

western. The Kingdom was preached by a real man, to real men, in real words. The time has come to re-find it. It is an old Protestant cry. How much better that it should come to us out

of Downside than from across the barriers of prejudice and non-communion made largely by political accident at the Reformation.

JULIAN DAVID

**THE NATURE OF MORAL JUDGEMENT**, by Patrick McGrath. *Sheed and Ward, London. 327 pp. 32s. 6d*

This book is divided into two parts, the first of which deals with various theories of moral philosophy put forward by philosophers of the Anglo-Saxon tradition since 1900, and the second of which gives the author's own account of the matter. Fr McGrath has performed a considerable service in providing a clear, concise and sympathetic account of the positions of emotivists such as Ayer and Stevenson and the views of later philosophers such as Urmson, Hare and Toulmin. Nor is this account limited to mere description of the theories of these philosophers; the author offers precise and perceptive criticisms and comments of his own on their arguments and conclusions. In particular, one may hope that this survey will help to bridge the gap between moral theology and contemporary moral philosophy.

Inevitably in the short compass of 200 pages or so, there are omissions and general summaries whose brevity could be misleading. It is hard, for instance, to be fair to logical positivism in three pages or to assess the impact of Wittgenstein's *Investigations* in not many more. More serious, perhaps, are the omissions: even in so small a space, some mention might have been made of Von Wright's *Varieties of Moral Goodness* and of the recent work of Mrs Foot, the main opponent of Hare's prescriptivist theories. In fact the views of Mrs Foot might have served to connect the two parts of the book since her descriptivist interpretation of moral terms offers some support to Fr McGrath's own criticism of the emotive and prescriptive positions. But these are minor criticisms; the book would be well worth reading for the first part alone, since it provides a good introduction and a fair critical appraisal of contemporary English moral philosophy.

In the second part of the book Fr McGrath gives his own account of the nature of moral judgement and the ultimate criterion of morality. He argues that moral statements have an objective content: like other propositions they are true or false and do not merely convey the attitude of the speaker. He distinguishes the meaning of moral terms such as good and their criteria of application; the former he analyses in terms of the concepts

of function and need, and for the latter he uses the notion of right to provide what he calls logico-empirical criteria for the application of good in moral contexts. He argues that fundamentally it is because men are persons that they have rights and that this is the ultimate criterion of morality which gives moral statements an objective truth value.

This line of argument seems extremely fruitful and illuminating and does appear to offer some means of connecting fact and value in a way that does justice to our basic moral intuitions and to the way that moral terms are actually used. In particular Fr McGrath's analysis and explanation of logico-empirical criteria as the basis of the objectivity of moral statements does seem to throw real light on the problem. Again he is surely correct to make rights logically prior to duties and not the other way round. Furthermore it seems vital to connect the concept of person to that of rights and to make it central to any account of morality.

Unfortunately, however, Fr McGrath does not do justice to his own argument by trying to compress it into such a short space, with the result that there is a number of lacunae and obscurities in his account. For one thing he appears to have been too greatly influenced by the other theories he analyses and therefore concentrates too much on moral terms and their use instead of trying to set moral behaviour squarely in the context of other human actions. For it does seem that to give a correct account of moral judgement one needs to analyse more general concepts of philosophical psychology such as act, intention, reason and motive in order to see how specifically moral behaviour fits in. This deficiency comes out in Fr McGrath's use of a spurious distinction between doing and not doing to exemplify the difference between meeting the obligations arising from another's rights and respecting the rights of another. He says that the first requires the doing of something positive, the second merely the negative action of refraining from doing something. A case of the first would be paying one's taxes and a case of the second not killing someone. He then argues that, when a man overcomes the temptation to kill someone, the

merit must lie purely in the motive, since the mere refraining from killing cannot be meritorious because a man does that all the time without being aware of it. But in fact the distinction will not stand: I can equally meet the obligations arising from another's rights, violate those rights or merely respect those rights by refraining from doing something as by doing something. Furthermore there is an important difference between being inactive and refraining from doing something. If I refrain from doing something then there is something specific which I do not do. If I am simply inactive, then my not doing is not specified in this way. Thus the merit in not killing someone when I am tempted to do so is not to be explained in a different way from the merit that comes from positive doing, i.e. in the motive alone. My refraining from doing something is just as much a case of intentional behaviour as is my doing something and it is in both cases the intentional behaviour not the motive alone which is the object of a moral assessment.

Fr McGrath uses the concept of rights to provide an objective criterion for the application of moral terms. He considers the proposition that men have rights to be self-evident and argues that this entails the proposition that one is obliged to respect the rights of others. This may in fact be true but I think that the matter requires more investigation than Fr McGrath allows. What sort of self-evidence is in question here? Is it legitimate to employ the terms rights and moral rights as though the two were interchangeable? There is a danger if one does this of imagining that the connection between rights and moral obligation has been proved by the

use of expression 'moral rights'. In the last section of the book Fr McGrath connects the concept of rights to that of person and this part of his account is at once the most suggestive and the most unsatisfactory. The inviolability of certain rights a man has is said to depend on his status as a person, i.e. a being who possesses himself. The analogy seems to be drawn from the notion of a person possessing property but it is not at all clear how this is to be transferred to a man's relation to himself. What happens when a man loses his rights through his own fault or his rights are violated? Does this mean that he ceases to possess himself? Does a man have obligations with regard to himself, e.g. not to commit suicide and, if so, how are these to be related to his possession of himself? It is significant that Fr McGrath quotes Kant sympathetically, since it seems that a number of the logical problems attached to Kant's theory of the autonomy of the will are raised by Fr McGrath's theory of possession of self. The difficulty is that while one can see what the basis of a right is if it is conferred by an authority with the requisite power to confer such rights, it is not so clear what is the basis of fundamental human rights. Do we confer them on ourselves? This seems as nonsensical as the notion of giving oneself a present. Fr McGrath seems to suggest that we just have them because we are persons, i.e. individuals who possess ourselves. But isn't to possess something to have a right over it? So the argument seems circular, unless something different is meant by possession in this case. But what is this difference? It is very much to be hoped that Fr McGrath will develop this argument more fully elsewhere.

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LANGUAGE AND SILENCE, by George Steiner. *Faber and Faber*, 1967. 50s.

THE PRESENCE OF THE WORD, by Wather J. Ong. *Yale University Press*, 1967. 63s.

The focal argument of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* is about what can be said and what cannot be said but only shown. It seems clear that the latter is the more important. This emphasis on the tacit is not unambiguous, but Max Black is surely right to insist, against the positivists, that the 'mysticism', far from being irrelevant or inconsistent or even non-existent, constitutes one of the central themes of the *Tractatus* as a whole. Miss Anscombe has pointed out that Wittgenstein took over the term mysticism from Russell, who used it of a perfectly ordinary experience: one which is well evoked in *Tractatus* 6, 52: 'we feel that even if all possible scientific questions have been answered, still

the problems of life have not been touched at all.' In the *Notebooks* version this is preceded by the remark: 'the urge towards the mystical comes of the non-satisfaction of our wishes by science.'

Wittgenstein seems, here, to be haunted by the problem of the relationship between the natural sciences (*Naturwissenschaften*) and the liberal arts (*Geisteswissenschaften*), which has perplexed German philosophers for more than a hundred years. Professor Gadamer, in his magisterial study, *Wahrheit und Methode*, has charted the course of the debate from its beginnings down to the effort to resolve it in the work of Heidegger. It is curious to reflect