--both in its activities and in its thoughts--with its increasingly-demanding defense-function, until it becomes a male-collective defense-force.

But, during this process of cultural isolation of breeding-females from breeding-males—except in their nests at night—natural selection has taken the only course it can, under the circumstances, to prevent extinction of their species through culturally-determined inability to consummate reproduction. It has made the breeding-females receptive to, and the breeding-males highly desirous of, sexual-intercourse the year round, while still restricting the fertility of the females to prevent overpopulation of their oasis, and has caused the female genitalia to migrate more toward the front of their body to make the face-to-face--affection-rousing--intercourse (play and copulation) possible in their nests at night which is required to maintain the social-bond between the male-collective defense-force and the--self-protecting--female nurture-center.

But, by the time this overall evolutionary process is at an end, our advanced oasis-masters—who gradually shrink in number owing to the gradual decrease in their year-round food supply—will have faced inva-
sion of their oasis, for food and water, by ever-larger herbivores and their ever-larger pursuing predators. Thus they have had to abandon merely brandishing their sticks and stones at their enemies, and have had to develop attack-formations in which they actually use these weapons to inflict enough damage on their enemies to drive them away. But, sooner or later, they find themselves faced with plains herbivores and carnivores who—out of hunger or thirst, and self-confidence—resist and attack them successfully owing to their strength, armament and size. Thus our advanced oasis-"masters"—who, owing fundamentally to their territoriality-determined mental-set, cannot go elsewhere—are on the verge of extinction through food deprivation by herbivores and predation by carnivores, with whom they cannot cope by the means presently at their disposal, even though they feel toward them an animosity amounting to hatred which is expressive of the integrated structure of their total personality. So the question is: what will happen?

Well, only one thing can happen that will save our natural interested primates from extinction by starvation or predation: a revolution in their weaponry which will enable the male-collective defense-force to kill, without being killed by, the very large, powerful and well-armed herbivores and predators with whom they find themselves locked increasingly unsuccessfully in mortal combat, as they attempt to drive them away from their oasis. Their sticks and their stones just won't do the job and their use makes them vulnerable to the weapons—hooves and horns and claws and teeth—of their enemies. But their sticks and their stones are all they have for weapons!

Thus some super-dominant male—through absolute obsession of his natural interested autonomy with the problem it has perceived—is bound to come up with the idea—through analogy with their hand-impacted stone-weapons—of a stone-axe (stone fastened to end of stick for powerful long-range delivery) and its use to bash-in the foreshell of an attacking animal before it can reach its wielder. Now every idea with which natural interested autonomy comes up, in a primate ruled—as an oasis-master is—by its social instincts, must be tested and then demonstrated before the group for its recognition, approval and imitation. So our obsessed male first makes and then tries out his, primitive, axe on one of the herbivores—prudence sometimes truly is the better part of valor—he despises to the point of insanity. The stunned beast falls dead at his feet with hardly a quiver! Thus there issues forth from our dominant male a maniacally-triumphant-and-urgent call to the male-collective to witness a demonstration of the phenomenal new weapon he has invented. Recognition, approval and imitation by the male-collective quickly follow.

Thus development and use of their stone-axe becomes the focal-point of the personality of every member of the male-collective. For it is the one thing through which each can find outlet for his developed personality as a member of the male-collective and at the same time for the developed hatred and ferocity each feels toward the invaders of their oasis; and natural interested autonomy—knowing no better—cannot but put its stamp of approval on whatever it deems necessary to satisfy the (focused) felt-requirements of the total developed personality of each! Thus each member of the male-collective develops a monomania for
improving the quality and the use of his stone-axe for perpetrating genocide upon the "dangerous" herbivores and carnivores who have the brazen-effrontery to encroach upon their territory; and a lust for their blood thereby arises in the members of the male-collective to serve as the capstone of this monomania.

The rapid development of their stone-axes, as reliable weapons which they wield with increasingly-deadly results by surrounding enemies at their water-hole, is of course matched by the rapid depletion of the available supply of animals upon whom they can practice their advancing art. Soon these animals all either have been killed or have learned to avoid the Terror of the Oasis like the plague, so that their oasis is virtually free of encroaching animals, of any sort, round the clock!

Now one would think that the male-collective would be satisfied with completion of the job they originally set out to do! The nurture-center certainly are satisfied with it, and congratulate and applaud their dominant males for a job well done. But the male-collective by now are frozen into their monomania for the use of, improved, stone-axes to vent their genocidal lust-for-the-blood of their herbivorous and carnivorous enemies. For this genocidal lust has become the single most-powerful-and-persistent craving the male-collective have, so that its monomaniacal character is now due also to the full approval given to its continual gratification by their natural interested autonomy! Thus each member of the male-collective has come to think that venting his genocidal lust is what he ought to do above all else: a belief which, when once formed by his natural interested autonomy, constitutes an absolutely unshakeable conviction which is his supreme guide in life! Thus the male-collective have put out of their minds entirely the job they originally set out to do--and, along with it, any other socially-useful job—for total preoccupation with the, sociopathic, job of finding a new supply of animals upon which they can vent their monomaniacal, genocidal blood-lust! But where and how are they to find such a supply?

Well, from the tops of the tallest trees of their oasis the males have, for years, been able to see small clusters of trees and other vegetation like their own which, they now assure each other, must contain the quarry they seek. So they set frantically about organizing their entire troop for departure for the nearest-looking of these clusters of vegetation. The males are extremely anxious for action, and the troop cannot carry much besides their weapons; so they are soon under way, with the male-collective leading the way as rapidly as possible toward their chosen-mass-of-green ever-gaining-in-detail, and with the cumbersome female nurture-center doing their best to keep up. But the nurture-center—which is armed to protect itself against dangerous animals--falls farther-and-farther behind, as the male-collective are spurred into a trot and then into a run by the "stench" of their enemies drifting toward them on the wind from the oasis ahead.

Thus the male-collective descend on this oasis in a frenzied genocidal-rage, which immediately scatters in all directions the--forewarned and knowledgeable--victims they seek! So the male-collective erupt into a mass-tantrum of unrestrained destruction of the oasis—which contains precious little to eat to begin with--and then urge their nurture-center
to catch up, so they all can go on—right away!—to a nearby oasis they have spotted from on high. But the nurture-center-being tired, thirsty, hungry and not in an over-compensating maniacal-state-of-mind like the male-collective—balk at this "invitation." They make it plainly known that they want to stay at the oasis, even though they know it must be in pretty bad shape, to take care of their life-needs! In fact—being nurture-center oriented—they believe, out of their natural interested autonomy, that they ought to do so!

Thus neither side can possibly give-in to the other; so there ensues a battle-to-the-death between them, in which the male-collective—utterly insane with ungratified blood-lust roused in them by the defiance of their nurture-center—descend in a howling-rage and perpetrate bloody "murder" upon the nurture-center until they are entirely extinguished. Then the male-collective—or what is left of them—return to the quest that has led to the extinction of their nurture-center, and soon will lead to their own extinction in a fratricidal battle-to-the-death brought on by continuing frustration of their now absolutely-monomaniacl lust-for-blood-pure-and-simple!

But take heart! For a young male and a young female member of the nurture-center—who are not really of their parents' race, even though they look very much like them—have fled hand-in-hand together unnoticed from the slaughter they alone saw coming and found—morally and rational self-interestedly—abhorrent, to return to live together at their old oasis. They have for some time now felt not only sexual-attraction and warm-affection for each other—as did their parents for each other—but also—as their parents did not—love for each other as persons. This deepening love for each other as persons, which makes them a married couple, arose between them from the loving gazes and caresses exchanged by them during their love-play and loving-copulation—which roused from dormancy in them their (spontaneously evolved) unique powers of moral (and subordinate rational self-interested) autonomy to serve as the supreme guide in life in the relations between them. For in moral (and subordinate rational self-interested) autonomy alone lies the power—displayed by our first married couple in their abhorrence for and flight from the slaughter they saw coming—to prevent and break any compulsive grip which natural interest or/and instinct may gain over the developed personality, with of course the—unwitting—aid of natural interested autonomy, through its unique ability to perceive the socially (and personally) detrimental character of any such compulsion and to prevent or break its grip by behaving (or learning to behave) in accordance with this perception.

Thus it is that both the social order and the developed personality and life of the individual are brought under the control of autonomy for the ultimate end (terminus) of natural selection: maximal satisfaction of the natural interests of each and every member of the species. So in our married moral beings—who by their romantic love are so committed to each other that they can and must live with each other on the terms set by the Principle of Morality (and subordinate Principle of Rational Self-Interest)—we see the first full functional-equivalent of natural selection whose origin from natural selection I set out to discover in chapter 9.
Our first married couple are of course well equipped—with tools and skills and full autonomy—to live and raise their family successfully at the oasis to which they return. And from there they will of course disperse and diversity all over their planet, with the only body and psyche that equips an animal species to move into and live successfully in virtually any natural environment whatever!
NOTES

1 I say psychical, rather than psychological, to coordinate my terminology with physical. If this seems strange, how much stranger it would be to say physiology and physiologically, rather than physics and physically. Thus I recommend psycheics--psychics already is in widespread use to refer to people who claim to have certain psychical powers that seem to those who believe in them to be supernatural in character--rather than psychology, to refer to the discipline that usually goes by the latter name.

2 In chapter 9 I call it pure trial-and-error-learning to indicate that it is trial-and-error-learning guided by instinct rather than autonomy. But what I actually had in mind is not so much that it is pure as that it is random, or not guided by a plan thought out to achieve a rationally ascertained or ascertainable goal: a plan such as would be developed by a rational exploratory-and-experimental (or autonomous) being. It is in this sense that natural selection is a random, or blind exploratory-and-experimental process, and yet appears prima facie (or at first glance) to be guided by an autonomous being (or designing-intelligence). To my way of thinking, we can rightly be eternally grateful to Darwin and to his genetic-evolutionary-theorist successors for dispelling the illusion that animate-nature cannot be the way it is without the (deistic) underpinning of a (omniscient) designing-intelligence.

3 I am ignoring the possibility that they are insectivorous-predators on the--possibly factually-mistaken--ground that herbivorousness is more flexible, or adaptable than is insectivorousness: a characteristic that fits in with the decreasing particularization of the type of line of social animal-development that eventuates in autonomy.

4 I am simply assuming without proof, but as intuitively plausible, that bodily bilateral-symmetry is an essential feature of the type of line of social animal-development that eventuates in autonomy. Proof of this assumption, though presently beyond my ability, strikes me as an extremely interesting and worthwhile exercise in conceptual biology.

5 I have so far been assuming that, in accounting for the descent of Man, we are concerned with but a single species of carnivorous predatory-snake. Moreover, while I cannot prove this assumption to be true, and while it well may not be true--it is conceivable that we are actually concerned with separate species of day-hunting and of night-hunting snakes, and even with several varieties of each type--it is a convenient, simplifying assumption that seems to me not to affect the substance of my account since my account is general enough to accommodate all of these alternative possibilities.

6 By now, it is obvious that my account requires that numerous groups of, roughly similar, terrestrial center-perimeter mammals are driven by predatory-snakes, roughly simultaneously, into permanent large-tree-dwelling, in the same region(s) of their tropical forest, as the only available avenue of escape from extinction-through-predation by them. But it is only the most advanced of these groups of, roughly
similar, mammals whose development as primates my account is designed, specifically, to cover.

