EARLY BUDDHIST CONCEPT OF ETHICAL KNOWLEDGE: A PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS

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Contemporary moral philosophy pays special attention to discussions relating to the possibility of knowledge and truth in the sphere of morals. The conclusions reached in this regard after elaborate analysis of moral concepts and the logic of moral discourse are by no means mutually compatible. Although the primary role of ethical discussions in early Buddhism is not the solution of such logical issues. if the Buddhist ethical system is to be formulated as a rationally coherent one the solutions implicit in the system have to be made explicit. The present paper is an attempt to make the meta-ethical foundations of the early Buddhist ethical doctrine explicit and highlight its concepts of moral truth and moral knowledge.

The following questions will therefore be taken into consideration.

Is it possible. according to early Buddhism. to have knowledge with regard to what is morally good and bad? Can one be said to be mistaken about one's judgments regarding what) *kusa/a* (morally good) and *kara!tiya* (what ought to be done)? Can ethical judgments be true or false? Can they be rationally justified and if so how? Where does early Buddhism stand in the controversy between ethical cognitivism and ethical non-cognitivism ?

In the *Sarpyutta-nikiiya* the Buddha speaks as if there are certain moral phenomena in the world which can be known by us such as *kusa/a-akusa/a* (good/bad). *siivajja-anavajja* (blameworthy/non-blameworthy), *hina-partita* (low/excellent) and *ka1}ha-sukka* (shady/clean).1 It is said that the Buddha has properly laid down what these moral distinctions are.[2] A person is said to possess right views *(sammiiditthi)* if he comprehends what *akusa/a* is, what the source of *akusala* is, what *kusala* is and what the source of *kurala* is.[3] That killing etc. are *akusla* is to be known; knowledge is not restricted to matters of empirical fact (empirical facts understood according to the fact-value dichotomy established in recent moral philosophy in the West). A person is said to be ignorant and deluded if he does not know the moral distinctions such as *kusala-akusala. siivajja-anavajja* etc.. An uninstructed ordinary person is said not to know the sort of things he ought or ought not to associate himself with and engage himself in. The skeptical stand taken by some recluses and brahmans is considered by the Buddha to be due to their ignorance of *kusa/a* and *akusa/a* as they have come to be.6

The Buddha expressly uses even the term *sacca* (true) to characterize certain moral judgments. **In** the *Anguttara-nikiiya* the Buddha says:

Here wandering ascetics. a Brahmana says thus: "All living beings ought not to be killed." **In** saying thus the brahman says what is true and not what is false.'

What we have said so far shows that the basic components of an objectivist theory of ethics are to be found in the Pali Nikayas. What is *kusala* and *akusala*

is said to be knowable; skepticism on what is *kusala* and *akusala* is said to be unwarranted and certain judgments regarding what we ought and ought not to do are said to be true.

In speaking of knowledge of *kusala* and *akusala* the Buddha uses forms of the *no* 'to know' (mostly *pajiiniiti* and *jiiniiti).* According to modern ethical non-cog\litivists such as Ayer and Stevenson whatever knowledge one can have in ethics belongs to psychology. sociology, the natural sciences or to logic.[s] The Buddha admitted not merely such 'knowledge in ethics' but also 'ethical knowledge' in the sense in which philosophers who are denominated 'ethical cognitivists' have admitted it. We shall attempt to examine the grounds for this objectivist ethics in early Buddhism and the sense in which it was held that ethical knowledge is possible.

In early Buddhism (as it is the case in Indian philosophical systems in general). knowledge was conceived as an integral whole which constitutes both knowledge of matters of fact and knowledge of what is of ultimate value. theoretical knowledge as well as practical knowledge. The early Buddhist term *parniii* is one which comprehends both these aspects of knowing. *paiii'iii* has a specific application in Buddhism and does not signify knowledge in general, but knowledge which is connected with the highest good of man. A similar interest in practical knowledge is shown by Socrates who is considered the great founder of moral philosophy in the West. Socrates believed that men's ignorance of their true good was the source of all wrong-doing. He believed .against the sophists of his time, that objective knowledge of good and bad, right and wrong is possible. Gorgias. one. of the leading spohists of his time. declared that the essential nature of things could not be known, or if known. could not be stated. Protagoras, the other prominent sophist. declared that human apprehension is the only standard of what is true and what is false. Socrates, on the other hand, assumed that there is an objective basis for moral distinctions. However, it is not clear what Socrates meant by knowledge of good and evil. Sometimes he attempts to approach the question by seeking for definitions of justice. virtue. etc., although this exercise ends up as a purely negative one of rejecting all definitions offered by others. There are other instances in which the knowledge needed is knowledge of how to estimate pleasures and pains accurately. Plato offered a positive theory of moral knowledge. He, like Socrates, recognized

the objectivity of moral judgments and attempted to explain it in terms of his general epistemological theory founded on the central notion of his philosophy, namely, the doctrine of Ideas or Forms. Early Buddhism, like early Greek philosophy, did not explicitly draw a distinction between factual knowledge and ethical knowledge. Instead it spoke of knowledge in general, admitting that ethical knowledge is possible. But the modem distinction between fact and value raises an important problem for the moral philosopher. Objectivism in e1hics is seen by some contemporary philosophers in the West as being a result of the failure to distinguish between description

and evaluation. Knowledge and truth are said to be confined to descriptive scientific statements, on the one hand, and to logical or mathematical statements on the other, and therefore, inapplicable in the realm of ethical evaluation. Common usage unquestionably permits us to speak of moral knowledge. With regard to moral judgments that people make in such forms as 'X' s action A was wrong. We often express our assent saying, *'That's* true' or dissent saying, 'That's not true'. We often say that people do certain things, 'knowing' what they are doing is wrong. But it may be argued that common usage is not decisive in this matter, and that philosophical reflec1ion about the nature of morality should convince us that common sense talk about knowledge and truth in morality is misleading. It may therefore be argued that the early Buddhist talk about truth and knowledge in ethics is just the result of the adoption of the unsophisticated common sensical ways of speaking which a n10re reflective analysis could prove to be confused or mistaken. Some contemporary philosophers argue that the confusion in our ordinary notions of morality are due to the misleading grammatical form of ethical utterances. Moral utterances are often expressed in subject-predicate form by sentences in the indicative mood. This, it may be argued, is the source of the confusion. But early Buddhism believes not only that it is possible to justify, objectively, ethical statements in the indicative n:ood, but also ethical utterances which clearly take the imperative ffiood. Ethical statements, according to early Buddhism, mayor may not be disguised imperatives. But imperatives themselves. when they are moral ones, can be adequately or inadequately supported by reasons, In addressing the KfiHimas, we find the Buddha speaking of the possibility of 'personal knowledge' *(attanava janeyyiitha)* in the sphere of *kusala* and *akusala.9* This personal knowledge is contrasted with six ways of knowing based ell authority and four ways of knowing .based on reason. IO K. N. JayatiJleke recognizes the emphasis on personal and direct knowledge found throughout the Pali Nikfiyas and attempts to clarify in great detail what was ffieant by this kind of knowledge. However, his discussion of the question of knowledge does not pay attention to logical problems that arise when the Buddha speaks of ethical knowledge. His discussion remains within the confines of what the modem positivistic tradition in Western philosophy would describe as factual knowledge. One reason for this is that, within Buddhism itself, the distinction between the factual and the evaluative is not explicitly drawn. However, it is clear that in the context of the *Kiilama-Jutta* the Buddha is speaking of knowing what is *kusala* and *akusala* and hence speaking of ethical knowledge.

Considerations relevant to the question of knowledge in factual context may be relevant to the moral epistemology of early Buddhism as well. But it is important to see how they become relevant. Their relevance depends, as we shall see. on the nature of the relationship that early Buddhism implicitly recognized between statements of fact and statements of moral value (if we go by this modern distinction).

First we shall examine how the terms signifying knowledge are used in early Buddhism. The Pali Nikayas use terms derived from the verbal root *jfiii,* sometimes with various prefixes (e.g. *sarp,-, vi-. pra-, abhi-, pari-,)* and sometimes without, to signify in each instance a kind of cognitive activity. There are instances which clearly show that the Buddha, in using *jiiniiti* (knows), sometimes meant cognition by means of the ordinary physical sense. In the *Vima1[lsaka-sutta.* for instance, the Buddha says: "An inquiring monk. . . should study the Tathagata in regard to two things : things cognizable through the eye and through the ear... While he is studying in this manner he cotr.es to know thus *(tarp, enarp,samannesamiino evarp, jiiniiti)* : Those impure states which are cognizable through the eye and the ear do not exist in the Tathagata."J 1 This is clearly an instance where factual knowledge of a person's state of mind is said to be possible by observing his behavior by using one's eyes and ears. 12Accordingly, one source of knowledge recognized in Buddhism is sense perception.

Tbe Buddha is also said to have claimed personal knowledge in a sense which is different from that of knowledge gained by ordinary sense-experience. It is this claim to a higher knowledge that distinguishes the Buddha from the materialist thinkers of his time. The early Buddhist world view as "Wellas its practical judgments rested on this epistemological basis. On epistemological grounds, contemporary thinkers who propounded religious systems *(ii.iibrahmacariyarp, pa!ijiinanti)* belonged to three main types, namely, (l) the traditionalists *(anussavikii),* (2) the rationalist metaphysicians *(takki vima1[lsi),*and (3) the experientialists *(~iimarp,yeva dhammarp, abhliifiiiya).* The Buddha includes himself under the category of the experientialist thinkers whose teachings are based on personal higher knowledge.I3

K. N. Jayatilleke identifies the traditionalists with the thinkers of the *Ved(C)* and *Brhiima'lJas,* the rationali5ts with those of the middle and late *Upanil;ads.* He also mentions numerous instances in the Pali Nikayas where the Buddha claims personal higher knowledge, and emphasizes its significance. Explaining the peculiarity of this knowledge claimed by the Buddha, he says:

There is no doubt that 'knowledge and insight' *(fiii'lJadassana)*or knowing and seeing *(jiiniiti passati).* .. is mainly a by-product of 'mental concentration' *(samiidhi)* in *jhiina* or *yoga.* It is said that there is a causal relation between the attainment of the mental concentration and the emergence of this knowledge and insight. . . This shows that it is qualitatively similar to the Upani/?adic 'Knowing' and 'seeing' which was also a result of *dhyiina.I4*

The claim to supernormal powers of perception was not peculiar to the Buddha. It was a claim made commonly by those who practiced *Yoga.* The Pali Nikayas mention certain theories propounded on the nature of the world and the individual on the basis of such yogic experiences *(iitappam anviiya padhiinamanviiya anuyogam anviiya tathiiruparp,cetosamiidhi'1'(pihusati)* .15It can be seen as a widely recognized means of knowledge among the Upanif]adic thinkers.

