A PHILOSOPHICAL EXAMINATION OF THE CONCEPT OF AN

ETHICS OF PERSUASION

by

MICHAEL J. MCCARTHY

B. A., California State College at Hayward, 1965

M. A., Kansas State University, 1967

A MASTER'S THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the
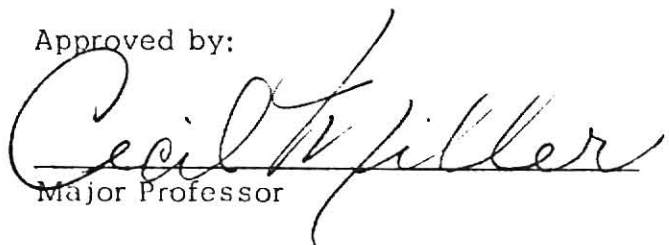
requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Philosophy

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1970

Approved by:

Cecil W. Miller

Major Professor

PART I

THE DIALOGUE

Persons of the Dialogue

Steven, a somewhat elderly philosopher who is a professor at a midwestern university.

Henry, a speech teacher at the same university.

Helen, the philosopher's cook and maid.

Scene: The house of Steven

Steven: I was somewhat flattered, Henry, when you stopped me in the hall-way the other day with your problem.

Henry: I can only thank you, professor, for taking time from your research to visit with me tonight.

Steven: Nonsense. And my name is Steven. I look forward to our little chat. It is not often that one of my colleagues from another field questions me concerning ethics.

Henry: Yes, professor.

Steven: You were mentioning some unfortunate events that took place in your class.

Henry: Well . . . yes. As you know I teach a course in public speaking . . . .

Helen: Here is your tea.

1

Steven: Set it down there, Helen, and please don't disturb us for a while.

Helen: Yes, professor.

Steven: Thank you.

Henry: Thank you, Helen.

Steven: You were saying?

Henry: During the week, this particular week, I have had several students steal the ideas and comments of other authors, which they used in their speeches, without giving those authors credit.

Steven: You mean they were guilty of plagiarism.

Henry: Yes, and moreover, I discovered a few actually "bending the truth," if you know what I mean.

Steven: They lied.

Henry: Right. You must admit that truthfulness is necessary to establish a foundation of trust between people.

Steven: Yes, yes.

Henry: Well, how do you approach such a subject in class without sounding religious? I don't want to sound like a preacher. I follow no orthodox religion.

Steven: Neither do I, but I see your problem.

Henry: When I heard that you taught ethics, the thought occurred to me that a philosophical approach might be the answer.

Steven: I will try to help you. I see the problem.

Henry: Any suggestions would greatly be appreciated.

Steven: Certainly, you are not here for a technique to convince students that they should not tell lies.

Henry: Of course not! What I believe I need is a unifying point, an ethical principle drawn from philosophy through which and by which my students can rationally determine the moral propriety of their conduct with respect to their audience.

Steven: Go on.

Henry: We live in a democratic society. Such a society puts great demands upon the communication process and demands certain standards of it. For example, the Congress collectively determines whether or not we go to war. What if during a critical time we have lobbyists lying to protect private interest groups so that the members of Congress get a wrong picture, then act accordingly? A particular labor relations board could determine the fate of an industry or a household, legislating, for example, how much food would be on the table in six months. If an unscrupulous union leader does not tell the whole story, withholds vital information which would break the strike and clear the way for a fast settlement because of private ambition, then useful arbitration might be delayed indefinitely. Isn't this especially unfortunate when the others engaged in the dialogue are trying to reach the proper solution based on all the facts? Juries decide whether to take a man's life. A witness may not perjure himself on the stand. We vote for politicians by what they say they will do. My students

need to be trained in responsible citizenship and to search after truth. The demands of our society urge me as a speech teacher not only to teach persuasive speaking, but also to teach the reasons why communication should be ethical. I do not want to support my arguments by religion and hoped that philosophy could act as my foundation.

Steven: If I follow you, Henry, you are searching for an ethics of persuasion which you could teach to your students so that they may rationally be able to distinguish between right and wrong in specific cases.

Henry: That's it! Yes, I want to also show how the rightness and wrongness of these acts are derived from the ethical basis of democratic society.

Steven: I'm not sure that I understand what you mean by "the ethical basis."

Henry: There are certain attitudes, ground rules which we adhere to in a democracy.

Steven: Give me some examples. I am not sure that attitudes and ground rules are the same things.

Henry: I am thinking of freedom of speech and due process of law.

Steven: If you were to work very hard, I imagine that you might arrive at a skeletal "ethical basis," but it still wouldn't be the ethical basis. You see, Henry, some of the attitudes of those in a democracy are opposed to the kind of democracy you and I want. Attitudes and ground rules are not the same things. Freedom of speech and due process are guaranteed by "rules" which are codified in the laws of

the land. An attitude is something quite different. For example, a person might have a hostile attitude toward our constitutional government. Perhaps, he is a communist and displays this hostile attitude by the angry statements which he utters, but the ground rule of freedom of speech permits him to do so unmolested. I believe that all this is part of a democracy. Again, what I believe you are searching for is a specialized ethics of persuasion. Have you done any research?

Henry: Yes, I was reading a book in which someone stated, "Morality is the attempt to discover the nature of the good life, and then to live by it."[1] Now, I could not agree more wholeheartedly with him. I would like to help rebuild our society by discovering the nature of this good life. I believe that this good life can be created by people such as myself who want to teach principles based on decency, justice, and life. J. C. Flugel agrees with my aim, but he says that the task depends on an appeal to the moral impulses of man,[2] whereas I say that there also must be the philosophical, the rational approach to have anything which is lasting.

Steven: A favorite philosopher of mine agrees with you in a way. His name is R. M. Hare. Have you ever heard of him?

---

[1]H. Titus and M. Keeton, Ethics for Today (New York: American Book Co., 1966), p. 19.

[2]J. C. Flugel, Man, Morals and Society (New York: Viking Press, 1961), p. 9.

Henry: No.

Steven: I don't believe that Hare would be quite as ambitious as yourself, but *he would agree that philosophers should study moral disputes* and that the knowledge gained from this study should be used in the particular interests of our society. He tells us in Freedom and Reason[3] that the individual who will not commit himself to moral discussion in our type of society is compelled to abjure the protection of morality for his own interests. In other words, Hare would agree with your intention of studying the morality of society, and that it should be done in a philosophical way; but he is also saying something even more basic: men must talk about moral matters that affect them.

Henry: I must sound foolish.

Steven: No, no. You are doing fine. After all, I did ask you to bring some notes with you. Please continue.

Henry: Here's another passage. May I read it to you? (Steven nods. Henry reads the quotation at length.)

> We have clearly pointed out that persuasion needs ethics; ethics also needs the service of persuasion. In order for the kind of interchange to occur which creates appreciative understanding as we have defined it, certain physical, biological, psychological, social, and historical conditions must be met. At the simplest physical level, air must be free of smog and

---

[3]R. M. Hare, Freedom and Reason (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 9.

radioactivity . . . . Plainly, the art of persuasion is indispensable to the moral law, for without persuasion the air will not be kept pure nor the slums cleared nor programs for the abolition of disease discussed and adopted.[4]

What do you think?

Steven: Let me first ask you what _you_ think.

Henry: Well, I agree with them. This is exactly what I have been saying, what your friend Hare said.

Steven: There is a slight difference. What you have been propounding is a specialized ethics of speech, albeit in this case for rhetoric. The authors, I believe, are referring to ethics in general in this context. I agree with them; heaven knows we need persuasive speakers to move us to overcome some of the "evils" of our society such as air pollution and radioactivity, but this does not seem to have any connection with the "evil" of lying which is what I believe you are interested in.

Henry: But, Professor, these men are interested in changing society by combining ethics and persuasion.

Steven: And so are you, but you are interested in the ethics _of_ persuasion, and not simply the combination of them. What's wrong?

Henry: I guess that Schrier was right. His thesis is contained in the following paragraph which I have here:

---

[4] Henry N. Wieman and Otis M. Walter, "Toward an Analysis of Ethics for Rhetoric," _Ethics and Persuasion_ (Richard L. Johannesen, Editor. New York: Random House, 1967), pp. 137-138.

> Persuasive ethics is general ethics. There is no separate standard of ethics for public speakers; each case of persuasion must be judged in the light of the particular instance, and according to the prevailing standard of ethics of the community or of the individual.[5]

Steven: Although I'm not in the field of speech, I am familiar with Professor Schrier's work. A difficulty I have with him is that he never explains how he proposes to discover the prevailing standard of ethics within a given community. For the most part, I agree with him; but we will talk about that later. Let me remind you now as I would remind Professor Schrier if he were with us; that if by a "standard," he means a systematic doctrine or theory which links together the data obtained through study, I believe that he is talking nonsense. Of course, he might make sense in another way . . . . Another matter! How is he using the word "persuasion"? When I use the word I could mean that I have talked someone into something which he would not have done otherwise. For example, I persuade a small child to give me the ball which he had intended to keep. Is _that_ what he means by persuasion?

Henry: Why yes! But he also means more. When a lawyer is presenting a case before a magistrate, he is not necessarily changing his mind; but he still would be considered as engaged in persuasion. "The

---

[5]William Schrier, "The Ethics of Persuasion," Quarterly Journal of Speech, 16:4, pp. 476-486.

object of a speech to persuade is to influence belief or action."[6]
Let us leave it at that. I realize that that is not a very good defini-
tion, but it shall suit our purpose. It will cover most of the cases
that will arise, but could you explain yourself further concerning
Schrier's standard?

Steven: No, not right now. Please be patient with me. I would first like
to see or hear what you have uncovered for yourself.

Henry: I am afraid it may be more nonsense.

Steven: You are doing fine. Please continue. I will explain my last remarks
later. O. K. ?

Henry: O. K. ! You realize that all I am trying to do is discover some
rational principles to teach that will strengthen my students' partici-
pation in our democracy in a meaningful way.

Steven: And you should be commended in your desire! But you yourself have
limited your quest to an ethics of persuasion with no concern for
general ethics. Do you follow me?

Henry: That is what I really want, isn't it?

Steven: Of course, otherwise we would have to terminate our conversation
right now simply becuase the latter task would be too monumental.

Henry: Shall we start over?

---

[6]Alan H. Monroe and Douglas Ehninger, The Principles of Speech
(Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1964), p. 42. (5th Edition).

Steven: Rather let us continue. You are doing remarkably well.

Henry: Thank you, Steven. This is my first attempt at such a thing. (Gaining in confidence.) It is my belief that a teacher's job is to make understanding easier for students.

Steven: Agreed.

Henry: (Smiling.) He has to have the ability to take complicated information and to simplify it so that the student immediately grasps the essential relationships. Often when I was a student I sat in class after class where a professor, in order to create the impression that we were learning something complicated, mangled a simple concept or description of a process with jargon or "models" of explanation which only served to confuse us.

Steven: I know what you mean.

Henry: It is the teacher's job to reveal the simple thread binding the fabric together.

Steven: Can you be more specific? Cite an example.

