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MORAL AND OTHER VALUES

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What constitutes moral values and norms in comparison with other kinds of values and norms? What makes moral values different from political, aesthetic or personal values? At first sight, these questions seem to have an easy answer. On a closer look, however, difficulties abound. The concept of morality seems to defy a definition by necessary and sufficient conditions. By approaching the question *ex negative,* the article attempts to do away with a few "myths" about morality current in analytical meta-ethics and, in conclusion, to offer some suggestions of how the concept of morality might be explained without recourse to a definition *per genus et differentiam*.

Key words: morality, moral values, definition, necessary and sufficient conditions

INTRODUCTION

Whenever something goes seriously wrong in society one of the first diagnoses given by conservative leader writers is that of a *crisis of values*. Politicians, teachers and other public figures are reminded of their duty of directly and indirectly supporting the authority of values in society and of living up to these values in their own public behavior. The values which are usually meant in these contexts are *moral* values. It is not values as such that are diagnosed to be unduly weakened in society. Nobody wants to deny that even those who offend most blatantly against moral values have values of their own and value a large variety of things, e. g., money, reputation, and good food. What is thought to be wrong with people in need of value-education is not that they do not value *anything* but that they value the *wrong* things, or, perhaps, the wrong *kind* of things. Philosophically, this distinction is not without interest: Value criticism can consist in the criticism of the values people have, and in the criticism of the *kinds* of values people have.

The question I am going to deal with in the following concerns the *kind* of values people have. How are moral values distinguished from other kind of values, such as political, aesthetic, or personal values? Are there certain characteristics *specific* to moral values? What is the "province" of moral values within the universe of values, and where lie its boundaries?

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This question must not be misunderstood. What it asks for is not a definition of the *true* or *justified* morality. The question is not what distinguishes *truly moral* values from *immoral* values. The question is what distinguishes moral values from *non-moral* values. The distinction between moral values and *immoral* values is made from within a particular morality: What conforms to this morality, is called moral, what does not conform to it, immoral. In contrast, the distinction between moral and non-moral values is made from an external or meta-perspective, a theoretical perspective beyond all particular moral perspectives.

The simplicity if this question is only apparent. Though we use the concept of "moral values" quite confidently in everyday speech, it is by no means easy to give necessary and sufficient conditions for the concept of morality or, in other words, to articulate clearly what the essence of morality is. There has indeed been an intense and largely inconclusive discussion about "the nature of morality" in the meta-ethical literature of the last fourty years. One of the earliest contributions to this debate stems from Peter Singer, then a largely unknown young philosopher, who at the end of his article comes to the agnostic conclusion: "Nor does any one definition of morality have any important overall advantages as against the other plausible definitions that have been suggested"[1].

Against this backdrop, I hope to be forgiven for not presenting any definitive results. What I have to say is exploratory, and mostly negative.

THE TROUBLE WOTH INDIRECT APPROACHES

The difficulty of an analysis of the concept of morality is to avoid the Scylla of a too broad and encompassing, and the Charybdis of a too narrow concept. The first danger lurks large if morality is characterized by some of its necessary conditions of which the most are unproblematic, such as their *categoricity*, understood as the property of valuing actions independently of how far they correspond to the purposes or interests of the agent. The problem is that many other kinds of values manifest these same features, for example religious or aesthetic values.

One strategy is to approach morality *indirectly*, via its symptoms, i. e. by its characteristic manifestations in language, emotion and social life. The trouble with these approaches is that they can easily be shown to be circular. Instead of explaining what is specific to moral values, they all presuppose that we already know what it is.

[1] P. Singer, *The triviality of the debate over "is-ought" and the definition of "moral"*, "American Philosophical Quarterly" 1973, No. 19, p. 56.

