THE OPEN QUESTION ARGUMENT IN MOORE
AND HARE

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LORIN WAYNE BROWNING
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This is to certify that the

thesis entitled

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presented by

Lorin Wayne Browning

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

Ph. D. degree in Philosophy

Donald F. Koch

Major professor

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ABSTRACT

THE OPEN QUESTION ARGUMENT IN MOORE AND HARE

By

Lorin Wayne Browning

Although the Open Question Argument has been taken by
many as a conclusive refutation of ethical naturalism, I show
that the versions used by Moore and Hare are inadequate for
that purpose. After exhibiting a skeletal form of Moore's
early ontology, I discuss and discredit four reasons which
give prima facie plausibility to Moore's use of the argument;
I also show that the Open Question Argument cannot function
as a heuristic device for discovering Moore's concept of in-
trinsic goodness. I find three instances of the argument in
Hare, all of which are shown to be defective. Finally, I
show that all forms of the argument are defective in that
they are based on the false assumption that definitional
analytic truths and formal analytic truths have the same
function.

In passing, I argue that Moore's concept-inspection
procedure blurs important philosophical distinctions, that
a modification in Moore's realistic epistemology further

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discredits the Open Question Argument, that Hare has mis-identified ethical naturalism, that Hare has overlooked an important point concerning the logic of standards, and that we need to set limits for the application of the vague term 'moral language'.

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THE OPEN QUESTION ARGUMENT IN MOORE AND HARE

By

Lorin Wayne Browning

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

By drawing attention to the different idioms used by philosophers in referring to the objects of their investigations, Gilbert Ryle has distinguished three different phases of analytical philosophy.[1] First, to use Ryle's clause, "our forefathers, at one time, talked . . . of the concepts or ideas corresponding to expressions." Later, reports Ryles, philosophers came to talk about the meaning of expressions. Most recently, he continues, philosophers have come to talk about the use of expressions. Thus, if we adopt Ryle's distinctions as a handy mode of classification, twentieth-century British philosophy can be viewed as being roughly divided into three major areas: (1) the earliest period, in which philosophers were concerned with the giving of analyses of extra-linguistic concepts; (2) a middle period, in which philosophers searched for synonymous linguistic expressions; and (3) the contemporary period, in which philosophers are generally concerned neither with

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[1]Gilbert Ryle, "Ordinary Language," The Philosophical Review, LXIII (April, 1953), 172.

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discovering and analyzing concepts denoted by linguistic expressions nor with discovering which expressions have the same meaning; instead, the concern is now with the tokens of our ordinary language itself, a concern with elucidating how those tokens are in fact used in actual practice.[2]

I have chosen to consider a representative from the earliest period and one from the current period. A central unifying factor between these two representatives for the purpose of this paper is that each made similar important uses of a particular type of argument, the Open Question Argument.

The Platonic Socrates once held:

> If anyone tells me that the reason why such-and-such a thing is beautiful is that it has a bright colour or a certain shape or something of that kind, I take no notice of it all, for I find it all confusing, save for one fact, which in my simple, naive and maybe foolish fashion I hug close: namely, that what makes a thing beautiful is nothing other than the presence or communion of that beautiful itself. . . .[3]

G. E. Moore favored a similar procedure for explaining what makes a thing good. In attempting to show that that which makes a thing good is nothing other than the presence of goodness itself, he employed a type of argument which has

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[2]A similar scheme of classification is used by Morris Weitz, (ed.), Twentieth-Century Philosophy: The Analytic Tradition (New York: The Free Press, c1966), v.

[3]Phaedo 100d; R. Hackforth, translator.

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come to be designated as the Open Question Argument. So

many have accepted the soundness of that argument and have

used versions of it that a recent author was justified in

reporting, "The Open Question Argument in various guises

and modifications has become a stock-in-trade in the moral

philosophy of the twentieth century."[4] Nevertheless, as I

shall attempt to show, the Open Question Argument does not

have the force its proponents and users assume it to have.

This paper is an attempt to clarify and to evaluate

some of the "guises and modifications" of the Open Question

Argument. Since an investigation of every instance of the

actual use of the Open Question Argument is impractical

because of the wide extent to which this argument has been

employed, I shall limit my discussion to forms of the argu-

ment that were used by two of the more prominent and in-

fluential ethical theorists of the twentieth century as they

applied the argument to purported analyses of the term

'good'.

The Open Question Argument has been employed for many

purposes. In order to keep this paper within manageable

bounds, I have chosen to limit my investigation to certain

uses of the Open Question Argument which purport to be

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[4]George C. Kerner, The Revolution in Ethical Theory
(New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 16.

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refutations of a type of ethical theory known as ethical naturalism. Since what was taken as constituting ethical naturalism will be found to vary as we consider each author's versions of the Open Question Argument, I shall be concerned, among other things, with making explicit what both authors mean by naturalism in ethics.

As a further limitation of the scope of my paper, I have chosen--perhaps arbitrarily--to consider the Open Question Argument as it is applicable only to analyses of purported moral uses of the term 'good' although there have been those who used versions of the argument for the evaluation of analyses of other moral terms besides 'good'. For instance, I will not be concerned with applications of the Open Question Argument to attempts to naturalistically define 'right'. If we can get clear about the logic of the argument itself, what can be said concerning its application to purported analyses of 'good' can be applied <u>mutatis</u> <u>mutandis</u> to analyses of other terms, both moral and non-moral.

Finally, I shall restrict my investigation of the Open Question Argument to its uses in selected writings of G. E. Moore and R. M. Hare where they are concerned with showing through applications of the argument that 'good' cannot be correctly analysed naturalistically. Moore shall be taken as a representative of the first stage described by

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Ryle, and Hare as a representative of the last. Since Moore

encompasses all three stages, I shall limit my investigation

to his earliest works.

I shall begin with an exposition and evaluation of

the Open Question Argument as it was employed by G. E. Moore

in _Principia Ethica_. Although Moore was not the originator

of this argument, he is its recognized popularizer.[5] Next,

a critical exposition of the Open Question Argument as used

by R. M. Hare in _The Language of Morals_ will be undertaken.

Both of these works, landmarks in twentieth-century ethical

theory, were concerned with presenting, among other things,

a refutation of a type of ethical philosophy known as natu-

ralism. The central thesis of this paper is that both were

unsuccessful in refuting ethical naturalism by employing

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[5]For historical progenitors of this argument, see
Chapter IX, "The Naturalistic Fallacy: The History of Its
Refutation," in Arthur N. Prior, _Logic and the Basis of
Ethics_ (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1949), pp. 95-107.
Moore's most obvious predecessor in using the Open Question
Argument is Richard Price whose _Review of the Principal
Questions and Difficulties in Morals_, published in the
eighteenth century, contains "the same argument" concerning
right: _vide_ D. Daiches Raphael, _The Moral Sense_ (London:
Oxford University Press, 1947), p. 1. Raphael credits
Moore with having never read Price. Prior notes, p. 106,
that Sidgwick's _The Ethics of Green, Spencer and Martineau_,
published only a year before _Principia Ethica_, claimed that
if good means pleasure, then pleasure is the ultimate good
"would be a tautology and a tautology cannot be an ethical
principle." Sidgwick's _Methods of Ethics_, mentioned by
Moore in _Principia Ethica_, contains a similar statement on
p. 109 of the seventh edition.

