

Terminal and Adjectival Values

Author(s): Arthur O. Lovejoy

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TERMINAL AND ADJECTIVAL VALUES

MUCH recent reflection and discussion within the general field of moral philosophy has been concerned with what may be called—though not precisely in T. H. Green's sense—prolegomena to ethics—not, that is, with the attempt to construct a body of principles from which answers to particular, concrete, and, especially, more or less vexed, problems of human conduct may be directly deduced, but with certain antecedent logical, semasiological, or psychological questions about the class of judgments commonly called "moral" and about the relation of these to the phenomena of voluntary choice: such questions as, "Do the distinctive terms commonly employed in discourse on morals, and especially the word 'ought,' have any 'meaning'?" "If they do, what *is* their 'meaning'?" "What kind of fact, if any, do such judgments assert?" "Can a judgment, simply as such and alone, be conceived to be capable of determining voluntary choice at all?" "What is the relation between 'reason' and feeling or desire in men's choices of their courses of conduct?" The present paper also falls under the general heading of prolegomena, and is an attempt to throw some light on certain of the questions mentioned. For convenience in cross-reference, and to keep the steps in the argument distinct, it is presented in the form of a series of numbered theorems. Few if any of these are offered as original ideas of the author; some of them, I hope, are truisms. If there is anything novel in what follows, it consists chiefly in the concatenation of its parts.¹

I

(1) Theorems in ethics should have some relevance to the actual determination of human conduct. This is true whether such theorems are regarded as theoretical or descriptive, or as normative or prescriptive. A recent writer² has argued that they should be

¹ The argument of this paper is, in substance, though not in form, largely the same as that which I propounded something over forty years ago in this JOURNAL ("The Desires of the Self-Conscious," Vol. IV, 1907, pp. 29-39), though with some additions and omissions. For the full presentation of the case, any reader sufficiently interested should read both papers.

² Professor Harold N. Lee in *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 56 (1947), pp. 646.

regarded solely as theoretical. "The task of ethics is explanatory," he writes, and is similar to the task of natural science, except that the latter is "concerned with the order and connection of natural phenomena," while ethics is "concerned with the order and connection of moral values"—with "the *understanding* of moral conduct." The terms "ethics" and "morals" are not synonymous. "Ethics is theoretic, while morals is practical." But even if you should choose to define the term "ethics" in this manner, it would still be implied that propositions in such an "ethics" must correctly "describe" and "explain" how theorems in prescriptive ethics, what are called "moral judgments," can and do affect or determine conduct, that is, the deliberate choices of human agents. If they could not or do not do so, there would be no distinctive class of phenomena for theoretical ethics to "describe" or "explain," for there would be nothing that could be called "moral conduct" to be understood. The desiderated understanding would consist in observing what the nature of the determinants commonly classed as "moral" is, and how they operate as factors in the choice of courses of conduct. If, on the other hand, you choose to mean by "ethics" a body of prescriptive or normative theorems, and if, as moral philosopher, you propound a set of such theorems as rules or guides for men's conduct, you are presupposing that these *can* affect or determine actual conduct. But in a systematic ethical theory this presupposition requires scrutiny and proof. A set of propositions or reasonings which was declared to be true, but also was admitted to be incapable of affecting anybody's conduct, would be the least "practical" thing in the world. The first problem for the would-be prescriptive moralist, therefore, is to show that, and how, his prescriptions are relevant to, and can be conceived as potentially efficacious in, the phenomenon of voluntary choice.

(2) A necessary preliminary to any ethical theory is, therefore, a psychological inquiry into the way or ways in which men's deliberate choices, and consequently their behavior, in so far as it is preceded by conscious and deliberate choices, *are* influenced or determined.

(3) Recognition of the material truth of a proposition, or of the formal validity of an argument, can not, as such and alone, determine choice; there must at least be associated with it some emotive state or desire. Here, of course, I am merely expressing a little more guardedly Hume's famous thesis: "To show the fallacy of all this philosophy"—i.e., of pretty much all previous moral philosophy—"I shall endeavor to prove, *first*, that reason alone can never be a motive to any action of the will, and *secondly*, that it