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This is most obvious for the *linguistic* approach that tries to define morality by the linguistic expressions typically used in moral contexts, such as the expressions "good", "right", "ought" *etc*. This approach, represented, e. g. by analytical ethicists like Hare and Tugendhat, faces the problem of being too all-inclusive. The expressions *characteristic* of morality are not *specific* to morality. They are used in moral contexts, but also in non-moral ones. Thus, "good" does not only mean *morally good* but also *instrumentally good* ("a good knife"), *aesthetic* goodness ("a good performance of the Ninth Symphony") or *prudential* goodness ("a two week's holiday would be good for you"). "Right" can also refer to technical or aesthetic rightness. "Ought", though characteristic of moral context, is also used in the sphere of social convention, of aesthetics and in legal contexts.

A *psychological* approach does not fare better, though for different reasons. Moral *emotions* like *indignation* or *guilt* are specifically moral, but they are specifically "moral" only by their intentional content, i. e. by the positive or negative moral judgements which go into them. In all their other components they are indistinguishable from their non-moral analogues, such as anger, non-moral shame or embarrassment. As far as their phenomenal content, their affective tone and their behavioral expression are concerned, they are identical. Moral emotions, like moral language, do not explain what is particular about morality, they presuppose it.

Can we characterize the specific nature of moral values by their *social functions*? Among the most important social functions of morality are the following:

1. Individual orientation. Moral values have the function of orienting the individual in his everyday behavior by providing a normative frame of reference.

2. Social trust. Moral values set limits to the potential trespasses of others and reduce fear of aggression, deception and violations of self-respect.

3. Easing social co-operation. Moral values make room for long-term social co-operation by creating a climate of mutual trust in which every party is confident that promises and contracts will be respected.

4. Peaceful conflict resolution. Moral values provide possibilities of resolving conflicts of interests and norms in accordance with shared social rules instead of the use of force.

Again, these functions are not the exclusive prerogative of morality. All these roles are taken by other social normative systems as well, such as the law and the norms of etiquette.

We have come to an impasse. Only the *direct* way seems to be open.

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INTERACTIONS BETWEEN META-ETHICS AND NORMATIVE ETHICS

More frequent than too broad explications of the concept of morality have been too narrow explications, mainly because philosophers have insufficiently paid attention to the difference between the question what the features are of morality in general and what are the features of the right, valid or well-founded morality. The meaning of "morality" is identified with a certain type of morality or even with a particular morality held to be the only valid one. By defining morality in a highly specific way, this approach misses out on the plurality and diversity of moral systems. Ironically, the historically most influential moral philosophies committed this *quid pro quo*, among them the competing models of Kant and Schopenhauer.

Kant's moral philosophy combines meta-ethics, normative ethics and a good deal of moralizing within one comprehensive system of ethics. It attempts to answer three different questions by one and the same basic principles:

1. the question about the nature of morality in general,
2. the question which morality is a the right ort rue morality,
3. the question what is the right motivation to act in accordance with this morality.

Impressive as this system is, is not without risks. One such risk is the risk of *undue interference*, the risk that the normative ethics unduly interferes with the meta-ethics and that the concept of morality is defined in a way which fits the normative ethics proposed by the author but none of the various other possible systems of ethics. The concept of morality is defined in such an exclusive way that it is exemplified by the author's system and by nothing else. Other systems are ruled out as competitors by a "definitional stop": The definition is such that other imaginable systems of morality are not as a matter of fact wrong, but *must* be wrong because they are no proper instances of morality. (Remember that the harshest criticism of a system of philosophy is not that it is *wrong* but that it is no philosophy at all, but something else, mysticism, say, or, in Carnap's phrase, *Begriffsdichtung*, conceptual poetry.) Schopenhauer's empirical model, though starting from completely different meta-ethical principles, suffers from a similar weakness. The essence of morality is characterized by certain contents: sympathy, altruism, compassion. This is no less one-sided and partial. A morality need not necessarily be based on altruism. It can be based, instead, on reciprocity or justice.