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versions of the Open Question Argument. My previous sentence is not to be taken as implying that I think that a refutation of ethical naturalism is necessarily dependent upon a successful application of the Open Question Argument, for I do not hold to that position. Nevertheless, I am convinced that there has been a tendency for some philosophers to reject ethical naturalism solely because they thought that the Open Question Argument was sound. Let me illustrate my conviction: A recent author has told us that:

> Moore's "open question" technique is famous; naturalistic definitions fail because it is not meaningless to ask whether something fulfilling the naturalistic definition is good.[6]

Another writer has stated:

> A putative _analysans_ was required to pass the open question test or quit the scene. And . . . all naturalistic analyses were found wanting.[7]

Lastly, consider the following remarks by one of the twentieth-century's leading ethical theorists:

> No matter what set of scientifically knowable properties a thing may have (says Moore, in effect), you will find, on careful introspection, that it is an open question to ask whether anything having these properties is _good._ It is difficult to believe that this recurrent question is a totally confused one, or that it seems open

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[6]Rollo Handy, "Naturalistic Definition in Ethics and 'Common Usage'," _Philosophy_ and _Phenomenological Research,_ XVI (June, 1956), 540.

[7]William K. Frankena, "Moral Philosophy at Mid-Century," _The Philosophical Review,_ LX (January, 1951), 49.

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only because of the ambiguity of "good." Rather, we must be using some sense of "good" which is not definable, relevantly, in terms of anything scientifically knowable.[8]

If I can show that the Open Question Argument in its "various guises and modifications" is not a sufficient condition for showing ethical naturalism to be a fallacy, then I hope that ethical naturalism may be reconsidered. At the very minimum, if I am successful, any purported refutation of ethical naturalism will have to appeal to some considerations other than the Open Question Argument for support.

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[8]Charles L. Stevenson, "The Emotive Meaning of Ethical Terms," Mind, XLVI (January, 1937), 18.

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CHAPTER II

G. E. MOORE AND THE OPEN QUESTION ARGUMENT

2.1 The Intended Preface to the "Second Edition"

of Principia Ethica.

> By employing some of Moore's own corrections in an
> unpublished manuscript, I give two central assertions of
> the Principia Ethica with which this chapter is to
> be concerned: (1) "Good is not identical with any
> natural . . . property," and (2) ". . . propositions
> about the good are all of them synthetic and never
> analytic."

In the often-quoted section 6 of Chapter I of Principia

Ethica, G. E. Moore draws at least the following three major

inferences about "the only simply object of thought which is

peculiar to Ethics."[1]

(1) "good is good"

(2) Good "cannot be defined"

(3) ". . . propositions about the good are all of them
     synthetic and never analytic. . . ."[2]

That is what Moore said, but what he meant has been the sub-

ject of much dispute. But, fortunately, light was shed on

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[1]G. E. Moore, Principia Ethica (Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, 1960), p. 5; first published in 1905; here-
after referred to as 'PE'.

[2]Ibid., pp. 6-7.

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Moore's meaning by the 1964 Dawes Hicks Lecture on philosophy given to the British Academy by C. Lewy.[3] In Part I of that lecture, Lewy gave a synopsis of an unfinished manuscript of Moore's which was intended to have been a preface of a second edition of <u>Principia</u> <u>Ethica</u>.[4]

In this intended preface Moore claimed that he confused the assertion that "good is good" with the different assertion that "Good is simple in the sense of being indefinable or unanalysable."[5] What did he originally mean by "good is good"? According to Lewy, quoting Moore, two meanings are possible:

> . . . either 'Good is different from everything other than Good' or 'Good is different from everything which we express by any word or phrase other than the word "good"'.[6]

Moore then concluded that "good is good" is either "wholly trivial and unimportant" or "else obviously false."[7] The

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[3]C. Lewy, "G. E. Moore on the Naturalistic Fallacy," <u>Proceedings</u> <u>of</u> <u>the</u> <u>British</u> <u>Academy</u>, L (1964), 251-62.

[4]In a letter dated August 4, 1970, Professor Lewy informed me that although "G. E. Moore's philosophical papers are not at present available for inspection," I could be assured that his summary given in Part I of the lecture is "very full & . . . accurate." Part of this section rests on the assumption that Lewy's lecture is indeed full and accurate.

[5]Lewy, <u>op</u>. <u>cit</u>., p. 252.

[6]<u>Ibid</u>.   [7]<u>Ibid</u>., pp. 252-53.

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interpretation that "Good is different from everything other than Good" is trivial since

> . . . the property of being different from every property that is different from it, is a property which must belong to every property without exception, analysable and unanalysable alike.[8]

Thus it says little to say of the property denoted by the term 'good' that it has a property which every property has. The interpretation that "Good is different from everything which we express by any word or phrase other than the word 'good'" can be seen to be false "quite apart from the obvious fact that there are languages other than English," for the "word 'desirable' is sometimes used as a synonym for 'good'."[9] Since on either possible interpretation, "good is good" is discredited by Moore's own showing, I shall not consider it in this paper as one of the things to be proven by a use of the Open Question Argument in Principia Ethica.

But what is the status of the claim that good is

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[8]Ibid.

[9]Ibid., p. 253. It is worth pointing out that even in the Principia Moore gave synonyms for 'good'. Abraham Edel, "The Logical Structure of Moore's Ethical Theory," The Philosophy of G. E. Moore, Paul Arthur Schlipp, editor (second edition; vol. IV of The Library of Living Philosophers. New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1952), p. 138, indicated that Moore used 'intrinsic value', 'ought to exist', 'absolutely good', 'good in itself', and 'ought to be' as synonyms for 'good'. Lan Freed, "A New Review of Principia Ethica," The Philosophical Quarterly, VI (October, 1956), 317, added 'worth having for its own sake' as an additional synonym.

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indefinable, the second of the inferences of Section 6 of
Chapter I of _Principia_ _Ethica_ cited above? Moore held in
his intended second preface that "it is probably true" that
good is indefinable in the sense of being simple, but
whether good is definable or not in that sense "does not
seem to him now nearly as important as it did when he wrote
Principia."[10] Thus I drop as one of the points to be estab-
lished in the _Principia_ the claim that good "cannot be
defined."

What Moore really intended to assert in the _Principia_,
relates Lewy, was that "Good was not identical with any
natural or metaphysical property,"[11] and that that asser-
tion "neither implies nor is implied by the proposition that
Good is unanalysable."[12] I take it then as being established
on Moore's own testimony as reported by Lewy that the first
two inferences from Section 6 of Chapter I of _Principia_
Ethica cited above may be counted as either discredited or as
mistaken attempts on Moore's part in trying to assert what,
in his mind, was the central doctrine of the first part of
the _Principia_, namely, the assertion that "Good is not
identical with any natural or metaphysical property."

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[10]Lewy, _op_. _cit_., p. 252.

[11]_Ibid_., p. 254.   [12]_Ibid_.

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13 Ibid

Thus we are now left with two major claims which, perhaps, the Open Question Argument may be invoked to support:

(1) "Good is not identical with any natural or metaphysical property."

(2) ". . . propositions about the good are all of them synthetic and never analytic."

I retain the second claim from my original list because it is explicitly made in the _Principia_ and, to the best of my knowledge, never rejected by Moore. Since Moore gave no new arguments for his assertions and did not comment on his old arguments in the intended preface,[13] I shall assume that any proof of these assertions continues to rest _in part_ upon a successful application of the Open Question Argument.

I will make one major modification in Moore's first claim, a modification by deletion. In order to tie my two authors together as much as possible, I have indicated that a common interest of theirs was to provide a refutation of ethical naturalism. Moore's first assertion shows that he wanted to refute both metaphysical and naturalistic ethics. Nevertheless I will not pursue Moore's use of the Open Question Argument as a tool for refuting any metaphysical ethics. I shall, instead, take Moore's first assertion to

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[13]_Ibid._, p. 256.

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2.2 The Word 'Good' and a Concept of Goodness.