Jayatilleke argues that this kind *offiii1)a*~hich is said to go beyond the knowledge

gained by the ordinary senses, and consequently is called *abhififiii* (higher knowledge), is conceived somewhat differently in early Buddhism from the way it is conceived in the *Upanif}ads.* He contends that while the *Upanif}ads* conceived of this knowledge as a mystical form of intuitive knowledge, the Buddha gives a causal explanation for the arising of such knowledge.

In the *Upanif}ads*one's knowledge and vision is not, in the final analysis, due to one's efforts but to the grace or intervention of Atman or God. The emergence of this knowledge is conceived as something inexplicable and mysterious. This character warrants it being called a kind of mystical knowledge. But in the Buddhist account the mental concentration *(samiidhi)* which is a product of training and effort is a causal factor *(upanisii)* in the production of this knowledge.16

He further argues that, not only was the origin of such knowledge conceived differently in early Buddhism, but also the content of it was considered to be different from that of the Upanif]adic *jfiii1)a.* **In** the *Upanif}ad*~such *jfiiina* was considered as what reveals the *iitman* (self) or *brahman* (universal self or the Absolute). But the higher knowledge which the Buddha claimed is usually mentioned as the six *abhififiii,*namely, (1) *iddhividlza,* (2) *dibbasota,* (3) *cetopariyafiiirJa,*(4) *pubbeniviisiinussatifiii1) a,*(5) *dibbacakkhu* and (6) *iisavakkhayafiiirJa.*

Of these the first is explained as psychokinesis (ability to levitate, etc.) and cannot strictly be considered as a form of propositional knowing. *Dibbasota* (clairaudience) is considered as an extraordinary ability to perceive sounds that do not normally come within the range of an ordinary person's hearing. It is also claimed that by this means one-is able to appreciate even the sounds of non-human spirits. *Cetopariyafiii~ta*(telepathic knowledge) is considered to be a means whereby the general character of another person's mind could be known. Sometimes, it is said, that even the specific thoughts of another person can be known by this means. *Pubbeniviisiinussatifliif J,a* (retrocognitive knowledge) is said to be an extension of one's memory into the past beyond one's present-life experience. It is said that when the mind is supple and pliant, after attending the fourth *jhana* one could direct one's mind to recalling one's manifold past experience *(anekavihita'1'(i pubbeniviisa'1'(ianussarati).* The numerous details of one's previous existences are said to be known by this extended memory. *Dibbacakkhu* (clairvoyance), of which *cutupapiitafiii'f)o* (the knowledge of the passing away and arising of beings)

is said to be a particular form, is the ability to see contemporaneous event beyond the range of one's normal power of vision. It is said that wit! this "clear. paranormal. clairvoyant vision *(dibbena cakkhunii visuddhent atikkantamiinusakena)* one is able to verify the truth of rebirth and *kamma,* by seeing! how a being leading a certain form of life passes away and is reborn in accordance with his deeds. By *iisavakkhayafiii1:w* is meant the introspective knowledge of one'! liberated condition of mind and the knowledge of the four noble truths.

We see, therefore, that according to this account of knowledge, the *abhiiiiia*

are considered merely as a means of going beyond the limitations of ordinary senses. While there is no recognition of a knowledge that goes beyond the perception of material form *(riipa)* , sound *(sadda),* etc., these knowledges permit a clear perception of the different states of mind both of oneself as well as of others. Jayatilleke points out that in early Buddhism the *abhinnii* were not considered as infallible. Erroneous inferences could be drawn from some *abhinnii* just as much as they could be drawn from ordinary sense experience. He concludes:

It would be misleading to call this *(the knowledge involved in the abhiiinii)* mystical or intuitive knowledge in the context of Buddhism in view of the utterly different attitude to and evaluation of it.t7

We have also drawn attention to the fact, which JayatiIleke too considers important to recognize regarding early Buddhism, namely, that the Buddha does not deny the validity of sense experience in our knowledge of things as they have come to be. The Buddha is not attempting to replace sense-knowledge with a kind of infallible intuitive knowledge in affirming the existence of *abhinnii;(higher* knowledge), but merely drawing attention to the limitations of ordinary sense experience. Certain facts which are incapable of being known or verified by means of ordinary sense-experience are said to be capable of being known and verified by means of a developed and extended sensory capacity.

According to Jayati1Ieke, all the knowledge that the Buddha and his disciples claimed to have (except for the knowledge of Nirval).a) in knowing and seeing consist of direct inferences made on the basis of the data of normal and paranormal perceptions. As examples of such knowledge he mentions such propositions as "On account of birth, there is decay and death" and "All conditioned things are impermanent." Now it is clear that these two examples are not examples of ethical knowledge. They differ, for instance, from such propositions as *"stealing is bad."*

JayatiIIeke does not direct any attention to the nature of the knowledge admitted in Buddhism regarding ethical propositions. The *Kiiliima-sulla,* in our opinion draws specific attention to ethical knowledge, and like in other spheres of knowledge. the Buddha rules out dependence upon external authority of whatever form in gaining knowledge of right or wrong. The authority of a scriptural tradition

dependent on revelation or not, is rejected *(mii anussavena mii pi(akasampadiiya):* The testimony of a respected teacher, or a successively preserved tradition is considered to be 110 better guide *(mii, samm}o no garu mii parampariiya)*. Personal subjective opinion and pure reasoning are also rejected. *(mii dit(hinijjhiinakkhantiyii mii takkahetu, mii nayahetu)*. How then is the personal knowledge of *kusala* an *akusa/a* to which the *Kii/iima-sutta* draws our attention to be conceived?

One possibility is that the Buddha admitted a realm of ethical facts which can be objectively known. The Buddha's insistence that there are phenomena which are *kusa/a* and *akusa/a (atthi bhikkhave kusa/iikusa/ii dhammii)* may be taken as a reference to this realm of ethical qualities. But the analysis of the means of knowledge admitted in Buddhism and the content which constitutes the objects of such

knowledge do not reveal that early Buddhism ever admitted the existence of an objective realm of ethical qualities which can be directly known by means of any sensory, extrasensory or intuitive faculty.

Mrs. Rhys Davids suggests that Buddhism recognized a realm of ethical qualities. Contrasting the modern trend in Western philosophy to separate fact and value with the early Buddhist position on questions of moral value, she says;

> We have learnt, in modern text books, that ethical considerations are to be kept severely apart from what is held to be scientific investigation of facts, mental or other, of things as they are or appear to be. These considerations deal with the "ought to be," and why.
>
> Here again we come upon a difference of 'habit of thought.' For the Buddhist, the ethical goodness or badness of a state of consciousness was a primary quality of that consciousness, no less than for us, extension and solidity are reckoned as primary qualities of external things accessible to touch. "There is nothing good but thinking makes it so" was never a Buddhist dictum. You act, speak, think, say, in a good way, whatever you or others may, think about it. A good moral or meritorious act means that a desirable result will follow such an act sooner or later, inevitably. And an opposite sort of result will follow no less the opposite sort of act. The doing will entail suffering. These opposed qualities are integral parts of the content of mental activity, wrought up in its texture.t9

Some philosophers in the West who admitted the fact-value distinction did not do away with the idea of an objective realm of moral qualities. For, according to intuitionist philosophers like G. E. Moore, moral qualities are non-natural and directly apprehended by intuition. Rhys Davids is not speaking of any such realm of directly intuitable moral qualities. In the latter part of the passage quoted above, Mrs Rhys Davids interprets the early Buddhist ethical system as a naturalistic one. For she says that according to Buddhism, "A good moral 01"meritorious act means that a desirable result will follow such an act sooner or later, inevitably."

And by a desirable result she means a happy result or a result free from suffering. Moore would have charged such a doctrine with the naturalistic fallacy, for, according to him. "good" is not analyzable in terms of happiness.

It is as a consequence of a positivist theory of knowledge that the sharp demarcation between "fact" and "value" came into being *iJ1.*modem Western philosophy. For. it is assumed that sensible qualities of objects are capable of being known by our seme-experience. The value of a thing. whether it be moral. aesthetic or otherwise is said to be non-sensible and. therefore, not knowable as a fact. A. J. Ayer, one of the most prominent exponents of logical positivism argues that the only possible means of gaining factual knowledge of the world is sense-experience. According to D. J. Kalupahana. the early Buddhist position regarding factual knowledge is not different from the position held by the logical positivists in the west.20

One qualification that he would add is that according to early Buddhism even the data of extra-sensory perception are admitted in the determination of verifiable or cognitively meaningful statements. The Buddha admits as true only what comes within the six spheres of sense. Kalupahana points out that early Buddhism takes an empiricist approach to the question of knowledge and presents the *Sabba-sutta* of the *Sarp,yutla-nikaya* as unmistakable evidence for this view.2t In the *Sabba-sutta* the Buddha brings everything that may be truly said to exist within the respective sense organs and their objects:

Monks. I will teach you 'everything' Listen to it. What, monks is everything? Eye and material form, ear and sound. nose and odour, tongue and taste. body and tangible objects. mind and mental objects 22

All knowledge, sensory or extra-sensory is within the six spheres of sense.23

The Buddha does not advocate the employment of speculative reason beyond the limits of what can be verified by the senses and hence does not provide room for metaphysical truths. The absence in early Buddhism of the doctrines of an immortal soul and God which are central to most religions is due to this epistemological approach. The Buddha does not recognize the ontological status of any supposed entities which cannot ultimately be known by means of the six sense faculties. This account of knowledge, therefore. rules out the possibility of. a special nonnatural realm of moral objects which can be intuitively apprehended.

In view of this epistemological doctrine and attitude towards metaphysics. where, according to early Buddhism. do moral judgments stand? Are they cognitively meaningless. and a class of emotive utterances as the logical positivist claimed them to be ? On the contrary early Buddhism maintained that the truth or falsity of ethical judgments can be known.