The trouble with this intermingling of meta-ethics and normative ethics is that the resulting concept of morality and of moral values is an *idealization* rather than a working concept which can be of use outside the narrow sphere of the particular moral philosophy in which it has been developed. It reflects the values, ideals and prejudices of the author rather than the reality of morality and the reality of the

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concept of morality. One consequence is that it is neither adequate to the concept as it is commonly used in everyday speech nor to concept used in the scientific study of morality outside philosophy. Indeed, much of the discussion of the "nature of morality" in meta-ethics exemplifies what Wittgenstein has criticized in relation to logic and the philosophy of language:

"The crystalline purity of logic was [...] not a *result of investigation*: It was a requirement [...] we have got on to slippery ice where there is no friction and so in a certain sense the conditions are ideal, but also, just because of that, we are unable to walk. We want to walk: so we need *friction*. Back to the rough ground!"[2].

Though the Kantian picture of morality is an idealized picture, it has profoundly shaped the concept of morality as it is commonly used in moral philosophy. As an idealization, however, this picture is in many respects inadequate. This reality is more varied and more pluralistic than the Kantian concept of morality allows, as shown by the variety of moralities developed by the great systems of philosophy and religion. Each of these puts its focus on a different set of values: love of one's neighbor, compassion, altruism (Schopenhauer, Utilitarianism), justice (Aristotle, Rawls, Tugendhat), respect, dignity (Kant), salvation, mental health (Buddhism, Christianity). With Schopenhauer and the Utilitarians, retributive und desert principles have no basic role to play, with Schopenhauer "justice" is redefined as the principle of not harming, with John Stuart Mill as a moral minimum of negative duties. In contrast, with Aristotle und Tugendhat, morality necessarily provides rules as to "how to allocate common goods among individuals"[3]. With Kant, again, respect tends to incorporate altruism so that there remains little room for duties of solidarity with beings without a morality of their own, such as non-human animals.

ARE MORAL VALUES NECESSARILY "UNIVERSAL"?

One of the characteristics most frequently attributed to moral values in the Kantian tradition of moral philosophy is their "universality".

What does universality mean? It does not mean that moral values are of a high degree of *generality*. Moral values can be of a high degree of generality, e. g. when they concern human rights and ascribe these rights to each single member of the human species. They then hold for the whole of mankind and not only for the members of some more narrowly defined group. But moral principles can also be highly specific, ascribing rights and duties to the bearers of highly specialized so-

[2] L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, transl. G. E. M. Amscombe, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1963, p. 46 (§ 107).

[3] E. Tugendhat, *Vorlesungen über Ethik*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main 1993, p. 62.

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cial roles. In most moralities, the moral principles applied to physicians, priests, teachers or civil servants significantly from the moral rules applied to the man in the street.

Universality is a much weaker requirement than generality. It demands that moral principles and values, however specific, are universal in either of the following two meanings of the term "universal":

1. They are universal in so far as they claim universal assent.

2. They are universal in the sense that only characteristics of a logically universal kind are taken to be relevant to moral distinctions.

Is the first part of the principle adequate? Is it a necessary characteristic of moral values that they claim universal assent?

This is by no means obvious. Moral values need not be general, but they need not be universal either. They need not be universal in the sense that they claim to be *recognized* by the whole of mankind in past, present and future. Instead, they are perfectly free to refer essentially to certain authorities, traditions and cultural norms and to address only those who recognize these authorities, traditions, and cultural norms as binding for themselves. Obvious cases are *tribal* and *religious* moralities. Tribal moralities commonly claim to be valid only for the members of a particular tribe, religious moralities only for the members of the respective religious community.

The idea of a particularistic morality is sometimes thought to involve a paradox. Famously, David Hume wrote:

"The notion of morals implies some sentiment common to all mankind, which recommends the same object to general approbation, and makes every man, or most men, agree in the same opinion or decision concerning it. [...] He (the moralist) must move some universal principle of the human frame, and touch a string to which all mankind have an accord and symphony"[4].

Tugendhat has gone even gone further in making the claim to universal validity not only a necessary but a sufficient condition of morality: "morality" is meant to signify nothing other than a principle' s property of being well-founded, i. e. being backed by reasons that are convincing enough to subject oneself to them on one's own free will[5]. Being well-founded is taken to mean that there is a reason to recognize a value or norm as valid in the strong sense of accepting it as binding for one's own behavior. This seems to imply that moral judgment imply a claim to

[4] D. Hume, *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, [in:] Idem, *Enquiries Concerning the Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1963, p. 272, (section IX, part 1).