7 In this total demonstration we see one fruit of blind animate-nature at work producing as refined an embodied program of research-and-development—though it is dispersed in the mutually-complementary instinctual-apparatuses of the individual members of the R-and-D group—as could be devised by the most knowledgeable designing-intelligence.

8 I am assuming, what I take to be self-evident, that evolution-by-natural-selection can give rise to a trait such as natural interested autonomy that is, at first, neutral—having, in the immediate context of its evolution, neither survival nor extinction value. Such a neutral trait will be carried along, for a time at least, until its survival or extinction value is made manifest through an alteration in the environment of the species in which it is embodied. This is but further illustration of the manifest munificence and—coordinate—blind-providence of animate-nature.

9 This means that all other primate species that descended along with our oasis-masters—unless they are similar enough to them to survive for awhile in an oasis similar to theirs—suffer one of three possible destinies: (1) they perish on the plains of predation or/and starvation; (2) they adapt—as an evolutionary dead-end—to life on the plains or/and its retreating forest-perimeter; or (3) they retreat with the forest and adapt—also as an evolutionary dead-end—to the changing character of the forest. For there simply are no other possibilities. But suppose they are similar enough to our oasis-masters to survive for awhile in an oasis similar to theirs. What then? Well, they will not be sufficiently advanced to survive long enough to evolve into moral beings. But they may survive long enough, if circumstances are favorable enough, to be exterminated by our oasis-masters when the latter go into the peripatetic genocidal-rage described below. I allowed for this possibility, though I make no reference to it, in my account of this genocidal-rage.

10 It may be that, in this developmental-step, we see the origin of meat-eating in moral animals such as Man. For how simple and natural a thing (or spontaneous act) it would be for a hungry oasis-master to scoop-out and pop-into-his-mouth a handful of his victim's brains.

11 See note 8 infra.

12 Their conception of rational self-interest—of the maximal satisfaction of their natural interests, or the urges they feel, is so primitive—given their abysmal ignorance of the ways of the world—that what it means to them, consciously, is the total gratification—an idea to be explored and experimented with—of the romantic (not to be confused with merely erotic) love they feel for each other and which is their constant preoccupation. In light of this, can there be any doubt that they find the prospect of this slaughter so morally and subordinate rational self-interestedly abhorrent that they flee together from it—as they do—as if it were the plague descending on them? If this is not a rhetorical question what is?
Chapter 12

RELATIVISM AND RATIONAL SELF-INTEREST

In chapter 4 I argued that to establish or refute relativism about right (or wrong) conduct—or, as I now prefer to put it, relativism about conduct that ought (or ought not) to be done—we must first (1) figure out how to discover and then discover (prove true) the basis (supreme principle) of conduct that ought (or ought not) to be done and then (2) determine whether this principle is a relative or absolute criterion of moral judgment. A relative criterion of conduct that ought (or ought not) to be done is one which in application can—while an absolute criterion of conduct that ought (or ought not) to be done is one which in application cannot—lead to any particular action's being correctly judged to be one that ought (or ought not) to be done and—by either the same or different persons, at either the same or different times—being correctly judged to be an action that is not one that ought (or ought not) to be done. I shall not summarize the supporting argument of this chapter, or of any of the subsequent chapters in which I endeavor to carry out—successfully, I think—the first of these two tasks. I shall simply report that the overall result of these latter chapters is that the following principle is the supreme principle of morality:

We ought to act only in those ways whose universal performance is both possible and consistent with the rational self-interest (maximal satisfaction of natural interests) of every human being (member of our species);

and turn now to the second of the above tasks. I shall endeavor to prove that the above principle, which I call the Principle of Morality, is an absolute (rather than relative) criterion of moral judgment: that it cannot in application lead to any particular action's being correctly judged to be one that ought (or ought not) to be done and—by either the same or different persons, at either the same or different times—being correctly judged to be an action that is not one that ought (or ought not) to be done. I shall endeavor to prove, in other words, that any judgment that a particular action ought (or ought not) to be done is the logical-contradictory of any other judgment that the same particular action is not one that ought (or ought not) to be done, no matter when or by whom these judgments are made—two judgments being logical-contradictories of each other when both cannot be true and both cannot be false.

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I find it extremely implausible a priori to suppose that the universal performance of any particular action (the performance—within a, actual or potential, community of moral agents—of all instances of particular actions of any—relevantly—similar class on all possible occasions of their performance) is both possible and impossible. So I think there is no need to prove in this regard that the Principle of Morality is an absolute criterion of moral judgment. What I find problematic and argument-necessitating about this principle concerns the
concept of the maximal satisfaction of one's own innate and acquired human natural interests (drives): the object of rational self-interest.

For I find it highly problematic whether the concept of the rational self-interest of any human being (of the maximal satisfaction of the innate and acquired natural interests, or drives of a human being) is what we may call a unitary concept: a concept whose content always is the same for any rational human being, no matter when it is considered. If it is a unitary concept, then rational human beings always will (can) get the same result when applying the Principle of Morality:

We ought to act only in those ways whose universal performance is both possible and consistent with the rational self-interest of each and every human being.

to particular actions; and if it is not a unitary concept, then rational human beings will (may) not always get the same result when applying this principle to particular actions. Thus the issue of ethical relativism versus ethical absolutism comes down in the end to the question as to whether or not the rational self-interest of any human being (the maximal satisfaction of its innate and acquired natural interests, or drives) is a unitary concept: a concept whose content always is the same for any rational human being. So, to refute ethical relativism—or, what is the same, to establish ethical absolutism, 'absolute' being the proper opposite of 'relative'—I must prove that the concept of the rational self-interest of a (any) human being is a unitary concept: a concept which cannot vary in content at any given time from one rational human being to another or for a given rational human being from one time to another.

-2-

Prima facie, at least, the concept in question appears not to be a unitary one; for do not a person's natural interests vary over time from, for example, an interest in checkers to an interest in chess or from a liking for spinach to a liking for collards, and are not such interests variable from person to person across cultural (including national and ethnic) lines both at any given time and over time! Thus it must be admitted by anyone acquainted with the facts of human life that there is relativity, or variability of at least particular (highly determinate) natural interests, such as those just cited as examples—the list could be multiplied indefinitely—both from person to person and for any given person, depending on such factors as culture (including national and ethnic origin) and personal taste and experience, and from one period of time to another. Moreover, so the argument continues, de gustibus non est disputandum: there is no rational disputing of taste—of individual preference, or interest; so that the concept of rational self-interest is not a unitary concept.

There are, as I see it, two things on its face wrong with this argument. First, it gratuitously and erroneously assumes that tastes and individual preferences cannot be rationally disputed. This is true by definition of anything that is a mere, or sheer matter of taste, or preference. But then the question always can arise about a taste or preference whether it can be rationally disputed or is a sheer matter of...
taste or preference, and some tastes can be rationally disputed, or criticized. Consider, for example, a preference for what is called 'junk' food or for highly-refined foods such as white sugar and white rice. Such foods, nutrition-experts tell us, are not good for our health and may even be detrimental to it; nor is a preference for health (good health) over unhealth (bad health) a matter of sheer preference since good health is essential to a long and satisfactory life (a life in which one is able to satisfy and eventually to maximally satisfy his innate and acquired natural interests).

The second thing wrong on the surface with the foregoing argument is its unsupported and erroneous assumption that all natural interests are personal tastes or preferences. This is true of some natural interests such as interest in (preference for) collards over spinach since spinach and collards are roughly equally-nutritious green-vegetables. But it is not true of other natural interests such as interest in vegetables in preference to foods made of highly-refined carbohydrates since the former are rich at least in fibre, vitamins and protein—all essential to good health—while the latter contain mostly what are called 'nutritionally-empty' calories. One must, of course, have sufficient calories to live at all, but it is not a mere matter of personal preference from what kinds of foods one gets (ought to get) these calories, and there are experts in this matter (a healthy body, including a healthy brain, being the end to which their expertise is directed).

But there is yet a third and, I think, deeper and more pervasive and important error in the argument in question. This error arises out of failure to pay attention to the distinction between innate natural interests, such as hunger, thirst and curiosity, which are physical or/and psychical life-needs of the human organism and which are very general, or unspecific and those acquired natural interests, such as a taste for collards or interest in chess, which are far more specific and fundamentally a direct or indirect means to satisfying innate and very general natural interests. The importance of this distinction lies in the fact that, as we shall see, it is innate natural interests which are physical or/and psychical life-needs—needs connected with sustenance (physical and/or psychical health and/or growth) and security (prevention or correction of injury to physical or/and psychical health or/and growth)—that are fundamental in explicating the concept of the maximal satisfaction of our human natural interests—which concept I now further define to mean the optimal and exhaustive satisfaction of our human natural interests—and in the fact that these innate natural interests are part of our species-wide bio-psycheical (or bio-psychological) makeup and consequently are quite obviously not optional matters of (mere matters of) personal taste or preference.

Evidently, even this latter conception of the object of rational self-interest requires further explication if it is to be a useful (practically applicable) one which can be seen to be invariable from one rational human being to another. Moreover, I propose to go about this further explication via explication of the closely- and internally-related conception of a 'rational life-plan', which I define abstractly as follows:
A life-plan of a human being that ought to be realized (by the person whose plan it is) and to which all of us human beings therefore morally ought to make any and all of those morally-permissible contributions within our power which are necessary to its realization (including whatever forms of aid and cooperation among us that are so necessary).

This much of the conception in question seems to me to follow analytically from the concept rational occurring in it. For its further specification, however, I must appeal to the analysis, or theory of the innate structure of our autonomy, will or practical reason as it is developed and defended in chapters 9 and 10. I must do so because autonomy (will, or practical reason), as I conceive it, is the power to (decide what one ought to do, choose and) act from ought-principles. My analysis, or theory of autonomy is that our inborn autonomy is tripartite and hierarchical in character, consisting of the Principle of Morality:

We ought to act only in those ways whose universal performance is both possible and consistent with (not positively contrary to or denying of--taking away or not providing--the means to) the rational self-interest of each and every human being

in normative superiority (superiority in judgment as to what ought to be done) and practical superiority (superiority in action pursuant to judgment as to what ought to be done) over the Principle of Rational Self-Interest:

I ought to act so as to maximally (optimally and exhaustively) satisfy my own natural interests

in normative-practical superiority over the Principle of Natural Interest:

I ought to act so as to satisfy my own natural interest x.

In accordance with the overall requirements of both (i) our innate and therefore for us valid (by us assertably true) autonomy and (ii) the standard implications of the concept ought (in its application to actions), I further, though still abstractly, specify the concept of a rational life-plan, or a life-plan that ought to be realized, in terms of three fundamental negative conditions and a fourth positive condition, as follows: A rational life-plan (a life-plan that ought to be realized) is a life-plan that

(1) is not contrary to morality (an immoral life-plan, or a life-plan involving, either in itself or in the means necessary to its realization, the doing of actions that on moral grounds ought not be done or the production of states of affairs that on moral grounds ought not to exist);
(2) is not imprudent, or contrary to the rational self-interest of the person whose life-plan it is (a life-plan involving, either in itself or in the means necessary to its realization, the doing of actions that ought not to be done or the production of states of affairs that ought not to exist on grounds of rational self-interest);

(3) is not impossible (a life-plan for the realization of which the means do not exist or for which the means do not exist to generate the means for its realization, either on the part of the person whose life-plan it is or on the part of him in conjunction with those other persons who on moral grounds ought to aid him or cooperate among themselves and/or with him so as to make possible its realization); and

(4) is worth realizing either (a) on moral grounds (as fulfilling requirements of morality incumbent on the person whose life-plan it is or moral ideals valid for that person) and/or at least (b) on rational self-interested grounds (as fulfilling requirements of rational self-interest incumbent on the person whose life-plan it is or personal--self-regarding--ideals valid for that person).