The non-cognitivist theory of ethics is a corollary of an epistemology and a theory of meaning which is associated with logical positivism. We shall pay some attention here to one of the ,earliest versions of the non-cognitivist theory presented

by A. J. Ayer since it depicts clearly the sources of ethical non-cognitivism. Ayer divides all propositions which can be considered to be genuine ones into two classes:

(1) the class of propositions comprising the *a priori* propositions of logic and pure mathematics. .. These are necessary and certain only because they are analytic and, (2) propositions containing empirical matters of fact. . . These are hypotheses which can be probable, but never certain. In the case of an empirical hypothesis, some possible sense-experience should be relevant to the determination of its truth or falsehood. If a putative proposition fails to satisfy this principle, and is not a tautology, it is neither true nor false but literally senseless.24

Ayer goes on to clarify the implications of this theory of meaning in ethics. He attempts to give an account of ethical judgments which is both satisfactory in itself and consistent with the general empiricist principles. According to Ayer, the contents of ordinary ethical systems can be divided into four main classes:

There are, first of all, propositions which express definitions of ethical terms. or

judgments about the legitimacy or possibility of certain definitions. Secondly. there are propositions describing the phenomena of moral experience, and their causes. Thirdly, there are exhortations to moral virtue. And lastly. there are actual ethical judgments.25

He argues that insofar as statements of value are significant they are ordinary scientific statements. The second category of propositions which Ayer mentioned is assigned by him to the science of psychology. or sociology. The exhortations to moral virtue are, according to him, not propositions at all ; they are "ejaculations or commands which are designed to provoke the reader to action of a certain sort." As regards expressions of ethical judgment, he argues that they belong to the class of evaluation statements and that they cannot be translated into statements of empirical fact. According to him, the subjectivists and utilitarians who attempted to show that they were so translatable were mistaken.26 (The attempt of the intuitionist cannot be justified either.27)

Ayer argues that the only plausible conclusion that can be reached in accordance with empiricist principles regarding ethical judgments is that they are factually meaningless. They are pure expressions of feeling and, therefore, have an emotive function, but they do not come under the category of truth and falsehood. Ayer argues'

. . . If I say to someone. "you acted wrongly in stealing that money." I am not stating anything more than if I had said. "you stole that money." In adding that this action is wrong I am not making any farther statement about it. I am simply evincing my moral disapproval of it. It is as if I had said. "You stole that money," in a peculiar tone of horror. or written it with the addition of special exclamation marks.28

Thus empiricist principles lead Ayer to conclude that in saying, "Stealing money is wrong." I produce a sentence which has no factual meaning, that is, expresses no proposition which can be either true or false. In saying that a certain type of action is right or wrong I am not making any factual statement, not even a statement about my own state of mind. I am merely expressing certain moral sentiments. One may disagree with me, but there is no sense in asking who is right. For neither of us is asserting a genuine proposition.

Ayer's analysis of ethical statements leads to the conclusion that they cannot be true or false; there cannot be knowledge of what is right and wrong. This view is directly opposed to the Buddha's assertion that one can have knowledge of *kusala* and *akusala.* According to the Buddha, "killing living beings is *akusala" (paJ}iitipiita1J1akusala1J1)* is a true ethical proposition which is known by one who comprehends the distinction between *kusala* and *akusala (kusalaii ca pajanati, akusalaii ca pajanati).* According to Ayer. it has no factual meaning and expresses no proposition which can be either true or false. The moral exhortations of the Buddha such as "one should not kill living beings" ale mere arbitrary commands for which no rational justification is needed or can be given. Ayer would have argued that the

Buddha's view is due to the lack of philosophical sophistication which enables one to see the distinction between statements of fact which are cagaitively meaningful and statements of value which lack cognitive meaning.

Contrary to the opinion of the logical p03itivists, early Buddhism treats ethical judgments as being objective. Yet the ethical objectivism of early Buddhism cannot be considered as an objectivism of the Platonic kind. The paradigm of knowledge for Plato was mathematical knowledge. Hence anything which falls short of the certainty that is guaranteed in mathematical knowledge, cannot, according to him, be properly called knowledge. Plato adhered to a rationalist model of knowledge which was suggested to him by the nature of mathematical propositions. In all spheres of knowledge Plato imi ted 011the certainty that is guaranteed in m'1themltical knowledge. In Euclidean geometry we would say th'1t we know that triangles on equal bases and between parallels are equal in area and that this is a truth that always holds. Triangles on equal bases and between parallels must be equal in area, and no particular instances in the way of diagrams or models that we can sensibly experience would ever falsify this. This was the model that Plato conceived as the model of knowledge.

Plato also believed that only what is real can be known and that what is real must be unchanging absolute and universal. **In** order for there to be knowledge .there must also be real objects of knowledge. Only u'1changing and fixed entities of a certain kind can truly be known, What is changing and impermanent cannot be known. The objects of the senses are changing appearances. Therefore the senses can only give us opinion but not knowledge. Knowledge can be had only by a mysterious intuition, in which we apprehend the transcendental realm of ideas. Plato's ethical objectivism was based 011his general theory of transcendental Idea

according to which it was held that there are Form3 of moral characteristics suc)} as Goodness. Justice, etc. The possibility of ethical distinctions is accounted for by prato by the hypothesis of substantial Ideas. The Form of Justice was taken to be a perfect unchanging model or standard; it is there to be known. Just conduct is no matter of cO'iwention, but a matter of c0l1forming to the ideal standard of justice which, like the other Forms, is part of the nature of things. Plato was clearly cognitivist, for according to him. to know what is good is to know the immutable Form that good stands for, that object or idea of Goodness.

Neither the epistemology nor the ontology of Plato's objectivist and cognitivist theory of ethics can be found in early Buddhism. Epistemologically, early Buddhism rejected rationalism and admitted the significance of the senses as a means of knowledge. The metaphysical notion of a transcendental realm of Ideas can find no place in early Buddhism, which rejected even the notion of permanent self on the ground that it is not observable or verifiable.

One might contend that the recognition of paranormal perceptions in early Buddhism puts early Buddhism on the same epistemological footing as Platonism because of Plato's admission of intellectual intuition of transcendental Ideas. But

there is clearly a difference between what the Buddha c1aims to know by means of paranormal perception and what Plato claims to know by means of rational intuition. Plato contrasts rational intuition with sense experience. Sense experience, according to Plato can only give us appearances and never the real objects. In early Buddhism, on the contrary, the difference between sense-experience al1d paranormal vision is to some degree analogous to the~ difference between the visual experience gained by the naked eye and the experience gained with the aid of a telescope. Some of the facts known by paranormal vision can I', dependently be tested by means of ordinary sense experience. According to Plato, sense experience and intellectual intuition are mutually exclusive epistemological categories. But in Buddhism, the difference between the cognitive status of the ordinary senses and that of the paranormal faculties is merely one of degree.

Intuitionism, as advocated by G. E. Moore, was a consequence of his view that the fundamental notion of ethics if>'good' and that "goodness" is a *sui generis* indefinable prop~rty.29 Rightness, according to Moore, is definable in terms of , goodness' but' goodness' itself is a property like 'red' which has to be directly apprehended. 'Red' is a sensible property, whereas 'good' is not such a natural or sensible property. It is considered by Moore to be a directly intuitable nonnatural property. In Moore's analysis, questions about 'good" cannot be settled by reason, experience, authority or any other means. The only means available is the personal intuition of each individual. Moore can b~ called a Platonist. For. according to him, the word' good' stands fOf an catity of some sort. It is the simple and unanalyzable nature of that entity that makes the term 'good' undefinable.

A similar intuitionist position with certain modifications, which did not affect Moore's fundamental epistemological position, was advocated by other prominent intttitionist philosophers like H. A. Prichard and David Ross.3o

An assumption common to both Plato and Moore is that knowledge implies an object known. This assumption was shared also by the non-cog1itivists like Ayer and Stevenson who denied ethical knowledge altogether. According to the rationalist model of knowledge which Plato followed, ethical knowledge is certain and infallible knowledge gained by means of a mysterious intuition into the transcendental realm of ethical ideas. The object of ethical knowledge in any particular instance is the immutable ethical Idea. Moor~ too needed an object of ethical knowledge, and since the objects cannot be natural properties that can be known by the senses, he postulated a special kind of intuitable non-natural property. Philosophers in the positivist tradition shared the same assumption about the necessity of an object of knowledge for there to be any knowledge at all, and finding no such objects in ethics that can be known by the senses, they denied ethical knowledge altogether, The philosophers who postulated non-natural properties and transcendental Ideas in order to safeguard the objectivity of moral judgments, as well as those who denied meaning to ethical terms were working under a common theory of meaning. Early Buddhism does not consider *kusala* and *akusala* as properties

that can be known by the senses in the way that natural properties like 'red' can be known. Nor does it postulate special entities in the form of transcendental Ideas or non-natural properties. Yet it speaks of knowledge of *kusala* and *akusala.*

In order to clarify the early Buddhist method of moral reasoning let us examine three canonical *suttas* which throw considerable light on the issue. These three *suttas* may be said to contain the standard formula for moral evaluation in early Buddhism.

In the *Biihitika-sutta Majjhima-nikiiya* it is said that the kind of bodily, verbal and mental conduct which is condemned by wise recluses and brahmans is the conduct which is *aku.mla. Akusala* conduct is said to be the kind of conduct that is blameworthy *(siivajja);* conduct that is blameworthy is said to be conduct which involves injury *(savyiipL~jjho).* Injurious conduct is said to be that which has an unhappy consequence *(d'AkkhavlpZika).* That which has such a consequence is said to be the kind of conduct which results in the torm~l1t of oneself, the torment of others and the torment of both. Here censurable or blameworthy conduct which is signified by terms such as *akusala,* is said to be on the final analysis that which brings about an unhappy consequence both to the agent as well as to others. Conduct which is praiseworthy or commendable, which is signified by the terms *koala* or *anavajja,* is said to be of the opposite consequence.

The *Ambalat{hikii Riihuloviida-sutta*.ofthe *Majjhima-nikiiya* seems also to express the early Buddhist method of moral reasoning. It clearly shows that choosing to do the right action involves consideration of reasons and that it is not an arbitrary

matter Just as Kant propounds the rationalist criterion of acting in accordance with the 'Moral Law', the Buddha is seen to be giving a criterion for distinguishing between good and bad action, between what ought to be done and which ought not to be done. The Buddha says here that whenever one wishes to de) a1. action by body, speech or mind, one should consider the action in terms of its tendency to lead to certain consequences. In doing so, if one observes that the performance of it is likely to lead .to harmful consequences to oneself, harmful consequence to others, and harmful consequences to both (in other words, ifit is fOU'Cld to h1Vdhe likelihood of leading to harmful consequences in general) such an action is *akusala:'* Such and action, having an unhappy consequence is the sort of action which ought not to be doneY TllUs the 'ratio'1al ground' Cut is implicit in most moraljudg-:ments in early Buddhism is here explicitly stated. It is stated that the considerations that are relevant to our judgments regarding 'good' and 'ought' are considerations ,such as b,mefit, harm, happiness and unhappiness(in early Buddhist ter.ms"*savyiipajjha* (involving injury), *avyiipajjha* (il1,volvillg non-injury), *sukha (happiijess),duklfha* (unhappiness), *,hila* (well-being), *ahita* (harm), *byiibiidha* (injurious); *abyi'tbiidha* (non-injurious), *attha* (welfare), *anattha* (ill).

, 'The *Ki'tliima-sutta* was preached in a context which can be described as a typically ethical one. Many scholars have drawn attention to the epistemological significance of this *suttab'Jt* few h1Ve recognize its ethical significance. 'The

Kiilamas, being confronted with doctrines which evidently involved mutually contradictory moral teachings that were propounded by nlJ'11erousteachers who visited them, were in a state of moral perplexity beinguna')le tode~ide what they ought and ought not to da. Here the Buddha's advice to them was to disregard tradition, revelation, authority and pure reasoning and to use one's own judgment. The Buddha's attempt to resolve the ethical problem with which the Katiimas were faced can be seen in the following dialogue:

'~Now which do you think, Kiliimls, when greed arises within a man, does ,it arise to his benefit or harm ?"