By making use of several of Moore's early articles, I
attempt to show what sort of thing it is that Moore
refers to by the term 'good'. 'Good' is used by Moore
to denote a concept, but Moore's early ontology ex-
hibits at least five types of concepts. There are
particular and universal concepts. Particular concepts
are first divided into empirical and a priori concepts.
Empirical concepts are further divided into intrinsic,
psychologically causal and relational concepts. I
identify the natural properties of the Principia with
empirical concepts. Moore uses 'good' to denote an
a priori concept, but at least two types of a priori
concepts are found: particular and universal. The
universal a priori concept which 'good' denotes for
Moore in the Principia is called 'Goodness (m)'; the
particular a priori concept is called 'Good (m)'. I
argue that 'good' in the assertion "Good is not identi-
cal with any natural . . . property" must denote
Good (m), not Goodness (m), if it is to denote anything
at all.

With some philosophers it is relatively easy to

ascertain their conclusions and then to see whether their

arguments support their conclusions. But the case is not

like that with Moore in this particular instance. Before

I can decide whether the Open Question Argument supports the

conclusion that "Good is not identical with any natural . . .

property" it is first necessary to get clear about what

Moore means by 'good' and 'natural property'. Until that is

done, it will be impossible to ascertain whether or not

Moore's argument supports his conclusion. This section is

an attempt to get clear about what Moore means by 'good' and

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and 'natural property'.

There are at least two possible starting points one may assume in interpreting Moore's position in the Principia. First, one may assume that "natural property" is the more familiar notion. If this assumption is adopted, Moore will have to be interpreted as attempting to show that there is at least one concept denoted by 'good' which is not a natural property. From this starting point, Moore would be interpreted as attempting to provide the reader with an understanding of what he denoted by 'good'. Second, one may assume that "good" is the more familiar notion. If this assumption is adopted, Moore will have to be interpreted as attempting to show that that concept is not identical with any natural property. From this starting point, Moore would be interpreted as attempting to provide the reader with an understanding of what he means by 'natural property'. The denotation of 'good' is not to be explained since it is assumed we are already familiar with it. Both starting points are, in a sense, exaggerations; yet if we adopt the second perspective I am convinced that it will prove the more fruitful way of interpreting Moore. From this beginning we are expected to assume at the outset that we are already aware of that which 'good' denotes for Moore. What will need to be explained is what are natural properties.

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It seems to me that Moore does in fact assume in the Principia that we are aware of the denotation of 'good'. His task is not to explain it; his task is to show that there is no natural property identical with it.

I am adopting the second starting point in this section. I shall assume that the reader is already familiar with the denotation of 'good'. If the reader is not familiar with it, neither I nor Moore can make the reader aware of it. All that I can do is to point out the kind of thing Moore held it to be, not what it is in fact.

In the Principia Moore tells us that he is not concerned with analysing the word 'good'; neither is his business with giving a verbal definition of its "proper usage, as established by custom." He relates that although he will use the word in the sense in which he thinks it is ordinarily used, he is not anxious to discuss whether he is right in thinking it is ordinarily used in the way in which he is interested in discussing. As he tells us in the Principia:

> My business is solely with that object or idea, which I hold, rightly or wrongly, that the word is generally used to stand for. What I want to discover is the nature of that object or idea, and about this, I am extremely anxious to arrive at an agreement.[14]

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[14]PE, p. 6.

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Any purported analysis of "the object or idea" which
the word 'good' stands for needs to heed at the outset the
caution issued by Ross in 1930 when he said that "a study of
the meaning of 'good' . . . should begin by recognizing that
there is a wide diversity of senses in which the word is
used."[15] Although Moore did not explicitly indicate in the
Principia that 'good' may be used in several senses, he
did tell us in another place that "the word 'good' is highly
ambiguous: it is not only used, but correctly used, in a
number of different senses."[16] Lewy reports that Moore
began his second preface by acknowledging that there are
several senses of 'good' and he was concerned with only one
of them in the Principia; Moore does not now think "that
this sense can be called the ordinary sense of the word,
even if any one sense of it is commoner than any other."[17]

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[15]W. D. Ross, The Right and the Good (Oxford: The
Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 65.

[16]G. E. Moore in a symposium with H. W. B. Joseph
and A. E. Taylor, "Is Goodness a Quality?" The Aristo-
telian Society, Supplementary Vol. XI (1932), 127. Many
philosophers have agreed that the word 'good' is ambiguous.
For example, see R. B. Braithwaite, "Verbal Ambiguity and
Philosophical Analysis," Proceedings of the Aristotelian
Society, XXVII (1927-28), 136; A. C. Ewing, "A Suggested
Non-naturalistic Analysis of Good," Mind, XLVIII (January,
1939), 5; Evander Bradley McGilvary, "The Summum Bonum,"
University of California Publications in Philosophy, I
(November 29, 1904), 1.

[17]Lewy, op. cit., p. 251.

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Moore's later revelation was that:

> . . . among the many different senses in which the word
> "good" is used, there is one particular sense which is
> <u>the</u> sense which I have been mainly concerned to talk
> about in my ethical writings. Perhaps I may sometimes
> have confused this sense with other closely allied
> senses. But I think it is true that, in the main, there
> is just one sense with which I have been principally
> concerned. I have often used the expression "intrin-
> sically good" as a synonym for "good," when used in this
> particular sense, and I have also sometimes used the
> expression "has intrinsic value" as a synonym for "is
> good," when "good" is used in this particular sense.[18]

Thus we see that we cannot discover the object of Moore's

interest by attempting to discover the ordinary meaning of

'good', for 'good' has many ordinary meanings. That is to

say, the term 'good' is ambiguous. However we may attempt to

evaluate the analysis given in the <u>Principia</u>, one evaluation

is ruled out: Moore's analysis is not to be judged by its

correspondence with the facts of ordinary usage of the term

'good', i.e. that 'good' may be used in senses not explicitly

acknowledged by Moore does not discredit his analysis;

neither is it a discredit to his position to point out that

the sense with which Moore was concerned is not the most

common sense of the word 'good'.[19]

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[18]G. E. Moore, "A Reply to My Critics," <u>The Philosophy
of G. E. Moore</u>, Paul Arthur Schlipp, editor (second edition;
Vol. IV of The Library of Living Philosophers. New York:
Tudor Publishing Company, 1952), p. 554.

[19]Cf. <u>ibid</u>., pp. 570-71, where Moore said, "<u>Principia</u>
does not use the words 'good,' 'right,' 'ought,' 'duty' in

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Once we disabuse ourselves of the now-common notion that Moore was concerned with indicating how the word 'good' is generally used, we may come to take some of Moore's claims in the Principia literally. He did tell us that his "business is solely with that object or idea" which he holds the word 'good' "is generally used to stand for." It is not his concern to debate whether 'good' is so used that way: in the Principia Moore is not interested in the facts of linguistic usage. He is interested in only one possible sense of the word 'good'. And he wants to show that when 'good' is used in that sense, it is true that "Good is not identical with any natural . . . property."

Moore intends to refer to something unique by his use of 'good' in the Principia. Since the term 'good' is ambiguous and since I wish to have an unambiguous expression to uniquely denote Moore's object of concern in the Principia I shall use the term 'Goodness (m)' to name that "object or idea".

Several commentators have indicated that the Moore of the Principia held to a special theory of meaning, the

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any sense other than one in which they are used in common speech. . . . Thus in the case of 'good,' all that I did was to assert (very likely wrongly), in the case of one of the senses in which that word is ordinarily used, that that sense was a simple notion: I was not assigning a new sense, which was a simple notion."