It is obvious that there is much in each of these--individually-necessary and jointly-sufficient--conditions of a rational life-plan that requires detailed further specification. I shall not delve into condition (1) since it is the import of morality (the requirements of the Principle of Morality), insofar as it depends on the concept of rational self-interest, that is our concern in the present chapter. Nor, for an analogous reason, shall I delve into the first half of condition (4), which concerns moral grounds for the positive evaluation of a life-plan. Moreover, explication of condition (3) is self-evidently irrelevant to the present principal concern of this chapter, elucidation of the concept of rational self-interest. So my concern now will focus on condition (2) and on the second half of condition (4), both of which do bear on explication of the concept of rational self-interest (the optimal and exhaustive satisfaction of one's own innate and acquired natural interests, or drives).

Consider first condition (2) that a life-plan not involve, either in itself or in the means necessary to its realization, the doing of actions that ought not to be done or the production of states of affairs that ought not to exist on grounds of rational self-interest. Evidently, the concept of rational self-interest enters into (2) in such a way that this concept must be elucidated first in order for the practical import of (2) to be grasped, and not vice versa. The same point, evidently, holds for (b) of condition (4) that a life-plan be worth realizing on rational self-interested grounds, as fulfilling requirements of rational self-interest incumbent on the person whose life-plan it is or of personal (self-regarding) ideals valid for that person. To elucidate (b) of (4), we must first elucidate the concept of rational self-interest, and not vice versa.
What then, if anything, have we gained from this, I think, necessary and illuminating excursus into the concept of a rational life-plan? Two things, I think. First, we have gained insight into one enormously important and fundamental theoretical and practical application—morally and prudentially speaking—of the concept of rational self-interest. Second, we have had introduced into our discussion of this concept the notion of a personal (self-regarding) ideal valid for the person whose ideal it is: a notion whose elucidation is central to elucidation of the concept of rational self-interest since realizing one or more personal ideals valid for oneself is a very important aspect of the concept of rational self-interest. So let us begin our systematic explication of this latter concept, to which we have now returned full-circle, by looking more closely into the notion of a personal (self-regarding) ideal valid for oneself.

An ideal is self-, though not necessarily exclusively self-, regarding—such as the desire to recover fully from a CVA (stroke) or the desire to be the best pitcher in professional baseball in the 1980's—when its objective is some state (condition) or/and achievement specified in terms of some state (condition) of/or by the person whose ideal it is. Such an ideal is valid for the person whose ideal it is when its objective is a state (condition) or/and achievement that actually is worthwhile—on balance, perhaps—in terms of the rational self-interest (optimal and exhaustive satisfaction of the natural interests) of the person whose ideal it is.

Now it is obvious that personal (self-regarding) ideals—whether valid or invalid for the persons whose ideals they are—are acquired natural interests. It is obvious, furthermore, that acquired natural interests—including self-regarding ideals—unless they just happen to occur—as in the case of a child's initial interest in the odor of roses, arising out of a chance pleasant olfactory-encounter with them—are acquired as more specific forms of or else out of experiencing satisfaction of innate natural interests. Thus we must take up in detail the distinction, adumbrated earlier, between innate natural interests such as hunger and curiosity, which are very general, or unspecific and are physical or/and psychical life needs of the human organism and those acquired natural interests such as a liking for collards or for chess or mystery-novels, which are more specific and, as we can now see, are acquired as more specific forms of or else out of experiencing satisfaction of innate natural interests, including the innate positive interest in (desire for) pleasure (pleasantness)-negative interest in (aversion for) pain (unpleasantness): the notorious pleasure-pain drive to which so many amateur and professional psychological-theorists have attempted—erroneously, as we can by now see with ineluctable certitude—to reduce the whole of (at least what they call 'rational') human behavior. For it is these innate natural interests which are physical or/and psychical life-needs of the human organism that—of conceptual-factual necessity—are the foundation of the optimal and exhaustive satisfaction of our human natural interests.
To see that this is so, consider: (1) the concept of a life-need of an organism, (2) what the biological and/or psychological sciences tell us are some of our more important life-needs and (3) how these life-needs are related to the optimal and exhaustive satisfaction of our innate and acquired natural interests, or drives. A physical or and psychical life-need of an organism is an--innate or acquired--natural interest (drive) essential to the physical or/and psychical sustenance or/and security of an organism in relation to an ongoing pattern of physical or/and psychical health and growth normal for its species. Certainly, in accordance with this definition, hunger and thirst as well as curiosity and the (acquired) drive for love from other human beings--including cuddling and other forms of loving-behavior--qualify, according to the relevant biological and/or psychological sciences, as very fundamental life-needs--especially throughout infancy and childhood, though need for them in the life-process continues until death. Moreover, without life and consequently without the meeting of at least the most important of our life-needs, the process of the ongoing optimal and exhaustive satisfaction of our innate and acquired natural interests is inconceivable in principle. QED

Consider next the fact--already in part argued earlier in the present chapter--that it is not a matter of (sheer) taste or preference--of arbitrary whim, if you prefer--how our life-needs are (ought to be) satisfied. This conclusion follows analytically from the foregoing definition of a life-need of an organism; for it is not arbitrary what manner of meeting these needs is essential (contributes at least minimally and perhaps optimally) to the physical or/and psychical sustenance and/or security of an organism in (relation to) an ongoing pattern of physical or/and psychical health and growth (normal for its species). I deal extensively and in depth with the subject of healthy (normal) and unhealthy (abnormal) human psychical growth (development)--from infancy to adulthood--in chapter 13. But I must leave to the biological and/or psychological scientific-experts further development in depth of the subject of healthy (normal) human physical growth and healthy human psychical growth insofar as the former bears on the latter. One general point here will have to suffice, namely, that an adequate diet (a diet minimally, and perhaps even optimally, necessary for sustained healthy physical or/and psychical growth) is an absolute (unconditional) necessity for a human being’s rational self-interest (the optimal and exhaustive satisfaction of its innate and acquired natural interests).

This brings us to the last, but by no means the least important, point that needs to be made about the object of rational self-interest. Aristotle made essentially the same point about happiness when he observed that 'happiness' applies fundamentally only to a whole lifetime. The same is true of the optimal and exhaustive satisfaction of one's own innate and acquired natural interests (drives). Some natural interests such as hunger and thirst must be at least minimally and regularly satisfied throughout a lifetime for health and growth to be sustained throughout a lifetime. Other natural interests such as curiosity and the interest in knowledge developed out of its enjoyable gratification can be optimally satisfied only over the course of an entire life-
time and only through stages of successively-developed more particular manifestations of the generating general interest(s). The same is true of other acquired general natural interests such as an interest in gourmet-food. The fact also must be taken into account that some acquired, and even some late-developing innate, natural interests such as an interest in painting, in poetry or in esthetic-satisfaction come into play for some persons late enough in life so that a lifetime is required for exhaustive satisfaction of their natural interests. Finally, let me observe, along with Hobbes, that complete satiety comes only with death; so that a human being completely (opulently and exhaustively) satisfied is probably a dead human being: from which observation I draw the conclusion that the most interesting and fortunate people, those people who have well-diversified and deep interests in developing and exercising what Mill called our 'higher' (our intellectual, moral and sensitive) faculties—in part because he considered them to be characteristically-human faculties and in part because, as he observes (Utilitarianism, ch. 2), they are more permanent, less costly to gratify and more certain to be gratified—not only ought to seek in every possible and necessary, morally and rational self-interestedly permissible way to prolong their lives to the greatest extent possible, but also have the greatest chance of achieving a rational self-interestedly satisfactory—personally happy, or maximally satisfied if you prefer—life.

There are, of course, many different rational life-plans which make for personal happiness and which must be grounded in part on personal, perhaps idiosyncratic, preference: a fact which Mill seems to have realized in noting (On Liberty, ch. 3) that respect for individuality and its accompanying human-diversity is one sign of an advanced and advancing condition of human society. Mill has been criticized here for valuing mere eccentricity. But on this point, I think, Mill is right and his critics are wrong. Mere eccentricity is individuality with no moral purpose (intent) behind it, if I read the critics aright, and surely some forms of mere eccentricity such as de novo extraordinary interest in an esoteric art-form or art-genre is valuable in itself at least to the person interested in it and also makes such a person, as Mill would put it, an interesting, or attractive and thereby a worthwhile 'ornament of the human-scene'. Besides, who can say what a morally or/and rational self-interestedly worthwhile model for others such an ornament might turn out to be (to have been)? Blanket-condemnation of mere eccentricity is like unto blanket-condemnation of pure research. Neither, as our accumulated experience reveals, is a prudentially or morally wise policy; pure research and mere eccentricity are a source of immense pleasure in themselves and are an important source of inspiration to others as well as a fund of at least possible future-benefits to mankind.

Where Mill does seem to me definitely to go wrong is in recommend-ing to human beings, at least by implication (Utilitarianism, ch. 2), that they build their rational life-plans ('manners of existence' is his locution) almost exclusively, it seems to me, around gratification of their 'higher' faculties to the exclusion of gratification of what he calls their 'animal' appetites. For, not only are our animal appetites such as hunger, thirst and sexual-desire (libido) the source of immensely-intensely and endlessly-renewably pleasurable-activities such as
eating plain home-cooking, drinking cold and sweet mountain-spring water and the wholly-animal activity of fucking, they all can be combined with our higher faculties such as esthetic-interest and our need to give-receive human romantic-love to yield a kaleidoscope of even more immensely-rewarding (satisfying) and more immensely-intensely and endlessly-renewably pleasurable-activities such as dining in fine restaurants, drinking in fine pubs and engaging in the distinctively-human activity of making love which culminates, naturally enough, in intercourse. I would end on this note and rest my case here were it not putting me in mind of the importance to rational self-interest of the satisfaction of our innate and acquired interests as social (or inter-dependent) and moral animals. But I must mention this point only in passing while promising to develop it further later (see chapter 13).
NOTES

1 Chapters 5, 9, 10 and 11.

2 For development and defense of the conception of ethical relativism central to the present chapter, see my "The Definition of Ethical Relativism," PERSONALIST, Autumn 1969; chapter 4; and especially my "Moore and Stevenson on a Certain Form of Ethical Naturalism," PERSONALIST, Summer 1971.

3 We must note here the important distinction—drawn first by Joseph Butler—between the object of a natural interest and the pleasure which arises from its gratification (reduction of the drive).

4 The more essential (central and fundamental) a life-need is to an ongoing pattern of physical and/or psychical health and growth normal for the species in question the more important a life-need it is to an organism of that species. Some life-needs are so important that they are absolutely essential (unconditionally necessary) life-needs.

5 Optimal satisfaction of a natural interest is the degree of satisfaction of it, on any given occasion of its satisfaction and in relation to its satisfaction over time, that is required for its necessary contribution to an ongoing pattern of physical and/or psychical health and growth normal for the species in question. Compare note 4 infra.