can never oppose passion in the direction of the will.”³ Hume does not, of course, mean by this to deny that the understanding has an instrumental use in the determination of conduct. Given a desire for some end, a reasoned knowledge of the relations of cause and effect may show us how to satisfy it by adopting the means without which the end can not be attained. What he is asserting is that “reason,” the apprehension of any kind of truth, is *not* a passion or desire—is not the same psychological phenomenon as liking or *wanting* something; and that a thing can become an end only by being wanted. The rôle of reason consists in judging of propositions as true or false, as in “agreement or disagreement” with the matters to which they refer. “Whatever is not susceptible of this agreement or disagreement, is incapable of being true or false, and can never be an object of our reason.” But “our passions, volitions and acts” are “original facts and realities, compleat in themselves. . . . ’Tis impossible, therefore, that they can be either true or false, and be either contrary or conformable to reason.”⁴ And since reason neither is nor can produce a desire, it can not even tell us what we *should* desire—can not evaluate desires; if it professes to do so, it will only the more clearly reveal its irrelevance and impotence. You either have a desire or you do not; unless you have one, you will never act at all; and a desire can be combatted or overcome, not by reason, but only by another desire.

Some of Hume’s critics have objected that his proof of this thesis is simply tautological reasoning from definitions. He *defines* “reason” or “understanding,” it is said, as the recognition of the material or formal truth of a proposition or inference, and nothing more; he defines “passion” or desire as *not* involving the notions of truth or falsity; and then, of course, it follows that an act of the reason as such is not a desire, and, therefore, can not influence choice; the conclusion is a purely verbal one. But the objection is not, I think, well taken. Hume’s definitions are not *mere* definitions, arbitrarily constructed; they are *descriptions* of two actual, and recognizably distinct, mental phenomena. To judge a proposition to be true, and to desire a state-of-things, are *experienced* as different; and any psychology of volition which does not begin with the recognition of this primary empirical distinction can only end in confusion. On the other hand, it is of course possible that there are fixed empirical *associations* between the apprehension of certain propositions as true and certain de-

³ *Treatise of Human Nature*, I, iii, 3; ed. Selby-Bigge, p. 412.

⁴ *Treatise*, Bk. III, Pt. I, 1.

sires; the former may always be accompanied or followed by the latter, so that the two kinds of event in consciousness, though distinct, are inseparable. There may, moreover, be a specific kind of constraint exercised by reason, that is, by logic, upon a particular kind of desire, once that desire has arisen; we shall presently return to this point. These possibilities were not, I think, wholly overlooked by Hume, though he might well have made more of them than he does. Nevertheless, he has, in substance, laid down the two theorems from which any inquiry into the phenomena of moral experience, and therefore any systematic ethics, should start: namely (to repeat), first, that the intellectual recognition of the truth of a proposition or of the formal validity of an argument is incapable of determining choice and action, except in so far as it is connected in some particular manner with a feeling or desire; and consequently, second, that the primary problem in such an inquiry is to identify the *particular feelings or desires* which in fact lie behind the choices commonly called moral, and to investigate the precise manner of their connection with the processes of the understanding. And the moral philosophers can *not*, I think, be said to have usually gone about their business in this way.

(4) It is nevertheless the case that men make judgments—distinguished by such predicates as “right” and “wrong” and the like—which appear sometimes to influence or determine their conduct. Since, according to the preceding thesis, this can not be due to a simple recognition of the truth of the judgments, *quâ* judgments, it must be due to the fact that some specific kind of affective or appetitive state is *either* expressed by, or fixedly associated with, judgments of this class, when they function as factors influencing the choices of individual agents.

(5) Judgments pertinent to the choice of courses of action manifestly fall, *prima facie*, into two classes: *appraisals of the values of ends of action*, and *approbations or disapprobations of the actions or of the qualities of agents* (including oneself). It is a prerequisite for an ethical theory to determine how these two classes are related—whether, e.g., one of them is reducible upon analysis to the other; or whether there is any fixed correlation between them.

(6) The desires which are, so to say, the dynamic factors associated with these two sorts of judgment are fundamentally distinct from one another with respect, *inter alia*, to the relative *time* of occurrence, or realization, of that which is desired. The one is the desire for states-of-things which, at the moment of choice, are conceived by the chooser as *about-to-be* valuable, as eventually affording satisfaction to the agent, or to somebody, *when realized*

through the act; the other is the desire of the chooser to be able to think of himself as having or manifesting qualities *in* the act, which, *at the moment of choice*, he can regard with satisfaction, or at least without dissatisfaction, *as characterizing himself as agent*. I shall call these two—for lack of better terms—the desire for terminal values and the desire for adjectival values.