[5] E. Tugendhat, *Drei Vorlesungen über Probleme der Ethik*, [in:] E. Tugendhat, *Probleme der Ethik*, Philipp Reclam jun., Stuttgart 1984, p. 83 f.

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universal validity in the sense of a claim to validity against virtually everyone, independently of place, time and culture.

This condition seems to me to be overly ambitious. It is based on a specifically rationalistic concept of morality and is obviously not met by a particularistic morality that restricts its claims to its own members and refrains from subjecting members of other communities to its own standards. Such a morality meets the Humean condition to appeal to shared values and moral convictions. But the harmony on which it relies need not be strictly universal and to cover the whole of humanity. It is sufficient that it covers all members of a defined group to which the values is personally or ideologically related, such as a tribe, a culture, or a religious creed For Hume's condition of "resonance" to be fulfilled it seems perfectly sufficient that this resonance extends over the members of a certain group. Nor does it seem appropriate to define, as Geoffrey Warnock has done[6], particular moralities such as tribal or religious moralities away by granting them the status of *a morality* instead *morality* properly so-called.

There is another kind of moral value which is recognized even by ethical universalists to claim less than universal assent: *moral ideals*. What distinguishes moral ideals from moral principles is exactly that they are firmly anchored in the personality of an individual but that they do not claim to be valid for any and everyone. Whoever accepts a moral ideal subjects his own behavior (and, perhaps, his desires, motives and thoughts) to higher moral standards than he applies to the behavior and to the motives of others. Moral ideals can be the result of a personal decision, but they can also be experienced as something that imposes itself on the valuer, possibly as an irresistible force, in the manner of Luther's "Hier stehe ich, ich kann nicht andersę.

Admittedly, it is not easy to articulate what it is that makes an ideal a *moral* ideal and that makes someone who acts against his moral ideals feel *morally* ashamed. It seems to have something to do with the *content* of these ideals, and especially with the fact that moral ideals, like typical moral norms, aim at the well-being of others and the realization of justice. Thus, ideals of generosity or ideals of equality are, in general, moral ideals, whereas ideals of beauty or of good manners in general are not. Ego-ideals, as Freud called them, often lack any genuine moral element. The more perfectionist they are, as with artists and scientists, the less room they leave to moral ideals proper.

What shall we say about the second part of the principle of universality? Is universality in the sense of the exclusive relevance of general characteristics a necessary feature of moral values?

[6] G. Warnock, *The Object of Morality*, Methuen, London 1971, p. 148.

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This second kind of universality concerns the justification of moral judgments rather than these judgements themselves. We judge an action to be morally right or wrong on the basis of principles that refer to certain characteristics of the action and of its context. Universality means that these characteristics must be logically universal. They must be expressible by general terms and not only by a proper names or by indexical expressions like "I", "you", "here", "now", "my country", "your family" *etc*. A singular moral judgment like "It is wrong that you told him a lie" or "I have a right to be told the truth" cannot be justified exclusively with recourse to characteristics (of the action or the action context) which can be described only by expressions essentially involving the terms "I" and "you". If I have a right to do *a* or a right to get *b*, this must be based on characteristics which are not so firmly bound to my person that they could not be instantiated by others as well. If *you* are under an obligation to do *a*, "you" in this particular context is only a placeholder, as it were, which in principle can be filled by any other name. Anyone else would be under the same obligation under the same circumstances.

Note that this version of the principle of universality is stronger than another principle with which it is often confused: the principle that situations identical in all morally relevant characteristics must be identically judged. This latter principle is so weak that it is even accepted by non-universalists, for it says no more than that we have to be consistent in our judgements. Given that certain non-moral characteristics of situations are morally relevant, they must be morally relevant in all cases and not only in *this* case. The principle of universality goes beyond mere consistency in restricting the range of characteristics that are allowed to count as relevant. It requires that only those characteristics of situations count as morally relevant that can be expressed by logically universal terms. Differently from the purely formal principle of consistency, the principle of universality is a substantial and forceful meta-ethical principle.