6 See note 5 infra.

7 Evidently, Mill had not made love to Harriet Taylor before writing Utilitarianism or else was unconscious if and when he did so, a pity either way.

8 It may be thought that my account of the content of the concept of rational self-interest is not sufficiently detailed to show that it is a unitary concept: a concept that does not vary in content from one rational human being to another; so that my claimed refutation of ethical relativism is no refutation of it at all. But one who thinks like this cannot be said to understand what moral philosophy is, as opposed to casuistry (or the producing of specific judgments for particular individuals in particular circumstances of life and living). A moral philosopher can not, and should not even attempt to, do another person's thinking for that person. Accordingly, I have not endeavored, in this book or elsewhere, to produce a secular (or, better, naturalistic) equivalent of the Talmud.
Chapter 13

MORAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUICIDE

Autonomy, as I understand this concept, is the same thing—fundamentally—as will, or practical reason: the power to (decide what one ought to do, choose and) act from ought-principles. Moreover, the innate autonomy of moral beings such as ourselves is tripartite and hierarchical in character, with the Principle of Morality:

We ought to act only in those ways whose universal performance is both possible and consistent with the rational self-interest of every human being in normative-practical superiority to the Principle of Rational Self-Interest:

I ought to act so as to maximally satisfy my own natural interests in normative-practical superiority to the Principle of Natural Interest:

I ought to act so as to satisfy my own natural interest x.

Now the process of moral development, of the development of moral autonomy, is of intrinsic interest to moral philosophers; and I seek in this chapter to describe the broad outlines first of normal and then of abnormal moral development. I seek to do so both for its intrinsic interest and for the sake of the light it sheds on the phenomenon of suicide, as the culmination of abnormal moral development.

Moral development per se begins— in the nature of the case— with species imprintation. For species imprintation is the starting point, or basis of receptivity to psychical nurturing; and species imprintation must— in the nature of the case— take place through the dominant (species identifying) innate psychical structure of the species in question. Thus species imprintation takes place in human beings through the Principle of Morality, and thereby begins the process of moral development per se. The initiator of this imprintation is the smiling and loving gazes exchanged first by the mother and the infant and then by the father and the infant, through which the mother and the father together develop a deep moral commitment to their infant and their infant comes to love them together above all others. Now the continuing loving care bestowed by the mother and the father upon their infant, including their continuing smiling and loving gazes, allows the love of their infant— emerging-child for its parent together above all others to intensify to the point where it makes possible as well the emerging-child's complete trust in its parents together above all others. Moreover, the love and trust an emerging-child has in its parents together above all others is coordinate with the moral conviction that its parents together are perfect! For this conviction is the only thing conceivable that could
make them together its, a nacent moral being's, authority figures in all matters, including matters of conduct, by giving rise to the conviction that it ought to model itself on its parents together: be and behave itself just like its parents together! Thus the very first and most deep-seated moral conviction a human being has is formed by it out of its extraordinary love for and trust in its parents on a basis of the exemplary treatment as a human infant--emerging-child it has received at their hands; so that, even though this conviction is radically mistaken in fact, it is one which an emerging-child--in its profound ignorance of the ways of the world--cannot but form and cannot do without if it actually is to succeed in developing psychically into an adult human being.

Fortunately, however, the energies of an emerging-child as an autonomous being are not entirely absorbed by its modeling on its parents as authority figures. For the trauma of its birth, the earliest event that can get the job done, roused from dormancy in it the powers of natural interested autonomy which it has long been displaying in its rational exploratory and experimental behavior. Thus in its natural interested autonomy and in the repertoire of knowledge and skills it has built up through its exercise an emerging-child has the only check conceivable upon the total determination of its developing personality by its modeling on its parents as authority figures. But how on earth is this checking of morality-based modeling possible? Well, the only possible answer is that its parents have, through their supportive behavior, made known all along to their infant--emerging-child their complete approval of its natural interest directed rational exploratory and experimental behavior, so that morally (modelingly) it places a high premium in its life on such behavior and develops moral (modeling) confidence in itself as a natural interested directed rational exploratory and experimental being. Thus at first it is moral (modeling) confidence in itself as a natural interest directed rational exploratory and experimental being that prevents total determination of an emerging-child's developing personality by the modeling-process. But the natural interest directed rational exploratory and experimental behavior of a child frequently--unbeknownst to itself but not to its parents--is detrimental to itself or to others. Thus, through modeling on its parents as authority figures, a child gradually acquires habits of prudent (rational self-interested) and moral behavior which serve, through constant reenforcement by parental approval, as the framework within which its natural interest directed rational exploratory and experimental behavior progresses, so that it develops something of a true picture of itself as a whole-human-being and confidence in itself as such.

Thus it is that the groundwork is laid for development of the differential-modeling of a child on the parent who is its sexual-like--for formation by a child of the moral conviction: I ought to be and behave in male/female matters just like daddy/mommy. For this conviction is an absolutely inescapable deduction from: (1) my parents together are perfect--which a child has had since species imprintation was completed; (2) I am a male/female--the physical resemblance is too striking for any child to miss and (3) there are distinctive male/female ways to be and behave--their differences also are too striking for any child to miss.
And thus it is that a child becomes fully equipped to undergo emergence into adulthood; for it now is equipped with an overall developed personality which enables it to respond increasingly effectively overall in the increasingly adult world into which it begins to enter: the world of its own maturing peer-group which—in time—merges fully with the continuing world of adult human beings.

The awesomeness of older (superior) human beings in a child’s mind gradually diminishes down through their various ages, until it reaches the vanishing point when a child meets face to face one of its contemporaries. Thus when a child interrelates with its contemporaries, it must do so without the assistance which otherwise would be provided for it by the awe it has of older (superior) human beings or the awe younger (inferior) human beings have of it. Thus it is that a child interrelates naturally with its contemporaries as equals: as naturally entitled to treatment in accordance with the requirements of morality. And thus it is that a child undergoes emergence into adulthood by beginning its development as a morally (and rational self-interestedly) independent and autonomous (mind of its own) human being. Hence the question arises: what will the pattern of this development be?

A child emerging into adulthood interrelates with members of its peer-group initially on a basis of what it has learned from its parents about how to treat human beings. It has no real understanding of why it ought to treat human beings in these ways, simply accepting them as the ways it ought to behave, on a basis of the modeling authority of its parents. But how fortunate a child is to have learned the moral fundamentals of human group-dynamics through its cooperative-aiding family life, so that it can play successfully—freely relate as a developing overall fully autonomous being—with its peers. For it has learned not to strike out at or in some other way coerce others when its will is frustrated, not to take unfair advantage of others when its will is frustrated and to cooperate with and aid others so that all can benefit fairly from their enterprise; and in the process it has developed a conception of and confidence in itself as a worthwhile human being—a human being who understands how it ought to behave and behaves itself as it ought—so that it puts what it has learned into effect in its interaction, at first its play, with its peers. This interaction is, however, the interaction of equals, not of superiors and inferiors; so that a child’s powers of autonomous (mind of its own) moral thinking can come on fully only in this interaction. So the question now arises: how does interaction with its peers bring into existence and develop a child’s powers of autonomous moral thinking?

The fundamental characteristic of a peer play-group is its simultaneous spontaneity and seriousness: the manner in which its participants are devoted for its own sake to the full display and development of their physical and/or psychical powers within a framework provided by morality. Now a child’s peer-group play begins naturally with imitation of its family life, in its parts and as a whole, and then graduates naturally into forms of activity through which its participants develop the various physical and/or psychical skills they may need in adult life. Thus there takes place within a child’s peer-group play a natural transition, from mere emulation of the moral-structure of its family...
life, including any reasons it has been given for it, to the full understanding of this moral-structure through the actual reasons underlying it, which is required to enable it to participate in a morally successful way in these new forms of activity; for these new forms of cooperative-aiding activity—in their very nature—manifest this moral-structure in ever new, unusual and increasingly complex ways which can be understood only through the reasons which actually make sense of it. Thus a successful peer play-group are able continuously to grow, with the aid of their genuine superiors, in their understanding of the moral (and subordinate rational self-interested) why-and-wherefore of their various play and other cooperative-aiding activities. And thus, through participation in a successful peer play-group, a child develops a new conception of and confidence in itself as a worthwhile human being: a fully autonomous whole-human-being who understands both how and why it ought to behave and behaves itself as it ought. Now a child's growing new conception of and confidence in itself as a fully autonomous whole-human-being is of course welcomed and encouraged by its parents and other superiors, who also of course make the adjustments in their treatment of it required by its growing full autonomy and accompanying full equality with them. Thus it is that a child's new conception of and confidence in itself as a worthwhile human being develops in time into its own perfection: a child's conception of and confidence in itself as a fully autonomous whole-human-being who continually understands better and better both how and why it ought to behave and thereby continually behaves itself better and better as it ought. Now this conception and confidence is none other than that of a continually self-perfecting (self-improving) human being: a conception and confidence which, though founded ultimately in a child's conception of and confidence in its parents together as perfect beings, is bound to come increasingly into opposition with this now childish conception and confidence, as a child advances in individuality and thereby feels increasingly the pinching shoes of its modeling on its parents (and sexually-like parent) as authority figures. Hence the question arises: how does a child throw off its modeling on its parents (and sexually-like parent) as authority figures, so as to develop an adult personality which actually corresponds fully to its adult conception of itself as a continually self-perfecting human being?

Now the answer in principle must be: by throwing off its belief in its parents together as perfect beings; for this belief is the continuing source of the modeling a child must throw off to actually be fully a continually self-perfecting human being. So our question amounts to this: how does a child throw off its belief in its parents together as perfect beings? Now the answer to this question evidently is: by recognizing this belief for the infantile belief that it is. So our question now amounts to this: how does a child come to recognize as infantile its belief in its parents together as perfect being? Now the answer to this question evidently is: by coming to see its parents as continually self-perfecting human beings rather than perfect beings. But there are two parts to this enormously therapeutic insight—(1) my parents are self-perfecting beings and (2) I have long been believing that my parents together are perfect beings—which must be brought into juxtaposition to produce it. So our question comes down to this: how does a child acquire and juxtapose these two beliefs, so as to develop
an adult personality which actually corresponds fully to its adult conception of itself as a continually self-perfecting human being?

In the process of developing the conception of and confidence in itself as a continually self-perfecting human being, a child is bound also to develop the conception of and confidence in its parents together as continually self-perfecting human beings. For, in this developmental process, a child comes to see itself more and more as being like (what) the fully autonomous human beings its parents together actually are—continually self-perfecting human beings—and thereby comes more and more to see its parents for the fully autonomous human beings they together actually are. Thus it is that a child acquires belief (1) my parents together actually are self-perfecting beings, and thereby is prepared to enter adolescence (sexual maturation) with a realistic and constructive conception of and confidence in both itself and its parents together, upon whose male-female relationship it will of course still be modeling, as human beings. But how is an adolescent to bring to the surface, as it must if it is to dispose of its infantile conception of a male-female relationship, the ancient and deeply buried (totally unconscious) belief that its parents together are perfect, so that it can form and juxtapose to (1) belief (2) I have long been believing that my parents together actually are perfect beings, and thereby become an adult? Now the answer in principle evidently is: by seeing this ancient and deeply buried belief manifested for what it actually is in its infantile behavior toward members of the opposite sex. So the question arises: how is this herculean feat-of-seeing possible?