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naming theory of meaning.[20] According to this theory, a

term means what it names. Thus, if we wish to discover

the meaning of 'good' with which Moore was concerned, we

must look for the "object or idea" which it names. But

what does 'good' in Moore's sense name? Verbally, I can

say Goodness (m), but that does not tell us anything of

significance. What is Goodness (m)? Moore refers to the

denotation of 'good' by several terms: "object or idea,"[21]

"object of thought,"[22] "notion,"[23] "object or notion."[24]

Although Moore at this stage of his philosophical develop-

ment did not always distinguish between the object named

and the notion or idea named, I think that I will not be

amiss if I drop the potentially misleading 'object' for the

time being and refer to the object of Moore's interest as

the concept denoted by the term 'good'; for, as Moore later

reported, "In my usage, the analysandum must be a concept or

idea, or proposition and not a verbal expression."[25] Thus,

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[20]For example, Barry R. Gross, Analytic Philosophy
(New York: Pegasus, 1970), p. 43; Alan R. White, G. E.
Moore: A Critical Exposition (Oxford: Basil Blackwell,
1958), pp. 39-40.

[21]PE, p. 6.   [22]Ibid., p. 5.

[23]Ibid., p. 6.   [24]Ibid.

[25]Moore, "A Reply to My Critics," pp. 663-64. John
J. Fisher, "On Defining Good," The Journal of Philosophy,
LI (November 11, 1954), 732, in considering the procedure

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we can now say, if we assume the theory of meaning at work in the _Principia_, of the many concepts named by different occurrences of 'good', one of those concepts was the object of Moore's concern; that concept is the concept Goodness (m). But before we attempt to further identify that particular concept, it is necessary to get clear about how Moore used the word 'concept' at the time of the _Principia_.

It would be an anachronism on our part if we interpreted Moore's use of 'concept' to have the meaning normally attached to it today. For example, Gilbert Ryle has quite properly used 'concept' to refer to the function or use of an expression. Kerner defines 'concept' as "what is common to a range of instances of using a word or expression."[26] Yet none of these designate (nor do they intend to designate) what Moore meant by 'concept' during the period in which the _Principia_ was written. I shall now turn my attention to explaining what Moore meant by 'concept' for unless we know

of Moore, held, "In spite of the fact that the _analysandum_ and _analysans_ must be verbally expressed, the analysis is not of words but of concept and in terms of concept." George C. Kerner, _The Revolution in Ethical Theory_ (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 10, argues persuasively that Moore must be interpreted as dealing with concepts and not with things or entities of any sort. And yet, as we shall soon see, "things and entities" are composed of concepts according to Moore's early ontology.

[26]Kerner, _op. cit._, p. 10.

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what sort of things Moore took concepts to be we will not

be able to adequately decide if Goodness (m) is different

from every natural property.

Herbert Hochberg has in my opinion correctly argued

that _Principia Ethica_ depends upon an ontological position

previously outlined by Moore. As Hochberg said, "In Moore's

1899 paper 'The Nature of Judgment' we find . . . the origin

of the ontology I attributed to _Principia_. . . ."[27] Hochberg

summed up Moore's discussion of concepts in "The Nature of

Judgment" in the following manner:

> . . . concepts are objective universals and not "sub-
> jective ideas." Among concepts we find _red_, _this_, and
> _now_. Propositions are composed neither of words nor of
> thoughts but of concepts. Concepts may also be objects
> of thought. But this merely means that they come into
> a relation with a thinker and are not dependent upon
> such a thinker. Further, concepts are incapable of
> change and hence are immutable. Existence . . . is also
> a concept. And, moreover, everything that exists is
> composed of concepts. Objects, as well as propositions,
> are thus composites of concepts.[28]

In the 1899 paper to which Hochberg refers, Moore tells us

that, "It is necessary to regard the world as formed of

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[27]Herbert Hochberg, "Moore's Ontology and Non-Natural
Properties," _The Review of Metaphysics_, XV (March, 1962),
375. Hochberg's thesis is further developed in "Some
Reflections on Mr. Nelson's Corrections," an essay prepared
for E. D. Klemke, editor, _Studies in the Philosophy of G. E.
Moore_ (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969), pp. 141-54.

[28]Hochberg, _loc. cit._

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concepts. They are the only objects of knowledge."[29] Moore accepts Bradley's argument that "the idea used in judgment is the universal meaning" as "conclusive . . . against those . . . who have treated the idea as a mental state."[30] Concepts are "not a part of the content of our ideas, nor produced by any action of our minds."[31] The concept is "not a mental fact, nor any part of a mental fact."[32] A proposition or judgment is "composed not of words, nor yet of thoughts, but of concepts."[33] Thus we can see that the ontological ultimates for Moore were concepts, but these concepts were not contents of any mind. Nevertheless Moore held that we can experience them directly. Moore seems to have been led to his position by considering, as the title of the article indicates, the nature of judgment. If concepts were psychological in nature, then judgment would be impossible Moore held, for we would never have any access to that for which the concept stood. Moore argued thusly:

> The theory would therefore seem to demand the completion
> of an infinite number of psychological judgments before
> any judgment can be made at all. But such a completion
> is impossible; and therefore all judgment is likewise

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[29]G. E. Moore, "The Nature of Judgment, _Mind_, VIII (1899), 182.

[30]_Ibid._, p. 177.   [31]_Ibid._

[32]_Ibid._, p. 179.   [33]_Ibid._

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impossible. It follows, therefore, if we are to avoid this absurdity, that the "idea used in judgment" must be something other than a part of the content of any idea of mine.[34]

From the above remarks we can see that there are two major assertions to be gleaned from Moore's "The Nature of Judgment" which are important for our understanding of his position in the <u>Principia</u>: (1) The ultimate constituents of the universe are non-mind-dependent concepts, out of which the world is composed; (2) An individual can immediately experience concepts.[35]

Moore held in "The Nature of Judgment" that concepts are of two types: empirical concepts and <u>a priori</u> concepts. Empirical concepts are those "which can exist in parts of time."[36] By contrast, <u>a priori</u> concepts are those concepts which cannot exist in an actual part of time.[37] Although the world is formed of concepts, not all concepts enter into the constitution of the world. <u>A priori</u> concepts have "a precarious sort of existence."[38] They exist, but they

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[34]<u>Ibid</u>.

[35]Moore's celebrated "The Refutation of Idealism," which appeared in the same year as the <u>Principia</u>, was concerned to further argue for the proposition that the mind is directly related to concepts.

[36]Moore, "The Nature of Judgment," p. 187.

[37]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 189.   [38]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 186.

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do not "exist in an actual part of time."[39] Examples of <u>a</u>

<u>priori</u> concepts given by Moore are "attribute" and "two".[40]

Although all concepts, both <u>a</u> <u>priori</u> and empirical, are

"given by experience," it is only empirical concepts which

are given through perception.[41] How Moore though we know

<u>a</u> <u>priori</u> concepts is not given in "The Nature of Judgment."

Since Moore did not give any positive statement on

the status of <u>a</u> <u>priori</u> concepts in his article but gave

only a negative description, it is necessary to go to some

of Moore's other works of the same period in order to

attempt to further distinguish between <u>a</u> <u>priori</u> and empirical

concepts. This distinction is necessary, for Goodness (m)

will turn out to be an <u>a</u> <u>priori</u> concept and natural proper-

ties will turn out to be empirical concepts.

An article by Moore written slightly before the

<u>Principia</u> may help to understand Moore's difference between

<u>a</u> <u>priori</u> and empirical concepts. In trying to explain how

two things may be numerically different and still be con-

ceptually identical, Moore presented a theory of universals

in his article "Identity." In that article Moore held that

two things may either be both numerically and conceptually

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[39]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 189. [40]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 186.

[41]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 183.