Henry: "Because persuasion is, essentially, rearranging the lives of other people, we believe that the persuader's sincere effort to abide by some social utility principles is the first and perhaps most important step toward being ethical."[7] (Henry hands the card he just read to Steven.)

---

[7]Winston Brembeck and William S. Howell, "The Ethics of Persuasion," Ethics and Persuasion (Richard L. Johannesen, Editor, New York: Random House, 1967), p. 17.

I think *Brembeck* and Howell have hit upon something. Don't you see?

Steven: Hmmm. You are indeed fast becoming a philosopher.

Henry: (Elated.) Thank you, Professor.

Steven: Would you illustrate how this quotation bears out the points you were just making?

Henry: Gladly! Social utility is the essence, the thread, the guiding principle by which we should judge the moral appropriateness of what we say. It tells the student <u>why</u> he should communicate the truth. There is no jargon involved. Social utility is straight-forward and understandable.

Steven: The more I listen to you, the more you amaze me. (Henry smiles.) Can you show me how your principle would work in a specific instance?

Henry: Even David Hume agrees with me because he says whatever is valuable is naturally classified under the useful. [8]

Steven: A great philosopher! But could you cite a specific instance?

Henry: A politician knows, for example, that if he links his opponent to the John Birch Society, his adversary will lose. But his opponent doesn't belong to the John Birch Society. Of course, the *politician cannot* overtly say that the man belongs to the John Birch Society so he asks

---

[8]David Hume, "An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals," <u>Hume Selections</u> (Charles W. Hendel, Editor. New York: Charles Scribner's, 1927), p. 225.

questions in a TV debate which definitely give the impression to the audience that the man is a member no matter how the man defends himself. If challenged, the politician can reply, "I didn't say that he belonged to the Society." The damage is done. The politician has planted enough doubt in the voters to win the election. This case is not entirely removed from reality. A couple of years ago, I was the county chairman for an ex-governor of a state who was running for the United States Senate. My candidate's state coordinator who managed his campaign statewide said of our opponent, "If I could do it, I would have someone planted at his next press conference to ask him whether or not he belonged to the John Birch Society."* This would have had a damaging effect on this particular candidate (opposing) because it was well known within the party that he did receive funds from the Society. Our opponent would have undoubtedly lost many of the moderates who were then supporting him and were ignorant of this information. The state coordinator decided that it would not be right to do such a thing. Besides, it would probably hurt the party in the general election.

Steven: An interesting example, but how . . . ?

Henry: I am coming to that. Suppose the politician reflected before he started asking questions. He might have reasoned in this way.

---

*The description of this incident is based upon the writer's personal experience.

"If I make such insinuations, it would be unethical; because if every-

one would do it, then society would be in chaos. Moreover, the very

same tactic could be used against me."

Steven: It is difficult to determine whether you are employing the utilitarian

principle or the Kantian principle of universality. Kant's principle

tells us always to act so that we will the _determining_ principle of

our action to become universal law (an _a priori_ standard and not the

product of experience.) I don't think you mean this. You quoted

Brembeck and Howell who used the words "social utility principles."

What I believe that you and the authors just cited are trying to say

is that to justify an act on moral grounds, one must show that the

act promotes good or has desirable consequences. In other words,

the act is "right" if and only if it promotes desirable consequences.

According to utilitarianism the ultimate good is best expressed by

the formula "The greatest happiness of the greatest number." Thus,

to say that an act (truth telling, for example,) is right, one must say

that it _does in fact_ promote the greatest happiness. Abraham Edel

states:

> The idea of selecting means wisely to produce maximum net
> gain comes to the fore, embracing both the meeting of maximum
> demand and the minimization of cost or loss. Such as ideal of
> rationality, brimming with the spirit of accountancy, was found
> in the Utilitarianism of Bentham, with its outlines of a felicific
> calculus.[9]

---

[9]Abraham Edel, _Ethical Judgment_ (London: Collier-MacMillian Ltd,
1964), p. 62.

This seems to be the accounting method behind your last statements,

Henry. Speaking of utilitarianism, Murphy says,

> . . . it is a doctrine that sets up one obligation--to maximize 'happiness' no matter whose, or of what sort, or how attained if only in the total felicific balance it be 'more'--as unconditionally binding, and treats all others as empirical maxims concerning ways in which this 'more' is normally achieved.[10]

Yet, there are various interpretations of this doctrine. As Reagan

clearly points out, there are two kinds of utilitarianisms: act and

rule. He says and I quote: "The fundamental thesis of act-utili-

tarianism is that actions are to be evaluated by their consequences,

that is, by producing a greater balance of good over evil in the

world."[11] Reagan goes on to say that the evaluation is made by the

particular person viewing his particular action at a particular time.

In other words, there is no concern for classes of actions and agents.

A person who believed that another individual was "evil" might

justifiably under his doctrine murder the individual because at this

particular time his death might have "good" consequences for society

as a whole. For example, this individual might have been a loan

shark in some poverty area, or the like. It is the thesis of rule-

utilitarians also that actions be evaluated by their consequences,

---

[10]Arthur E. Murphy, The Theory of Practical Reason (La Salle: Open Court, 1965), p. 203.

[11]Charles E. Reagan, Ethics for Scientific Researchers (Manhattan: Kansas State University), p. 32.

but it is claimed by this group that actions and agents should be first lumped into classes.[12] For example, lying is in general wrong, they say, because when we analyze numerous cases lying appears to be harmful in more cases than not. Finally, judging from your previous statements concerning the particularity of persuasions, it seems to be that you are holding a kind of act-utilitarianism although the statement in itself sounds Kantian. Nevertheless, let us return to the core of your thought. I am certain that your utilitarianism will return later in our conversation. Let me try to summarize what you have said so far. First, you have tried to show that there is a need in our society for people to abide by ethical principles in their persuasions. (Henry nods.) Secondly, after some discussion you have advanced the idea that a special ethic for persuasion be adopted. (Henry nods.) And lastly, you suggest that this ethic for persuasion be founded on a social utility principle which is really a kind of act-utilitarianism. I believe that we can rule Kant out. (Henry nods.)

Henry: That pretty well sums it up; although both utilitarianisms appear to be good, I do, as you said, favor act-utilitarianism because of its particularity.

Steven: Do you have a full realization of what an ethical theory is?

Henry: Oh! I believe I do, but perhaps we each mean something different

---

[12]_Ibid._, p. 34 ff.

when we speak of an ethical theory?

Steven: Perhaps. Here read this--the section entitled The Purpose of an

Ethical Theory. Reagan is lucid in his description of how a tradi-

tional ethical theory should work:

> The purpose of an ethical theory is to establish a coherent
> interrelationship among the elements of the theory. The goal
> here is to ultimately sic justify . . . to show reasonable . . .
> particular moral judgments. Ethical theory, like any other theory,
> is an attempt to coherently, consistently, and as far as possible,
> completely sic show relationships among moral judgments,
> moral rules, and moral principles such that the moral rules
> serve to justify the moral judgments and the moral principles
> serve to justify the moral rules. Thus, in a well developed
> theory, we can show moral judgments to be correct and reason-
> able in the light of the theory's rules and principles.[13]

Is that what you think of as an ethical theory?

Henry: Yes. Of course, I do not have a well developed theory, just the

basic principle from which other principles and rules can be deduced,

which I believe would make sense under act-utilitarianism.

Steven: Now, I think I understand your position, but would you mind if I

asked some more questions?

Henry: No. Go ahead.

Steven: Do you have anything to say before I begin: that is, is there any-

thing else which you have looked into which should be brought out

at this time?

Henry: (Hesitant.) There is something else, but I don't know how valuable

---

[13]Ibid.

it is. Karl Wallace is, of course, a well known authority in the

field of speech, which emphasizes all the more the significance

of his words that follow:

> It is these four 'moralities'; the duty of search and inquiry,
> allegiance to accuracy, fairness, and justice in the selection
> and treatment of ideas and arguments, the willingness to sub-
> mit private motivations to public scrutiny, and the toleration
> of dissent--which provide the ethic of communication in a free
> society. [14]

Steven: How does this fit in?

Henry: Well, all four "moralities"--he really means obligations--might be

deductions from the principle of social utility. For example, we must

allow people to dissent in our democracy--otherwise we lose our

freedom.

Steven: Is that all?

Henry: The author of that statement does not clarify what he means by

"fairness." He cites the example of indebtedness stating that a

man who has put out great effort to make information available or

has expressed an idea with effectiveness has the right to be recog-

nized. [15]

Steven: Oh, I see. You are going to make sure that your ethics covers the

---

[14]Karl R. Wallace, "An Ethical Basis of Communication," Ethics and
Persuasion (Richard L. Johannsen, Editor. New York: Random House, 1967),
p. 55.

[15]Donald C. Bryant and Karl R. Wallace, Oral Communication (New
York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc. 3rd ed., 1954), p. 61.

problem you had with your students' plagiarism. I did not see the need of clarifying what the author meant by "fairness" though.

Henry: I guess you are right.

Steven: Anything else?

Henry: That's about it, Professor . . . I mean Steven. It seems to me that with your help I could develop a series of convincing lectures on the ethics of persuasion with the social utility principle at its base.

Steven: Let us first examine whether or not you grasp the idea of a theory of ethics. Alright? How are you going to demonstrate to your class that plagiarism is wrong?

Henry: By illustrating to the students that that particular rule follows logically from an accepted principle.

Steven: Let us say that you have developed a full blown system of ethics. How are you going to teach that system of ethics? Isn't that part of what you are interested in?

Henry: Precisely. Well, based upon the consequences of experience and the axioms of my ethical system of perscriptive statements.

Steven: I am sorry. I don't follow you.

Henry: My primary lectures would be of an informative nature. I would cite countless cases where particular acts such as lying worked against the common good. The language which I would use would be, of course, descriptive. Then, I would develop my ethics of persuasion, the deductions from which would be in the form of

prescriptions, necessarily following from my descriptions.

Steven: Could you give an example?

Henry: After showing that lying has had bad consequences, I would conclude that students should not plagiarize, a form of lying. The "should" immediately tells the student that this is an ethical conclusion, a prescription, not a description. By using such words as "ought" and "should" in sentences I will avoid any ambiguity.

Steven: I fail to see where there is any danger of ambiguity. You are handling many things all at once. I am going to have to show you before long that the act-utilitarianism which you are expounding is wrong. But now, you seem to be making much of the "is-ought" distinction. What about the sentence, "Lying is wrong?"

Henry: That is a good example. Most anyone would say that lying is wrong, but also once that is said, the "should not lie" necessarily follows. What I am looking for is precision in the use of language. Once we objectively describe the wrongdoing, the prescriptions necessarily follow.

Steven: I do not agree with you about your alleged precision in the use of language; it doesn't seem to be an issue, at least in my mind. Nevertheless, what about the statements "Los Angeles is in California" and "Lying is wrong"? Are they descriptive or prescriptive?

Henry: They are the same kind, both informative. Don't you see?

Steven: What about the sentences, "One ought to pay one's debts" and

"Girls ought not wear tight skirts"?