An adolescent's belief in its parents together as perfect beings is bound to color more and more deeply its relationships with members of the opposite sex, as its gets closer and closer to the unknown and enthralling territory of intimate sexual contact with them. For an adolescent in love—an adolescent exploring this territory—is blinded by this love to the imperfections of the object of its affections, so that its relationship to the object of its affections will be determined basically by its infantile conception of a male-female relationship as one between two individuals who together are perfect. So let us imagine an adolescent male and female in love with each other, to see what will transpire between them in this relationship and so what they will learn from it.

An adolescent couple will of course extend and intensify their love-play together, openly and in private: a course of events which leads quite naturally—as they fall more and more deeply in love—to full loving copulation in private. Not only is their instinct-drive for indiscriminate sexual intercourse, and so their natural interested autonomy, fully behind this course of events, so also is their modeling on their parents as a happily married, and so in private lovingly-copulating, couple, and thereby also their moral and subordinate rational self-interested autonomy; for thus it is that they know that their love-play and loving copulation is not only alright but something they ought, as normal human beings, to do! For the truth is that in their own minds they are a married couple—a male and female who together are perfect—and this shared state of mind—what a moral bond it is—is the true consummation of adolescent love! For this shared state of mind—together
we are perfect—is absolutely indispensable to an adolescent couple's graduation into adult love—together we are continually self-perfecting human beings: the true marriage—meeting of our moral minds—each of us seeks and knows he must have to become a fulfilled human being. For nothing but this state of mind, together with their already existent conception of and confidence in themselves individually as continually self-perfecting human beings, can possibly carry them through the series of rude awakenings they necessarily undergo as to each other's and their own imperfections and peculiarities, until they reach the point in restructuring their relationship where they can formulate to themselves and share with each other the conception of and confidence in themselves together as continually self-perfecting human beings: a conception and confidence which—when shared by them with the world—constitutes them a married couple, morally speaking, in reality.

And just look at what has happened in the bargain! The married couple now see themselves together as continually self-perfecting rather than perfect beings, and thus at last come to see their parents together, who also are seen together as human beings, in the same way. What a laugh they have together, and with their parents, over the idea they once had that a married couple (their respective parents) together were perfect beings! Their parents had of course for years been trying to dissuade them of the idea of parental perfection, but now at last they can see its infantile character for themselves by having seen it manifest itself for what it actually is in the infantile behavior toward members of the opposite sex (human beings) they have gotten over in the process of becoming a married couple. Thus at last they are fully autonomous human beings: human beings who conceive of, have confidence in and behave themselves together and individually as continually self-perfecting beings!

The final step in normal moral development is the process of self-knowing in which a moral adult brings to linguistic self-consciousness the nature of his innate autonomy; so that he is able to act self-consciously from his basic ought-principles.

Abnormal moral development, like normal moral development, is as complex a phenomenon overall as the many diverse personalities which are manifestations of it, and yet its overall structure always is the same. For the culmination of abnormal moral development is the negation of the culmination of normal moral development: human beings who neither conceive of nor have confidence in nor behave themselves as continually self-perfecting beings because they conceive of themselves as thoroughly evil and impotent beings who therefore ought to terminate their own lives. So our problem is to figure out how moral development goes so wrong as to produce beings who conceive of themselves as thoroughly evil and impotent and out of this conception terminate their own lives.

Now two things are abundantly clear from the foregoing account of normal moral development. One is that a human being's very first moral conviction that its parents together are perfect, the foundation of its moral development per se, is in complete control of the first (non-
autonomous) phase of this development, and the other is that the first phase of its moral development lays the sound or unsound basis for the second (autonomous) phase of this development. So we must begin our account of abnormal moral development by coming to see how its first phase can go so wrong as to cause a child to form the conception of itself as a human being who is worthless because it cannot understand how it ought to behave or behave itself as it ought. Now a child's conceiving of itself as worthless for this reason evidently arises somehow out of its feeling guilty about its behavior as a human being. So we must begin with an account of the origin of the feeling of guilt about one's behavior as a human being.

The process of human birth is one of the great wonders of nature. For in it the natural interested autonomy of a fetus is shocked into awareness to deal with its terrifying and helpless condition, so that the utter terror the fetus experiences through failure of all its attempts to deal with this condition--it is helpless in all respects but does not know it--is pair-bonded in its absolutely primitive normative-practical consciousness with the feeling of utter normative-practical impotence: complete inability to understand how it ought to behave or to behave itself as it ought. Thus is born the utterly terrifying feeling of utter normative-practical impotence. Now the utterly terrifying feeling of utter normative-practical impotence evidently is none other than the general feeling of guilt! For the general feeling of guilt is the utterly terrifying feeling of uncorrectable wrong-doing on one's part--failure on one's part to do what one ought owing to complete inability to understand how one ought to behave or to behave oneself as one ought: a feeling which, on its face, is identical to the utterly terrifying feeling of utter normative-practical impotence. Thus what we must determine next is how the general feeling of guilt is transformed into the moral feeling of guilt: the utterly terrifying feeling of utter normative-practical impotence as a moral being. Now the moral part of the moral feeling of guilt evidently stems somehow from the conviction that one's parents together are perfect. So we will be aided materially in our present task by understanding in greater detail the process of species imprintation through which a human being forms this conviction, so as to understand the elements that go into its formation and thereby are necessarily associated with it.

A very young infant feels the pangs of hunger, for example, and shortly thereafter feels the pangs of general guilt. For a very young infant's natural interested autonomy is unable to perceive what it ought to do to quell its pangs of hunger and so experiences the total normative-practical frustration which blossoms immediately into the general feeling of guilt. Thus its pangs of hunger and its mounting frustration and fear induce in the infant the overall reaction of panic, which includes loud and frantic crying. This loud and frantic crying of course brings it normal and therefore available and solicitous parents to its aid, who relieve it of its pangs of hunger and thereby of its general feeling of guilt.

Now this general pattern of events repeats itself a number of times each day in a developing very young infant's life, so that it is not very long before its rational exploratory and experimental behavior...
leads it to form the hypothesis that it is its own crying which induces the presence of its parents who take away its pangs of hunger (or other natural interest) and accompanying pangs of general guilt. Thus it is that a young infant forms the rational experimental intention, through its natural interested autonomy, to cry out at the slightest pang of hunger (or other natural interest) to avoid the blast of general guilt its intensification inevitably brings with it. Its parents are of course wonderfully obliging, so that their young infant soon transforms its experimental intention into a set policy. It then of course learns, through rational experimentation, to cry out as a set policy periodically even when it is not in immediate need of aid from its parents, so as to reassure itself periodically that its crying out actually will get the job done when it is needed. Thus it is that a young infant is brought increasingly into rewarding contact with its parents, and thereby develops natural interest based confidence in itself and its parents together, so that it is ready psychically for the first step in species imprintation: the rousing from dormancy of its capacity to develop feelings of intimacy and warm affection, brought about by its confidence induced locking onto its parents' smiling and loving gazes—a locking and coming on signaled by its responding smiling and loving gazes. So our problem now is to figure out, on a basis of the psychical materials laid out so far, how an infant is brought from this first step in species imprintation to the last: formation of the conviction that its parents together are perfect.

The experience an infant undergoes while locked onto its parents' smiling and loving gazes through its own consists of a total filling up of its consciousness with the feeling of warm affection for and intimacy with them. Moreover, this feeling intensifies very rapidly, with quite natural frequent repetition of the experience which produces it, until it becomes the supremely exhalting feeling of absolute loving oneness with its parents. Thus it is that an infant's natural interested autonomy forms the conviction: I ought to have it—the supremely exhalting feeling of absolute loving oneness with them—above everything else. Now an infant already is possessed, as we can see from this model, of the natural interest based conviction: I ought to avoid it—the utterly terrifying feeling of utter normative-practical impotence—above everything else. Furthermore, through continuing smiling and loving contact with its parents, an infant comes to realize that this contact is the one and only thing in its life that provides it simultaneously with fulfillment of both of these convictions! Thus it is that an infant's natural interested autonomy forms its supreme conviction: I ought to bring about IT—general guilt free and supremely exhalting absolute loving oneness with them—above all else; and thereby develops for its self a monomania for supremely rewarding—IT avoiding and IT producing—social contact with its parents.

But see what desperate straits an infant now finds itself in. There is no way in which its monomania can be satisfied, and so no way open to an infant through its natural interested autonomy out of the blasts of extreme general guilt with which its consciousness is swamped upon separation from its parents. Its parents eventually are forced to tolerate its utterly terrified and panic-stricken squalling. But an unremitting blast of extreme general guilt, as it feeds on itself, soon
becomes absolutely intolerable and so must be dealt with in some way by an infant's total psyche. Now there evidently is only one way conceivable in which an infant's total psyche can deal with this absolutely intolerable state of consciousness, namely, by projecting itself in imagination into a situation with its parents together in which it actually experiences the ultimately exalting feeling of absolute loving oneness with its parents together; for nothing but this projection can annihilate the intensifying unremitting blast of extreme general guilt which has swamped it consciousness and has been brought on by separation from both of its parents. Hence the question arises: how is this projection possible?

As an infant experiences intensifying unremitting extreme general guilt brought on by separation from both of its parents, it undergoes the sort of utter frustration and panic of its total personality which it underwent during its birth trauma. This frustration and panic shock into action its moral (and subordinate rational self-interested) self to deal, as best it can, with its otherwise hopeless situation. Now its moral (and subordinate rational self-interested) self comes into action in a situation in which an infant is absolutely frustrated in its natural interest based monomaniacal endeavors to bring about actual social union with one or the other and preferably both of its parents. So, not having any plan of action to test for its morality, all its moral self can do is project its situation universally, in the only way it can, by imagining itself with its parents together undergoing the self-annihilating super-nova of general guilt it experiences through this image. But the imagining of itself with its parents together, while it does give rise momentarily to this self-annihilating super-nova of general guilt, also gives rise almost as quickly to the annihilation of this guilt: the supplanting of it in the image of itself with its parents together by absolute loving oneness with them, as a spontaneous product of its overall developed personality. Thus it is that an infant's self-annihilating super-nova of general guilt becomes pair-bonded through this moral (and subordinate rational self-interested) birth experience to its polar opposite of absolute loving oneness with its parents together. Thus whatever disturbs the precariously balanced infant's projected absolute loving oneness with its parents together will bring on a self-annihilating super-nova of general guilt. Hence the question arises: how can an infant escape bondage to the necessity of continuously projecting itself in imagination, when it is away from them, into absolute loving oneness with its parents?

Well, evidently an infant must form the moral conviction which is functionally equivalent to the continuous projecting of itself in imagination into absolute loving oneness with its parents: the moral conviction which enables it to think of itself apart from both of them without feeling a self-annihilating super-nova of general guilt. Thus it must be the moral conviction whose feeling content is absolute loving oneness with its parents and whose conclusion is the belief that everything is exactly as it ought to be, even when it is apart from them. Now this moral conviction evidently is none other than an infant's conviction that its parents together are perfect: a conclusion an infant has no difficulty at all in forming in view of their most mysterious and awe-inspiring connection with the presence of absolute loving oneness...
(the supreme good) and the absence of self-annihilating general guilt (the supreme bad) in its life. Thus the question arises: how does moral guilt arise out of this psychical situation and what are its psychical components?