"to his harm, Sir".

."Now, Kalii,mas, thisma'1, thus be':;om:: greely, onteo ne hygreed, with his mind completely filled with greed, does he not kill a living creature, take what is not given; commit adultery, tell lies and induce others tooto commit such deeds as those which would cOldu:;e to disadvantage and: unh~ppil1~s fora long time ?"

"He does Sir"33

This is repeated in the same m;tll11erabDt mJUce and delusion. The Kiiliimas finally admit that those actions conditioned by greed, hatred and delusion *(lobha, dosa,* and *moha)* are the things that are morally bad *(akusala),* blameworthy

(siivajja), censured by the wise ones *(viffPilZ, garahita)* and are the things that, when undertaken. conduce to ill and suffering *(samattii samiidinnii ahitiiya dukkhiiya sarp,vattanti).* The Buddha's attempt here was to show the Kalamas that they can know for themselves what is *kusala* and what is *akusala.* and that they need not depend on any external authority.

The *Kiiliima-sutta* is a typical example of the early Buddhist method of moral reasoning. [t is philosophically significant in that it emphasizes the possibility of independent inquiry about moral matters. Moral philosophy begins when people find their existing moral rules unsatisfactory. The Buddha. in the *Kiiliima-sutta* may be said have assumed the role of normative~ philosopher in instructing the Kalamas as to how reasoning should proceed in making moral decisions. The Kalamas are advised not to adhere to traditional morality *(parampariiya)* or authority of sacred scriptures or individuals, but to use their own judgment. However, in using their judgment in coming to autonomous moral decisions, the Buddha assumes that there are grounds that everyone needs to consider, namely. the happiness or unhappiness produced by the course of conduct that one decides to follow.

The Kalamas, as represented in the *sutta.* happened to assent to the Buddha. showing that they were convinced of the Buddha's solution. Of course. one could raise the question here. "What if the Kalamas did not assent?" Supposing the opinions of the Kalii.mas regarding what is advantage. benefit. ill. harm. happiness and unhappiness did not coincide with the Buddha's, could the Buddha still have won their assent? Under such circumstances the Buddha would have been placed in the position similar to that of Socrates in Plato's Gorgias where he attempts to

prove that justice is more profitable than injustice. For Callicles' notions of 'profit' 'advantage' and 'happiness' seem to differ radically from those of Socrates. Philosophical problems regarding the use of the happiness criterion for deciding the moral worth of actions require careful attention. We have attempted elsewhere a clarification of these issues and pointed out that early Buddhism has strong ground for maintaining that questions regarding what is happiness or well-being can be settled on the basis ,of commonly acceptable criteria.34

The preceding discussion shows that early Buddhism takes certain facts to be relevant to an ethical conclusion. It admits the relevance of facts but restricts the kind of facts that are relevant. The reasoning contained in the *Kiiliima-sutta* may b~ formulated as follows:

1. *Lobha* (greed), *dosa* (hatred) and *moha* (delusion) lead to actions such as killing. stealing, etc.

2. Killing. stealing etc. lead to unhappiness.

3. Therefore. *lobha. dosa, moha* ~re *akusala.*

Here (1) and (2) may be looked upon as factual statements, (1) being an empirical statement about the psychology of action and (2) being an empirical statement about the causal relationship between certain kinds of action and the results they produce and (3) the evaluative conclusion. According to early Buddhism any arbitrary fact cannot be taken as grounds for moral evaluation. Only actions and mental dispositions productive of happiness are considered as *kusala* or *puiina. Kusala* is not considered as a directly intuitable property of actions. but to be determined on the basis of the consequences of action. The recognition of the data of extrasensory perception *(abhiiiia)*has a relevance to Buddhist ethics, not in the sense that such perception reveals a special world of moral qualities, but in the sense that they help to overcome the limitations of the ordinary powers of sensibility and bring us more knowledge about the range of consequences that actions have. The Buddha is found. in the *Subha-sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikaya.* to be criticizing the moral teachings of the Brahmans on the ground that the virtues that they advocated for the doing of *puniia* and the development of *kusala (punnassa kiriyaya, kusalassa ariidhaniiya)* were not known by themselves in terms of their consequences. Here the knowledge demanded of the brahman teachers is not simply the ordinary sense experience but the 'personal higher knowledge' which we referred to above.35 With regard to the Brahmanical morality. the Buddha questions whether there is at least one brahman who has propounded these morals on the basis of his own personal higher knowledge of the consequences of these pmctices.36 The answer is in the negative. Then the Buddha questions whether these were known in terms of their consequences by the original composers of the Brahmanical scriptures *(brahmanalJarp,pubbaka isayo mantiina1fl-kattiiro).* To this too the answer is in the negative. Thereupon the Buddha says that their adherence to such a morality is merely a matter of blindly following a tradition.

In early Buddhism. therefore, to pass moral judgments on a non-arbitrary

rational basis is to do so after a due consideration of the consequences taking into account not only the consequences knowable by sense perception but also by means of *abhifiiii* (higher knowledge). When Buddhism judges killing to be a bad action it bases this judgement on one or more of a number of factual premises such as:

1. that it springs from and enhances *lobha, dosa.* and *moha* or anyone of those mental conditions or character traits which impede the agents' progress towards the highest happiness;
2. that it has harmful karmic consequences to the agent in this life itself or in a future life.
3. that it has harmful consequences for the agent which may not fall under karma, but resulting from his own guilty conscience, social and legal sanctions. etc. ;
4. that it leads to the unhappiness and harm of persons other than the agent.

This shows that the Buddha makes a distinction between right and wrong on the basis of a fundamental moral principle. The Buddha does not attempt to convince the KiiIamas about this fundamental ethical principle, but directs their attention to certain facts, assuming that the Kiilamils already -recognize the relevance of these facts to the moral judgments. There is reason to believe that the Buddha consistently uses the factual grounds constituting the consequences of action in almost all instances of ethical discussion.

Now, according to this analysis of ethical statements in early Buddhism, it is easy to see under what circumstances one may be said to be mistaken about one's -moral judgments. One is mistaken in the judgments that one makes' if one bases the judgments on any grounds other than a consideration of human happiness or well being. Early Buddhism would consider anyone who supported a moral judgment by giving any other grounds (such as conformity with the scriptures, or conformity with God's commands etc.) not as committing a logical error but saying something unintelligible or irrational. A second, and more common source of error with regard to moral judgments, according to early Buddhism, results from erroneous factual beliefs and theories. One may consider a course of action. good, thinking that it leads to happiness, although, as a matter of fact, it does not. This is the kind of mistake that the Buddha attributed to most of his contemporaries who believed in the efficacy of sacrifice and other forms of purificatory rites such as bathing in the sacred waters. This Buddhist idea is amply illustrated in the criticism of the brahman practice of washing off sins. It is argued that if one can wash off sins by bathing in sacred waters and be born in heaven, then all the aquatic creatures living in the water should have their sins washed off and be born in heaven.37 A similar criticism was leveled against bloody sacrifices, prayers and incantations to superhuman beings and animistic beliefs such as the worship of natural phenomena.38

Accordingly the relevance of facts in the determination of what is *kusala* and *akusala* is admitted in Buddhism. In favour of a judgment that 'X is *kusala'* one

cannot adduce any arbitrary fact. "Giving food to A who is now in hunger is a *kusala* deed," is not jU1.tified, for instance, by giving some idiosyncratic reason as 'Today is Sunday.' But it is justified by the reason that it leads to the alleviation of another person's suffering and to the cultivation of my benevolent character on which my own happiness ultimately rests.

One of the main reasons why ethical non-cognitivists deny ethical knowledge altogether is because they are of the opinion that ethical conclusions are not logically entailed by any factual premises. The problem of the existence of a logical gap between factual premises and an ethical conclusion was explicitly raised for the first time by David Hume. Hume says:

> In every system of morality which I have hitherto met with, I have always remarked, that the author proceeds -for sometime in the ordinary way of reasoning, and establishes the being of a God, or makes observations concerning

> human affairs; when of a sudden I am surprised to find, that instead of the usual copulations of propositions *is,* and *is not,* I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an *ought* or *ought not.* This change is imperceptible; but is, however, of the last consequence. For as this *ought* or *ought not,* expresses some new relation or affirmation it is necessary that it should be observed and explained; and at the same time that a reason should be given, for what seem, altogether inconceivable, how this relation can be a deduction from other.> which are entirely different from it. But as authors commonly do not use this precaution, I shall presume to recommend it to the readers; and am persuaded that this small attention would subvert all the vulgar systems of morality, and let us see, that the distinction of vice and virtue is not founded on the relation of objects, nor is perceived by reason.39

Hume's observation prompted moral philosophers to attempt to construe the nature of moral discourse in such a way that objectivity and truth are denied to moral utterances. It is argued that moral terms and moral statements are characterized by a special kind of meaning which prevents them from serving as mere descriptive statements and performing the function of giving factual information. Moral terms and moral statements will no longer be moral, according to one account, if they cease to be emotive,40 and according to another account, if they cease to be prescriptive.41 According to both these theories of meaning moral terms and moral statements have two kinds of meaning. Both theories admit that they have a descriptive meaning, but according to them this descriptive meaning does not exhaust the meaning of moral terms or statements. They possess, according to Stevenson, an additional emotive meaning, and according to R.M. Hare, an additional prescriptive meaning. According to both these accounts these two types of meaning, the descriptive meaning, on the one hand, and the emotive or prescriptive meaning, on the other are independent of each other. They consider it possible to extract from the meaning of ethical terms some element called 'evaluative meaning,' which according to them is externally related to its objects. The result is that, according to these theories

the- relationship between factual evidence and an ethical conclusion is conceived not in the manner it is conceived in early Buddhism. For according to them, the independent emotive or prescriptive meaning enables one to use the emotive or prescriptive force of an ethical utterance to combine an ethical conclusion with any set of factual statements. For, what is conceived to be the primary meaning of ethical statements is said to be the emotive, the prescriptive or the evaluative meaning, and the descriptive meaning is said to be secondary: These theories, therefore, fall under the category of non cognitivist ethical theories. The fundamental ethical principle which early Buddhism accepts would, according to them, be called the expression of an attitude or an ultimate action guiding prescription.

Objectivism in ethics was conceived by non-cognitivist moral philosophers to be a consequence of misconstruing the real logic of ethical statements. Sentences in which moral judgments are expressed resemble, in their grammatical form,

sentences in which factual judgments are expressed. 'Action A is right' is not different from 'Object 0 is red' in grammatical form. They are both ordinary indicative sentences of subject predicate form. Wittgenstein warned against the real and apparent logical form of propositions. It came to be held that the function of moral discourse is not to purvey information. 'This object is red' is compatible with instructing or advising someone to do or not to do practically anything with it. But. it is argued. when we say 'This act is right. but don't do it,' there is something logically odd about it. The reason for this logical oddness is said to be the peculiar meaning that moral predicates possess. Moral judgments. it is argued. are not simply a sub-class of factual judgments. For they have an emotive or prescriptive force. It is by virtue of this element in them that they are so intimately connected with human action.