(7) The long dominant and, as it may be called, the classic type of moral philosophy has largely neglected adjectival values; it has usually conceived the general and primary problem of ethics to be: What end or ends of action have genuine value *when realized*—what kind of experience will be found eventually satisfying by a being constituted as man is?

(8) This preoccupation with terminal values has apparently been due mainly to a simple psychological error. The error consists in the assumption that the conceived *eventual* value of an end of action always and necessarily determines present desire—that all deliberate choice is *sub specie* or *sub ratione boni*. This assumption is erroneous because, in fact, the affective determinant of desire is always the felt relative pleasantness or welcomeness of an idea of a realizable state-of-things *at or just preceding the moment of choice*—the *present* valuedness or appeal of the idea, not the future value of the state-of-things.⁵ And the chooser's idea of himself as possessing or manifesting *in* his contemplated act certain qualities or characteristics which he can now regard with pleasure, or without displeasure, is an idea of a state-of-things which can, and often does, have such present value—i.e., is an object of desire. This desire has no fixed connection with the desire for ends or termini of action conceived as about-to-be-satisfying, or in some sense valuable, when attained. *Either* desire may determine choice; and the two types of desire sometimes lead to identical actions, sometimes not. A martyr—a martyr not believing in future rewards or punishments—must know very well that he will not enjoy being burned at the stake. But he may also be intensely repelled by the thought of himself as a renegade or a coward. If the latter motive is the more powerful in him, he will refuse to recant. The desire for an adjectival value will prevail over the aversion from an extreme form of terminal disvalue. Or—to sink to a less lofty example, in which the two types of desire

⁵ This will be recognized as an expression of the now familiar thesis of the "hedonism of the present"—"hedonism" in the psychological, not the normative, sense. The best statement of it with which I am acquainted is in L. T. Troland's *Fundamentals of Human Motivation* (1930), pp. 273–280. My acceptance of this psychological thesis does not imply entire agreement with the ethical doctrine which Troland develops in the same work.

do not conflict but tend to determine the same choice—I may know that if I eat something highly indigestible, say welsh-rabbit, to-night I shall presently much regret it, and may therefore refrain. But if I like welsh-rabbit very much, this prudential consideration may not of itself be decisive, until it is reënforced by the consideration that those who obtain present gustatory pleasure at the cost of greater future pain are gluttonous fools. The scale may then be turned in favor of abstinence. But any ethical theory which assumes that only one of these types of desire can be the determinant of choice, or that they are always in accord with one another, is fundamentally wrong in its psychological presuppositions.

(9) The empirical fact that adjectival values do influence or determine choices—i.e., that they are actually desired—is the manifestation, on the appetitive side of man's life, of the peculiarity which constitutes the psychological differentia—or at least the principal differentia—of the human species, *viz.*, that man is a self-conscious animal. Without self-consciousness there could obviously be no desires for adjectival values, though desires for terminal values would still be operative. As a consequence—an empirically actual, though not a logically necessary, consequence—of his self-consciousness, man is a habitually self-judging and self-appraising animal; and he has, as no one, surely, can deny, an intense desire to think well, or at least not to think ill, of himself and his qualities and acts and performances. This is the most distinctive, and perhaps the most persistent and potent, of his desires. It can, and often does, over-ride his desires for any sort of terminal values to be enjoyed by himself.⁶

⁶ What is said above is partly in accord with the view expressed in an illuminating article by Professor Virgil C. Aldrich, "An Ethics of Shame," in *Ethics*, Vol. 50 (1940), pp. 59 ff. "For me," Aldrich writes, "an 'I ought' means simply 'I am ashamed not to,' and 'I ought not' means 'I am ashamed to . . .'" You can get a thief to agree that stealing is imprudent, dangerous, etc., but unless the act makes him feel some degree of deterrent shame, it will not for him be *morally* wrong." In short, "X ought to = X is ashamed to." "Never do anything which you would be ashamed to do, always do what you would be ashamed not to do. I adopt this as my Golden Rule." This emphasis upon the rôle of shame in moral experience is, I think, sound, though it does not tell the whole story. Shame is the most intense of the emotions aroused by the idea of oneself as acting in a manner, or possessing a characteristic, which it is painful to attribute to oneself; i.e., it, by its very existence, *gives* to the act or characteristic in question a purely adjectival *dis*-value. And to say of another's act that it is "shameful" is the most extreme way of expressing condemnation. But there are also positive adjectival values, attaching to ideas of oneself or of another as acting in a manner that one approves, esteems, admires, etc. The relations between the negative and positive types of adjectival value, and their relative potency, I do not in this paper attempt to examine.