Moral guilt, to put it in the most general terms possible, is guilt felt for failing to do what one thinks overall one ought to do. But what a nacent moral being thinks overall it ought to do, as we have seen, is model on--be and behave itself just like--its parents together. Thus nacent moral guilt is self-annihilating general guilt felt by an infant--emerging-child in pair-bonded conjunction with the conviction that it has failed to be and behave itself just like its parents together, whose polar pair-bonding with modeling on its parents together as authority figures has resulted from the deduction of this modeling from the conviction that its parents together are perfect in its moral birth experience polar pair-bonded conjunction with self-annihilating general guilt. Now this deduction takes place naturally in an infant--emerging-child, when its parents begin to correct its behavior through the "dos" and "don'ts" which go so naturally with its conviction that they together are perfect.

Thus our first problem has come down to this: how does nacent moral guilt give rise, through abnormal child development, to a child's conception of itself as worthless because it cannot understand how it ought to behave and behave itself as it ought--cannot be and behave itself as its parents indicate that it ought? Now the solution in principle to this problem is this: through the manner in which an emerging-child's parents correct its natural interest based rational exploratory and experimental behavior--how they initiate, carry out and terminate correction of it--so as to bring it within the bounds of prudence and morality; for the image an emerging-child forms of itself evidently is determined entirely by the character of this correction process. So our question now is this: how does nacent moral guilt give rise, through the manner in which an emerging-child's parents initiate, carry out and terminate correction of its natural interest based rational exploratory and experimental behavior so as to bring it within the bounds of prudence and morality, to a child's conception of itself as worthless because it cannot be and behave itself as its parents together indicate that it ought?

The natural purpose, or developmental function of correction of an emerging-child's behavior is to bring it within the bounds of prudence (safety to itself) and morality (safety to others) throughout the process of its mastery of the succession of environments with which this behavior brings it into contact through coordinate development of physical and/or psychical skills, and in such a way that it develops moral (modeling) confidence in itself as a natural interest directed rational exploratory and experimental being. For thus it is that an emerging-child becomes the morally and rational self-interestedly responsible yet self-confident natural interest directed rational exploratory and experimental, thoroughly delightful creature who so enjoys its overall relations with its parents that it enters spontaneously into their cooperative-aiding family life in the spirit of eager willingness to learn as much about and contribute as much to it as it can that is
required for it to develop to the point where it can begin to play successfully with its peers. This means that an emerging-child's environment should be stimulating and challenging to its rational exploratory and experimental behavior, without being unduly frustrating to it by presenting it with excessively difficult tasks to master or excessive opportunities for behavior which must be corrected because it is dangerous to itself or to others. But it also means that when an emerging-child does make a mistake, either by attempting something excessively difficult or by doing something dangerous to itself or to others, it ought to receive: (1) unified parental moral guilt-rousing disapproval of the mistake it has made (but not of itself for innocently venturing into the situation in which it made it); (2) unified parental instruction, at its level of understanding, as to the nature of the mistake it has made; and (3) unified parental moral guilt-stilling and esteem-rousing approval of itself as it corrects, with their help if necessary, its natural and unavoidable mistake.

It is evident that its parents' disapproval of it for innocently venturing into the situation in which it made its mistake induces directly in a child a feeling of moral guilt for being a natural interest directed rational exploratory and experimental being; and that, if this sort of feeling of moral guilt, especially if it is intense, arises in it very frequently, an emerging-child will shrivel up, and perhaps even totally desiccate, as a developing autonomous being. But this autonomy-shrinking feeling of moral guilt also is induced indirectly in an emerging-child by inducing directly in it the conception of itself as a being who can neither understand what it ought to do—the corrections its parents require in its behavior—or do what it ought to do—carry out the corrections its parents require in its behavior. For this conception results from parental disapproval of a child's mistake which is followed by inadequate parental explanation of the mistake made, and so inadequate understanding by the child of what it ought to do to correct its mistake and continuing parental disapproval of the child's mistake; and continuing parental disapproval of its mistake, which it cannot understand how to correct or therefore correct, is transformed by a child, out of its belief in its parents together as perfect, into moral guilt for being defective in its capacity to understand how it ought to behave and to behave itself as it ought—to understand and comply with what its parents indicate that it ought to do—so that it immediately feels moral guilt for venturing, through its innocent rational exploratory and experimental behavior, into the situation in which it manifested this terrible defect. Now this dual feeling of moral guilt evidently is coordinate with a child's conception of itself as worthless because it cannot be and behave itself as its parents together indicate that it ought. Moreover, owing to the circumstantial-necessity of some unavoidable parental ignorance of the inadequacy of their corrective instructions, every emerging-child will to some degree feel about or conceive of itself this way; so that a moderate amount of this negative image of itself is a normal thing for any child to have. Furthermore, this negative image of itself serves a normal developmental purpose, by intensifying a child's felt urge to enter into the constructive social relations with its parents through which it experiences the guilt-stilling and esteem-rousing approval of its parents which keeps this image of itself in check. So our question now is this: how is
this childish image of itself perpetuated, if it already is intense, or intensified throughout a child's increasing social interaction with its parents until it is thrust into social interaction with its peers?

It is evident that a child's development of constructive social relations with its parents--its developed successful participation in their family life--is a rational exploratory and experimental venture guided directly by its modeling on its parents (and sexually-like parent) together as behavioral authority figures. Thus the developmental function of correction of a child's behavior, as it develops constructive social relations with its parents, is to enable a child to learn enough overall of the ways of its family life, so that it can go on through this process to find for itself a genuinely constructive place in it; for this is the learning process which provides a child with both the social know-how and the confidence in itself required to put it into effect which enable it to participate successfully in a peer play-group. This means that a child's family environment should provide it with a continuum of tasks to master which relieve its parents of some of the burden of their daily routines, but which do not unduly frustrate it by being excessively difficult to master or by calling for correction because, in its hands, they are dangerous either to itself or to others. But it also means that, when a child does make a mistake, by attempting a social task which is either excessively difficult to master or dangerous to itself or to others, it ought, as before, to receive: (1) unified parental moral guilt-rousing disapproval of the mistake it has made (but not of itself for innocently venturing into the situation in which it made it); (2) unified parental instruction, at its level of understanding, as to the nature of the mistake it has made; and (3) unified parental moral guilt-stilling and esteem-rousing approval of itself as it corrects, with their help if necessary, its natural and unavoidable mistake. And thus it is that a child develops something of a true conception of and moral, or modeling confidence in itself as a whole--(moral and subordinate rational self-interested and subordinate natural interested rational exploratory and experimental) human-being.

So we can see that a young child's conception of itself as worthless--its feeling of guilt--for being defective in its capacity to understand and comply with what its parents indicate that it ought to do, and so for venturing into the situations in which it manifests this terrible defect, is perpetuated, if intense, or intensified by the same sort of mismanagement by its parents of correction of its rational exploratory and experimental family-life behavior as gave rise to it in the first place: excessively frequent and/or intense parental disapproval of its mistakes which is followed by inadequate parental explanation of the mistakes made, and so inadequate understanding by a child of what it ought to do to correct its mistakes, failure of the child to correct its mistakes and continuing parental disapproval of the child's mistakes. Now the resulting conception of itself as worthless for being defective in its capacity to understand and comply with what its parents indicate that it ought overall as a whole-human-being to do, and so for venturing into the situations in which it manifests this terrible defect, has as its specific effect the shriveling, and perhaps total desiccating, of a child overall as a rational exploratory and experimental--self-perfecting--being, and so constitutes the basis of one half of a sui-
dal person's conception of itself as thoroughly evil and impotent. So, what we need to discover next is the basis in childhood of the other half of this conception: I am thoroughly evil.

A child's conception of thoroughgoing evil is the polar opposite of course of its conception of thoroughgoing good—the perfection of its parents together—and so is the conception of a being whose intention and execution is in systematic opposition to theirs: how they indicate one ought to be and behave. Now the only ultimate moral intention a child has is the intention whose ultimacy constitutes it a child—its supreme intention to be and behave itself as its parents together indicate that it ought—through its functional equivalence in a developing child's mind to its innate supreme developing intention to be and behave itself as it ought as a whole-human-being. Thus, to form the conception of itself as thoroughly evil, a child must picture its ultimate moral intention as its polar opposite: the intention to be and behave itself contrary to how its parents together indicate that it ought. But how on earth is this remarkable, and utterly tragic, turn of events possible? How can a child possibly come to see its actual ultimate moral intention to be and behave itself as its parents together indicate that it ought as the intention to be and behave itself completely contrary to how its parents together indicate that it ought?

The source of a child's self-identifying ultimate moral intention to be and behave itself as its parents together indicate that it ought, as we have seen, is its belief in its parents together as perfect. Therefore whatever contradicts this belief undermines this intention and thereby a child's sense of self-identity. But loss of a sense of self-identity, as everyone knows from personal experience, is absolutely intolerable and so must be dealt with in some way by a child's overall developing psyche. So, when a child experiences contradiction of its belief in its parents together as perfect in the course of growing up normally, it regains a sense of self-identity by supplanting as ultimate its childish intention to be and behave itself as its parents together indicate that it ought by its adult intention to be and behave itself as it can see for itself that it ought, through its growing understanding of the normative why-and-wherefore of things: an intention which is coordinate in a child—emerging-adult's mind with the proto-adult conception of itself as a being who knows how and why it ought to behave and behaves itself as it ought. Thus when a child experiences contradiction of its belief in its parents together as perfect, in the normal course of growing up, it does so after it has begun to develop the powers of autonomous moral thinking, through successful peer-group play, which have enabled it to form the proto-adult conception of and confidence in itself as a being who knows how and why it ought to behave and behaves itself as it ought; for this is the only conception of and confidence in itself whose possession by a child will enable it to supplant as ultimate its intention to be and behave itself as its parents indicate that it ought by its intention to be and behave itself as it can see for itself that it ought, when it repeatedly experiences, as it should, contradiction of its belief in its parents together as perfect. Thus it is clear that a child comes to see its actual ultimate moral intention, to be and behave itself as its parents together indicate that it ought, as the intention to be and behave itself completely contrary
to how its parents together indicate that it ought, by experiencing contradiction of its belief in its parents together as perfect before it has developed powers of autonomous moral thinking and the coordinate conception of and confidence in itself as a being who knows how and why it ought to behave and behaves itself as it ought. But (1) how is it possible for a child to experience contradiction of its belief in its parents together as perfect? (2) what form must this contradiction assume if it is to induce in a child the image of its ultimate moral intention as the intention to be and behave itself completely contrary to how its parents together indicate that it ought? and (3) how does this experience induce this image in a child?