Henry: They are both prescriptions.

Steven: Then you see, as Dorothy Mitchell points out, descriptive state-
ments as well as prescriptive can be utilized where the speaker is
making either a moral point or a non-moral one. You agreed that
"Los Angeles is in California" and "Lying is wrong" were both
descriptive statements. Likewise, "One ought to pay one's debts"
and "Girls ought not wear tight skirts" were prescriptions. Clearly,
the examples bear out Mitchell's statement. You might be thinking
to yourself that "Girls ought not wear tight skirts" could have a
moral point. For example, "Girls ought not wear tight skirts around
the prison farm because it causes psychological pain to the inmates."
I will concede that statement as having a moral point, if you concede
"Girls ought not to wear tight skirts because it is not becoming" has
no moral point. All of which brings us back to the truth of Mitchell's
statement. She tells us in an article in the Philosophical Quarterly[16]
that we must not confuse the non-moral distinction with certain
sentence forms. In fact, as we just illustrated, the classification
of sentences into "is"-types and "ought"-types cuts right through
both moral and non-moral discourse. Murphy in the Theory of Practical
Reason points out that there is no necessary connection between how

---

[16]Dorothy Mitchell, "Some Comments on Ethical Distinctions,"
Philosophical Quarterly 13:38-47, p. 41.

something is and what ought to be done about it.[17] Earlier you said, "Once we objectively describe the wrongdoing, the prescriptions necessarily follow." You seem to recognize that there is no necessary connection between what is and what ought to be done because you distinguish between prescriptions and descriptions. Therefore, you *seem to* recognize this and have summoned the utilitarian principle as the link in the form of the prescription: always act to promote the greatest good. Is it true that you see moral reasoning take this form:

> Always act to promote the greatest good
> __X__ will promote the greatest good in these circumstances
> Do X in these circumstances.

Henry: Yes, following the lead of Brembeck and Howell.

Steven: Murphy claims that a link, whether logical or psychological, is not necessary, rather the facts have to be understood as morally relevant to the circumstances, and this kind of understanding is available only to one with proper moral training, which concept I will explain later. In Murphy's chapter "The 'Why' of Practical Understanding" the whole aim of his inquiry is to make clear a sense of practical understanding, the knowledge that comes to us when we investigate "What should be done?" For example, after examining the facts which would be practically relevant to an inquiry, an inquirer then

---

[17]Murphy, op. cit., p. 28.

decides on a course of action which he believes to be sound. The following example will demonstrate how facts become relevant through practical reason. X meets Y on the street and tells Y that he just delivered a basket of food to his sister, whose husband has been ill in the hospital for weeks. Y asks, "Isn't she cared for sufficiently?" X replies, "Yes, but she is still my sister," whereas Y replies, "I don't see why that's any reason for you to go to all that trouble." X stated a series of facts: (a) that X had just delivered food to his sister, (b) that X's sister's husband was in the hospital, and (c) X's sister was sufficiently cared for. Y appeared to see the relevance of caring for someone who was in need. In other words, he appeared to understand the moral relevance of giving food to someone who was hungry. Yet, he seemingly could not see the moral relevance of doing something for someone when he is sufficiently cared for. What he does not see is the special relationship here. In other words, to say "she is my sister" is to mean something more than "she simply is my female sibling." The description "she is my sister" carries a moral weight, and to understand this familiar relationship is to understand it as a moral relationship. The point is this: to understand the relation between certain facts and a certain decision, one has to see the moral relevance of those facts. Murphy says,

> This point is something to be done because it is in some way worth doing by considerations of worth that anyone accepts not

as information, rationally verified by either logic, science, or ontology, but as sufficient ground for action.[18]

Murphy continues,

A 'Reason' limited in its theoretical purity to the 'facts' or super-facts as thus 'rationally' established would of necessity be practically inconclusive, its pertinence to practice would remain a problem that would not in this way be rationally *solved*. Hence, such a reason could be practical only extrinsically, as hitched to something outside itself that could supply the link still missing between 'is' and 'ought,' or what is the case and what, if anything should be done about it.[19]

It is worthy of note that Hume tried to supply the missing link with feeling, as you tried with the utilitarian principle. Harold Hoffding says:

The psychological examination of the relation of feeling to reason is of direct importance for Hume's ethic, since it contains the answer to the question whether morality rests on reason or on feeling. Reason ascertains relations of matters of fact only. But moral judgment does not arise until a feeling is excited through the idea of an action, after all the relations and facts depending on this action have been brought out. It is only because our feeling has been set into motion that we call anything good or evil.[20]

Murphy is not only answering people such as yourself who want to provide a "magical language link"--a philosophical principle (is-ought)--but also philosophers such as Hume who go about it in a different manner. You must admit, as Murphy shows, there is a

---

[18]Ibid., p. 28.

[19]Ibid.

[20]Harold Hoffding, A Modern History of Philosophy, Vol. I (New York: Dover Publications, 1955), p. 435.

great difference between what is and what should be done. So you

must recognize this as a mistake before we proceed any further.

Prescriptions do not logically follow from descriptions. Do you

agree?

Henry: I see. I still am somewhat confused, but let's move on and pos-

sibly return to this point later. If you recall, Professor, I am

interested in developing an ethic for persuasion in a democracy.

Steven: Are you then concerned with the democracy in this country or with

all democracies throughout the world?

Henry: Primarily with our democracy, but with other world democracies in

so far as the principles which I would expound are pertinent to them

in that they themselves would look to the common good within their

own framework. What I mean is this: a social utility ethic can be

developed for any democracy. I am interested in the good ole' U. S.

Now, what I say should have general application to other countries

similar to ours.

Steven: In determining moral judgments, i. e. the truth and falsity of moral

judgments, you are asking your students to reflect whether or not

what they are doing is right or wrong in the light of usefulness to

a community. Isn't that correct? And since you are following act-

utilitarianism, each decision by each person must be made separately

based upon how he thinks the consequences of his act will affect

the common good.

Henry: Correct! He must consider first his immediate community-town,

city, state, etc., then the larger community.

Steven: It seems to me that the boundaries of your community are not so

clearly drawn. Is it not true that out country is so involved in the

problems of the whole world that an ethical judgment considering

the good ole' U. S., without consideration of the good of the world

community, might have the opposite effect than the one intended?

Henry: I suppose that is possible.

Steven: You say that other democracies could use your ethics. Then shouldn't

you consider the "Free World" as the community to which you apply

your principles?

Henry: That would make sense.

Steven: But, Henry, many of the countries of the so-called "Free World" are

not free. They are run by dictators. (Henry lowers his eyes.) I'm

not trying to embarrass you in any way, but it does appear that your

notion of community is vague, to say the least. Even if you say

that your ethics is for a democracy, what does that mean? Are you

interested in the type of democracy here or in the U. S. S. R. ? You

see the problems? Where do we draw the boundaries when we con-

sider social utility?

Henry: You are right, Professor, I can see that.

Steven: Moreover, the word "useful" is stretched to cover numerous cases

where it does not seem to apply.

Henry: Could you give me some examples in the area of persuasion?

Steven: Take one of your four "moralities." The "toleration of dissent" is a

principle you mentioned. We,of course, are referring to verbal

dissent? (Henry nods.) Do you seriously want to make this a

principle of your ethic? Verbal dissent in a democracy is essential--

freedom of speech and all, but in no way is it or can it be considered

always useful. In fact, most of the time it is a hinderance to useful

productivity. Labor-management debates lower the G. N. P. Families

go hungry. Dissent is time-consuming. Factories are closed. The

trains remain in their yards. As a direct result of verbal dissent,

inflation spirals. The word "useful" doesn't really fit here. I be-

lieve that it is "good" and "needed" in a democracy, but as every-

one knows democracies can be notoriously inefficient, which may be

all right. "Useful" simply isn't the right word. The word "useful"

is understood as something beneficial, or something promoting the

common good (utilitarianism). Yet, at times dissent can be contrary

to the common good. In utilitarianism something is justified by the

actual consequences. If you continue to use the word "useful" in

the utilitarian sense, a problem arises. A particular act of dissent

might be useful on particular occasions and not on others, which

could mean that you are sliding between act and rule utilitarianism.

Nevertheless, you cannot argue that verbal dissent is always useful.

If you do, your use of the word "useful" becomes puzzling indeed;

maybe even nonsensical. Take the example of a soldier taken prisoner by the enemy who lied to the enemy to save his comrades. "Lying" is the wrong word here. The enemy would well say that the soldier lied, which would imply wrongdoing; but the soldier's comrades would refuse to call him a liar, would not admit that he had done wrong, rather they would say he had done what he ought to have done in misleading the enemy. There is nothing wrong in <u>that.</u> Take another example! When a soldier kills an enemy, his side doesn't claim that he "murdered" the enemy because such a statement would imply wrongdoing, and the soldier has done nothing wrong. A soldier is not held morally accountable for slaying an enemy on the field of combat. Do you see what I mean?

Henry: Yes.

Steven: Thus, we have observed that it is difficult to limit the size of the group to which you want to apply this social utility ethic, and that when we apply the word "useful" to particular cases, the word often does not fit within the context, we no longer understand the word applied in that way.

Henry: Yes, I can see that.

Steven: The next question is whether or not it is possible or advantageous to have a specialized ethic for persuasion. Wouldn't you agree?

Henry: Certainly.

Steven: Isn't that what you really want to know? Didn't you jump on this

social utility idea as a kind of cure-all solution?

Henry: Yes, Steven. I think you are right.

Steven: All right, then. Let us see if we can work something out. Oh, if I seem to belabor some points, forgive me. It was William Blake who said, "You never know what is enough unless you know what is more than enough."[21] (Henry smiles.)

Henry: Before you continue, Professor, what if we meant by social utility something like "the greatest good for the greatest number" as you mentioned before?

Steven: Still the same two basic problems remain: (A) What number of people you are thinking of? and (B) The notion of the greatest good becomes vague and at times puzzling just as the word "useful" does when applied in certain contexts. Moreover, the idea of "the greatest good for the greatest number" could prove to be in open contradiction to the toleration of dissent. The logical consequence of such a principle might turn out to be the tyranny of the majority. If, on the other hand, you claim that an individual making a choice should allow dissent because it ultimately allows or provides for the greatest good for the greatest number, I might be able to agree with you. However, as Murphy states concerning practical reasoning,

---

[21]William Blake, "Proverbs of Hell," Essays in Philosophy (Houston Peterson, Editor. New York: Pocket Books, 1959), p. 109.

I would judge from the practical or specific action and the reasons supporting it; I would not allow the limitation of verbal dissent in such a manner that the minority voice would be silenced, i.e., for the most part. You see, your axiom is not very specific. It is open to varied interpretations. Besides, Henry, this social utility ethic, which is act-utilitarianism, could be used seemingly to justify the most horrible crimes. Act-utilitarianism maintains that actions are to be evaluated by their consequences, that is, by the ratio of good to evil produced. Now, Hitler would have been quite justified under this axiom if it could be shown that the disposal of six million Jews did in fact produce the greatest good for his nation. At least, that is the way he viewed the consequences. Robert Penn Warren in his novel All the Kings Men introduces us to a character who does the most atrocious things under the guise of doing good for the common folk. Willie Stark, the character, felt that he could lie, cheat, and blackmail as long as he had the people's interest at heart. That is the kind of behavior your act-utilitarianism would justify. Do you see that?