(10) Though anyone may define the word "moral" as he likes, there is a sense—and, I think, the most appropriate and useful sense—of the word in which it may be said that it is by virtue of the desire for adjectival values that man is a moral agent. For that type of subjective experience which would generally be called "moral" (in the descriptive, not the eulogistic, sense) certainly does not consist simply in being aware that the desire for one potentially realizable terminal value is stronger than the desire for another. The distinguishing fact about this sort of experience is that it requires a special verb for its expression—the verb "ought," with the first personal pronoun for its subject. And those who use this expression obviously do *not* mean by it merely "I desire," for they frequently employ the two expressions as antithetic; they say, "I want to do that, but I ought not to," or "I don't want to do it, but I ought to." Yet if these "ought" judgments are to be efficacious, if they are to have any influence at all upon conduct, they too—if thesis 3 above is admitted—must express some emotive-appetitive attitude, some desire—a desire, namely, to do what one may at the same time desire not to do. This often poignant experience of inner conflict is intelligible only if the two desires are of different orders, pertinent to different aspects of the specific course of action under consideration—the one, to the anticipated pleasurable-ness of the action itself or its results for those affected by it, the other, to the present satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the agent when he thinks of himself as acting in that manner. The stuff of moral experience consists largely in the interaction of the desire for adjectival values and the desires for particular terminal values. If you are to assume that there is anything unique in moral experience, here is where it patently lies.⁷

There have, of course, been many ethical doctrines which have construed the "ought" of moral experience as expressing simply the relation of logical consistency or of factual dependence between a generic end supposed to be desired by everybody—happiness, or

⁷ The theses advanced up to this point are in agreement with those of Professor E. M. Adams in a recent article, "A Critique of the Emotive Theory of Ethical Terms," in this JOURNAL (Vol. XLVI, 1949, pp. 549-553), with one important difference. He maintains that the distinctively moral judgment, "X is right" is a judgment of approbation, and that such a judgment is not merely an assertion either that "I like X" or that "I desire that the hearer approve of X." This contention I think true. But Adams finds in this "approbative theory" of the import of the moral judgment a disproof of the "emotive theory" of the determinant of moral choice, whereas I hold, for reasons above indicated, that approbation is itself an emotive state, and that it is capable of affecting the choices of the individual only in so far as he feels a desire to approve—or not to disapprove—of his own acts.

self-realization, or what not—and the choice of means to that end. You want this or that terminal value, you “ought,” therefore, to act in such a way that the end will be realized. But this mode of reasoning in ethics not only fails to do justice to the intense emotional character of the conflict between “I want” and “I ought,” but it also tacitly and illicitly assumes that the only values of acts, or of personal qualities expressing themselves in acts, are instrumental values; that what you are is of importance only because of its tendency to bring about an eventual state-of-things which will then be satisfying to yourself or to whoever experiences it. But this is a very large and, for ethics, crucial proposition, which requires proof. The assumption that there are no distinct values in qualities of persons as such is by no means self-evident, and, in fact, runs counter to the general conviction of mankind. We set store by what people as agents are—or what we believe them to be—as well as by the results their actions accomplish; we like or dislike the results, but what we approve, admire, praise, or disapprove or despise, is *people* and what we conceive to be their motives or subjective springs of action. If, by some fortunate dispensation of nature, some motive, such as, say, envy or cupidity invariably led to actions producing the same results as magnanimity or generosity, we should still distinguish between the persons believed to be actuated by the two types of motive; we should still disapprove and despise the former and admire and praise the latter.

But I am wandering from the specific moment in the experience of the individual in which he is applying approbative or disapprobative judgments, not to others, but to potential choices or contemplated actions of his own, and in which he is aware of a conflict between what he says to himself that he wants to do and what he says to himself that he “ought” to do—or to be. What I am here suggesting, is that the “I ought” judgment—assuming that Thesis 3 above is true—if it is to have any efficacy in this situation, must *also* express a desire, but a desire generically different from the terminal desire of which the subject may also be at the moment sensible, and that the former is a desire for some adjectival value.