There is just one way in which a pre-autonomous child can experience contradiction of its belief in its parents together as perfect, namely, by becoming conscious of a discrepancy between how its parents together indicate that a human being ought to behave and how they actually do behave; for—in the nature of the case—there is no discrepancy in a pre-autonomous child's mind between how it believes a human being ought to behave and how its parents together indicate that a human being ought to behave. Now becoming conscious of this discrepancy in its parents between thought (intention) and action (completion) is a normal part of pre-autonomous child development which relieves a child's natural obsession with fulfilling to the letter the corrective instructions of its parents it has failed to understand, so that it quits worrying excessively about making mistakes and thereby is ready to participate fully successfully in a peer play-group. But it is absolutely necessary for its normal development that consciousness of this discrepancy not produce in a child's mind a picture of evil intent on the part of its fallible parent(s): intent to behave contrary to how its parents together indicate that a human being ought to behave. For if consciousness of discrepancy between parental thought and action induces in a child's mind reunion of the discrepant-pair through a picture of intent on the part of its offending parent(s) to behave contrary to how its parents together indicate that a human being ought to behave, then through this picture it will induce in a child's mind a picture of intent on its part to be and behave itself contrary to how its parents together indicate that it ought—a picture of itself as a thoroughly evil being; for—in the nature of the case—there also is no discrepancy in a pre-autonomous child's mind between the kind of being it believes its parents ultimately to be and the kind of being it believes itself ultimately to be. Thus we can see that a child's image of its ultimate moral intention as the evil intention to be and behave itself completely contrary to how its parents together indicate that it ought arises out of its species-imprintation-based sense of ultimate identity with its parents, when it experiences a discrepancy between parental thought and action which induces in its mind, as the only possible explanation of this discrepancy, a picture of the evil intent on the part of its parent(s) to be and behave contrary to how its parents together indicate that a human being ought to be and behave. So the question with which we are left is this: how is it possible for a pre-autonomous child to experience a discrepancy between parental thought and action whose only possible explanation in its mind is the evil intent on the part of its parent(s) to be and behave contrary to how its parents together indicate that a human being ought to be and behave?
When a normal pre-autonomous child perceives what it ought overall to do—what its parents indicate that it ought to do—then, owing to its overall developed personality, it endeavors to the best of its ability to so behave; so that failure on its part is due to want of ability to carry out its intention. But, when it does not perceive what it ought overall to do, a normal pre-autonomous child’s failure may be due either to want of understanding of what it ought overall to do or to want of ability to execute its inexact intention (or both). In either case, intending to do what it believes overall one ought not to do—to fail to do what its parents together indicate that it ought to do—is impossible for a normal pre-autonomous child. Moreover, through the mutual give and take of correction of its mistakes by it and its parents, a normal pre-autonomous child has learned that the mistakes it has succeeded in correcting were due either to want of understanding of what it ought overall to do or to want of ability to execute its inexact intentions (and sometimes both); so that it also has learned that its parents do not always understand what they ought to do—the instructions they ought to give it which it can follow—or succeed in executing their intention to do what they ought to do—impart the instructions to it that it can follow. Thus it is that, in the course of its normal pre-autonomous development, a child gives up its belief that its parents are omniscient—always can understand what they ought to do—and its belief that its parents are omnipotent—always can do what they understand they ought to do—without giving up the element of its belief in them as perfect which is crucial to their remaining its behavioral authority-figures for further normal moral development: its belief that its parents always intend to do what they believe overall one ought to do—be and behave oneself as they together indicate that one ought.

We can see from this that it is an essential feature of a fully normal adult’s overall developed personality that it always intends to do what it believes it ought overall to do, and so never intends to do what it believes overall it ought not to do; and we must admit that it is possible for a normal pre-autonomous child to mature into a fully normal adult. Moreover, Simple Simon himself can see how a pre-autonomous child would attribute a perceived discrepancy between parental thought and action to the evil intent to do what ought not to be done on the part of an abnormal parent who displays this intent plainly in its behavior. So our basic problem is to explain how perception by a normal pre-autonomous child of a discrepancy between parental thought and action, without behavioral display of this intent by its parent(s), induces in it belief in this intent on the part of its parent(s) as the only possible explanation of the action. For only by solving this problem will we be able to unravel the gordian-knot of human behavior, by explaining the origin in human behavior of the intent to do what one believes overall ought not to be done: an intent which quite evidently is totally foreign to the inherent nature of an autonomous being!

As we have seen, a normal pre-autonomous child perceives, at least during the mutual give and take of correction of its behavior, discrepancies between parental thought and action which lead it to give up its belief that they are omniscient and omnipotent, without giving up its belief that they are perfectly good: possessed only of the intent to do what they indicate ought to be done. Thus the fateful action—the
action the child is going to be forced to attribute to parental intent to do what ought not to be done—must be one a normal child is absolutely certain its parent(s) knows ought not to be done and can avoid doing. Thus the fateful action must be one that violates the most fundamental moral (modeling) belief it has about how a human being ought to behave, so that the action cannot be explained through an overriding parental moral belief, whose violation of this most fundamental moral belief it is certain its parent(s) knows of and whose avoidance would involve nothing it does not know through experience its parent(s) is capable of doing. Hence the key to solving our problem is discovering the identity of a normal pre-autonomous child's most fundamental moral belief about how a human being ought to behave.

Every human being knows that, in the nature of the case, the most fundamental general obligation any human being has is to prevent someone who is helpless from undergoing something absolutely intolerable; for every human being knows that, in the nature of the case, the most fundamental general right any human being has is to whatever help it may require in avoiding something absolutely intolerable. Nor is this a moral lesson lost on a normal pre-autonomous child, who is bound to have undergone salvation--rescue from the absolutely intolerable--by its parents on various occasions during its sometimes physically extremely perilous, rational exploratory and experimental ventures into the natural world in which it is learning how to live successfully; for these have been some of the most instructive and instructional times of its life. Moreover, a child's conception of the absolutely intolerable--as a matter of overall psychological necessity--is permanent loss on its part of absolute loving oneness with its parents; for anything adverse is tolerable to a child who has absolute loving oneness with its parents, and nothing adverse is tolerable to a child who does not have it. Furthermore, the only way in which a normal pre-autonomous child--also as a matter of overall psychological necessity--can conceive of itself as undergoing permanent loss on its part of absolute loving oneness with its parents is through its own death or their deaths. But the death of its parents at their own hands is something that is utterly inconceivable to a normal pre-autonomous child. Hence the fateful parental action is one which a child sees as bringing or allowing to be brought about its own death, whose character as such a child is certain it has brought to the attention of its parent(s) and whose avoidance a child is certain its parent(s) are capable of owing to their similar successful rescues of it in the past.

The psychical-earthquake induced by the belief that its parent(s) intend its death triggers off in a normal pre-autonomous child the following sequence of beliefs, all of which stem--indirectly or directly--from its directly unassailable--totally unconscious--belief in its parents together as perfect: (1) my parents have the evil intent to do what they know they ought not to do; (2) I have the evil intent to do what I know I ought not to do; (3) this evil intent on my part justifies my parents in intending my death; (4) death is appropriate for this intention; (5) it is appropriate that I die for this intention. Thus it is that, out of the directly unassailable, totally unconscious belief in its parents together as perfect, a normal pre-autonomous child forms, more or less consciously, the abnormal and, in conjunction with its
deeper normal personality, schizophrenic intention to model itself on the intention of its parents to be and behave themselves as they know they ought not. So everything depends on whether or not its parents detect the signs of its growing moral-schizophrenia early enough to help their child understand the situation from which it arose, so that it can see, through the facts about that situation, that there never really was any evil intent on their part: intent that it suffer death, for God knows what. For, if its growing moral-schizophrenia goes undetected and uncorrected for very long, it will rapidly become ingrained by the flood of parental disapproval a child will receive for the bad behavior it cannot, as a pre-autonomous child, help: a flood of disapproval which leads to total repression on its part of the source of the behavioral problems with which it cannot cope and thereby to a schizophrenic developing overall personality.

Thus we can see that a morally-schizophrenic child who, through continual parental mismanagement of correction of its behavior, already has a vivid conception of itself as worthless--feels intensely guilty--for being defective in its capacity to understand and comply with what its parents together indicate that it ought to do, in a state of utter confusion about itself, forms the belief that this terrible defect itself stems directly from its recently discovered intention to be and behave itself contrary to how its parents indicate that it ought. And thus it is that a pre-autonomous child forms the conception of itself as a being who is thoroughly evil and who deserves death for so being, so that all it need do to become suicidal, to form the moral intention to eliminate from existence the cancerous growth that it is, is form the conception of itself as impotent: incapable of coping with its cancerous behavior and self. For then it will conceive of itself as a thoroughly evil and impotent being who ought to die at its own hands, as its only remaining act of self-redemption. Nor is it very difficult to see how a suicidally-inclined child would come quite naturally, in an atmosphere of continuing ignorance of its plight, by the conception of itself as impotent, through the succession of increasingly disastrous behavioral-failures into which it is locked by its schizophrenic personality and which, in such an atmosphere, it cannot but attribute to its thoroughly evil and so obviously intentional failing to improve self!

How tragic such thoroughly insane suicides are, when they can be stopped, at least temporarily, by an extraordinarily simple observation anyone can make about such a suicide, namely, that only a person who at bottom cares with all of his heart about behaving himself as he ought could ever possibly carry out--as the only moral act left open to it--the taking of his own life to end the career of an incurable and intolerable moral-cancer. Of course a suicidal person needs a great deal of help to escape bondage to its phantasmagorical and totally guilt-ridden image of itself, but this observation about itself is the necessary foundation for its escape: discovery and development of the worthwhile innate and developed self that lies intact beneath the rubble of its life under which, without this observation, it must surely feel itself hopelessly buried.
Thus the voyage of self-discovery in which a moral being brings to linguistic self-consciousness the nature of his innate autonomy is an essential and fundamental leg of the complete journey from moral-schizophrenia back to normality. The analysis and characterization of this voyage of self-discovery is a major unresolved problem of analytic ethics, and one whose resolution would be a major contribution to the theory and practice of rational psychotherapy.
NOTES

1 This analysis of our innate autonomy is defended in chapters 9 and 10.

2 The process by which this conviction is generated is analyzed below.


4 When I was in the process of drafting this chapter I was yet in the throes of liberating myself from addiction to the idea that the notion of perfection, when applied to an autonomous being such as a human, has at least some definite and specifiable cognitive content. And, though I now see that my actual meaning, even at that time, is conveyed by the notion self-improving, I have left 'self-perfecting' in place throughout the final draft to serve as a biographical notice and reminder to myself and my readers. But feel free to substitute throughout 'self-improving' for the (cognitively empty) 'self-perfecting'.

5 This intention is the essence of evil (moral, prudential and even natural interested, evil) in general and the foundation, through particularization, of all forms of evil in all of its particular manifestations in various kinds of vices (dispositions to do kinds of actions or to manifest personal traits one recognizes, usually only unconsciously, that one ought not to do or manifest). This evil intent, both in its most general and in its particular manifestations, though not innate, or inborn as many people of a wide variety of religious persuasions would have us believe, is rampant in human behavior throughout history and throughout the contemporary world, knowing neither national boundary nor sect nor creed, and is the self-perpetuating source of many of the continuing ills from which the human race currently suffers. This in-born-autonomy defeating intent is also the self-perpetuating source of weakness of the will (moral, prudential and natural interested) in all of its manifestations and one of the major components of psychological compulsion in all of its forms, including all of the phenomena we classify as forms of self-deception (including rationalizing). Thus this autonomy-thwarting-and-nullifying intent must be extirpated from human life if we are to make genuine and permanent (moral, prudential and natural interested) progress, on a continuing basis, as a species. It can even be said that the fate of human civilization throughout the world hangs on success or failure in this, admittedly mind-boggling, enterprise; certainly, the future and ever more complete flourishing of the human race on earth hangs in the balance. It is to providing part of the means to extirpating this evil and normal-autonomy-destroying intent that this chapter is fundamentally dedicated.