When we make moral judgments of the form 'X is wrong'. the ethical objectivists argue that subjectivist account of such utterances is mistaken. In saying 'X is wrong' the subjectivist wishes to say that the speaker simply means that he himself has some unfavourable attitude towards X. According to such a view. to support the remark that 'X is wrong' a speaker would only have to establish that he had an unfavourable feeling or attitude towards it. Someone else may say 'X is not wrong' and he could not be contradicting the assertion made by the former, for he may have a different feeling or attitude towards it. If it can be established that he. in fact. has this attitude he can be saying something true as the other person himself does. provided the other too in fact has the contrary feeling towards it.

But it is commonly assumed that when we say 'X is wrong' we are not saying something about the speaker's feelings. but about X itself. some feature about X which makes X wrong. When the Buddha. for instance. said that killing is wrong, he did not intend to convey to us merely the information that he had an unfavourable attitude towards killing. According to the Buddha 'Killing is wrong' says something about killing. but not about anyone's favourable or unfavourable attitudes.

But it is argued by many contemporary philosophers that to say 'X is wrong'

says something about X which can be true or false is misleading. It is argued that such an interpretation of moral utterances leads to our losing sight of the special relation of moral judgment to action. They argue that fact-stating. descriptive discourse has to be distinguished from moral discourse whose distinct and peculiar function is not the purveying of information. The point of moral discourse is thought not to be the alteration of people's beliefs or of giving additional information to them. but of making some practical difference in what people do. To construe moral judgments as a class of factual statements is to overlook the practical character of moral discourse. With this contention they reject both subjectivism and objectivism.

Carnap, for instance, seeing that so-called moral judgments were employed in seeking to direct and influence conduct, suggested that they were merely commands in a misleading grammatical form. He says:

> Most philosophers have been deceived into thinking a value statement is really an assertive proposition and must be either true or false. . . But actually a value statement is nothing else than a command in a misleading grammatical form; it is neither true nor false. It does not assert anything and can neither be proved nor disproved.42

Ayer, as we have already noticed argued that in making a moral judgment of the form 'X is wrong' one is not describing but evincing one's feeling or attitude towards it. If moral judgments are to be conceded as arbitrary commands or as mere ejaculations there is no sense in asking whether a judgment like 'killing is wrong' is true or false. It also follows that any claim that a moral judgment is the valid or invalid conclusion of an argument is a mistaken one.

According to Stevenson, the major use of ethical judgments is not to indicate facts. but to create an influence. It is to influence, not the beliefs, but the attitudes of the hearer. Stevenson says that it is by virtue of the emotive meaning of moral terms that they can play the double role of evincing the attitude of the speaker, and exerting influence upon the attitude of the hearer. In this respect Stevenson's theory is widely at variance with the early Buddhist view of the use of ethical terms. The early Buddhist view implies that the terms such as *kusala* and *akusala* are emotively neutral. There is no special emotive force attached to these terms. The presence of an emotively charged state of mind was considered an obstacle to the legitimate application of such terms. The use of *kusala* and *akusala* may on occasion be associated with certain emotions in the speaker, but it is not the presence of these emotions or the creation of the like in the hearer that makes any particular instance of the use of these terms a legitimate one. A legitimate application of them requires freedom from the commonly acknowledged emotions *chanda* (favour) *Toga*(passion). *dosa* (hatred). and *patigha* (disfavour or opposition). The Buddha says that one reason *why* the moral skeptics refrained *from* any categorical commitment to questions about *kusala* and' *akusala* was the fear that they might distort the truth, due to their personal emotions of *chanda,* etc. affecting their judgments as a consequence

of their not knowing as it really has come to be *(yathabhUta1J1),* what *kusa/a* and *akusala* are.43 The Buddha implies here that there is a possibility of making judgments regarding what is *kusala* and *akusala* on an emotively neutral and impartial basis and that the skeptic's fear was unwarranted.

G. J. Warnock points out that emotive words can be distinguished from moral words. Words such as 'scandalous.' 'fatuous,' 'nauseating,' or 'bird-brained' are clearly emotive words. There may also be some moral words, like 'heroic' or 'blackguardly,' which are somewhat emotive. But this is not true of words like 'right,' 'good' or 'ought'.44 This observation applies equally well to the early Buddhist terms like *kusala* and *dhamma.*

.K. N; JayatiHeke attempts to show that in early Buddhism *too;* as in Stevenson's system, two components of ethical propositions are recognized. He says:' According to the Buddhist analysis, such propositions would have two ,components, a factual component and an emotive prescriptive component. The factual component would be of primary importance since the validity of ethical propositions would depend on the truth or falsity of the statements (::comprising this component. The emotive, prescriptive component, would only have a secondary significance.45 -', "..,'

According to Jayatilleke, the significance of the emotive, prescriptive component is dependent on the truth of the factual' component.46 According to this view the difference between Stevenson's theory and the, Buddhist theory lies in the fact that the former asserts a theory of independent emotive meaning whereas the latter asserts a theory of dependent emotive meaning. But our contention is that there is no question of emotive or prescriptive meaning at all involved in the early Buddhist ethical propositions. The Buddha never, explicitly or implicitly, indicated any such component involved in ethical propositions. If there is any emotion associated with the use of terms like *kusala* and *dhamma* they are not parts of the meaning of those terms but contingent psychological responses. There is no reason to hold that the Buddha admitted that such a psychological response to be eveti invariably .associated with all instance of the use of these terms.

however it is true, to say that the Buddha did not consider an ethical proposition to be' equivalent in meaning to pure description of the non-moral] characteristics of something. For there is also a comtr.endatory or condemnatory aspect to moral] judgments. And sometimes one, may directly address moral] prescriptions on the~ basis of moral reasons. the difference between the contemporary ethical tJ:1eorists .and the Buddha lies in the fact that the Buddha did not identify theeva]uati'Vemeaning .of an ethical proposition with some necessary expression of attitude or emotion or with the' necessary making of a prescription. The Buddha thought' that whatever evaluation made in the use of evaluative terms like *kusala* or whatever prescription made by the use of any directly prescriptive linguistic device, such as the use of the gerundive or the imperative, if they are instances of moral] evaluation and moral

prescription they must be dependent on the appropriate grounds of moral .eva]uatj9~ 'and moral] prescription. It is not from the genera] evaluative :character of IIlora] propositions which they share with mal1Yother instances of evaluation! su(,;4~$ evaluation in aesthetic contexts and other diverse contexts in human life, that the -nature of morality is to be known.

According to R. M. Hare's analysis of ethical utterances a moral argument .consists of a syllogism .of which the major premise is a "general principle of action, " a universal imperative. In a moral argument there is a fact stated in a descriptive minor premise, e.g., 'This is stealing' or 'This is false;' and a general principle of

action stated in the major premise, e.g., 'Never steal' or 'Never say what is false.' From the conjunction of the two premises the moral conclusion logically follows. There is no difficulty about the validity of the argument but it arises regarding the major premise. For if we question the major premise, everyone is forced back ultimately to some moral principle which he simply asserts and which someone else may simply deny. **In** the ultimate analysis Hare's theory leads to the consequence that major premises in moral arguments are merely arbitrary decisions for which no reasons can be given. Ultimately, morality rests on decisions and commitments for which rational justification is out of place. There is no restriction on what one may give as the major premise.

Hare's account as well as Stevenson's are based on the view that there is no logical connection between statements of fact and statements of value. Each man is free to make his own decision about the facts pertaining to an action which are relevant to its evaluation. Early Buddhism uses moral words on the assumption that only some facts count in favour of a moral conclusion.

Philosophers like Hare and Stevenson, as we know, dissociated themselves from the first order activity of making moral judgments. But they claimed to indicate certain logical features which any first order morality must necessarily posses. If we hike early Buddhist ethics as involving a first order activity of making moral judgments, we find that it does not possess certain features that these philosophers attributed to any first order morality. The early Buddhist ethical system can be presented as a counter-example to Hare's thesis that moral discourse must cOlisist essentially and always in the performalJce of a single speech act. Buddhism would not deny that in all instances in which terms like *kusala, puiifw, dhamma* are used in ethical contexts a commendation or evaluation is involved. This is clear from the use of expressions such as *pasattha* (praised), *oparambha(blamed), garahita* (censured) in such contexts. However it is not clear that all such instances entail an imperative. But Stevenson and Hare analyzed ethical statements in such a way that what is common to all instances of ethical judgments is that they entail imperatives. According to early Buddhism, to say 'A is *akusala'* is certainly to commend A, and yet *to* add in the saine context 'Do A' is not merely to repeat what was expressed by the former sentence. Evaluation and prescription are considered as *two* independent activities. ,This seems a more sensible position to take, for one may

evaluate a thing from one point of view and yet prescribe a thing from another point of view. '

The prescriptivist may argue that if one evaluates from the moral point of view, this evaluation entails a prescription from the same point of view, tIJOughit may not entail one from any other point of view. But then the question arises as to how different points of view are to be distinguished without distinguishing' the criteria for amoral evaluation from those used for any other kind of evaluation. They cannot be distinguished merely in terms of prescriptive\'e meaning without invoking other criteria which circumscribe the particular point of view.

The descriptive-evaluative dichotomy cannot, according to the early Buddhist ethical system, be a basis for maintaining a non-congnitivist ethical doctrine, The position of the non-cognitivist is that when X says 'A is red' he describes A, whereas when X says 'A is right.' X commends or evaluates A. X can make a mistake only in his description of A, but not in his evaluation of A. The Buddhist position is that just as much as 'description' in the non-cognitivist' sense is a rule governed linguistic activity, 'evaluation' also is a rule governed linguistic activity. Evaluation can make sense (just as much as description) only in the presence of certain conventions and norms, and not on the arbitrary whims and fancies of any individual.

According to early Buddhism evaluation, condemnation and prescription in ethics are not considered as arbitrary activities. Those who do not properly go into the facts and arbitrarily pass evaluative judgments are considered as foolish and inexperienced. King Pasenadi is represented, in the *Majjhima-nikiiya,* as saying to Ananda, "When those who are foolish and inexperienced speak in praise or dispraise of others without inquiry and scrutiny (i.e. consideration of reasons) we do not take it as proper. But when those who are wise, experienced and intelligent speak in praise or dispraise of others, after inquiry and scrutiny we consider it proper."'"

The *Biihitika-sutta* consists of a clear explication of the form this inquiry and scrutiny takes in earl) Buddhism. There is no need to look for reasons for praising and blaming if anyone can praise or blame for any reason. Of course the contexts and the points of view from which praising and blaming occur may be divergent. But provided the context is specified, the facts which constitute the reasons for praise and blame cannot depend on arbitrary choice.