Henry: Yes.

Steven: Shall we try to develop an ethics for you?

Henry: That sounds interesting.

Steven: Are there any ethical rules which you already teach in your course?

Henry: I have to confess it. I have been using the "Four Moralities."

Steven: Is it common for ethics or ethical rules to be mentioned in speech courses?

Henry: Yes.

Steven: Why?

Henry: Because the end of communication has been of late viewed from the stance of controlling one's environment. As Miller points out we must ask to what ends people will control us with their persuasions. He states that speech communication involves tools we all use for manipulating other people. The skill in the spoken word allows us to maximize rewards and to minimize punishment.[22] I believe that this claim brings us into the middle of ethics.

Steven: It certainly does. Hence, if I may summarize, most speech teachers are concerned with what ends their fellows are persuaded to.

Henry: I would say so.

Steven: Is there anything else?

Henry: We have what has been called "ethical proof" in speech. Cathcart in his book Post Communication devotes a whole section to it. He admits that if a speaker manifests good reasoning and evidence, one of the primary goals of speech-making has been attained. Yet, he also claims that the very situations that produce speech-making-- doubt, controversy, contingencies--make it impossible to produce

---

[22]Gerald R. Miller, Speech Communication – A Behavioral Approach (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966), p. 81.

agreement by reasoning and evidence alone. Bearing this in mind,

the audience depends on the trustworthiness of the speaker. In

short, what Cathcart's speaker must do is not only produce the

impression that he is knowledgeable, good, etc., on the particular

speech-making occasion, but also maintain his reputation as a

good man before the speech-making occasion arises. Both of these

elements are contained in the idea of ethical proof.[23] This is a

fairly clear and modern interpretation of Aristotle.[24] To repeat,

there are two notions of ethical proof: (A) what the person says

and does to give the impression at the particular time he is speaking

that he is good, trustworthy, knowledgeable, etc., and (B) what his

reputation is before he speaks, whether it is of a good, trustworthy,

or knowledgeable fellow.

Steven: I'm familiar with its substance. Isn't "proof" used in a rather peculiar

way? The speaker is not actually proving anything. Isn't he speaking

as a man of virtue, or a competent scientist, or a close friend so that

the audience will trust him?

Henry: He in a way is proving what he is saying by his past actions.

Steven: On the contrary, it takes facts and logic to prove an assertion. There

------

[23]Robert S. Cathcart, Post-Communication (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966), p. 48.

[24]For further clarification see Aristotle's "Rhetoric," in The Rhetoric and Poetics of Aristotle, ed. Friedrich Solnsen (New York: Random House, 1954), 1356a, 1-4; 1356b, 10-15; 1356b, 27-35; 1418a, 1418b, 35-5.

is an old expression that "he proved himself," i.e., "he became a success," but that is not what you mean by "ethical proof" is it?

Henry: In a way, the speaker has proven himself in the past to be a good teacher, scientist, etc., so that we can trust what he says.

Steven: All right. That makes sense, but the words "ethical proof" are very misleading. Why don't you see what you can do about correcting that? So, except for this notion of "ethical proof" and a few rules such as "be fair in the treatment of materials," or "tolerate dissent," there is no full blown ethics for persuasion. Am I correct?

Henry: Just bits and pieces, but no systematic ethics as I indicated earlier.

Steven: So you did. I forgot. Well, to make a long story short, you don't need this ethics of persuasion which you are striving for. All you need is a good deal of common sense, the realization of what you are saying, and patience. This is not to say that moral problems should not be discussed and analyzed in making a decision as to the rightness or wrongness of actions, but I shall elaborate on the method of doing that a bit later.

Henry: Then Schrier was right. Persuasion ethics is a part of general ethics.[25]

Steven: On the contrary, there is no need, no use for a systematic ethics of persuasion. To be even more blunt, it would be useless and,

---

[25]Schrier, op. cit., p. 476.

paradoxically, the antithesis of your social utility ethics. Schrier was correct in stating that each persuasion must be judged in the light of the particular instance. William James made a similar point when he stated that we all determine the content of ethical philosophy. He said that all contribute in so far as we determine the Race's moral life. "In other words, there can be no final truth in ethics any more than in physics, until the last man has had his experience and said his say."[26] You were on the right track earlier when you mentioned common attitudes and beliefs. In both cases just mentioned the notion of traditional ethical philosophy will not serve our need. We must realize that moral judgments are made about specific situations, and at the same time the attitudes, customs, and beliefs of those who live with us provide part of the background against which we ascribe "right" or "wrong" to an act. Still, in all this process no systematic ethical theory need be assumed. Consequently, you don't need a specialized ethics of persuasion. You are probably asking yourself, "Why not?" I shall return to Murphy to answer that question. There is no need for a systematic ethical theory because as such it does not help in solving moral problems; it confuses and bewilders the sincere moral agent as act-utilitarianism confused you. Murphy distinguishes between moral training and

---

[26]William James, "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life," Essays in Pragmatism (Alburey Castell, Editor. New York: Hafner, 1948), p. 65.

moral reasoning. When we train our children morally we teach them the "right" ways of acting. For example, we scold them if they lie to us, and so on. As Murphy asks:

> What, then, is moral training? Before the use of justifying reasons can be taught, there must be such a use. The 'game' in which they have a normative cogency must be played. A society that offers effective training in such use must practice what it preaches, for it is in this practice that preaching makes sense - and if the training is to be moral, this practice must be that of a community in which a going concern for right action is an effective factor in a way of life in which the learner is called upon responsibly to share.[27]

Moral training is not only admonishing children as to the right way, but living in such a way as to teach by example. Murphy makes it quite clear that a morally trained person is not necessarily a moral agent. All the morally trained person needs to do is remember his instructions, to obey without hesitation or discussion. Only when one morally reasons does he become a moral agent, does one begin to understand the importance of these rules. Moral reasoning is something different. Murphy maintains that a person can arrive at moral decisions about moral problems only if that person morally reasons, i.e., is able to state reasons why what he did was right. He states,

> To characterize an action as honorable or as dishonorable, or in any other moral terms, is to place it in a practical context, to give a reason why it should or should not be done. Unless

---

[27]Murphy, op. cit., p. 192.

the 'done thing' is in this way understood as the ought to be done thing it has no moral warrant and in the teaching of it nothing moral has been taught.[28]

Henry: But could not philosophical reasons be given--those coming from a system of ethics?

Steven: Yes, but the reasons would be as inadequate or useless as in the case of act-utilitarianism. Look around you. There are reasons which you should recognize as such. The moral principles of the community serve as reasons for many of our acts. Speaking of the community, Murphy says,

> For the process of the use of reasons is a self correcting process, the customary acceptances with which it begins are grounds for action each of us has learned to respect in the local communities in which he was brought up to play his part well as a son, a team mate or a citizen.[29]

This is marvelous, Henry. You may do as you wished when you first came; namely, teach the morality of speech. The four moralities need not be part of a systematic ethics, but need only be considered societal "rules" which act as your reasons for moral behavior, proper moves in the game. Of course, you must yourself employ them as reasons and hope that your students do likewise. Of course, moral disputes are not altogether disposed of in this way because there are genuine moral problems which force the moral reasoner to establish

---

[28]Ibid., p. 191.

[29]Ibid., p. 194.

priorities, select those principles which best suit the particular case.

Many of these problems arise with new knowledge and skills: witness

the disputes about the morality of heart transplants.

Henry: Could not a system be merely a set of rules to aid us in our moral

judgments?

Steven: *In one sense, moral rules could be considered as maxims which*

rightly enjoy our respect, i.e., if they are the property of a moral

community who practices these maxims. Murphy, speaking of moral

rules says,

> But to respect them as reasons is not to set them up as logical
> requirements of games, that in the general interest, are good to
> play. Their defeasibility is not of laws with built-in loopholes
> (exceptions) in them. It is rather that of grounds for action which,
> though good as so far cogent, may be insufficient for the resolu-
> tion of concrete problems on their specific merit.[30]

Moral rules usually stand under normal circumstances, but sometimes

reference to the moral rules will not meet the circumstances especially

when "abnormal" circumstances arise. This at the base is what is

wrong with strictly deductive systems of moral rules when applied to

practice. The moral philosophers make it sound as if reaching a moral

decision is simply a matter of syllogistic deduction, where some

general principle stands as the major premise, and the facts of the

circumstances as the minor: I have attempted to dissuade you of this

opinion earlier when I talked about act-utilitarianism, i.e., how such

---

[30]Ibid., p. 208.

a logic could lead to dire conclusions if put into practice. Neverthe-

less, a more straightforward attack is called for here. The term

"defeasibility" used by Murphy in the previous quotation has a

technical meaning. Murphy borrowed the concept from Hart, and

the latter in "The Ascription of Responsibility and Rights" said this

when speaking of the uniqueness of legal concepts in ordinary lan-

guage, and especially the concept of a "contract."

> When the student has learned that in English law there are
> positive conditions required for the existence of a valid contract,
> i.e., at least <u>two parties</u>, an <u>offer</u> by one, <u>acceptance</u> by the
> other, a <u>memorandum</u> in writing in some cases and <u>consideration</u>,
> his understanding of the legal concept of a contract is still in-
> complete, and remains so even if he has learned the lawyers'
> technique for the interpretation of the technical, but still vague
> terms, 'offer,' 'acceptance,' 'memorandum,' 'consideration.'
> For these conditions, although necessary, are not always suf-
> ficient and he has to learn what can <u>defeat</u> a claim that there is
> a valid contract, even though all these conditions are satisfied.
> That is the student has still to learn what can follow on the word
> 'unless,' which should accompany the statement of these con-
> ditions. This characteristic of legal concepts is one for which
> no word exists in ordinary English. The words 'conditional' and
> 'negative' have the wrong implications, but the law has a word
> which with some hesitation I borrow and extend: this is the word
> 'defeasible,' used of a legal interest in property which is subject
> to termination or 'defeat' in a number of different contingencies
> but remains intact if no such contingencies mature. In this sense,
> contract is a defeasible concept.[31]

Hart shows how wrong it would be to identify the meaning of the con-

cept "contract" with a statement of the conditions in which contracts

---

[31]H. L. A. Hart, "The Ascription of Responsibility of Rights," <u>Logic
and Language</u> (Anthony Flow, Editor. Oxford: Basil Blackwood, 1955), p. 148.

are held to exist simply because the "defeasible" character of the

concept could not always express conditions which are sufficient.[32]

Henry: Still, is the law of system of deductive reasoning at work?

Steven: Look at the practical law. The list of items that follows "unless"

is an open-ended one and hence exceptions cannot be built into the

statement of the rule. How can you have a purely deductive system

when the sufficient conditions for the use of the rule are missing?