This fact, however, does not speak in favor of the principle. Indeed, the principle seems too substantial to be instantiated by all types of morality. The principle of universality is itself far from universally valid. It holds for the bulk of modern, enlightened and secular moralities. But it does not hold for fundamentalist or quasi-fundamentalist moralities based on the belief in particular holy texts or the belief in particular gods. For these moralities, it does make a difference whether a certain behavior is approved or disapproved by *this* particular god or by *this* particular holy text. Especially in monotheistic religions the expression "God" is mostly interpreted as a proper name referring to one particular god instead of a variety of gods answering certain general descriptions. A principle incorporating the name "God" must therefore be understood as incorporating a proper name referring to *this* god and no other god. Since this reference cannot be eliminated (i. e. is essential) the

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principles justified with reference to God, or the will of God (as manifested in Revelation) necessarily violates the principle of universality.

The model underlying moralities that do not conform to either of the two universality conditions is clearly different from the model underlying moralities which do. In the *universalistic* model morality is pictured as a moral analogue of a *natural law*. Like natural laws moral laws are inherent in the nature of things and do not require a personal law-giver for their existence. Not surprisingly, one of Kant's favorite names for the highest moral principle, the Categorical Imperative, is that of a "moral law". Like the laws of mechanics, the moral law is taken to be of universal form, of universal validity (valid throughout time and space), and of the highest possible generality. The model underlying particularistic moralities, in contrast, is that of a personal relation. The law given by a personal God or laid down in a holy text derives its validity from a more or less individualized relation between the moral subject and the respective authority. Morality is seen not as conformity with a universal impersonal structure, but as abiding by a particular relation of loyalty or awe. The typical motivating force of a non-universalistic morality is not *respect* ("Achtung"), but *love* or *fear*.

ARE MORAL VALUES NECESSARILY "OVERRIDING"?

Another characteristic that is often attributed to moral values as an essential and necessary feature is their "overridingness". Overridingness means that they are necessarily the most important values a person has. The thesis of the overridingness of moral values and norms has a respectable tradition that reaches from the Platonic Socrates to our day. There is a suggestion of this overridingness also in the Kantian tendency to associate moral values with *Unbedingtheit*, unconditionality. The most explicit statement of this position is to be found in the writings of the British philosopher Richard Hare:

"There is a sense of the word »moral« (perhaps the most important one) in which it is characteristic of moral principles that they cannot be overridden [...], but only altered or qualified to admit of some exception. This characteristic of theirs is connected with the fact that moral principles are [...] superior to or more authoritative than any other kind of principle. A man's moral principles, in this sense, are those which, in the end, he accepts to guide his life by, even if this involves breaches of subordinate principles such as those of aesthetics or etiquette"[7].

[7] R. M. Hare, *Freedom and Reason*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1963, p. 168 f.

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This is a very strong thesis. It does not at all seem obvious that the fact that moral principles are "superior to or more authoritative than any other kind of principle" or that moral values necessarily take precedence over non-moral values is, as Hare claims, part of the *meaning* of the concept of morality.

We can distinguish, following Philippa Foot[8], between two respects in which someone gives priority to moral values: in his *behavior*, or in his (silent or open) *judgments*. In relation to behavior the priority thesis would read: "Everyone who sincerely accepts moral values and norms, orients his behavior with priority by these values and norms".

Thus understood, the thesis seems hardly plausible. It would be true only if the moral values and norms someone holds become necessarily realized in his form of life. Such a close connection seems to be unnecessarily strong. It is perfectly thinkable that someone sincerely holds principles without acting in conformity with them, even frequently or universally. His espousal of these principles is not necessarily invalidated by his behavior. Even if they are in fact subordinated to prudential values, say, they do not thereby lose their moral character. A well-known example of such a subordination is the practice of "Kartoffelklau", the stealing of potatoes in the hunger winters in post-Second-World-War-Germany. Though the principle of not stealing was, in this case, subordinated to prudential considerations, it was not completely relativized. It maintained its position in the individual's hierarchy of values even when failing to guide the individual's action due to situational factors. It does not seem contradictory to say of a person that he honestly accepts certain moral values, and even that he lives up to these values, and denying at the same time that he gives priority to these principles in all imaginable situations.