Rejecting the non-congnitivist position in ethics, some contemporary philosophers who have been called descriptivists have attempted to show that there are rules governing what is to count as a moral reason. This position comes close to the early Buddhist position in some important respects. The non-cognitivists who argue for the independent evaluative meaning of good are of the opinion that there is nothing laid down in the meaning of 'good' which connects it with certain criteria to the exclusion of others. Philippa Foot argues that from this "it follows that a moral eccentric could argue to moral conclusions from quite idiosyncratic premises; he could say, for instance, that a man was a good man, because he clasped and unclasped his hands, and never turned N. N. E. after turning S. S. W.""s Supposing

someone were to say that clasping the hands three times in an hour was a good action, without providing any background for his judgment we would be at a loss to understand what he means. We cannot say anything is a good action without being able to say what the point of the action is. Foot takes a position similar to that taken in early Buddhism in maintaining that the moral virtue must be connected with human good or harm.

She uses the term 'rude' as an example of an evaluative term for the use of which there is a determinate criterion. According to her, the terml'rude' is applicable only in !)ituations in which one offends someone by behaviour showing disrespect for

him. (We may compare this with an evaluative term like *akusala* in Buddhism. One cannot say that something is an *akusala* without implying that it leads to harm). Foot argues that. in our judgments about 'ought,' 'right', 'wrong,' etc. too. only a certain restricted range of facts can be used as grounds for them. We cannot make our own choices regarding which principles of morality we will accept if we were to think that morality has any rational basis. She argues that it is undeniable that the moral concepts such as rightness, goodness, obligation, duty and virtue are related to concepts of harm, advantage, benefit, importance, etc.49 .

The Buddha does not seem to take the diversity of the things commended in different periods of history and different communities as evidence for rejecting a determinate criterion of morality. He takes it as evidence for saying that the concept of morality has disappeared from such communities or has not emerged at all. In the *Cakkal'attisihanada-suttanta,* for instance, the Buddha speaks of certain periods in human history when the very concept *kusala* disappears.5o However, even under these circumstances people would not cease to commend and condemn human behaviour. But the difference is that they would commend and condemn respectively for quite the opposite qualities from those which the Buddha advocated as worthy of commendation and condemnation. As the *Cakkavattisihanada-suttanta* says, they would praise people who have no respect for parents, for holy men or elders.51

One of the arguments adduced against the objectivity of moral judgments is the enormous diversity in the kinds of conduct and behaviour that is valued in different communities which is revealed by historical and anthropological inquiries. However, the argument that there is diversity in what people in different communities and different periods of history have commended begs the question. Yet the onus of proving the ground of an objectivist ethics falls on the objectivist himself.

The Buddha cannot be said to have held a relativistic theory of ethics in the sense that whatever practices generally commended at any time or place was held to be morally right. The Buddha allows for certain differences and changes in circumstances which might make certain moral rules outdated or out of place. This was his consideration in allowing the community to change certain minor disciplinary rules laid down by him depending on the place and time.

Early Buddhism does not appear to be in agreement with the view that there

are no specific grounds that can be adduced in favour of a moral conclusion. According to Hare and Stevenson. there are no such grounds. What is done in Buddhism by using terms like *kusala* and *dhamma* is partly evaluation. but evaluation for a specific reason. For Hare and Stevenson. what is primary in an ethical statement out of the two components they distinguish, namely the descriptive and . the evaluative. is the evaluative component. The evaluative component is considered to be independent of the descriptive component allowing for the possibility of tying up any evaluation with any description. According to early Buddhism. however.

anybody using the terms *kusala* or *dhamma* apart 'from implicit reference to the consequence of the thing evaluated would be doing something irrational. This difference, to some extent, accounts for the cognitive theory of ethics in early Buddhism as opposed to the non-cognitivist theory in Stevenson and Hare.

But are there any philosophical grounds for accepting the early Buddhist position rather than the position adopted by non-cognitivists ? The non-cognitivists based their meta-ethical views on what they held to be the features of *the* language of morals. They considered this language as something of a very high degree of generality. Its persistent character in the midst of a vast range of change and difference in other respects is its evaluative character. Amidst the diversity of ways of life, beliefs and opinions among different communities every community has talked evaluatively of actions, persons and their character using such terms as 'good' 'bad' 'wrong' 'ought' etc. Philosophers have held that the concern of philosophy is with the 'logic' or 'analysis' of these words and their synonyms. They consider it possible that specific vocabularies by which evaluative judgments are made should vary. English may use 'good' and the Buddhists may use *dhamma* or *kusala.* They may not even be easily inter-translatable. What character traits, actions and behaviour are commended may vary widely. What is taken as grounds for commendation may vary as well. Yet such commendatory use of language can be taken as a general feature of any human community at all. These philosophers, therefore, identify a certain set of concepts as moral concepts and examining features common to these concepts, attempt to determine the characteristics of moral reasoning. The metaethical theories of Stevenson and Hare are a result of such an attempt. Accordingly they arrive at the conclusion that just any fact can logically be given as a reason for moral judgment. For, according to Stevenson, the generic feature of moral statements is comprised of the emotive force, and according to. Hare the generic feature is comprised of the prescriptive force of the term.

According to the non-cognitivists, non-logical judgments that can truly be said to be cognitive are found only in science. They point out that in the case of moral judgments there is no way of resolving a conflict, whereas in the case of a scientific judgment there are accepted ways of doing so. Hence moral judgments are explained in terms of" disagreement in attitudes, or ultimate non-rational commitment to principles, whereas scientific judgments are said to provide us with knowledge and truth. They are of the opinion that the paradigm of cognitive activity is to be found

()only in science. Scientific, factual disagreements are said to be cognitively decidable. Moral disagreements as to whether an ethical predicate is to be applied to an object is said to be cognitively undecidable.

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Alan Gewirth, for example, has seen a kind of disparateness in the philosophers approach to morality and science.52 Scientific knowledge and scientific truth are possible because certain 'ultimate' principles are presupposed in scientific inquiry. . It is only within the framework of those presuppositions that scientific knowledge is possible. Supposing someone rejects the presuppositions or ultimate principles

of science. Such a person may claim to have an alternative system of 'science' which does not adhere to the ultimate principles of science as conventionally adopted by the scientific community. It is also possible that one can challenge the position that knowledge is not confined to scientific knowledge, for there can be other methods of obtaining knowledge. One might either reject that the present presuppositions or 'ultimate' principles of science are inadequate for obtaining scientific knowledge and intend to widen the notion of science to include other 'unorthodox' methods or one mig1-J.ltet the present scientific practice go on as it does with its own presuppositions and claim that there are other ways of obtaining knowledge. If either of these positions is found to be held, the problem of ethical cognitivism can be seen in a different light.

Alan Gewirth points out that when the non-cognitivists approach science they make a distinction between good science and bogus science, but when they approach ethics they do not do so. As metaethicists, they insist on strict ethical neutrality. "The metaethicist is far more permissive in his view of the scope of that "ethics" whose meaning and methods he studies. „53 It is pointed out that philosophers like R. M. Hare, in discussing the meaning of 'good' concern themselves indifferently with the ethical language of missionaries and cannibals. They deal, as we have pointed out in our preceding discussion, only with generic features of ethical terms which their use in 'moral contexts' share even with their use in non-moral contexts. The philosophers of science on the other hand take a norm1.tive position as to what constitutes the g~l1uinely scientific. Alan Gewirth points out that if philosophers approach science and ethics on the same level, both would turn out in basic ways to be equally cognitive or equally non-cognitive.

An explanation of early Buddhist ethical congitivism can be given in terms of the point made above. 1'he Buddha considered ethical judgments to be grounded on factual judgments. In this connection it is the nature of th13relationship between the facts and the ethical values grounded on them that is in question. The noncognitivists deny any logical entailment between the facts and values, and since, according to their theory of knowledge, knowledge is Inssible only in logic and the empirical sciences, they deny any cognitively to moral judgments. For, they arc neither analytically true, nor can they be directly observed and verified by the senses nor can they b:: logically deduced from the o'nervable fa~ts.

Now if early Buddhism considered moral judgments to be grounded on certain facts, the question arises whether it recoginizd the possibility of logically deriving moral conclusions from factual propositions. There is no reason to b:e1ivethat such a theory was explicitly held in early Buddhism. What we can, without doubt, say is that certain facts were considered relevant to moral conclusions. The theory that an ethical conclusion can logically be derived from factual premises has not been able to withstand the criticisms leveled against it despite attempts by some recent philosophers to defend such a position.54 From an examination of the present controversy on the question, one can plausibly conclude that no evaluative proposition can *logically* be deduced *from* factual propositions and no 'ought' proposition

can *logically* be deduced from an 'is' prop03ition. H-however, this result need not force ourselves to the conclusion that knowledge and truth are not obtainable in ethics. The non-congnitivists have thought that anyone who expects to use facts as reasons for a moral judgment must also be able to show that his moral judgments are logically entailed by the facts without the mediation of an ethical premise which stands as a fundamental ethical principle. But if we reject this assumption, we may find that there are other means of establishing the rationality of moral judgments. It can be argued that early Buddhism did not share the non-cognitivist assumption that moral conclusions, if they are to be justified by factual premises, must be logically entailed by the latter. It is possible that the facts were considered as providing a kind of rational ground. It is this possibility that we must consider when we inquire into the early Buddhist approach to the question of ethical cognitivism.

Now it may be argued that if there is no logical entailment between certain facts and moral conclusions drawn from them there is no way of determining what facts are relevant to a moral conclusion. But anyone who wished to maintain that moral conclusions can be grounded on facts clearly holds the position that not any fact but only some specific facts, are relevant to moral conclusions. The non-cognitivists argue that there is no restriction that must be imposed on the facts that can be adduced in favour of moral conclusions. Anyone can base his moral conclusions on any fact, for in moral argument what actually happens is that one's selection of the relevant facts depends on one's own individual moral maxim or one's own persuasive definition. The non-cognitivist points out that the relation of facts to moral conclusions is mediated by the adoption of an ultimate moral principle, but at the same time he denies that a rational justification can be given of the ultimate principle. No further reason can justify this maxim or persuasive definition. According to Hare, one just happens to choose its ultimate moral principle and, according to Stevenson, one evinces one's own attitude or approval and seeks to redirect the attitude of others in adopting a persuasive definition. This gives to the ultimate moral principles an arbitrary character. When we come to an ultimate moral principle reason has no more room to operate and morality, in the ultimate analysis, becomes something that lacks a rational basis.