The application of law always remains subject to further and unforseen

contingencies. Hart says this.

> But *sometimes the law is cited as an example of a deductive
> system at work.* 'Given the existing law,' it will be said, 'The
> statement of facts found by the judge entails the legal conclusion.'
> Of course, this could only be said in the simplest possible cases
> where no issue is raised at the trial except what common sense
> would call one of fact . . . . But even more it would be wrong
> to say when the judge was making a deductive inference; for the
> timeless conclusion of law (Smith is guilty of murder) is not
> entailed by the statements of temporal fact (Smith put arsenic
> in his wife's coffee on May 1st, 1944) which supports it; and
> rules of law even when embodied in statutes are not linguistic
> or logical rules, but to a great extent rules for deciding.[33]

In summary, we see that even in a court of law with its technical

concepts and procedures there is no strict syllogistic deduction.

Moral philosophers often make the same mistakes Murphy and Hart

have just evidenced: (1) *they do not concern* themselves with the

defeasibility of their concepts, and (2) they claim truth from syllogistic

---

[32]Ibid., p. 154.

[33]Ibid., p. 156.

decision-making, where such is impractical in Murphy's sense of

the word.

Henry: Isn't "the abstract character of pure ethics a mark of its dignity?"[34]

Steven: Nonsense. You stated when we first met a few days ago that you

read Sidgwick, who said,

> The boundaries of the study called ethics are variously and often vaguely conceived; but they will perhaps be sufficiently defined, at the outset, for the purposes of the present treatise, if a 'method of ethics' is explained to mean any rational procedure by which we determine what individual human beings 'ought' or what is 'right' for them to do, or to seek to realize by voluntary action.[35]

As you recall he is extremely concerned with what a person "ought"

to do. Am I correct?

Henry: Yes.

Steven: Well, so am I, but as you see not in the sense you just mentioned of

being concerned to develop a single principle and expecting every

specific instance to fit that principle. If that is the dignity of ethics,

you may keep it. But if Sidgwick follows Murphy's notion of moral

investigation, I would applaud him. It would be as just illustrated

a false method to establish logically connected laws (generalizations)

as traditional ethics has so often tried to do.

---

[34]Leonard Nelson, <u>System of Ethics</u> (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956), p. 11.

[35]Henry Sidgwick, <u>The Methods of Ethics</u> (Chicago: University Press, 1874), p. 1.

Henry: Doesn't a teacher have to formulate generalizations in order to say

anything significant?

Steven: For example?

Henry: Isn't it true, as Walter A. Kaufman says in Ethics and Business, that

as long as somebody does not consider how his actions are likely to

affect the happiness of others, he acts irresponsibly?[36]

Steven: You answer me. Does every moral decision which I make have to

involve the consideration and the welfare of others wherever my

well-being or that of others is being affected? It is not always relevant

to consider the welfare of others. I am not saying that we should

not try to think of other people's happiness, and as often as pos-

sible. But is a person necessarily doing wrong even when he makes

an unintentional mistake? What is the logical force of "I didn't

intend to hurt her?" There are definite specific occasions such as

when one loses his temper and doesn't think of the consequences.

Although such occasions indicate irresponsibility, the failings are

somewhat diminished by the circumstances. Nor can we generalize

and say everything we do affects our happiness and the happiness

of others. I might well not be thinking of others' happiness when I

isolate myself to read a good book. In actual cases, it simply is

not an accurate description to say that we always consider the

---

[36]Walter A. Kaufman, "A Philosopher's View," Ethics and Business
(College Parks: Pennsylvania State University, 1962), p. 49.

happiness of others. Taken as a generalized moral statement, it still doesn't hold. Often, people decide upon actions based upon some principle (It is wrong to lie) without reflecting whether or not they are going to hurt others. Taken at face value, the generalization simply doesn't appear to be true. Yet, if the statement were uttered at a specific time to support a specific point, it could make sense and also be true. Certain generalizations seem to be true and make sense as soon as they are heard. For example, take Dresser's statement. He says that we cannot pass reasonable judgment without distinguishing between motives and results. This is especially true where a person's motive may be excellent but his actions subject to blame.[37] Look at it. This is a generalization but it is more a statement of how people can become confused if they are not aware of the total behavior of others. We immediately understand it. We all know it to be true from experiencing instances when we did not discriminate. The statement is comparable to "you cannot normally start a car without a key." Both are generalizations which describe processes with which we are familiar. "To understand people you must discriminate between motives and results" is more a statement about the concept of understanding, but it still makes sense as a generalization. The specific instances themselves

---

[37]Horatio W. Dresser, Ethics (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1925), p. 96.

explain what happened. For example, "Joe killed her, but you can tell from this or that evidence that he didn't mean to do it." The first generalization you cited ("affecting the happiness of others") doesn't help clarify what we actually do or ought to do at all. It is a philosophical position. Such generalizations are the stuff of which philosophy is made. Their authors make no attempt to see the defeasibility of the concepts which they use. Reality must be strained to fit its prescription, and in the last analysis, it simply doesn't work. Such generalizations are the law-like statements which Murphy warned us against. In other words, such law-like statements or maxims completely lose their moral relevance when circumstances cease to be "normal' i.e., when they are applied under "abnormal" circumstances. [38]

Henry: I'm not sure I follow you.

Steven: Let us take another kind of example, shall we? A. J. Ayer makes the statement, "Empirical statements are one and all hypotheses." [39] Does that make sense to you?

Henry: It seems reasonable. (Steven rises, walks to a bookcase, and takes a book.)

_____

[38] Murphy, op. cit., p. 209.

[39] Alfred Jules Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic (New York: Dover Publications, 1952), p. 120

Steven: (Paging.) What Normal Malcolm says about G. E. Moore's philo-

sophical method is instructive:

> When a philosopher says, for example, that all empirical
> statements are hypotheses, or that a priori statements are really
> rules, Moore at once attacks. He attacks because he is sensi-
> tive to the violations of ordinary language which are implicit
> in such statements as '49 minus 22 equals 27' a rule of grammar?
> 'Napoleon was defeated at Waterloo' an hypothesis? What an
> absurd way of talking! Moore's attacks bring home to us that
> our ordinary use of the expressions 'rule of grammar' and
> 'hypothesis' is very different from that suggested by the philo-
> sophical statements. If a child learning the language were to
> call '49 minus 22 equals 27' a rule of grammar, or 'Napoleon
> was defeated at Waterloo' an hypothesis, we should correct
> him. We should say that such language is not the proper way
> of speaking. [40]

I contend that philosophers of ethics use language similar to Ayer.

They make statements which to them take on the forms of moral

axioms, from which other axioms can be deduced. These state-

ments become queer when one realizes that they are completely

divorced from practical understanding. This is what I have been

trying to show you. For example, St. Thomas says that all moral

acts are directed toward the good.

Henry: All right. All right, but how is anyone going to teach anything?

Surely, there must be some general principles, some rules, some

generalizations that make sense in ethics. What ever happened

about determining the essence of things, even Murphy would agree

---

[40]Norman Malcolm, "Moore and Ordinary Language," The Linguistic
Turn (Richard Rorty, Editor. Chicago: University Press, ·1967), p. 120.

to that, the vital thread that makes all relationships clear? Isn't

philosophy supposed to be interested in first principles and the

essences of things?

Steven: Remember what happened when you tried to use the first principle

of social utility for your ethics of persuasion? It didn't work, did

it? Why?

Henry: Because of the logical consequences of such a theory, and of course,

the semantic difficulty.

Steven: Correct! Since we have Malcolm open, isn't what you are still

trying to do similar to what Malcolm suggests that the philoso-

phizing biologist is trying to do?

> Similarly, a philosophizing biologist, finding it impossible
> to draw a sharp line separating the characteristics of inanimate
> things from the characteristics of animate things, may be tempted
> to proclaim that all matter is really animate. What he says is
> philosophical, paradoxical, and false. For it constitutes an
> offense against ordinary language, in learning of which we learn
> to call things like fish and fowl animate, and things like rocks
> and tables inanimate.[41]

The philosophers will fight, similiarly, trying to show you how

this action does not fall under their conception of "good," or that

one does. Is this what you were trying to do when you mentioned

"being responsible on every occasion for the happiness of others"?

Henry: It certainly does, but there are some basics one can generalize

about ethically. I mean, in communication which, of course, is

---

[41]Ibid., p. 121.

what I am interested in, there have to be some ethical rules so at

least communication can take place. Do you understand me? As

Walter and Scott claim in Thinking and Speaking, there are two

processes which are distinctively human: the process of symbolism

and that of understanding, mutual understanding. They call these

processes the constructive needs of the human being. You must

admit that without these processes, there would be no growth of the

human personality. They say an ethical act is one which allows an

organism to grow. An unethical act thwarts this growth. The moral

law which they have formulated is stated thus: "Always act to pro-

vide conditions most favorable for mutual understanding between

yourself and all concerned."[42] Ethical rhetoric becomes the means

of symbolism which provides the greatest understanding and moral

influence.

Steven: Now, really, Henry, think of the other theory. Should one always

act to provide conditions most favorable for mutual understanding?

Henry: Certainly.

Steven: Is there not an ambiguity in the notion of understanding? There is

the understanding involved in your saying "pass the bread," and I

pass the bread. And then there is the understanding of moral accom-

---

[42]Otis M. Walter and Robert L. Scott, Thinking and Speaking (New
York: Macmillan, 1968), p. 25.

modation, a getting along together. I believe that we should try to
provide moral accommodation with our fellow man, but that is not
seemingly what Walter and Scott meant. On second thought, it
might be, but "understanding" is too ambigious.

Henry: I see your point.

Steven: Fine.

Henry: But you must admit that for people to communicate, certain rules
have to be followed. As Schwayder, who wrote on the stratification
of behavior points out, language is a type of behavior. It requires
conventionally determined, repeatable devices, what he calls
"expressions." The employment of these "expressions" is in con-
formity with rules that can be taught and learned.[43]

Steven: Certainly, we have all learned certain conventions which help com-
munication to run smoothly. You will not find any disagreement from
me on that point, but note you are not theorizing. You are merely
describing how we use our language. You were theorizing, previously.

Henry: I'm swimming, Professor. You say that there is no need for an ethics
of persuasion and that philosophizing is the worst practice which I
can do. Shouldn't we just terminate our conversation? Really, I
don't seem to be getting anywhere. In fact, I appear to be losing

---

[43]D. S. Schwayder, The Stratification of Behavior (London: Routledge
and Kegan Paul, 1965), p. 321.

ground. Now, I m starting to doubt some of my own theories of speech.

Steven: Good!

Henry: I don't see what is good about it. I have to earn a living.

Steven: I said that we would develop an ethics for you, didn't I?

Henry: That's right.

Steven: But I didn't say that it would be similar to traditional approaches.

Henry: What "traditional approaches"?

Steven: The theorizing approaches.

Henry: For God's sake, let us avoid those. What kind of ethics will it be then?

Steven: It really is no ethics at all, but ethical analysis, and I believe it will allow your students to see more clearly what they are saying. That _is_ your aim, isn't it?