The second interpretation of the priority theses seems prima facie more promising. Thus understood it says: "Everyone who holds moral values or norms, gives priority to these values and norms in his (silent or open) judgments".

The thought underlying this thesis seems highly plausible: Morality is something of importance, Ethics is, as Wittgenstein said in his Lecture on Ethics, the inquiry into what is "really important"[9]. Even if moral values do not manifest themselves in someone's behavior, they should at least manifest themselves in how he thinks about himself and others. In particular, he should be expected to react to behavior of his own that contradicts his principles with feelings like guilt and

[8] P. Foot, *Virtues and Vices and Other Essays in Moral Philosophy*, University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles 1978, p. 181 ff.

[9] L. Wittgenstein, *Vortrag über Ethik und andere kleine Schriften*, transl. & ed. J. Schulte, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main 1989, p. 10.

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shame, at least with regret and self-criticism. How else should we have reason to attribute these values and norms to him?

Here we must not overlook that most people in fact see themselves as moral evaluators, but not only so. Their evaluations of their own and other's behavior takes many forms, depending on context. They act as moral evaluators in some contexts but not in every context. In many – e. g. the economic one – they orient themselves primarily by norms of individual rationality, in others – e. g. the family – by "self-referential altruism"[10], i. e. with partiality for the near and dear. In short: Men live in a number of different normative worlds, a moral, a social, a prudential and an aesthetic world, worlds adapted to their respective contexts.

The picture drawn by representatives of "moral pluralism" such as Christopher Stone seems to be nearer to the facts than that drawn by Kantians like Richard Hare concentrating exclusively on the moral world. Stone has illustrated what he means by *moral pluralism* with the example of the senator who changes his moral orientations according to context like the appropriate clothes: In the morning, during parliamentary debate, he acts as a utilitarian with a view to the common good, in the afternoon, with his family, he acts as a Kantian, in the evening, in the company of his ecologist friends, he engages himself for the protection of ecosystems as an end in itself[11]. As diverse as the social relations we entertain in social reality towards our own and other's families, to colleagues and friends, to compatriots and foreigners, to individuals and corporations, to humans and nonhuman animals, are, according to this conception, the principles by which we orient the rights and duties associated with our various roles.

Stone's role model has bend citizen on the ground that is does not sufficiently distinguish between conventional role obligations and truly moral obligations that transcend convention[12]. Role norms demand that the role bearer convenes to certain expectations, whereas moral norms demand that one does in certain cases *not* convene to these expectations. Moral norms cannot, therefore, be reduced to role norms. This is perfectly true as far as it goes. But this criticism overlooks that Stone understands social roles only as a model of moral norms. The principles of pluralistic morality are not reduced in their moral dignity. The role model is only meant to show how different moralities can coexist in one and the same individual.

[10] J. L. Mackie, *Ethics. Inventing Right and Wrong*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth 1977, p. 84.

[11] C. D. Stone, *Earth and Other Ethics. The Case for Moral Pluralism*, Harper & Row, New York 1987, p. 118.

[12] P. Wenz, *Minimal, Moderate, and Extreme Moral Pluralism*, "Environmental Ethics" 1993, no 15, p. 67 f.

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The more details are added to the picture of the co-existence of a variety of different value systems, the less compelling it seems that moral values have necessarily priority over others. It is true, as far as we take a moral perspective, moral criteria are paramount. From a moral point of view, we necessarily give priority to the moral aspects of a given case. But from this it does not follow that we necessarily give priority to moral considerations overall. Nor does it follow that whenever we evaluate our own or other's behavior under other than moral aspects we get involved in some sort of contradiction. Even if it must be admitted that moral values and norms are associated, as a rule, with particularly strong and sustained emotions, such as guilt or indignation, this does not imply that whoever accepts these values gives them priority. The selfsame prominent role that moral emotions like guilt and indignation play in the decidedly moral person may be played by emotions like envy and anger in the rational egoist who gives priority to considerations of prudence.