(11) Though, as remarked in (7) above, many moral philosophers—the majority of them, I think—have, in their reasonings and explicit doctrines, been one-sidedly preoccupied with terminal values, they have frequently betrayed the fact that it is upon the desire for an adjectival value that they finally rely when they seek to persuade men to *adopt* the end, the terminal value, which they, the philosophers, extol. For such philosophers have often declared that that end is the only “rational” end. What they obviously mean by this is that that end is the only one which would be desired by a “rational” being. But “rational” is an adjective, and “ra-

tionality," in the relevant sense, is an attribute of persons or their motives or modes of action. In other words, those philosophers whom we may for short call "terminalists" in ethics are often "adjectivalists" *sans le savoir*; they tacitly assume that all men are as much determined in their choices as the philosophers themselves presumably are by an aversion from conceiving of themselves as behaving in an irrational manner. This has been interestingly illustrated recently in Professor Lee's article to which I have already referred. He has been discussing the meaning of "ought," and concludes that "'I ought to do' means 'it will be better if I do.'" But he goes on: "Of course, it is possible that someone may come along and say 'I do not want to attain the good, therefore I have no obligation.' The answer would be to show him in the manner of Socrates and Plato that he does not know what he means when he says, 'I do not want to attain the good,' or else to show him in the manner of Kant (or by an adaptation of Kant) that to say 'I do not want to attain the good' implies the statement: 'I do not want to be reasonable.'" And Mr. Lee adds: "Perhaps the Socratic-Platonic argument comes down to this in the last analysis."⁸ If it does (and I think it does), we see the argument for an obligation to choose a certain terminal value falling back, "in the last analysis," upon an appeal to an assumed desire for an adjectival value. And this sort of change of base is, in one form or another, frequently observable in the history of ethical theories.⁹

⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 655; italics mine.

⁹ A still more recent example of this may be seen in Professor James B. Pratt's last and notable work, *Reason and the Art of Living*, which has come into my hands since the above was written. His ethical doctrine may be said to be explicitly bifocal; "moral" action (in the normative sense) is action in accord with "the principle of Rationality and Value." Pratt argues with characteristic clarity and force that a given end's being actually or potentially valued by some "sentient subject" is (or is not) a matter-of-fact, whatever anyone else may think about it, and that, therefore, a value-judgment, in so far as true, is simply an intellectual recognition of this kind of objective fact: "a value is a value, and has its own actual worth whenever or wherever it comes . . . without regard to the prejudice of the present moment or the interests of the particular agent." But why should this "impartial and impersonal" judgment of fact determine the action of the "particular agent"? Because, Pratt answers, "if I act without taking into account" a value of which the realization may be affected by my conduct in a given situation, "I am in so far forth acting irrationally, unjustifiably, and therefore wrongly in the only defensible sense of the word *wrong*." "Morally good action is reasonable action." This seems clearly to imply that the agent's intellectual recognition of objective terminal values becomes relevant to his own volition only because, or in so far as, he has a desire for the adjectival value of "reasonableness," or an aversion from thinking of his choice, and the resultant action, as "wrong."

II

I have thus far been insisting chiefly upon the distinctness and irreducibility to one another of the desires for terminal and for adjectival values, even when they happen to issue in the choice of identical courses of overt action. But to assert this is not to assert that, in the complex processes of moral judgment and choice, they do not affect and interact with one another. There is another half to the story, and it has been, I think, even oftener forgotten than the half which I have hitherto been trying to tell, though some of it is to be found writ large in Adam Smith's *Theory of the Moral Sentiments*. I shall now, therefore, attempt to indicate briefly the manner of what may be called the intrasubjective interplay of the two types of desire. This interplay is mediated through another obvious characteristic of man which is complementary to and intricately interwoven with his self-consciousness, namely, his inexpugnable belief that he is surrounded by other beings who not only have perceptions, ideas, pleasures, pains, desires for terminal values, like his own, but are also, not less than himself, capable of recognizing adjectival values and of manifesting—or failing to manifest—these in their voluntary choices and their actions. *Their* motives and behavior consequently become for him legitimate subjects for *his* adjectival valuations; he applies these to his fellows as well as to himself—and he conceives of *them* as applying favorable or unfavorable, approbative or disapprobative, adjectives to his own motives or behavior. In consequence of all this he becomes involved in a situation which I shall try to delineate briefly in three concluding theorems.