Henry: (Bewildered.) Yes. Yes. Wait a minute. At one moment, you stated that you would help me develop an ethics of persuasion, and then a little later you said there was no need for a specialized ethics. Isn't that a contradiction?

Steven: It might _seem_ so. Let me see if I can clarify the matter. First of all, I stated that a specialized ethics for speech is not necessary. Right?

Henry: Yes.

Steven: Murphy showed us that we can and do analyze moral problems and make moral decisions without a system or philosophy . . . .

Henry: Don't go any further. I know what you mean.

Steven: Secondly, I told you that I would develop a kind of ethics, which would not be ethics in the traditional sense. I called it ethical analysis.

Henry: Will this ethical analysis, which I imagine will be Murphy's, support the statement that a student should not plagiarize?

Steven: Yes, in a way.

Henry: All right! That's what I want.

Steven: But it will not support statements with vacuous principles.

Henry: I'm listening, but I really think that you are playing with words. Either you are going to develop an ethics or you are not.

Steven: Perhaps, you are right. Would it satisfy you if I were to say that I shall give you the tools for ethical analysis? Shall we keep the word "ethics" within its traditional philosophical context? I will also omit the notion of "professional ethics" such as doctors and lawyers speak of.

Henry: Which means that "ethics" will always involve "theory." Right?

Steven: Correct.

Henry: But isn't this "analysis" of Murphy's really going to involve some theory, and if he rejects the traditional philosophical context, how can he consider himself a philosopher?

Steven: Very good. First of all, my analysis will not involve theory because "ethical analysis" is simple linguistic analysis of a philosophical work which involves some theory. Wittgenstein, who is the founder

of this approach, catches the kernel when he says "A main source of our failure to understand is that we do not command a clear view of the use of our words--our grammar is lacking in this sort of perspicuity."[44] Just now, I had (so to speak) a linguistic "blind spot." You came to my house seeking an ethics of persuasion. I knew that such a thing was impossible, at least one that made sense was impossible; but I encouraged you by saying that I would provide such an ethics, but of a different kind. Don't you see what I was doing? I used the word "ethics" in a persuasive way. I wanted you to hear what I had to say, but in the final analysis I confused you because you failed to understand my purpose. Linguistic analysis does not resort to such philosophical tricks. Its job in part is to remove misunderstanding to which traditional philosophy has led us. In other words, as Murphy says, traditional philosophy has led us to the wrong place to find the reasons for our moral actions. In describing the Wittgensteinian concept of philosophy, Alice Ambrose writes.

> I define a linguistic approach to philosophy as one arising from the view that what a philosopher does when he produces or tries to refute a philosophical theory is to inform one about language.[45]

---

[44]Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations (G. E. M. Anscombe, translator. New York: Macmillan, 1953), p. 122.

[45]Alice Ambrose, "Linguistic Approaches to Philosophical Problems," The Linguistic Turn (Richard Rorty, Editor. Chicago: University Press, 1967), p. 29.

Yet, the philosopher can also inform the biologist about language, the dramatist, etc. This is a rather lengthy introduction to answering your first question. The point is this: There is no need for theory when all you are doing is illustrating to someone how he is using his language. Finally, Murphy defines linguistic analysis thus:

> The business of 'conceptual analysis' is the clarification of meaning; its point is the elimination of misunderstanding--not any that might conceivably arise but such as do in fact arise and stand between us and the proper doing of the work that we are in. Philosophy in this use has no esoteric information of its own to contribute on the metaphysical insides of electrons or the axiological priorities among eternal values. All it can offer is a sort of light--the light of common day, indeed, for it is the light which, at our best, we live our days in common.[46]

Henry: I am beginning to understand what you are talking about, but what of my second question? It appears to me that by divorcing yourself from traditional philosophy, you no longer can be called a "philosopher."

Steven: If there is a divorce, it is an imaginary one. Wittgensteinians still are investigating the body of traditional philosophy, but, as it were, with a new kind of glasses perched on their noses. Secondly, they are clarifying many of the problems raised by traditional philosophy. For example, the task before us, which is how to develop tools for the ethical analysis of persuasion, will involve such clarification. Urmson tells us that Wittgenstein regarded his

---

[46]Murphy, op. cit., p. 429.

own philosophy as an heir to traditional philosophy. His method

was the true method of philosophy focused on solving traditional

problems.[47] You see, I still consider myself a philosopher.

Henry: The thought occurs to me that the linguistic analyst is more of a

speech teacher than most of my colleagues in the field, even myself.

Steven: I don't know about that. There is still the factor of public speaking.

I would be hard pressed to teach someone the intricacies of plat-

form speaking.

Henry: That's probably true, but most speech teachers are interested in

the organization and correct choice of words. In the same sense,

I believe, that philosophers are interested.

Steven: That is precisely why I became so excited when you stopped me in

the hallway.

Henry: Now that I can visualize your approach, how can you help me with

my classes? Can language analysis take the place of an ethical

theory?

Steven: Linguistic analysis is not a substitute for traditional philosophy,

but a method of dealing with the problems of traditional philosophy

including problems about scientific theories which are "philosophical,"

e.g., behaviorism. Unfortunately, we don't have the time to

---

[47]J. O. Urmson, "The History of Analysis," The Linguistic Turn
(Richard Rorty, Editor. Chicago: University Press, 1967), p. 30.

scrutinize that subject, and it would take us too far afield. Let's

concentrate on some specifics. Earlier, you mentioned the four

moralities articulated by Wallace. At that time, you were arguing

for them within the context of a philosophical theory, namely

utilitarianism. They couldn't be justified within that context, could

they?

Henry: No.

Steven: But if we look at them simply as mirroring the attitudes and beliefs

of people, they make sense. Following Murphy's lead, we see that

they make sense as moral principles, reasons for action, that is,

we must look at them not as rules of thumb standing in need of some

ultimate justification, but as expressing our basic ultimate commit-

ments--as principles in terms of which we justify particular actions.

There are, however, many pitfalls that the scholar such as yourself

can fall into. Many of us want to categorize reality and place

everything into its proper niche. Take for example the pitfall

John Wisdom describes. Referring to the so-called conflict between

the way the moralist speaks of the world as compared to the scientist

he says:

> We can only clear up this apparent conflict by a consideration
> of the metaphysics which lie behind moralism and factualism.
> Each has an implicit metaphysic which it uses, though perhaps
> clumsily, to defend its own part of the conflict: the moralists'
> metaphysic being designed to support his insistence on man's
> response to external authority, and the factualists' to support
> his insistence on the facts of human nature. It is important to

see that the moralists' metaphysic, in particular, must rely not
so much on objecting validity of some particular authority or set
of principles, as upon a picture of human beings which will
enable him to regard them as responsible and responsive to
authority. Thus, human beings must be morally free, capable
of virtue and vice, deserving of praise and blame, able to do
right or wrong, and in general morally responsible--in a different
sense of 'responsible' from that in which we say, for instance,
that the wind was responsible for blowing down the chimney-pot.
In their relations to authority men must be capable of being
judged, assessed as guilty or innocent, and justly punished or
rewarded. All of these concepts, as they are used by the moralist,
relate to authority; and they all seem to tactitly support sic a
metaphysical picture of human beings which is not necessarily a
true picture. The factualist metaphysic, on the other hand, need
not grind such an axe. For him, all that need matter is that
human nature can be investigated: that the facts can be discovered.
Factualism implies that human beings are explainable, predictable,
and capable of being analyzed, and can in principle be unrolled on
the table like a blue-print, in order that we may study them and
see what ought to be done with them. The moralist reacts very
sharply to any such idea. A typical reaction is that of a clergy-
man who gave the University sermon at Oxford University, and
complained about the psychiatric or clinical approach to homo-
sexuals and criminals on the grounds that such an approach treats
men 'as if they were machines.'[48]

He in this section, of course, describes two such false pictures.

Murphy covers the same subject in a chapter entitled, "Facts and

Values." He, as does Wilson, shows that there are those who

want to hold different pictures of man, those who wish to separate

in our life facts from values or moralistic language from scientific

language. But, as Murphy insists, we have but one language and

one life. A fact sometimes has moral implications. How? "The

---

[48]John Wilson, <u>Reason and Morals</u> (Cambridge: University Press,
1961), pp. 44-45.

answer is, of course, that a fact has moral implications when and, insofar as it is understood and used, not as a fact merely, but as a ground for action."[49] God save us from the so-called factualist who has no interest in morals or the moralist who shuns the scientific facts of reality. Murphy speaks of the "scientific humanists" who have to make decisions as citizens. He believes that, depending upon their political alignment, they will use facts to support their differing biases.[50] The important consideration is, however, the kind of reasons and the worth of the reasons which they are using whether those reasons be scientific or spiritualistic. The main question is: do the reasons which they use serve as a ground for justifiable action?

Henry: Doesn't the scientist often speak in moralistic terms, and vice versa? For example, as a speech teacher I do want to implant certain moral values concerning communication, but at other times I want to speak in a scientific way.

Steven: Certainly, what you say makes sense only to the degree it backs up the point which you are trying to make. Problems arise when one doesn't realize that there is but one language, which we all know, and if we do not use it properly, we grab onto a series of bad jokes!

---

[49]Murphy, op. cit., p. 267.

[50]Ibid., p. 269.

"The organism got drunk." "Don't smile; just throw the good ole'
reflex action." "Id is the devil." Other problems, however, arise
when scientists (or non-scientists) really abuse their terms to sup-
port what they think is a scientific theory, but really is a philosophi-
cal theory in disguise. Earlier Malcolm gave the example of the
theorizing biologist. There are other examples, especially in the
field of psychology. These latter problems are really more serious.

Henry: Let me try to rephrase what you have just said. It is your conten-
tion that scientific language is not antithetical to the language of
morals because purposes are different in specific contexts. For
example, I at one time may speak morally and at another scientifically.
The main object is to concentrate on the point which I am trying to
make in each particular instance. Of course, understood in all
this is that I should not use words in a "philosophical way."

Steven: Exactly, Shapere is very clear about using words in that way. Fol-
lowing Wittgenstein, he urges us to bring out the "workings" of
an expression. We do this by citing examples of its uses in actual
contexts and those philosophical uses in which the expression fails.
We show the philosopher how his use of the expression involves a
conflict, and that this conflict arises when he allows language "to
go on a holiday." Finally, once we show the philosopher the work-
ings of the expression, hopefully his desire to continue mis-using
it will disappear. Of course, at the same time the philosophical

problem might also disappear.[51] *I am bringing to light this process again because what I am about to say should make more sense to you now. A system of ethical axioms deduced from ethical principles doesn't make sense. Right?*

Henry: Right.

Steven: If it doesn't make sense, the question of a need for such a system *doesn't or cannot even arise.*

Henry: Agreed. I will tell you a story which I read. Harold Lee, a *doctoral student of Professor* Whitehead, approached his famous tutor one day with a problem. It was a semantic problem and Lee was puzzled as to what words could best communicate the conceptual system which he had worked out. Whitehead replied that if he thought he had a new concept, he might do two things: (a) redefine an old word to express it, but if he did he would always be misunderstood, or (b) invent a new word, but if he did that, he would never be understood.[52] I guess that is something of what you mean. Please continue.