6 The logical place to begin resolving this problem is with coming to understand the total argument of chapters 9 and 10.
I shall not even attempt in this, its concluding, chapter to summarize the argument of part 2, The Basis of Morality. I shall, instead, attempt to shed further light on some of its component parts by comparing my views with similar views of some of my major predecessors named in the preface to this book. For, though I have learned much of value from their written works, I disagree with each of them on what I regard as crucial points and I do not wish my views to be confused with their similar but, as I think, mistaken views. I shall begin with Hobbes, whom I regard as the father of modern moral philosophy and, along with Descartes, as one of the two fathers of modern philosophy.

Like Hobbes, I am a materialist—or, as I prefer to put it, a physicalist. For I believe that the physical, or natural universe—the universe of spatio-temporally located entities and processes—is the totality of everything that exists. But, unlike Hobbes, I do not accept the 'billiard-table' model of physical causation and processes as universally applicable. In particular, I view living matter, especially neurologically-functioning matter, as being organized in such a way that its total behavior does not admit of being analyzed on a basis of a billiard-table—pull-push, click, collision (what Ryle would call a 'clock-work')—model. So I am not in the least inclined to think that, merely because it is a physical, or natural system, the human brain cannot be the seat of the life of the mind, and in particular the seat of our autonomy, will or practical reason.

I also think, in fact, that Hobbes's conception of the will as the last appetite before action is woefully inadequate to the task at hand. It will not do even for the natural interested will, let alone for the moral and the rational self-interested will. Nor will it do to think, as he does, of the object of the rational self-interested will as being one's own good conceived simply as the gratification of the last appetite before action. Hobbes, evidently, confuses the object of the natural interested will with the object of the rational self-interested will. However, given my conception of the object of the rational self-interested will as the maximal (optimal and exhaustive) satisfaction of one's own innate and acquired natural interests—'desires' and 'aversions' are Hobbes's words for them—I think I have spelled out correctly in chapter 8 his defense of normative (ethical) egoism on a basis of psychological egoism. This defense of normative egoism, adumbrated in Leviathan and in Philosophical Rudiments Concerning Government and Society, turned my brain into a whirling-dervish on the problem as to how to justify a basic normative-practical (ought) principle. But I hasten to add that it was from reflecting on Kant's Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals that I got my conception of autonomy, will or practical reason as the power to act from ought-principles. For Kant says that will, or reason in its practical application, is the power to determine ourselves to action 'in accordance with'—I think he must mean 'from'—(the idea of) certain principles; and these principles turn out to be imperatives, which are expressed by an 'ought'.
Where I part company with Kant is in regard to his thinking that the only structural principle of the human will is the supreme principle of morality, which he calls the Categorical Imperative. He is wrong, I think, on two counts. First, the human will, as I have explained in chapter 9, is tripartite and hierarchical in character, with the Principle of Morality in normative-practical superiority over the Principle of Rational Self-Interest, and with these two principles in normative-practical superiority over the Principle of Natural Interest. But second, I think that the will is directed by ought-judgments—either principles or particular judgments—and not, as Kant does, by imperatives, or what Hare calls 'prescripts'. My reason for thinking this is that, for a rational being, a prescriptive—whether one's own or another's—guides one's conduct only insofar as one accepts it as (judges it to be) a prescriptive that ought to be followed (acted on).

So I think, overall, that Kant's account of the will and of its functioning, based on his (Christian) supernaturalistic conception of the mind (noumenal, or transcendental self), must be abandoned in favor of the sort of naturalistic account of it and of its functioning presented in chapters 9 and 10. The supposed supernatural human mind is, to my way of thinking, an explanatorily-superfluous-and-vacuous entity shaved-off by the application of Occam's Razor generated by (among other things) these two chapters. It goes down the tube along with Butler's supernaturalistic conception of human nature as a hierarchically-structured economy or constitution topped-off by the moral will—"conscience" is his word for it—supposedly implanted in human beings by God. How this alleged implantation is supposed to take place is left totally unexplained, along with the coordinate—I think with Kant, in principle insoluble—problem of explaining the working of transcendental causation in general.

What I did learn from Butler is to think of the human behavior-guidance-system—within which I include guidance of the brain-behavior involved in making normative-practical judgments—as an economy or constitution: a system of hierarchically-structured principle-springs of human normative-practical judgment and behavior. But I also think Butler was right in claiming that conscience (the moral will) bears the mark of its (normative-practical) superiority over self-love—the Principle of Rational Self-Interest—and over the appetites, passions, and affections—the Principle of Natural Interest. For the Principle of Morality is the only structural principle of the human will that contains the concept we to mark its superiority for us essentially-social autonomous beings over these other two structural principles of our will, which contain only the concept I. However, it was Rousseau, in his Discourse on the Origin of Inequality and his Social Contract, and Hume, in his Of Morals and his Principles of Morals, who together suggested to me the idea that morality and essential-sociality are intrinsically connected: a point that seems to have completely eluded Kant, who surely was familiar with these works, except perhaps in connection with his account of a 'kingdom of ends'—which I prefer to think of as a community of rationality-complete, essentially-social, autonomous beings, or a community of moral agents.
My view of Kant's account of the supreme principle of morality is as follows. First, I would formulate it, not as an imperative, but rather as the following ought-principle:

We ought to act only in those ways whose universal performance is both possible and such that we can will their universal performance.

But the question arises immediately as to what there is to the structure of our will that could make it impossible for us (rationally) to will the universal performance of an action (whose universal performance is possible), that is, to will every one to act on the natural interested or rational self-interested maxim of a prospective action--our own or someone else's? My answer is that it is what Kant thinks of as our built-in 'desire for happiness'--or, as I prefer to put it, our inborn concern for our own rational self-interest (within the constraints of morality). Thus I think, along Kantian lines, that no action ought to be performed if its universal performance would be incompatible with any human being's rational self-interest, that is, if universal conformity to its maxim would be incompatible with any human being's rational self-interest. If this interpretation of the Categorical Imperative is correct, then it is, as by now it can easily be seen, extensionally-equivalent to the Principle of Morality: We ought to act only in those ways whose universal performance is both possible and consistent with the rational self-interest of each and every member of our species, or kind--homo sapiens.

I shall end by endeavoring to forestall a certain line of objection to my account of the basis (the supreme principle) of morality, or of rational human conduct. Discussion of the following example of this line of objection will suffice. It was once said to me--by a colleague in connection with an earlier version of chapter 10--that the trouble with us Kantians is that we approve of cruelty to animals--meaning by animals, I suppose, certain (favored) types of sentient beings lower in the evolutionary-scale than Man. Now much more needs to be said about this particular alleged counterexample to Kantian ethics than I care to cover, except to point out that only abnormal people find in themselves the impulse to be cruel to animals, including human animals, and that those concerned genuinely to eliminate cruelty to animals would better occupy themselves with eradicating the conditions of human life that give rise to this impulse than with sentimental and rationally-unfounded moralizing about it to themselves and to others who--like myself--experience no cruel impulses toward animals but rather find them objects of deep and abiding intellectual and even esthetic interest and, especially when they are our pets, of warm affection. I shall have to confine myself to making several general observations about this alleged counterexample which apply equally-forcefully to all other such counterexamples.

First, I would point out that even if it does follow from Kantian ethics that cruelty to animals is always morally alright (permissible) and sometimes even morally obligatory (as when necessary to save human life), the criticism's implied founding-claim that cruelty to animals is always morally wrong, or disobligatory (morally ought never to be engaged
in) simply is an unsupported moral intuition: a preconceived moral idea having no support from a well-founded ethical theory. But preconceived, or precritical moral ideas sometimes turn out to be not only rationally-unfoundable but also erroneous in fact. Moreover, I—for one—have given up as unfoundable and erroneous many of the preconceived moral ideas—taught, or spoonfed to me by various authority-figures during my not yet fully-autonomous days—that I brought to systematic moral philosophy when I took up its serious pursuit in graduate school. To my way of thinking, such critical-behavior is to be commended, not discommended.

The second thing I would point out is that rejecting a purportedly well-founded ethical theory—such as the one presented in this book—on the ground that it conflicts with one or more of one's preconceived moral ideas—no matter how widely or how firmly these ideas are held or on whose authority they are held—is question-begging at best, and circular at worst, in that it can be rationally sustained only by appeal to a well-founded ethical theory from which the truth of the preconceived idea(s) in question follows as a consequence of the theory's correct application to human conduct. But no ethical theory can be founded well—epistemologically-speaking—on anyone's preconceived moral ideas, or beliefs; for, as Kant at least saw, these beliefs must first be tested by appeal to the basis of morality to see whether they are fit to serve as rationally-indubitable cases of true moral belief, or—as Plato would put it—to see whether they are 'wind-eggs' or not. Furthermore, once one has a better-founded ethical theory there is no need to appeal to preconceived moral ideas to refute (prove erroneous) another philosopher's account of the basis of morality; it stands condemned by contrast with the better-founded theory.

So I must ask—politely but insistently—that my critics, and I am confident that there will be many of them since there are so many good-hearted and morally-pious intuitionists about, either make specific objections to my supporting argument or else, using its proof-strategy, provide a better account than mine of the basis of human practical reason, including moral reason. One other cogent strategy for refuting me is possible, namely, that of providing an account of how to refute ethical skepticism, other than the one I presented and defended in part 1, and of then going on—on a basis of this account—to develop an alternative account of the basis of morality which is better-founded than mine. Any other critical-strategy must, I think, boil-down to an appeal to moral intuitions, that is, to some version or other of what Bentham calls 'the principle of sympathy and antipathy' (chapter 2 of An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation). On this point, Bentham is highly and amusingly-contemptuously instructive. It is a pity that so few contemporary moral philosophers have read him as attentively and thoughtfully on this point as they have on his—admittedly, utterly preposterous—account of the supreme principle of morality. Mill, at least, is alive—philosophically and morally—on both counts.

Some may be tempted to object to this whole line of critical reasoning concerning the appeal to ethical intuitions (to preconceived, or precritical ethical ideas, or beliefs) as the test of the adequacy of an ethical theory by claiming that we have nothing against which to test an
ethical theory but our ethical intuitions. My reply to this objection is three-fold. First, as the whole of the argument of this book leading up to this final chapter should by now amply demonstrate, I think it quite definitely false that we have nothing but our ethical intuitions against which to test an ethical theory. But, second, even if this were not so, it would not follow that our ethical intuitions are a reliable test of the adequacy of an ethical theory. For thinking that they are a reliable test strikes me as analogous to thinking that, because monopoly (or play) money is the only money with which we have to buy groceries this week, it (the monopoly, or play money) must be coin-of-the-realm (or legitimate currency). But, finally, since ethical intuitions vary from person to person, at a given time and over time, and vary even for a given person over time, one must face the question— in a non-question-begging and non-circular way— just whose intuitions, and which of these, are going to serve as the test in question? I submit that there is no satisfactory answer to this question that is not predicated fundamentally on an appeal to a well-founded ethical theory. So, back you go to the preface of this book.
AFTERWORD

My experience as a learner-teacher has repeatedly confirmed what other learner-teachers have found to be one of the best tested conclusions of their experience: that dogmatic and superstitious beliefs dissipate in the natural light of reason, when reason is supplied with adequate information, much in the manner in which dew evaporates in the light of day. However, I have also found through experience that a learner-teacher must practice patience and forbearance inasmuch as it invariably is darkest before the dawn.

Thomas McClintock
8600 Patton Road
Wyndmoor, PA 19118