Early Buddhism too takes the position that the relation of facts to moral conclusions is mediated by the adoption of an ultimate moral norm or principle,

but does not take the position that the adoption of this norm is arbitrary. The norm or ultimate principle that early Buddhism has consistently adopted is that actions conducive to the happiness of the agent as well as others affected by the action are morally good. One who accepts this norm, in determining what is morally good and bad examines the facts in terms of this norm. It is not that the Buddha simply chose to adopt this as his ultimate moral principle and expected others to conform to it, or that he simply had a subjective pro-attitude towards the acceptance of it and sought to bring the attitudes of others in line with his own. He thought it to be a principle that anyone who wishes to establish morality on non-arbitrary

grounds has reason to adopt. Others, of course, may put forward alternative principles, and whether or not agreement is reached, rational argument can still operate and some will agree to adopt one ultimate principle and others another. There is no logical proof that can establish an ultimate principle. But this is not a peculiarity of ultimate principles in ethics, but ultimate principles in all spheres of cognitive activity. The fact that there is no agreement on the ultimate principles need not preclude us from cO:1Sideringethical propositions as a class of cognitive propositions. If, on that ground, we say that ethical propositions are non-cognitive, we have to say, to be consistent, that even factual propositions are non-cognitive. For we cannot deny that there are ultimate presuppositions involved in our determination of what facts are.

The Buddha did not consider knowledge to be a superstructure which is to be erected on indubitable foundations. In the Western philosophical tradition the search of the rationalist and the empiricists was for the hard data guaranteeing the absolute truth and indubitability of what is claimed to be known. The Buddha may be called an empiricist in the sense that he accepted experience as a method of establishing what is factually true. But the proposition claiming experience to be the ultimate norm for determining what is true is itself neither a self-evident proposition nor an empirical statement. No empiricist or rationalist justification is possible of this proposition itself. How then could the Buddha have justified his position, without claiming that it is merely his arbitrary decision to adopt it himself and to prescribe that everyone else should adopt it? Some of the reasons were clearly pragmatic. Philosophers in the contemporary analytical tradition in the West may, of course, criticize the Buddha as attempting to prescribe a norm of cognitivity without examining the logic of terms such as knowledge and truth. For, according to them, it is not the task of philosophy to prescribe~ a use of a term, but to clarify the language in our ordinary discourse to discover the logic of our concepts. So according to them in order to see what counts as knowledge we need to study the concept of knowledge in its diverse linguistic settings. However, the result of even this inquiry is to exclude certain applications of the term knowledge on the ground that they do not conform to the logic of the concept. To what extent the Buddha had a philosophical reason in this sense to accept an empirical principle is not a question that we can definitely settle. It can be said that the Buddha

considered common usage important in answering such questions as 'What is truth?' and 'What is knowledge?.' For in rejecting revelation and scriptural authority, for instance, the Buddha gives the reason that wlu.t is accepted on the basis of revelation or scriptural authority may not conform to our expectations *(tatM pi hoti annathii pi hali).55*

So far we have argued that even with regard to factual knowledge we need to establish an ultimate principle on the basis of which the facts are to be determined. We have seen that it is because the non-cognitivists agree on the norms or criteria of the scientific method that they consider it possible in principle to resolve scientific disputes without explaining them in terms of disagreement in attitudes. If

men agree on ethical norms and criteria too, the same result can be obtained. -But the non-cognitivists take for granted agreement all a scie'1tific norm, while rejecting such agreement on an ethical norm. Here, the que5tion can be raised as to whether there are no considerations in favour of one ethical norm rather than another,' as there are considerations in favour of one scientific norm rather than another. To deny this; as Alan Gewirth contends, is to take a norm:1tive approach to science and a positive approach to ethics, thereby treating the tW;) quite disparately.

The Buddha recommends a kind of utilitarian ilOrm as the ultimate principle or standard to be adopted in morality. What is the justification for acceptingsl}cha principle? The Buddha is suggesting here that some moral systems can be' called good moral systems, whereas others can be called bad. For morality, according to the Budciha, is just not an activity having no point; Just as our. ,factual inquiries are not activities devoid of a point, morality too is not an exercise which is' devoid of a point,. Relativism and other forms of subjectivism do not allow the possibility of criticizing other ethical standards and evaluating them from the point of view of one's own. But the Buddha considered it largely a function of the moral values that people hold that co:n'11'lnities as well as individuals can live wisely or unwisely as a result of their moral values. It might be argued that we cannot judge other people's moral standards 011such gm:mds be~aT;e p:nple do not have iclel1tityof aim and purpose. People in different cultures and different periods of human history may be said to possess widely divergent aims and purposes. But the Buddha sees certain facts which can be recogl1izd as universal. to all humal1beings. Human beings generally have certain needs, desires, and aspirations irrespective of the time and place, although there may be individuals with certain abnormal or eccentric desires and aspirations. If the way people conduct their lives tend to work out things badly for them in ways they would themselves consider to be bad, if they knew completely the facts a1)nt themselves, it would be irrational for them to conduct themselves in those ways.

Is there no sense in which certain beliefs about man and what leads to the highest well being of man, or as some modern philosophers have thought, the 'nourishing' of man, are related to how man ought to act, in such a wcwthat oac holding a particular set of such beliefs can be said to b) irnitio:1al if, at the sa '11~time,hepropollnaed

a morality which according to his beliefs will lead to human harm-' thanhuriian flourishing? W. D. Hudson, for instance, argued that "Whatever will give rise to the flourishing of man, as what he is takentobc.ccnght tob~ do.ie" is not justoile general moral principle among others. He thinks that subscription to it might be called a test of rationality. He says: "If a man used moral language to commend *not* doing whatever would give rise to the flourishing of man as what he took man to be, then we should consider him irrational.'56 Perhaps it is on similar grounds that the Buddha advocates the principle that what leads to a person's happiness, advantage or well-being (not just on what the person himself thinks to be his happiness advantage or well-being is, but what is in fact his happiness, etc. on consideration of his very nature) is to be taken as the fundamental moral premise. In doing so

early Buddhism has recognized the significance and relevance of factual inquiries about man to ethical judgments. Hence in early Buddhism ethical judgments are never divorced from a comprehensive factual analysis of human nature and the human predicament.

Early Buddhism holds that insight into human nature and the human predicament is what is essential for a true morality. The Buddha examines the psychological springs of human action and shows what effects certain causal antecedents of human action can have on the individual as well as on the society. All this, according to the Buddha, has a factual basis. One can immediately see, verify and individually experience whether a certain way of life leads to human good or human happiness. Hence the Buddha calls the *dhammo sanditthiko* (immediately visible), *akiiliko* (not delayed in its results), *ehipassiko* (verifiable), *opanaiko* (leading to good) and *paccatta~ veditabbo vinnuhi* (to be individually experienced by the wise). Why the *dhamma* can be so qualified is further explained by the Buddha. He says:

'..One who is greedy, overcome by greed with his mind fully grasped by greed intends what leads to his own harm, intends what leads to the harm of others and experience mental suffering and dejection. When greed is abandoned he does not intend what leads to his own harm, nor does he intend what leads to the harm of others and he does not experience mental suffering and dejection.57

This, the Buddha says, is a fact that can be known. The same is true of hatred and ignorance. *Nibbiina* is the state in which the3e mental dispositions are completely eradicated. According to the Buddha's analysis of diverse levels of human experience in human life there is nothing else which can be called human well-being *(attha, hila, sukha),* other than this state. Hence early Buddhism considers all actions conducing to this state as morally good, and this is in accordance with its beliefs on human nature and the human predicament. The fundamental moral principle underlying it is "Whatever conduces to man's well-being, in terms of what man is taken to be, is good or ought to be done." Is this a reasonable principle that one can hold in ethics? It is surely not true by definition. But it may be said that it is a principle that one can legitimately hold.

One of the main arguments raised against an ethical theory that wishes to establish a single objective standard for the solution of moral problems is that there are irreducible ethical disagreements not only among people who belong to different cultures but also among people belonging to the same culture. It is pointed out that on a question wch as whether contraception is wrong or abortion is wrong two persons A and B will agree on the same facts, or share the same beliefs, but express different attitudes. In this sense their disagreement is said to be an irreducible ethical disagreement. However, it can be argued that in such instances the agreement in the beliefs or facts in question was assumed by us under a certain restricted or technical meaning of 'fact' and beliefs. There is an important sense

in which a devout Rom3.n C3.tholic. a devout Buddhist and a convinced materialist. do not share the same beliefs and agree on the~ same facts. A theistic moralist would think that man is God's creature and that God's will is what man ought to do. A Buddhist would have certain beliefs about the nature of man and his predicament. These beliefs cannot simply be called beliefs about what is good or what ought to be done. A Roman Catholic mother who believes that man is God's creature would consider herself as an immortal soul living under the governance of a God according to whose commandments certain actions are forbidden. She would also believe that her ultimate destiny depends upon obedience to God. Now there is a sense in which it would be irrational for a person holding such beliefs to lay down an ethics which violates God's commandments. While holding certain beliefs about man and his destiny, it is irrational to recommend actions which lead to human harm rather than human good. Against such a position it is sometimes argued that a man ought to do certain things even at the risk of destroying himself. .It is considered better to die rather than do wrong to preserve oneself. Moral self-sacrifice. it is argued. cannot be justified if we take any kind of utilitarian principle. The case of Socrates' death is often given as an example. But it may be questioned whether Socrates would have held the moral position which he held if he was not convinced that he was not merely a material body: but also an immortal soul. the purity of which was of great concern for him. As W. D. Hudson says:

> Is it not significant that those who advocate self-sacrifice usually present it as a path to self-realization? "He who loseth his life shall find it." However difficult *it* may be to make sense of this...the fact remains that to those who advocate it and to those who heed them. self-sacrifice appears to be a duty *because* it is)he way to some kind of self-realization. A moralist who advocated self-destruction simpliciter. who said "Men ought to destroy themselves" and left it at that would surely be saying something which, we should find. though not self-contradictory. certainly irrational and unintelligible. 58

The early Buddhist position regarding the issue of moral self-sacrifice was evidently based on the conception of a greater good to be attained. In illustrations of the Buddhist ethical ideal, through the popular Buddhist literature known as the Jataka tales. the *bodhisatta,* (the person aspiring to become a Buddha), is said to

have sacrificed many things that were dear to him. including his own life. not just for the sake of making a sacrifice, but for the purpose of fulfilling the perfection of character which finally enabled him to attain Buddhahood and save himself as w~n as countless other beings from misery.

There is a sense in which it is irrational to hold certain beliefs about human nature. including beliefs about what constitutes man's happiness, and at the same time lay down a morality which one believes would tend to result in more harm than good. However, philosophers have objected even to this principle on the ground that what constitutes harm cannot itself be determined apart from certain moral beliefs. Early Buddhism attempts to view matters regarding human' good and

'harm, happiness and unhappiness, as not belonging to the sphere of morality itself but as facts which can be independently known and established. It seeks to ground morality on those facts. The consequence of such a theory is that it considers a deep inquiry into human nature and the human predicament as an essential prerequisite Jor an objective ethics. People who are mistaken about the facts about man are considered in Buddhism to be mistaken about their ethics as well.