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or be numerically different while being conceptually identical. The import of the second clause may be expressed by saying that "things which are indiscernible are not always identical."[42] To hold that two numerically different things are indiscernible is to hold that the two things have common predicates. Or, in the language of "The Nature of Judgment," it is to say that the two things are composed of the same empirical concepts. To say that two things have a common predicate or to say that they have the same empirical concepts is to say "there exists in each a predicate exactly similar to that which exists in the other, but not numerically identical with it."[43] Or, again in the language of "The Nature of Judgment," it is to say that the two things contain exactly similar empirical concepts. What makes two numerically different empirical concepts exactly similar is that they stand in a certain relation to a third thing. As Moore puts his point:

> . . . the fact that each of the things said so to be has a peculiar relation to a third thing, numerically but not conceptually different from them, which they have not to one another. This third thing is the Platonic idea, or, as we may now call it, the universal. And this third thing is not exactly similar to either

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[42]G. E. Moore, "Identity," Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, VI (1900-1901), 111.

[43]Ibid.

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What is the ontological status of Moore's universals? He

tells us that "it is at least doubtful" whether any uni-

versals do exist, for ". . . it seems certain that this

red and that red do exist, but very doubtful whether red-

ness itself does."[45]

Thus we can see that in "Identity" Moore posited the

"existence" of universals in addition to acknowledging the

existence of the particulars of sense experience. The

positing of universals seems to have been required to allow

us to admit exactly similar things without thereby having

to admit that exactly similar things were identical.

I must admit that I find Moore's discussion of the

relation between particulars and universals somewhat con-

fusing. But at least this much seems certain: Moore holds

that there are objects which we directly experience through

perception: these are simply collections of empirical

concepts. Yet some of those collections contain properties

which are exactly similar to properties in other collections

of empirical concepts. What makes those concepts exactly

similar is the relation in which they stand with concepts of

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[44]Ibid., p. 114.   [45]Ibid., p. 115.

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a different sort, namely, to the universals of "Identity."

It seems obvious to me that Moore holds that all universals are a priori concepts. But does he hold that all a priori concepts are universals? I find no answer to that question in the Principia or in any of his works preceding it. But in Moore's "The Conception of Intrinsic Value," an essay written between 1914 and 1917[46] and published in 1922, a negative answer is implied. This essay constitutes an expansion of Moore's early ontology, but I feel justified in appealing to it since Moore was still concerned with discussing intrinsic value, a concept which the Principia identified with what I have called Goodness (m).

Moore tried to characterise intrinsic value in "The Conception of Intrinsic Value."[47] Holding that intrinsic value is "a notion which is constantly in people's heads,"[48] Moore went on to define intrinsic value:

> To say that a kind of value is "intrinsic" means merely that the question whether a thing possesses it, and in what degree it possesses it, depends solely on the intrinsic nature of the thing in question.[49]

To explicate this definition Moore thought that he had to

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[46]White, op. cit., p. 22, gives this dating.

[47]G. E. Moore, "The Conception of Intrinsic Value," as printed in G. E. Moore, Philosophical Studies (Paterson, New Jersey: Littlefield Adams & Co., 1959), pp. 253-75.

[48]Ibid., p. 259.   [49]Ibid., p. 260.

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explain what he meant by 'differing in intrinsic nature'.
The fact that two things are numerically different "does
not imply that they have different natures."[50] Neither
does the fact that two numerically different things have
different external relations imply that they differ in
intrinsic nature.[51] Two things have identical intrinsic
natures when they are exactly alike; what makes them ex-
actly alike is, as we have learned from Moore's earlier
articles, that they are composed of exactly similar con-
cepts. The intrinsic properties of a thing would be those
properties listed when one gave a complete description of
the thing.[52] Yet such a listing need not include the
relations into which the thing enters or the intrinsically
valuable properties of the thing. Moore summarized his
position thusly:

> If you could enumerate all the properties a given thing
> possessed, you would have given a complete description
> of it, and would not need to mention any predicates of
> value it possessed; whereas no description of a given
> thing could be complete which omitted any intrinsic
> property.[53]

The import of this is, for Moore, that "predicates of
intrinsic value are not themselves intrinsic properties."[54]

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[50]Ibid., p. 263.   [51]Ibid., p. 271.

[52]Ibid., p. 274.   [53]Ibid.

[54]Ibid., pp. 274-75.

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Just as Moore distinguished between red, the property belonging to an individual object, and redness, the universal to which all reds stand in "a peculiar nameless relation,"[55] I wish to distinguish between Good (m) and Goodness (m). Good (m) is that property that a thing always has when it is intrinsically good; Goodness (m) is that universal to which all Good (m)'s stand in "a peculiar nameless relation." Of Good (m), a predicate of intrinsic value, Moore held that two propositions are true: (1) Good (m) "does depend only on the intrinsic nature of what possesses it," and (2) Good (m) is "not itself an intrinsic property."[56] It follows from (1) that if any two objects have exactly similar intrinsic natures then either they both possess Good (m) to the same degree or they both lack Good (m) to the same degree; the possibility that Moore wished to rule out was that one object may be intrinsically good while another object exactly like it, though numerically different from it, may not be intrinsically good. At the same time he wanted to hold that Good (m) is not an intrinsic property.

For the early Moore, a thing is composed of the concepts (properties) which make it up; there is no thing

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[55]Moore, "Identity," p. 114.

[56]Moore, "The Conception of Intrinsic Value," p. 273.

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apart from the properties. "The Conception of Intrinsic Value" goes on to distinguish four different types of properties which a thing may have. They are (1) intrinsic properties which seem to be the empirical concepts of "The Nature of Judgment."[57] There are also (2) subjective predicates or properties which strictly speaking are not part of the object at all; they are the properties a thing has whereby it tends to bring about certain feelings in individuals. Perhaps an apt term to use to refer to this type of property is 'psychologically causal property'. Moore did not want to admit psychologically causal properties as part of an object's intrinsic nature because their efficacy is dependent on the causal laws at work in the universe and on the nature of the sentient beings being af-fected, both of which in changing may result in a "loss" of that object's psychologically causal properties. Such a loss of properties in Moore's view would not be a change in the intrinsic nature of the object.[58] Hence psychologically causal properties are to be distinguished from intrinsic properties which depend upon what the thing is, not upon what it does to something else. There are also (3) objective

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[57]Vide ibid., pp. 260-65.

[58]Vide ibid., pp. 268-71.

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relational properties or predicates, such as being surrounded by a red ring, a change in which does not alter the intrinsic nature of the object.[59] Finally, there are (4) predicates of intrinsic value which seem to be the a priori concepts of "The Nature of Judgment." These properties, these predicates of value, share with intrinsic properties the "characteristic of depending only on the intrinsic nature of what possesses them."[60] Since these predicates are not themselves intrinsic properties for Moore, there must be some difference between predicates of value and intrinsic properties, only what that difference is is hard to ascertain. Moore himself admitted that he could not "see what it is."[61] Moore's own words are worth repeating here:

> If, however, we are thus to say that predicates of
> value, though dependent solely on intrinsic properties,
> are not themselves intrinsic properties, there must be
> some characteristic belonging to intrinsic properties
> which predicates of value never possess. And it seems
> to me quite obvious that there is; only I can't see
> what it is. It seems to me quite obvious that if you
> assert of a given state of things that it contains a
> balance of pleasure over pain, you are asserting of it
> not only a different predicate, from what you would be
> asserting of it if you said it was "good"--but a
> predicate of quite a different kind; and in the same
> way that when you assert of a patch of colour that it

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[59]Ibid., p. 271. Moore is, in part, taking exception to Bradley's claim in Appearance and Reality that all relations are intrinsic.

[60]Ibid., p. 273.   [61]Ibid., p. 274.