Steven: But ethical statements of principles are perfectly legitimate.

Henry: I don't see . . . what do you mean?

---

[51]Dudley Shapere, "Philosophy and the Analysis of Language," The Linguistic Turn (Richard Rorty, Editor. Chicago: University Press, 1967), p. 283.

[52]Harold N. Lee, "The Meaning of 'Intrinsic Value'," The Language of Value (Ray Leploy, Editor. New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), p. 178.

Steven: Because such statements exist already and make sense as they

express moral principles of the community to which most of the

community hold, no philosophy need be assumed. Ethical state-

ments of principles are important, but traditional philosophy can

aid but slightly in establishing these, if at all. Let me cite an

example which I am sure you have been waiting patiently for:

you deliver this statement in your class! "<u>No person should lie</u>

<u>to support his persuasion.</u>" A person would not be "truthful,"

and "truthfulness" is needed for "trust" between people. There

are two notions that strike me immediately: (1) although we could

stipulate this as a moral principle for speech-making, little would

be accomplished because the principle is already used by the

majority (if not all) of society; although (2) it could be repeated to

the students as a good reminder of what society expects of them

when they communicate.

Henry: What if one of my students says, "You are just telling us that

lying is always wrong. I have heard that in church for the past

eighteen years"?

Steven: Simply answer, "That's right," and state the appropriate reasons

to support your judgment. If the student lies to support his per-

suasion, people might not trust him again if they discover his lie.

Besides, in verbal debates facts and solid reasoning are of the

essence. The point you are making is more a demand concerning

conduct rather than a proclamation of truth. You can point out that

lying always implies wrongdoing. This is the way we use our lan-

guage.

Henry: Oh, I see. If a person says, "It is a lie," he usually implies

that something is wrong, but we discussed this earlier, didn't we?

What you are concluding, then, is that the tools for ethical analysis

are simply the perceptions of the acute language used?

Steven: George Nakhnikan says:

> But linguistic analysis does not discover unique criteria
> which are so tied to the meaning of 'ethical' (evaluative)
> that if anyone were to say that such and such is ethical but
> not because of this or that unique criterion he could be
> accused of contradicting himself. With respect to criteria,
> linguistic analysis can give nothing more than a description
> of the criteria currently accepted in a given community. These
> are not the ultimate standards which philosophers like Kant
> and Ross believed could be found.[53]

Thus, in a way, persuasion ethics is the same as regular ethics,

and you know how to take that remark.

Henry: Then I, as a speech teacher, need not adopt any philosophical

system to explain why a student should not plagiarize material

or lie. I can simply point out that this behavior is not acceptable

according to the standards set up in my class and in the community.

That is, it is wrong. Of course, I should cite some specific facts

---

[53]George Nakhnikan, "An Examination of Toulmin's Analytical
Ethics," The Philosophical Quarterly, 9:59-80, p. 68.

and reasons to support my demand. Moreover, I have at my disposal language which is understandable in these matters . . . I don't need philosophy!

Steven: I am afraid that your answer is much too facile. It is true that you do not need traditional philosophy for the specific object you came to me with--to train students to be ethical communicators--but linguistic analysis which is the heir to traditional philosophy would aid you greatly.

Henry: I couldn't agree with you more. What I meant by "philosophy" was "traditional philosophy."

Steven: Yes, Henry, don't sell traditional philosophy short. It poses many problems that are profoundly disturbing! And then there are the technical changes in our society, which need the "light" Murphy talks of.

Henry: Thank you, Professor.

Steven: Although I didn't give you a new ethics, I hope you appreciate the new method you've just been exposed to.

Henry: I certainly do.

Steven: Before you go, I would also like to see society functioning on an ethical base, but this base is built on attitudes and actions, not on philosophy. You said that when we first started our conversation. You distinguished between a lie that was "wrong" and one that was "right." You were using the moralist's language to its fullest. You

didn't need traditional philosophy then. You don't need it now, and

neither do your students.

Henry: Thanks again.

Steven: Helen, will you show the professor out?

PART II

THE ESSAY

The significance of Part I was not that it showed an ethics of per-
suasion based upon act-utilitarianism to be false, but rather that moral
problems arising in persuasion and other fields can be handled by the
practical reasoning that we are all capable of. Henry's understanding
of the status of ethical principles of speech was provided with a methodology.
That methodology is what Murphy calls "moral reasoning." In brief,
actions are justified if the proper reasons compose the ground for such
actions. I hope that I have shown that linguistic analysis is the "light"
needed to remove many of the shadows of confusion which adhere to tradi-
tional philosophical approaches to ethics. In this part, I wish to focus
on Murphy's account of practical reasoning by using it to analyze problems
which have arisen in other so-called professional ethics. As the reader
knows, there are thousands of pages written on professional ethics: the
ethics of business, salesmanship, scientific research. There is also the
ethics of the legal profession, medical ethics, and the military code of
conduct.

For the purpose of completeness, rather than advocating some dogmatic
division of reality, I would like to divide the different specialized ethics

into two classes: (a) those dealing with specific areas of activity which transcend the boundaries of a particular profession, and (b) those involved in specific activities which are or can become genuine professions. Examples of the former are the so-called ethics of business, of persuasion, of scientific research. Many classes, professions, and types of people are involved in each of these three areas of activity. A chemist who owns some rental property fits nicely into all these categories at different times. Anyone who had the skill or interest could be considered a candidate for any one of these areas. Examples of (b) are medical ethics, legal ethics, and the military code of conduct (honor code). Note that these ethics concentrate on specific activities of professions, and their principles or rules are supposed to have application solely to persons engaged in those professions. For example, only doctors and nurses are bound by the code of medical ethics.

According to Tawney,

A profession may be defined most simply as a trade which is organized, incompletely, no doubt, but genuinely, for the performance of function. It is not simply a collection of individuals who get a living for themselves by the same kind of word. Nor is it merely a group which is organized exclusively for the economic protection of its members, though that is normally among its purposes. It is a body of men who carry on their work in accordance with rules designed to enforce certain standards both for the better protection of its members and for the better service of the public.[54]

This usage of the word "profession" is not new, and I believe that most people can readily understand the important difference between the

_____

[54]R. H. Tawney, The Acquisitive Society (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1921), p. 92.

ethics of persuasion and professional ethics. The difference is based on

the fact that both "ethics" do different jobs in our lives; in the case of

professional ethics there appears to be a job to do, whereas in the case of

the ethics of persuasion which assumes a traditional philosophical basis,

no job is accomplished at all. But if a person means by the ethics of per-

suasion, as Henry agreed to at the end of the dialogue, merely a loose

collection of social admonitions supported by the community, then the

"ethics" in this case might indeed fulfill an important function.

Any specialized ethics of a specific activity such as business, or

research could have the same pitfalls of an ethics of persuasion. First

of all, if it were organized along traditional lines (e.g. act-utilitarianism),

a philosophical theory would be involved. If a philosophical theory were

involved, puzzling and unconventional uses of words would occur. In other

words, the theory would be impractical in Murphy's sense of the word,

forming no ground for action. Secondly, if no theory were involved, the

formulator of this ethics would in essence be agreeing with my thesis that

ordinary, moral principles articulated in a rational way could and would

do the job. In other words, I would assume that the person would use these

moral principles as a reasonable ground of action. Thirdly, if they continue

to label their endeavors "the ethics of . . .," they make the same mistake

described to Henry. The word "ethics" does not conventionally describe

the activity in which they are engaged. I believe "moral reasoning" as

Murphy describes the activity would better suit their endeavors.

Let us, for experiment sake, allow that two individuals decide to write an ethics for business and an ethics for researchers respectively. The former cites as one of his ethical principles that, "A salesman should not lie about the qualities of his product," and the latter says, "A person who is a scholar should never falsify research results." These principles really differ little from the boy scout who in reciting the _Oath_ promises to do his duty, and the jaycee who in reciting his _Creed_ promises honesty. All of these rules, whether recited or written, are simply special applications of well known moral principles, which of course are very useful. The salesman is reminded by his code that his concern to make a sale should not outweigh his moral principles. The scout promises always to be vigilant in his duties, and the jaycee in his honesty. Notice, again, that these statements stand without reference to ultimate philosophical principles; they do not need the support of any theory. The "rightness" and "wrongness" of the actions are referred to the common attitudes, beliefs, and opinions of the community.

To get clear about this, let us take the field of medical ethics as an example. First of all, as has been pointed out, medical ethics has nothing to do with a philosophical system, but simply is as Tawney has shown "a code of conduct for those who work in the field." Many of the rules such as "medical ethics requires us not to divulge the medical history of a patient" to sources outside the patient's trust again appears only to be a special application of a well known moral principle. In this case, the

community believes that each member should have a certain amount of privacy. This belief is also reflected in other areas such as the law. Philosophy does not enter here, nor can it help to solve moral problems that ordinary moral reasoning cannot handle.

Let us be more specific. Recently, at a hospital, a doctor performed an abortion. This case was peculiar for two reasons: (a) it was not legal in that particular state to do this, and (b) the baby was quite developed, i.e., past the time for such operations to take place. Several of the nurses were disturbed about the operation, but all of them were silenced effectively by two words, "medical ethics." As another example, a nurse or doctor, who knows that a certain doctor is incompetent, is bound by "medical ethics" not to make this known to the public. The same principle or rule holds for operating procedures. The only informing which may be done is within the medical family. There are several reasons given for this type of rule: (a) trust must be developed by the public; (b) it is difficult to prove someone incompetent; and (c) if all the accidents, etc., were made public, the law suits would be so numerous that few would practice medicine.

There is no philosophy here in the silencing of those people but a wrong-headed adherence to a principle. To justify an action is to show that the reasons for such as action are proper, but in this case, there are only a series of moral mistakes--not reporting the murder and not protecting people from incompetency. The reasons given for silence are not cogent enough for the nurses not to act. What we have here, of course, is a moral

problem. Only when one seeks out moral reasons as a ground for action is he really functioning as a moral agent. There <u>were</u> moral reasons available to these nurses, and those reasons exist in the common beliefs and attitudes of the community--the moral community.

There is nothing bewildering about solving problems in this manner. At times, it does require a lot of thought and investigation, but all the needed elements are contained in our moral life--our ordinary life.

As another example from professional ethics, defendant after defendant in the Nuremburg trials claimed that they were doing "right," that each was obeying orders. It is, of course, part of the soldier's code always to obey orders. Granted, the general who sent a million Jews into the gas chambers felt that he did "right" when he obeyed orders according to the military code of conduct; but did he not act "wrongly" according to the moral principles of the world? Again, philosophy is of no use in solving this problem. Moral reason would say that his reason for acting was <u>not adequate.</u> Each defendant did not have a sufficient moral ground for doing what they did.