So far we have understood the thesis of the "overridingness" of moral values and norms in the sense that the subjective priority given to them (in behavior or judgment) is a *necessary* condition of their moral character. What about the complementary thesis that subjective prioritization is a *sufficient* condition of morality? In this way the priority thesis seems to have been understood by the Australian philosopher D. H. Monro, when he says; "We sometimes use »morality« of any overriding principles, whatever their content (»Satan's morality«, »his morality is purely selfish«)"[13].

This seems to go one step too far. Were we to accept this thesis, we should be compelled to give the name of morality to whatever someone puts in the first place. This would be clearly incompatible with widespread usage, and highly misleading, Even the amoralist whose maxims glorify egoism and arbitrariness would have to be credited with a morality.

A CONSTRUCTIVE PROPOSAL: CHARACTERISATION OF THE "MORAL" BY TYPICAL RATHER THAN SUFFICIENT FEATURES

Philosophical experience shows that many fundamental concepts – concepts that take a central role in the conceptual framework by which we order and structure our world – consistently refuse definition. This holds at least if one expects a definition to be a semantic explanation suited to distinguish the definiendum from related phenomena in clear-cut way. If what has been said so far is sound, the case of morality is a case where the quest for a definition leads to an impasse. It is true,

[13] D. H. Monro, *Empiricism and Ethics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1967, p. 225.

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in most concrete cases we have fairly clear intuitions about whether a given value or norm belongs to the sphere of the moral or to other spheres. But it seems that our theoretical tools are ill-adapted to the task of reconstructing them in a satisfactory way.

There are several methods on offer to solve this dilemma: characterizing the meaning of "moral: by semantic *paradigms* or *prototypes*, by a *family resemblance* or *cluster* structure or by the specification of *typical* features. This last approach seems to me to be the most promising, Typical features are, first, those a thing manifests in normal cases without manifesting them in all cases. They are not strictly necessary conditions. Nor are they sufficient to characterize the thing in question,

In the following I would like to propose, in a preliminary way, a number of features that seem good candidates for such a role. As is to be expected, they correspond to some of the aforementioned theoretical reconstructions. Obviously, they contain some measure of truth, which, however is falsified by overdrawn claims to universality.

There seem to be four interrelated features; *community-relatedness, obligatoriness, subjective importance*, and relatedness to *emotions*.

Not all moral values are community-related. A morality can focus more or less exclusively on the interior relatedness of the individual to itself, or on the relation of the individual towards transcendent beings likes gods and spirits. One of the most well-known systems of morality, the Kantian one, seems to reduce the entirety of moral duties to duties against ourselves (or, rather, the moral laws within us), thus giving absolute priority to the interior relation of the subject to itself. This example, however, is decidedly untypical. Typically, moral values and norm are primarily directed at others, with self-related values and norms playing only a secondary role.

The same seems to hold for the for the element of obligatoriness. This element is neither necessary nor sufficient. A morality can entirely consist of ideals or virtues that imply evaluations of behavior, motives and character traits without containing or directly implying any norms of obligation. The *Nicomachian Ethics*, for example, contains only few moral obligations. But these, again, are untypical cases. Typically, moral judgments are demands directed to others to act or not to act in certain ways. That morality typically contains moral demands is even recognized by descriptivist ethicists who completely abstain from making such demands or who, with Schopenhauer, think that an "imperative ethics" is altogether impossible.

Again, it is typical of morality that those who entertain values and norms of a moral kind think that these values and norms are particularly important, This may well be the rational kernel of thesis of the overridingness of morality. Moral demands are not necessarily, but typically associated with an emphasis and serious-

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ness that is alien to prudential, aesthetic and purely conventional demands. This emphasis aims at making others act in conformity with these demand and not to let them be drawn away from them by personal preferences or by demands of other, less important kinds. This, explains, at least in part, the tendency to objectification inherent in moral norms[14]. The tendency to project moral "states of affairs" into reality in analogy to the way descriptive states of affairs are projected into reality and to suppose that moral values have a *fundamentum in re* similar to that of descriptive judgments would probably be less common if they did not have the subjective importance they have. Whether they have this basis in reality is controversial. However this may be, even the subjective importance that is one of the factors in attributing them an objective status, need not be there in individual cases. As is well known, Oscar Wilde though aesthetic values to be more important than moral values. Kierkegaard put religious values first.