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is "yellow," the predicate you assert is not only
different from "beautiful," but of quite a different
kind, in the same way as before.[62]

This passage is subject to at least two possible interpre-

tations: Moore may be asserting that the universal yellow-

ness is of a different kind than is the universal Goodness

(m). Or he may be asserting that a particular yellow is

a different kind of particular than is a particular Good

(m). I incline to the latter interpretation, but the former

cannot be ruled out at this stage. This potential source of

confusion appears often in Moore's early writings.

It seems to me that much of this potential confusion

stems from Moore's failure to realize that he has posited

at least two and perhaps three different types of _a priori_

concepts in his early ontology. On the one hand, there are

the particular _a priori_ concepts such as Good (m) which are

held to be different in kind from particular empirical

concepts such as this yellow. On the other hand, there

are universal _a priori_ concepts such as yellowness (and

perhaps Goodness (m)) which are contrasted with particular

concepts of any sort, whether the particular concepts be

a priori or empirical. Moore perhaps admits as a third

possibility, although I am not sure that this point can be

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[62]_Ibid_., pp. 273-74.

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conclusively established, universals of intrinsic value which are contrasted with universals such as yellowness. For reference, let me call the former universals a priori value universals and the latter, a priori non-value universals. If such a distinction be adopted then Moore would at least have a verbal means of telling what the difference is between Good (m) and, say, yellow: He could hold that Good (m) stands in "a peculiar nameless relation" to not only a different universal but to a universal of a different type than does yellow. The former is related to an a priori value universal; the latter, to an a priori non-value universal. But in order to distinguish between types of universals would we not need to posit universals of yet a higher type and thus get ourselves into all the difficulties which the third man argument posed for Plato's original theory of universals? If Moore meant to assert in the passage which I cited above that the universal Goodness (m) is of a different type than is the universal yellowness, no wonder he failed to see what the difference is.

I began this section by indicating that Moore was concerned with a concept of good and not with the word 'good'. But now we have discovered a plethora of conceptual kinds inherent in Moore's early writings. At the very minimum there are (1) empirical concepts, (2) particular a

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priori concepts, and (3) universal a priori concepts. Where
do the subjective properties and psychologically causal
properties of "The Conception of Intrinsic Value" fit into
this scheme? It seems to me that they must be included as
different types of empirical concepts although Moore is not
explicit on this point. But if we do characterize these as
empirical concepts, then we must identity four types of
particular concepts: (1) intrinsic empirical concepts,
(2) objective relational concepts, (3) psychologically
causal concepts, and (4) a priori concepts, all of which
are to be contrasted with (5) universal concepts. Perhaps
(5) should be further divided as I indicated above but that
division is not necessary for my immediate purpose.

What properties are natural properties for Moore?
Given the five types of concepts that I have just enumerated,
the first three are held by Moore to be natural properties.
In the Principia, Moore contrasted metaphysical objects with
natural objects. Natural objects are those which "can exist
in time--can have duration, and begin and cease to exist--
can be objects of perception."[63] These descriptions certain-
ly fit the empirical concepts of "The Nature of Judgment."
An example of an objective relational concept--"more

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[63]PE, p. 14.

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evolved"--is given in chapter II of the Principia as a natural property. Chapter III of the Principia is concerned with a natural property which is a psychologically causal property.

A citation from Moore may further substantiate my claim that empirical concepts, psychologically causal concepts and objective relational concepts are all "natural properties." Moore gave a general description of what he meant by a naturalistic ethical theory when he said:

> Whether good be defined as yellow or green or blue,
> as loud or soft, as round or square, as sweet or bitter,
> as productive of life or productive of pleasure, as
> willed or desired or felt; whichever of these or of any
> other object in the world, good may be held to mean,
> the theory which holds it to mean them, will be a
> naturalistic theory.
> . . . .
> Those theories of Ethics, then, are 'naturalistic' which
> declare the sole good to consist in some one property of
> things which exist in time. . . .[64]

Green and blue seem to be intrinsic empirical concepts if we accept Moore's position in "The Nature of Judgment." Productive of life seems to be an objective relational concept, while productive of pleasure seems to be a psychologically causal concept. Loud and soft, depending on how one evaluates Locke and Berkeley, could be either intrinsic or relational empirical concepts. It is with natural

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[64]Ibid., pp. 70,71.

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properties of these sorts which Moore wanted to contrast with the denotation of 'good'.

For Moore, as I indicated above, a word must name something in order for that word to be meaningful: the word means the concept it names. What does Moore's use of 'good' name in the conclusion that "Good is not identical with any natural . . . property"? It may, of course, be asked if 'good' names anything at all, but it is clear that in Moore's own view it does.[65] Since it is the Open Question Argument as based on Moore's early view that has been so influential in twentieth-century ethical theory, I shall adopt Moore's own view in order to show how, even on Moore's own assumptions, the Open Question Argument does not have the force which it has been taken to have.

If we are not familiar with that which 'good' denotes for Moore, we would not be able to rule out at the outset the possibility that it may be any of the five types of concepts which I have extracted from Moore's early writings. But if we do know what it is, we may rule out that it is one of the first three types. Whether or not we know what

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[65]Vide White, op. cit., pp. 46-47, where he cites references to show that although Moore eventually gave up his early view that the meaning of a term is the concept named by that term, as late as 1942 Moore still held to the view that 'good' names.

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it is at the outset, Moore claims to know himself. At least he can say what it is not: it is not any type of natural property. It is not the sort of thing which "can exist in time"; it is not "a part of nature."[66] The denotation of 'good' for Moore must then be an *a priori* concept. The only question is, is it a particular *a priori* concept or is it a universal *a priori* concept? That is to ask, when Moore asserts that "Good is not identical with any natural . . . property," is Moore asserting that the particular *a priori* concept Good (m) is not identical with any natural property, or is he asserting that the universal *a priori* concept Goodness (m) is not identical with any natural property? Although Moore does indicate that he is concerned with the universal concept,[67] nevertheless I think we must conclude that in the particular assertion under consideration that Moore was concerned with a particular concept, with Good (m). If we assume for the sake of argument that Moore was concerned with showing that the universal Goodness (m) is not identical with any natural property, Moore would be open to two charges: the charges of triviality and the charge of holding a question to be open when it is in fact closed.

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[66]PE, p. 110.   [67]*Ibid.*, p. 111.

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If Moore claimed that "Goodness (m) is not a natural property," he would have made a statement which is not overly significant. Moore distinguished between individual spots of red and the universal redness. When that distinction is made, it follows that the universal redness is not a natural property: it is a universal, and no universals are natural properties.[68] Thus it would not be overly significant to assert of the universal Goodness (m) that it is not a natural property; such an assertion is true of any universal.

A question is open when the answer to that question does not depend solely upon the meaning of the terms involved in asking that question.[69] If the denotation of 'good' were Goodness (m) in the question "Is good a natural property?" then that question would not be an open question. The question would not be open because Goodness (m) was defined as a universal concept, and universal concepts are never natural properties. The very meaning of the words involved in asking the question closes the question. Yet a central point of the early part of the Principia was to show that a question such as "Is good a natural property?" is an open question. If 'good' in that question denoted

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[68]Ibid.   [69]Ibid., p. 44.

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Goodness (m), then the question would not be an open question.

I conclude that if 'good' in the assertion "Good is not identical with any natural . . . property," is to denote anything at all, it must denote Good (m); it cannot denote Goodness (m).

Thus I can now drop all references to Goodness (m). It has served its purpose in attempting to explain what is the content of Moore's claim. Whether Goodness (m) exists or not is superfluous to the scope of my paper. We could, if we like, assign Goodness (m) the status of an ideal object: ideal objects or those "objects" which may not exist at all, either in or out of time.[70]

Thus we are left with only one possibile denotation for 'good' in Moore's claim: it must denote Good (m) if it denotes anything at all.