Dr. Charles Reagan, who wrote the book quoted often in this essay, ends his book:

> If then we understand the structure of ethical arguments and the relations between particular moral judgments, moral rules, basic principles, and general theories, we are in a position to apply this knowledge to specific cases on ethical questions arising in science. And this is the primary goal of our whole effort.[55]

---

[55]Reagan, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 83.

I would agree with Dr. Reagan's position except for "general theories." Understanding of general theories of ethics and especially the use of such provides a stumbling block to practical understanding. I hope that I have shown this point clearly in this work. Finally, I would state that we need to bring light to our moral problems by ridding ourselves of semantic confusion, to penetrate our own ethical reasons for doing things, to investigate the changing beliefs and desires of the community, and finally to approach the new problems created by science and make definite suggestions about what to do based upon proper reasons.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ambrose, Alice. "Linguistic Approaches to Philosophical Problems," in
    The Linguistic Turn. Edited by Richard Rorty. Chicago: University
    Press, 1967.

Aristotle. "Ethics," in The Philosophy of Aristotle. Edited by Renford
    Bambrough. Trans. J. L. Creed and A. E. Wardman.. New York:
    New American Library, 1963.

Aristotle. "Rhetoric," in The Rhetoric and Poetics of Aristotle. Edited by
    Friedrich Solnsen. Trans. W. Rhys Roberts. New York: Random House,
    1954.

Austin, J. L. Philosophical Papers. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961.

Ayer, Alfred Jules. Language, Truth and Logic. New York: Dover Publications,
    1952.

Bentley, Arthur F. Behavior, Knowledge, Fact. Bloomington: The Principia
    Press, 1935.

Berne, Eric. M. D. Games People Play. New York: Grove Press, 1964.

Black, Max. The Labyrinth of Language. New York: Frederick A. Praeger,
    1968.

Blake, William. "Proverbs of Hell," in Philosophy. Edited by Houston
    Peterson. New York: Pocket Books, 1959.

Bormann, Ernest G. Theory and Research in the Communicative Arts. New
    York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965.

Brandt, Richard B. Ethical Theory. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1959.

_____. "Some Puzzles for Attitude Theories of Value," in The Language
    of Value. Edited by Ray Lepley. New York: Columbia University Press,
    1957.

Braybrook, David. (ed.) Philosophical Problems of the Social Sciences.
    New York: Macmillan, 1965.

Brembeck, Winston, and William S. Howell. "The Ethics of Persuasion," in Ethics and Persuasion. Edited by Richard L. Johannensen. New York: Random House, 1967.

Bronaugh, Richard N. "Freedom as the Absence of an Excuse," Ethics, 74:161-173.

Bryant, Donald C. "Rhetoric: Its Functions and Its Scope," The Quarterly Journal of Speech, 39:401-424.

Bryant, Donald C., and Karl R. Wallace. Oral Communication. Third edition. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1954.

Bunting, J. Whitney. (ed.) Ethics for Modern Business Practice. New York: Prentice-Hall, 1953.

Cathcart, Robert S. Post-Communication. New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966.

Cherry, Colin. On Human Communication. New York: Science Editions, Inc., 1961.

Chomsky, Noam. "Review of Skinner's Verbal Behavior," in Readings in the Psychology of Language. Edited by Leon A. Jakobovits and Murray S. Miron. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1967.

Clevenger, Theodore, Jr. Audience Analysis. New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966.

Corbett, Edward P. Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student. New York: Oxford University Press, 1965.

Deutsch, J. A. The Structural Basis of Behavior. Chicago: University Press, 1960.

Dresser, Horatio W. Ethics. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1925.

Edel, Abraham. Ethical Judgment. London: Collier-Macmillan, 1955.

Fagothey, Austin, S. J. Right and Reason. St. Louis: Mosby, 1963.

Feibleman, James K. "The Social Adaptiveness of Philosophies," Ethics, 70:146-154.

Fine, Reuben. "The Logic of Psychology," Psychoanalysis and the Psychoanalytic Review, 43:15-41, Winter, 1958-1959.

Flugel, J. C. Man, Morals and Society. New York: Viking, 1961.

Flynn, Lawrence J. "The Aristotelian Basis for the Ethics of Speaking," in Ethics and Persuasion. Edited by Richard L. Johannesen. New York: Random House, 1967.

Fotheringham, Wallace C. Perspectives on Persuasion. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1966.

Goedecke, Robert. "Feelings, Facts, and Politics," Ethics, 72:1-11.

Goodrich, Lawrence B. "Chrysostom, King of Preachers," The Quarterly Journal of Speech, 24:27-35.

Hampshire, Stuart. Thought and Action. New York: Viking, 1960.

Hare, R. M. Freedom and Reason. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963.

Harrell, Willard, and Ros Harrison. "The Rise and Fall of Behaviorism," The Journal of General Psychology, 18:367-421.

Hart, H. L. A. "The Ascription of Responsibility of Rights," in Logic and Language. Edited by Anthony Flow. Oxford: Basil Blackwood, 1955.

Hoffding, Harold. A Modern History of Philosophy. New York: Dover Publication, 1955.

Horton, David L., and Theodore R. Dixon. "Traditions, Trends, and Innovations," in Verbal Behavior and General Behavior Theory. Edited by the cited authors. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1968.

Hull, Clark L. A Behavior System. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952.

Hume, David. "An Inquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals," in Hume Selections. Edited by Charles W. Hendel. New York: Charles Scribner's, 1927.

James, William. "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life," in Pragmatism. Edited by Alburey Castell. New York: Hafner, 1948.

Kaufmann, Walter A. "A Philosopher's View," Ethics and Business. College Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1962.

Lee, Harold N. "The Meaning of 'Intrinsic Value'," in The Language of Value. Edited by Ray Lepley. New York: Columbia University Press, 1957.

Lippman, Walter. A Preface to Morals. New York: Macmillan, 1952.

Malcolm, Norman. "Moore and Ordinary Language," in The Linguistic Turn. Edited by Richard Rorty. Chicago: University Press, 1967.

Margemann, Henry. Ethics and Science. Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1964.

Miller, Cecil. "The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy: A Reappraisal," Ethics, 72:46-51.

Miller, George A. Language and Communication. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1951.

Miller, Gerald R. Speech Communication--A Behavioral Approach. New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966.

Mills, Glen E. Message Preparation. New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966.

Mitchell, Dorothy. "Some Comments on Ethical Distinctions," Philosophical Quarterly, 13:39-47.

Monroe, Alan H. and Douglas Ehninger. The Principles of Speech. Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1964.

Moore, G. E. Principia Ethica. Cambridge: University Press, 1903.

Morris, Bertram. Philosophical Aspects of Culture. Yellow Springs, Ohio: Antioch, 1961.

Murphy, Arthur E. The Theory of Practical Reason. LaSalle: Open Court, 1965.

Nagel, Ernest. The Structure of Science. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1961.

Nakhnikan, George. "An Examination of Toulminis Analytical Ethics," The Philosophical Quarterly, 9:59-80.

Nelson, Leonard. System of Ethics. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956.

Olbricht, Thomas H. Informative Speaking. Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1968.

Olson, Robert G. A Short Introduction to Philosophy. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1967.

Pitcher, George. (ed.) Wittgenstein The Philosophical Investigations. A Collection of Critical Essays. New York: Doubleday, 1966.

Reagan, Charles E. _Ethics for Scientific Researchers_. Manhattan: Kansas State University, 1969.

Ryle, Gilbert. "Systematically Misleading Expressions," in _The Linguistic Turn_. Edited by Richard Rorty. Chicago: University Press, 1967.

Sattler, William D. "Conceptions of Ethos in Ancient Rhetoric," _Speech Monographs_, 14:55-65.

Schrier, William. "The Ethics of Persuasion," _Quarterly Journal of Speech_, 16:476-486.

Schroeder, Harold M., Michael J. Driver, and Siegfried Streufert. _Human Information Processing_. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967.

Schwayder, D. S. _The Stratification of Behavior_. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965.

Shapere, Dudley. "Philosophy and the Analysis of Language," in _The Linguistic Turn_. Edited by Richard Rorty. Chicago: University Press, 1967.

Sidgwick, Henry. _The Methods of Ethics_. Second edition. Chicago: University Press, 1874.

Simon, Clarence T. "Speech as a Science," _The Quarterly Journal of Speech_, 37:281-298.

Singer, Marcus George. _Generalization in Ethics_. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961.

Skinner, B. F. _Science and Human Behavior_. New York: Macmillan, 1953.

_____. _Walden Two_. New York: Macmillan, 1948.

Spence, Kenneth W. "The Postulates and Methods of Behaviorism," _The Psychological Review_, 55:67-78.

Tawney, R. H. _The Acquisitive Society_. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1921.

Tillich, Paul. _Systematic Theology_. Vol. I. Chicago: University Press, 1951.

Titus, H., and M. Keeton. _Ethics for Today_. New York: American Book, 1966.

Urmson, J. O. "The History of Analysis," in _The Linguistic Turn_. Edited by Richard Rorty. Chicago: University Press, 1967.

Wallace, Karl R. "An Ethical Basis of Communication," in Ethics and Persuasion. Edited by Richard L. Johannesen. New York: Random House, 1967.

Walter, Otis M., and Robert L. Scott. Thinking and Speaking. New York: Macmillan, 1968.

Watson, John B. Behaviorism. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1924.

Wieman, Henry N., and Otis M. Walter. "Toward an Analysis of Ethics for Rhetoric," in Ethics and Persuasion. Edited by Richard L. Johannesen. New York: Random House, 1967.

Wild, John. Existence and the World of Freedom. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1963.

Williams, Katherine A. "Five Behaviorisms," The American Journal of Psychology, 43:337-359.

Wilson, John. Reason and Morals. Cambridge: University Press, 1961.

Wischner, George J. "Stuttering Behavior and Learning: A Preliminary Theoretical Formulation," in Readings in the Psychology of Language. Edited by Leon A. Jakobovits and Murray S. Miron. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1967.

Wisdom, John. "Philosophical Perplexity," in The Linguistic Turn. Edited by Richard Rorty. Chicago: University Press, 1967.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. Philosophical Investigations. Trans. G. E. M. Anscombe. New York: Macmillan, 1953.

A PHILOSOPHICAL EXAMINATION OF THE CONCEPT OF AN

ETHICS OF PERSUASION

by

MICHAEL J. MCCARTHY

B. A., California State College at Hayward, 1965

M. A., Kansas State University, 1967

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Philosophy

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1970

This thesis is a philosophical examination of the claims of many teachers, theorists, and philosophers who support directly or indirectly an ethics of persuasion. The author's aim is to show that an ethics of persuasion, traditionally formulated along philosophical lines, is both: (a) unnecessary and (b) based upon a misunderstanding of moral reasoning. The conception of moral philosophy used in this thesis is largely that expressed by Arthur E. Murphy in the Theory of Practical Reason.

The thesis consists of a dialogue and an essay. The first part, the dialogue, deals with the examination of the problem and exposition of the thesis as stated in the first paragraph. The second part, the essay, applies Murphy's account of practical reason to specific moral problems which might often occur in professional activities such as the practice of medicine and the performance of military duties.