(12) The approbative or disapprobative judgments which the individual passes upon contemplated or potential acts or motives of his own are profoundly affected, and largely determined, by his approbations or disapprobations of other men's actions or motives or characteristics. He is forever judging his neighbors and experiencing feelings or "attitudes" associated with these judgments—approval, esteem, admiration, or their opposites, disapproval, disesteem, or contempt—and expressing these by favorable or unfavorable adjectives or epithets. And his judgments of himself, or of potential modes of action of his own, are thus caught in a trap—or, to better the metaphor, his approvals or disapprovals of others act as a boomerang; they return upon himself. For it is difficult to approve in oneself what one condemns or despises in others. I do not say it is impossible. Men's desire for self-esteem is so great that it may beget much ingenuity in devising reasons for thinking that there is something exceptional in one's own case. But in the main, I think, a simple logic of consistency does control

the agent's judgments about his own acts, actual or contemplated; so that the working of the desire for self-approval, or the aversion from self-disapproval (which is usually the stronger of the two), makes for conformity with the categorical imperative, or at least one form of it: Judge yourself by the same standards that you apply in judging others. It is not that men, for the most part, consciously adopt this as a moral rule; it is only that they *tend* to conform to it, and find it hard to avoid doing so; and if they do not, their family or their neighbors are usually prompt to point out the inconsistency. Thus there is a kind of implicit rationality in the actual operation of the desire for adjectival values: the primary rationality which requires that an accepted general proposition shall be recognized as valid for all particular instances which fall under it. Nor is it only the *form* of rationality—mere consistency—that naturally tends to influence the individual's self-approbations or disapprobations. John is unlikely to approve of James for acts which cause pain or other injury to John, or even to third persons; and since, broadly speaking, it is thus injury-causing acts in others that John disapproves in them, it is such acts that, so to say, he gets the habit of disapproving in himself. Once more, men's minds do not always act in this way; it is, here also, not impossible for them to think up excuses, rationalizations, for doing to others with what is called "good conscience" things which they would not only dislike but disapprove, if done to themselves. All that I am saying is that the desire for self-esteem exercises a pressure towards action consistent with the Golden Rule. The question: "What would you think of me!—what epithets would you apply to me!—if I did to you the sort of things you are doing or thinking of doing to me?" is always a hard question to meet. And the "logic of the moral appeal" consists largely in pressing this question home.

(13) This interplay between the approbative (or disapprobative) attitudes of John towards the qualities of the actions of James and his attitudes towards the same qualities as predicable of potential actions of his own, shows—at least in part—how desires for certain kinds of terminal values pass over into desires for adjectival values, but do so in a generalized or depersonalized form. John's desire that the actions of others which affect him shall be beneficial to him, or at least not injurious, is a desire for terminal values—i.e., eventually satisfying experiences—for himself, except that he is not himself the agent for their realization. But since it manifests itself as approbative or disapprobative emotional attitudes towards other men's actions—attitudes expressed by commendatory or condemnatory adjectives—and since John desires

favorable adjectives, and is intensely averse from unfavorable adjectives for himself and his actions, the nature of the acts which John performs—or at least feels that he “ought” to perform—under the influence of his desire for adjectival values, is itself often determined by a desire for a non-adjectival value. But its purely egoistic character has, so to say, been filtered out of it by its passage through the two phases of (a) John’s approbations (or the contrary) of the acts of others, and (b) the extension of these habitual approbations (or the contrary) to all actions of the same type, and therefore to possible actions of John himself. In this way, generalized terminal values may become incorporated in adjectival values. It is not, of course, true that the personal qualities or modes of action approved by an individual consist exclusively of those which he consciously recognizes as thus instrumental to terminal values. His approbations or disapprobations are usually reflections of the *mores*—or more precisely, of the customary approbations or disapprobations of his social group, with which the actual *mores* do not always coincide. But these approbations are themselves in great part directed to the realization of benefits (i.e., terminal values) generally desired by the members of the group, or the prevention of injuries to the group or its members. Societies do not, in general, approve or admire “anti-social” conduct. It is not, however, true that the approbations current in a society are directed exclusively upon acts recognized as contributory to the realization of generalized terminal values; there are some characteristics of agents or actions commonly approved or admired which do not appear to have in fact, or to be assumed to have, any such instrumental value. This is especially evident in the formative period of the individual’s life, in childhood and youth, in which his adjectival valuations often receive their permanent “set.” Children and adolescents are natural hero-worshippers, and their attitude towards their heroes is not the result of a recognition of the terminal value of the heroes’ characteristics or behavior. It is a spontaneous quasi-esthetic reaction to those characteristics or behavior, immediately accompanied by a desire to be *like* the persons who are admired or revered. The potent part played by this desire in the actual moral life of human beings has, I think, been too seldom recognized by moralists—and (though as to this I am less competent to generalize) even by novelists.