I have been concerned in this section with showing the kind of thing which occupied Moore's interest in the Principia. I have referred to it as 'Good (m). But I have not yet said what Good (m) is. The term 'Good (m)' may be empty. Whether it is possible to discover a meaning for

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[70]Cf. G. E. Moore, "The Value of Religion," International Journal of Ethics, XII (1901), 98, for two examples of ideal objects.

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that term is the topic of the next section of this paper.

2.3 Can We Intuit Good (m)?

I begin by noting that if we are to become aware of
Good (m) we must intuit it. I indicate what Moore
means by 'intuition' and the limits assigned by him to
intuition as a proof-procedure. Following a suggestion
given by Kerner, I interpret the Open Question Argument
as a potential heuristic device for one to employ in
attempting to intuit Good (m) when he is not aware of
Good (m). I show that the Open Question Argument
necessarily fails as a heuristic device of discovery.
I conclude that Moore has not shown that there is even
any such thing as Good (m).

At the time of his writing the Principia, Moore held

that we can immediately perceive empirical concepts:

We may directly experience this particular blue and that

particular blue. That we do directly experience particular

material objects is the central thesis of his "The Refutation

of Idealism," where Moore asserted, "I am as directly aware

of the existence of material things in space as of my own

sensations. . . ."[71] These material things are direct

objects of perception. In this context, 'perception' refers

to the testimony of the senses.

Do we perceive Good (m)? J. M. Keynes' remembrances

of Moore may lead one to think that Moore held that we do.

For Keynes said of Moore that:

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[71]G. E. Moore, "The Refutation of Idealism," Mind,
XII (1903), 433.

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> . . . even when he was awake, he could not distinguish
> love and beauty and truth from the furniture. They
> took on the same definition of outline, the same stable,
> solid, objective qualities and common sense reality.[72]

Love, truth and beauty are all things which possess intrinsic

goodness in Moore's view, but they are not themselves Good

(m): Good (m) is that property that belongs to each of

them. If Good (m) is, as I have tried to show, an a priori

concept, it is not the kind of thing that we can sensibly

experience through perception, for it is not the kind of thing

which can exist in time. And only things which exist in time

can be objects of perception.

How, then, do we come to know Good (m)? Moore's

position is often referred to as ethical intuitionism,[73] but

a careful reading of Moore will reveal that in his usage the

word 'intuition' usually did not describe how one came to

experience Good (m) or any other intuitive object. His point

was primarily negative: it was to show how we did not come to

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[72]Cited by John O. Nelson as reprinted in Klemke
(ed.), Studies in the Philosophy of G. E. Moore, op. cit.,
p. 139. Nelson's article, "Mr. Hochberg on Moore: Some
Corrections," was originally published in The Review of
Metaphysics, XVI (1962), 119-32.

[73]For instance, an early article by J. G. Riddell on
Moore's ethical theory was entitled "The New Intuitionism of
Dr. Rashdall and Dr. Moore," The Philosophical Review, XXX
(November, 1921), 545-65. See also the classic article by
P. F. Strawson, "Ethical Intuitionism," Philosophy, XXIV
(January, 1949), 23-33.

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know Good (m). Several textual examples can be given to support my claim. In a 1901 article "The Value of Religion" Moore equates intuition with faith, where faith is a strong conviction on the part of a person when there is no evidence for that conviction. Although Moore does speak in this article of a person who "sees" that God exists which he himself does not "see", the context makes it clear that 'see' is not being used to describe the normal process of empirical perception which is usually referred to as seeing. Moore's own words are these:

> If a man still believes that God exists, he cannot support his belief by any appeal to facts admitted both by himself and the infidel. He must not attempt to prove that God probably exists; for that is impossible. He must be content to affirm that he sees as clearly that God exists as he sees that he himself does. Many people, I admit, may really have had this strong conviction. And many people may be content to justify belief upon this ground alone. They, I think, are right. Their position is quite unassailable. . . . In fact, if I were the only person who could not see that God exists, and all the world agreed with you, it would yet be just as likely that I was right, as that you and all the world were right. It is equally likely we are right and equally likely we are wrong; but only equally. I have no more right to argue that probably God does not exist, because I cannot see he does, than you to argue that probably he does exist, because you see he does. This is all I have tried to show, when I maintain there is no evidence for God's existence. It is mere faith, not proof, which justified your statement: God exists. Your belief is right, because you cannot help believing and my unbelief is right, because I have not got that intuition. We are both justified by mere necessity.[74]

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[74]Moore, "The Value of Religion," pp. 94-95.

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Several points concerning an intuition are made by Moore in the above passage. First, an intuition is not a proof; it is a "right belief" that one holds in the absence of proof. Second, incompatible intuitions are on an equal epistemological footing: neither are necessarily veridical and neither are necessarily false. Third, an intuition seems to be the result of psychological necessity, the necessity of one who cannot help believing that such and such is the case.

In Moore's 1903 article "The Refutation of Idealism" the following passage occurs:

> We have, then, in _esse_ is _percipi_, a necessary synthetic proposition which I have undertaken to refute. And I may say at once that, understood as such, it cannot be refuted. If the Idealist chooses to assert that it is merely a self-evident truth, I have only to say that it does not appear to me to be so.[75]

Although the word 'intuition' does not appear in this passage, I think that it is clear that Moore wishes to identify what he earlier called an intuition with what is being referred to as "merely a self-evident truth," for later in the paragraph he refers to a "truth" of this sort as "a perfectly unfounded assumption," the sort of characteristic which intuitions had been asserted to have. The way of dealing with intuitions with which one does not

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[75]Moore, "The Refutation of Idealism," p. 440.

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". . . it does not appear to me to be so." The major point

is that a self-evident truth is one held to be true in the

absence of proof. So is an intuition. Self-evidence, from

Moore's viewpoint, cannot be refuted; neither is it a proof,

nor an unfailing sign of truth.

The following passage occurs in Moore's second major

work in ethical theory:

> It does seem to me to be evident that no voluntary
> action can be both right and wrong; and I do not see
> how this can be proved by reference to any principle
> which is more certain than it is itself. If, therefore,
> anybody asserts that the contrary is evident to him
> . . . I do not see how it can be proved that he is wrong.
> If the question is reduced to these ultimate terms, it
> must, I think, simply be left to the reader's inspection.
> Like all ultimate questions, it is incapable of strict
> proof either way.[76]

Again the word 'intuition' does not appear, but the gist of

Moore's position is similar to that given above: To hold

that a view is self-evident is to hold that view to be

incapable of proof. When two persons disagree on what is

self-evident, there are no further grounds for appeal.

The question of who is correct is left to "inspection."

When we come to the Principia itself, the word

'intuition' is used in at least two different senses, as

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[76]G. E. Moore, Ethics (London: Oxford University
Press, 1958), p. 54; first published in 1912.

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was properly indicated in the Index of that work (p. 229).

In one sense, a judgment is held to be intuitive when no

reason can be given for that judgment.[77] Moore holds that

such a judgment "must be rested solely on its self-evidence"

(p. 59), as "not amenable to direct proof" (p. 74), and

there being "no reasons which prove its truth" (p. 144). In

this sense, being an intuition is a characteristic of the

judgments themselves. But there is a second sense of

'intuition' to be found in the Principia.[78] In this sense,

a person's intuition is the faculty whereby he arrives at

judgments of certain types. But not all dictates of the

faculty are intuitions in the first sense. Intuitions in a

"psychological sense" are judgments held without reasons, but

such judgments can at least sometimes be shown to be false.[79]

Other intuitions arrived at by employing the faculty of

intuition cannot be shown to be true or false.[80] It appears

that the faculty of intuition yields two different types of

intuitions.

What are we to make of this muddle of intuitions?

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[77]Vide PE, pp. 59, 74, 144, 148.