Thus early Buddhism suggests that a rational choice of an ethical principle which is not merely a persuasive definition is possible. According to this moral principle itself the kind of scientific inquiries necessary for an objective morality can be determined. Moral philosophers in the analytical tradition deliberately refrain from accepting any supreme principle of morality. They do not think it the task of the philosopher to do this. This is the source of their non-cognitivism with the resulting rejection of objectivism in ethics. For although they recognize that moral reasoning proceeds by pointing to facts as evidence for the moral conclusion, they do not see why anyone major moral premise should serve the purpose of an ultimate moral principle rather than any other. They therefore, argue that logically there is nothing in particular that should serve as a premise. Consequently. they believe that there is no common moral standard that everyone must accept.

NOTES

1 S V. 106, *Atthi bhikkhave kusaliikusalii dhammii, siivajjiinavajjii dhammii, hinappatlttii dhammii, katlhasukkasappalibhtigii dhammii.*

2 *D* II 222 r., *ldarp. kusalanti kho pana tena bhagavata supaniiattatp idatp akusalanti supaiiiiattatp idatp anavaffa/fl ;Ja~ sevitabbatp i~ na sevitabbatp ida/fl htnO/fl ida/fl patlita/fl ida/fl katlhasukkasappa1ibhiiganti supaniiatta~.*

M 1 47, *Yato kilo iivuso ariyasavako akusalan ca pajiiniiti akusalmUla" ca pajiiniiti kusaln ca pajiiniiti kusalamiUan ca pajiiniiti ettiivatii pi kho iivuso ariyasiivako sammiidmhi hoti ujugatii'ssa dmhi.*

4 *A* 111165,*Idha bhikkhave ekaccopuggalokusalakusaledhammena jiiniiti savajjiinavajjedhamme na jiiniiti /linappatlite dhamme na jiiniiti ka1;lhasukkasappalibhtigedhamme najaniiti evatp kha bhikkhave puggalo mando momuho hati.*

3

S M 1 *310,ldha bhikkhave assutavii puthujjano sevitabbe dhamme najiiniiti asevitabbedhamme najiiniiti bhajitabbedhamme najiiniiti abhajitabbe dhamme na janiiti..*

D 1 26, *ldha bhikkhave ekacco sama1;lOvii brahma1;lOvii ida1!lkusalanti yathiibhiltatp nappajiiniiti*

id~ akusalanti yathCibhiita~ nappajiinati... so nevida~ kusalanit vyiikaroti, na panida~ akusalanti vyiikaroti tattha tattha paiihatp puttho samiino vacii vikkhepa~ iipajjati amarii vikkhepa~.

7 *A* 11176, *ldha paribbajaka brtihma1;lOevam iiha sabbe piitla avajjhCi ti, iti vada1!l brahma1Jo saccam iiha no musa.*

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8. J. J. Kupperman, *Ethical Knowledge*(George AtIcn and Unwin, London 1970),p. Iff.

9 *A* J. 189.

68 P D PRE\1ASIRI

10 K. N. Jayatilleke attempts to clarify in great detail these different means of knowledge rejecfed by the Buddha. See *Early Buddhist Theory of Kn~JWledge*(George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London 1963), Ch. IV and V.

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MI. 318.

Here is an instance in which instruction is given as to how one should proceed to examine the mental state of another person by making use of beh::lVioural criteria. It is taken for granted that factual knowledge of another person's state of mind is possible by observing his behaviour using one's eyes and ears. Buddhism also admits the possibility of a more direct kind of knowledg of other persons' minds, by means of the development of extra-sensory perception. The above method of using behavioural evidl,)nce as a means of knowing the state of another person's mind is recommended for those who do not possess this extra-sensory power. Accordingly sense perception can be considered as one of the recognized means of knowledge in early Buddhism. In certain situations the questiml "How do you know that X is the case?" is according to early Buddhism, adequately answered by saying "I have seen it." Even some of the~ fundamental truths of Buddhism can be sahl to have been based on sense experience. In concluding that all material form is impenrianent the Buddha's appeal is to the common exp::rience of man.For he says that neither in his own experience nor in that of the others is to be found any material possession which is permanent and enduring (M I 137, *Passatha no tumhe bhikkave tarp,pariggaharp, yviissa pariggaho nicco dhlll'o sassato avipariryimadhammo sassatisamarp, tatheva tiHheyya. No heta", bhante. Sadhu bhikkhave, ahampi kho bhikkhave tam pariggaharp, na samanupassami. . .*)

13 *Mil* 21t. *Tartra* ye *te samalJabriihmarJi pubbesu ananussutesu dhammesu siimarp,yeva dhammarp, abhiiiiiiiya dit[hadhammabhiinavosiinapfiramippattfidibrahmacariyarp, patijananti, tesiiham asmi.*

14 *Early Buddhist theory of Knowledge,* p. 418

15 *D* I. 15.

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*Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge,*p. 420.

Ibid, p. 426.

18 Ibid, p. 457.

19 *Buddhist Psychology* (G. Bell and Sons Ltd., London 1941),p. .10.

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Buddhist Philosphy-A Historical Analysis, p. 158.

Ibid. ..

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22 Ibid.

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See Kalupahana's iIIu~trationof this with his chart, Ibid., p;' 23..

V:mguage,Trltthand Logic (Dover Publication, 1952), p. 5.

25

26

Ibid., p. 103.

Ibid., p. 104.

27

28

Ibid., p. 106.

Ibid., p. 107.

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30

Principia Ethica (Cambridge University Press, 1929).

H. A. Prichard, "Does Moral Philosophy Rest on a Mistake," *Mind* 1912.; Reprintedin *Moral obligation*(1949),pp. 1-17 ; W. D. Ross, *The Right and the Good.* (1930). .

MIl 114, *Katamo pana, bhante Ananda, kiiyasamiiciiro oparambho samaf'ehi brahma>;,ehivinnuh'ti?*

Yo kho, maharaja, kayasamacaro akusalo.

Katamo pana, bhante, kayasamacaro akusalo?

Yo kho maharaja, kayasamiicaro savajjo.

Katamo pana, bhante, kayasamacaro savajjo?

Yo kho maharaja, kayasamacaro savyapajjho.

Katamo pana, bhante, kayasamacaro savyapajjho?

Yo kho, ma/ziiraja, dukkhavipako.

Katamo pana, bhante, kayasamacaro dukkhavipiiko?

Yo kho ma/ziiraja kiiyasamacaro attabyiibadhaya pi sarp,vattati, parabyabiidhiiya pi sGl[!avattati, ubhayabyiibadlziiya pi sa'f!1Vattati.

32 *M* 1415, *Yad eva tvarp,Riihula kayena kammm[! kattukiimo hosi tad eva te kayakammarp, paccavekkhitabbarp, ,. Yarp, nu kho aham idarJ1.kiiyena kammar]1 kattukamo idafll me kayakammG1f! attabyabadhaya pi sar!lvatteyya parabyabiidlziiya pi safllvatteyya ub/layabyabadhaya pi safllvatteyya, akusalafll, idal!l kayakammal?l dukkhudraYG1!, dukkhavipiikanti. Sace tavarp, Rahula paccavekkhamano evmf! janeyyasi. .. evarDparp, te Rahula kayena kammarp, sasakka~ na karaf"i ya~..*

31

33 *A* I 189, *Ta~ ki~ mannatha Kaliima, lobho purisassa ajjhattafll uppajjamano uppajjati hitaya va ahitaya va ti? Ahitaya Mante. Luddho panayafJl Kalama purisapuggalo lob/lena abhibhUto pariyadinnacitto pii>;,ampi hanti adinnampi iidiyati paradaram pi gacchati musa pi b/lanati tathattaya samadapeti yafll sa hoti d'igharattafll ahitaya dukkhayati. Evafll bhante.*

P. D. Premasiri, "The Role of the Concept of Happiness in the Early Buddhist Ethical System," *The Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities* Vo1. VII, 1981, Published in 1983, pp. 61-81.

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See p. 4-8.

M II 199, *Kim pana m(inava attM koci brahmaf'anarp, ekabrahmaf'o pi yo evam iiha* : *aharp, imesa~ palicanna1Jl dhammiina1Jl saya1Jl abhinna sacchikatva vipakafll pavedem'iti.*

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Thig 237-244.

D I 135ff; III 180ff.

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Treatise **III.I** , I, L. A. Selby Biggs, ed., p. 469.

C. L. Stevenson, *Ethics andLanguage*(Yale University Press, 1944).

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42

R. M. Hare, *TheLanguageof Morals* (Oxford University Press, 1964).

R. Carnap, *Philosophy and Logical Syntax* (Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and *Co.,* Inc., New York, 1953), p. 125.

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44

D 1.24-25.

45

G. J. Warnock, *Contemporary Moral Philosophy* (Macmillan, St. Martin's press 1967),p. 26f.

K. N. Jayatilleke, *Ethics in BuddhistPerspective*(The Wheel Publication Society, Kandy 1972), No. 175/176,p. 69.

45 Ibid., p. 70.

47 **MIll** 114, *Ye te biila avyatta ananuvicca apriyogahetva paresafll vaf'f'afll va avaf'~tafll va bhasanti na maya1Jl ta1Jl sara to pacchagacchama. Ye kho te pm:,rj,ita vyatta medhavino anuvicca pariyogahetva paresa1Jl vaf'~lam va aVaf'f'afll va bhasanti ta1Jl mayafll sarato pacchagacchama.*

48 Philippa Foot, "Moral Beliefs" *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* Vo1. 59 (1958-9) Reprinted in *Theories of Ethics,* Ed., Phppa Fooilit (Oxford University Press 1967), p. 84.

49 Philippa Foot, "Moral Arguments," *Mind,* 1958.

50 **DIll** 71, *Dasavassayukesu bhikkhave manussesu kusalanti pi na bhavissati kuto pana kusa/assa kiirake?*

51 DIll 72, *Dasavassiiyukseubhikkhave manussesuye te bhavissontiamatteyyii apetteyyii asiimail.iiii abrahmaniiiina kule jeHhiipaciiyinote p/ljjii ca bhavissantipiisafl1siica..*

Alan Gewirth, 'Positive "ethics" and Normative "Science" *PhilosophicalReview,* Vol. LXIX, July 1960, Ed. by the Faculty of the Sage School of Philosophy (Cornell University, Ithaca, New York).

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Ibid., p. 316.

The di~ussion of the question by many recent writers is found in W. D. Hudson's anthology, *'Is/Ought Question'* (London: Macmllian 1969). Kai Nielson has argued convincingly that all attempts to defend the thesis that an ought-proposition can logically be derived from'an is-proposition have failed. See "On deriving an Ought from an Is : A Retrospective Look," *The Review of Metaphysics* Vol. XXXIII, No.3 March 1979(The Catholic University of America, Washington), pp. 488-574.

55 *M* I 520.

56 W. D. Hudson, *Modern Moral Philosophy,* p. 326.

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A I 156f.

W. D. Hudson, *Modern Morall'l.ilosql:y,* p. 326.