(14) It follows from theorems (12) and (13) that the crucial Humian thesis (No. 3) must be, not, indeed, rejected, but significantly qualified. It remains true that choice is determined, not simply and primarily by what Hume called “reason,” but by “passions,” or desires. But the “passions” of a self-conscious

agent who makes judgments about the adjectival values both of his own and other men's conduct are profoundly modified by the interplay of these two modes of valuation, and in this interplay "reason"—in the two ways that I have indicated—can, and usually does, creep in. It creeps in because *the desire for an adjectival value is a desire to be able to think of a certain kind of proposition as assertible of an actual or potential mode of action of one's own*—or of the contrary kind of proposition as not so assertible. And propositions, unlike desires, are "either true or false," and are thus "either contrary or conformable to reason." Hume was apparently thinking, in the passage earlier quoted, only of the desires for terminal values, and what he said of these was correct. But in that passage, in forgetting the desires for adjectival values, he oversimplified his problem, and failed to see the relation between "passion" and "reason" in the distinctively "moral" type of motivation. A *desire* to be able to look upon oneself as "an honest man," or as not a "mean" or a "cowardly" man, is, as Hume said, an "original fact"; you either have it or you do not, and it can not be generated simply by reasoning. But the judgment, "If I did do so-and-so I could not consider myself an honest man," or "I should have to admit that I am mean or a cowardly man"—or the retrospective judgment of the penitent soul, "That was a dishonest, or a mean, or a cowardly, thing that I did"—this, like any judgment, implies a truth-claim; it purports to be objectively valid. It is not *made* true by the fact that I desire certain predicates for my acts, or am horrified by the idea that the opposite predicates could be asserted of them. But though you cannot by argument compel a man to wish to conceive of himself as honest or not-mean or not-cowardly, if he does so wish, you may be able by argument to show him that his actual conduct does not correspond even to the meaning that he himself attaches to those desired predicates—or that he would not apply such favorable predicates to that sort of conduct on the part of another man. And finally, you may raise the question whether all of his adjectival valuations are themselves consistent with one another—whether, in holding to one of them, he does not really deny another. In this last case, "reason" may operate even to compel a revision of his desires for *specific* adjectival values—provided, at least, that he is *not* willing to admit to himself that he is in the absurd position of valuing something which he at the same time does not value. But it is precisely *because* man is a desirer of adjectival values that reason becomes capable of influencing his voluntary conduct and even of modifying—though not of creating—the desires of which his conduct, in so far as it is that of a moral agent, is the expression.

The foregoing had been written before I read, in a recent number of this JOURNAL (Vol. XLVII, 1950, pp. 5-22), Professor Henry D. Aiken's important article on "Evaluation and Obligation." In it he arrives independently, and largely by a different course of reasoning, at conclusions which, in spite of some differences in terminology, appear to be closely akin to, if not identical with, certain of the primary theses of the present paper. I call attention to these points of agreement because they may not be immediately apparent to all readers, and because I should like to adduce Aiken's clear and forceful arguments (which I shall not attempt to summarize) to complement those set down above, and, finally, because, along with the agreements, there are some differences which it may be clarifying to note. (a) Aiken sharply distinguishes "norms of conduct" from "values." "There is no process of analysis or dialectical manipulation by means of which we can deduce norms from values or normative statements from mere appraisals of value. . . . The normative function of 'ethical' or 'practical' judgments and their appraisive or evaluative function can not be reduced to the same thing." This is not precisely equivalent to the distinction of terminal and adjectival values; it does not, indeed, recognize that the latter *are* "values," in the sense of being valued by the agent at the moment of choice. But by "appraisals of value" Aiken seems to mean what I have called intellectual judgments about terminal values, and, if so, he has rightly—as I think—insisted that such appraisals do not, in themselves, perform the "normative function" characteristic of "ethical or practical judgments"; they are intellectual, "descriptive" judgments which do not, as such, determine choice. And that is one of the first and fundamental truths in the psychological pro-paedeutic to ethics. (b) "The fundamental characteristic of ethical statements," writes Aiken, "is their characteristic of being [i.e., of being felt as] obligatory or binding." Here we are in full agreement (cf. 10, above). And it is implied that this characteristic does not attach to evaluative judgments, and can not be deduced from them (c). "The fundamental problem," for Aiken, of the analysis of moral experience is that of "the relations of the normative to the descriptive (including the evaluative) use of language." I do not think the problem is *merely* one of "the use of language," and I should gather from some of Aiken's other contentions that he does not really think so, either. It is the problem of distinguishing the characteristic psychological components of the actual phenomenon of "moral" choice and observing their *modus operandi*. But it is, I hold, correct to say that the funda-