A further typical feature is he existence of a great variety of moral emotions. A good deal of the moral motivation we find in the world comes from self-related moral emotions like conscience, guilt and self-reproach, and shaping and internalizing these emotions is a substantial part of early upbringing. It is no surprise, therefore, to find that some ethicists have declared these emotions to be constitutive and necessary features of morality: "The morality of a community does not only east by of external moral pressure but also by inner sanctions manifesting themselves in indignation and feelings of guilt: This inner sanction constitutes the specific meaning of the moral ought"[15].

But, again, this generalization does not seem to do justice to the reality of morality. It might well be that a condition of the existence of a morality in a society is that some – or at least the leading – people in the society have internalized the morality with sufficient intensity that emotions like guilt and indignation play a significant part in their emotional life. That, however, need not imply that all who follow the morality must have developed these emotions. For a morality to "function" it seems sufficient that there are a few who, on the one hand, are sufficiently convinced of the rightness of their principles to feel these emotions and, on the other, sufficiently influential to serve as supports of a widely accepted morality. The motives of the others can, at the extreme, be wholly non-moral, such as the desire for inclusion, the desire for recognition ort he desire not to lose the trust of potential cooperation partners. The maintenance of the morality then lies primarily in the

[14] Cf. J. L. Mackie, *Ethics. Inventing Right and Wrong*, op. cit., p. 30 ff.; S. Blackburn, *Spreading the Word. Groundings in the Philosophy of Language*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1986, p. 181 ff.
[15] E. Tugendhat, *Dialog in Leticia*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main 1997, p. 14.

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hands of non-moral motives like pride and shame rather than moral motives like merit and guilt.

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Zusammenfassung

Moralische Werte und andere Werte

Was konstituiert Werte und moralische Normen im Unterschied zu anderen Arten der Werte und Normen? Was verursacht, dass sich moralische Werte von politischen, ästhetischen oder personalen unterscheiden? Auf den ersten Blick scheint die Antwort auf diese Fragen einfach zu sein. Doch

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beim näheren Hinsehen tauchen viele Schwierigkeiten auf. Der Begriff der Moral scheint sich der Definition durch die Angabe der notwendigen und ausreichenden Bedingungen zu widersetzen. Indem der Artikel diese Fragen *ex negativo* untersucht, versucht er sich mit einigen „Mythen" der Moral auseinanderzusetzen, die in den analytischen Meta-Ethiken auftreten. Als Schlussfolgerung formuliert er einige Vorschläge, wie man den Begriff der Moral erklären kann, ohne zur Definition *per genus et differentiam* zu greifen.

Schlüsselworte**:** Moral, moralische Werte, Definition, notwendige und ausreichende Bedingungen

Streszczenie

Wartości moralne i inne

Co konstytuuje wartości i normy moralne w odróżnieniu od innych rodzajów wartości oraz norm? Co sprawia, że wartości moralne różnią się od wartości politycznych, estetycznych czy personalnych? Na pierwszy rzut oka, odpowiedź na te pytania wydaje się łatwa. Przy bliższym przyjrzeniu się, pojawia się mnogość trudności. Pojęcie moralności zdaje się przeciwstawiać definicji poprzez podanie warunków koniecznych i dostatecznych. Analizując te kwestie *ex negativo* artykuł próbuje uporać się z kilkoma „mitami" na temat moralności, występującymi w analitycznych meta-etykach, by w konkluzji, sformułować kilka propozycji, które mówią o tym, jak można wyjaśnić pojęcie moralności bez uciekania się do definicji *per genus et differentiam.*

Słowa kluczowe: moralność, wartości moralne, definicja, warunki wystarczające i konieczne

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