mental problem is that of the relations of normative judgments (which for me, in so far as they influence choice, are expressions of the desire for satisfying adjectives for one's conduct, either approbative or not disapprobative) to merely evaluative judgments; and, if I may so translate Aiken's statement, we are here also in agreement.

There is, then, almost nothing in Mr. Aiken's paper from which I should dissent; but there are some things which I should wish to add. It may well be that he, too, would have added them, but for the limitations of space of a single journal-article. However that may be, they would, in my view, consist of the following theses. This brief summary of them is repetitious, but a recapitulation may be not amiss by way of conclusion. (A) The normative not less than the evaluative judgments are expressions of emotive attitudes on the part of those who assert them, and, in so far as they relate to actions of the person judging, they are expressions of a desire actually felt by that person at the moment of choice, though of one generically different from the desire for terminal values. (B) This is a desire to be able to think of satisfying or gratifying predicates, or adjectives, as applicable to oneself or to one's qualities or acts—or, at least, not to be compelled to think of predicates as so applicable which it is painful to attribute to oneself as agent. (C) This amounts to a desire to think of a particular kind of *proposition* as true of oneself or one's acts—or of the opposite kind of proposition as not true of them. (D) Being thus a desire to think a proposition to be true, the desire for adjectival values becomes, for its satisfaction, entangled with "reason," namely, with the primary logical requirement that a universal proposition shall be true of all instances of the class to which it refers—the class in this case being a class of actions or qualities of human agents. (E) Since the self-conscious agent applies adjectival—i.e., approbative or disapprobative—judgments not only to his own acts but to those of his fellows, he becomes, in consequence, subject to a logical constraint (not always effective) to judge his own acts by the same criteria by which he judges theirs. (F) These criteria consist, in part, in the tendency of their actions which affect him to contribute to the realization of the kind of *terminal* values which he desires. (G) In so far as this is the case, his approbative or disapprobative judgments of his own acts tend to require that those acts shall be such as contribute to the realization by others of the same kinds of terminal values. (H) The potency of "the fundamental characteristic of ethical statements," that of "being obligatory or binding," is the conse-

quence of the desire of the self-conscious agent to be able to look upon himself and his own acts with satisfaction, or at least without repugnance or shame, and of the (actual or possible) conflict between this desire and a desire for some particular terminal value.

ARTHUR O. LOVEJOY

JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

BOOK NOTES

Language and Philosophy: Studies in Method. MAX BLACK. Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press. 1949. xiii + 264 pp. \$3.50.

The author is to be congratulated on getting a book published which is composed of essays on points of logic. There ought to be more such, to supplement our periodicals. I note with pleasure the recognition of the importance of Mr. Russell's theory of descriptions, with the accompanying denial that this commits us to his ideal of language, or his views about acquaintance. Also the recognition of the potential values of semantics, with the firm though restrained devaluation of the late Count Korzybski. This book might be very good to introduce a student to this type of semantic discussions, including Tarski, Wittgenstein, Charles Morris, Ogden and Richards, and Stevenson.

I shall confine myself to some comments on the chapter on "Vagueness," to illustrate a certain inadequacy of the discussions carried on at the level of this book, granting that there is no reason why the author should not keep on the introductory level if he wants to. In this case of vagueness, Black dismisses Russell's one-many relation of word to thing as "generalization," rather than "vagueness." But I think it is important to insist on the distinction between generalization and the popular phrase, "vague generalities," between the precise abstractions of mathematics and the popular "vague abstractions." Students always blunder about this difference, and think themselves absolved from exact thought because abstract and generalized thought is vague, and therefore not worth bothering with.

Black thinks the vagueness of boundaries in various concepts is the chief logical difficulty, and talks about deciding such questions by popular vote. This seems to me the smaller part of the problem. Mr. Arthur F. Bentley, in his joint work with Dewey, *Knowing and the Known*, finds good arguments to convict all other logicians of being vague, not merely on the edges, but all the way