[78]Vide ibid., pp. 75-77, 79, 144, 148.

[79]Ibid., pp. 148, 108.

[80]Ibid., pp. 75, 144.

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Moore's general position may be induced from the above
passages to obtain something such as the following: We
sometimes do make judgments for which we offer no reasons
at all; such judgments may in fact be demonstrably true or
false, but we choose to offer no reasons for our judgment.
Such judgments could, if we wish, be called intuitive.
But there is a philosophically more interesting kind of
intuitive judgment: that kind of intuitive judgment we make
which is based on no reason at all because no reason can
in principle be given for our judgment. Such judgments
may be true or they may be false, but we can never ascertain
for certain what their truth values are. The only support
we can give for judgments of this type are reports such as:
"It seems to me to be so; my faculty of intuition affirms
such to be the case. Those whose faculties of intuition
affirm otherwise have as much right to their intuitions as
I do. I cannot prove that my intuition is correct; I can
only try to convince." Such, in fact, seems to be Moore's
position when he stated in one place that his intuition
denied that which Sidgwick's affirmed: Moore realized that
he could not prove his own intuition to be correct or
Sidgwick's false; the most he could do was to try to present
"considerations capable of determining the intellect." When
intuitions differ, one must resort to convincing the

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opponent of the truth of one's position; proving one's

position is impossible.[81]

Such a state of affairs is admittedly unsatisfactory.

The unsatisfactoriness in Moore's opinion results from the

fact that there is no sure way of arriving at agreement.

Moore put the difficulty with this view in the following

manner:

> . . . our dissatisfaction in these cases is almost
> always of the type felt by the poor lunatic in the
> story. 'I said the world was mad,' says he, 'and the
> world said that I was mad; and, confound it, they
> outvoted me.'[82]

I have not explained how it is that one comes to know

Good (m) on Moore's showing. Indeed I cannot. All that I

can do is to say that we intuit it if we know it at all.

At least this much can be said with assurance, we do not

perceive Good (m) through the senses.

Moore certainly held that he could intuit Good (m).

And he further held that any one could intuit it if a

certain procedure be followed. The recommended procedure

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[81] Ibid., p. 75; cf. p. 77.

[82] Ibid., pp. 75-76. Cf. the previously cited passage from p. 94 of "The Value of Religion": "In fact, if I were the only person who could not see that God exists, and all the world agreed with you, it would yet be just as likely that I was right, as that you and all the world were right. It is equally likely we are right and equally likely we are wrong."

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is a form of the Open Question Argument.

That there is such a thing as what I have called

Good (m) can be shown, Moore held, by "a simple appeal

to facts." The facts to which appeal is to be made are

expressed in the following passage:

> But whoever will attentively consider with himself what
> is actually before his mind when he asks the question
> 'Is pleasure (or whatever it may be) after all good?'
> can easily satisfy himself that he is not merely
> wondering whether pleasure is pleasant. And if he will
> try this experiment with each suggested definition in
> succession, he may become expert enough to recognise
> that in every case he has before his mind a unique
> object, with regard to the connection of which with any
> other object, a distinct question may be asked. Every
> one does in fact understand the question 'Is this
> good?' When he thinks of it, his state of mind is
> different from what it would be, were he asked 'Is this
> pleasant, or desired, or approved?' It has a distinct
> meaning for him, even though he may not recognise in
> what respect it is distinct. Whenever he thinks of
> 'intrinsic value,' or 'intrinsic worth,' or says that a
> thing 'ought to exist,' he has before his mind the
> unique object--the unique property of things--which I
> mean by 'good'. Everybody is constantly aware of this
> notion, although he may never become aware at all that
> it is different from other notions of which he is
> also aware.[83]

Two major claims are made in this passage: that 'Good (m)'

does denote something, and that that which is denoted is

"a unique object." I have already made reference to Moore's

own later remarks about the ambiguities inherent in referring

to the uniqueness of Good (m), which may be interpreted

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[83]PE, 16-17.

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as either trivial or as a false statement. Since Moore

himself admitted confusion on this point when he told us

that what he wanted to prove in the <u>Principia</u> is not ex-

pressible by saying 'Good (m)' is unique',[84] let us inves-

tigate the other claim made in the cited passage.

Strictly speaking, there are two procedures suggested

in this passage, both heuristic in nature. I will consider

the latter one first: We are to think of "intrinsic value"

or "intrinsic worth" or we are to say that a thing "ought to

exist." But what is it that we are to think of when we think

of, say, "intrinsic value"? Moore quite properly put that

phrase in quotation marks, for it is not clear at all what

it is that we are to think of when we think of "intrinsic

value". Is it the expression 'intrinsic value'? Well, it

is a nice expression with fourteen letters, but thinking of

that expression does not help to discover what Good (m) is.

Perhaps we are instructed to think of what 'intrinsic value'

names. But that instruction either begs the question at

issue or else it does not help us at all. The question begged

is that 'intrinsic value' has one and only one meaning and

that we are aware of that meaning. Why should we assume at

the outset that 'intrinsic value' is unambiguous? The

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[84]Lewy, <u>op</u>. <u>cit</u>., pp. 252-53.

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Hedonist, for example, may legitimately hold on Moore's concept denotation theory of meaning that he is being instructed to think of pleasure, of that which 'intrinsic value' denotes for the Hedonist. But Moore is certainly not instructing one to think of pleasure. Perhaps then we are being instructed to think of what Moore names by 'intrinsic value'. What does the expression name for Moore? Good (m). Is he then telling us that if we want to know what Good (m) is, the way to find out is to think of Good (m)? If so, and I can see no other plausible interpretation to the instruction, that procedure certainly does not seem very helpful. In so far as the other expressions cited by Moore are synonymous with 'intrinsic value' then it is of no help to be told to think of what they name. We need to know at the outset what they name, which is what Moore's procedure purportedly is designed to aid us in discovering.

I conclude then that the latter procedure given in the cited passage does not function in such a way as to allow one who is unfamiliar with Good (m) to experience it. If a person does not know Good (m), then that procedure is useless: it is tantamount to telling a person to think of Good (m) when he is trying to discover if there be any such thing as Good (m) to think of at all. If a person is aware of Good (m), then the procedure is superfluous. But there

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op. cit.

is also another heuristic procedure given in the cited passage.

The first part of the above passage contains a version of the Open Question Argument which, though it could be looked upon as a proof, may be interpreted as a heuristic device.[85] This utilization of the argument is an attempt on Moore's part to provide a procedure whereby a person may become aware of Good (m). The procedure is as follows: (1) Assert of some X that it is identical with good. (2) Ask 'Is X good?' (3) Repeat the above steps by giving different substitution values to 'X'. The outcome of this procedure should be, if Moore is correct, one's becoming aware of Good (m).

Several explanatory comments regarding this procedure should be made:

(A) It is possible, given Moore's position in "Identity" for X and "good" to be conceptually identical without supposing them to be numerically identical.[86] But it seems that if we assume Moore's ontology from the time

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[85]This is the interpretation given by Kerner, op. cit., p. 21.

[86]Moore admitted later that he was mistaken in holding in the Principia that the 'is' in assertions of the form 'X is good' is always the 'is' of identity; vide Lewy, op. cit., p. 225.

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of the _Principia_ that we must hold that numerical identity implies conceptual identity, while holding that conceptual identity does not necessarily imply numerical identity. Let us then adopt the weaker interpretation: When we assert that 'X is good' we are only asserting that X and "good" are conceptually identical and are leaving open the question whether they are numerically identical. For if it turns out to be the case that they are not conceptually identical, it will follow quite readily that they are not numerically identical; while if it turns out to be the case that they are not numerically identical, it will not follow that they are not conceptually identical.

(B) If we intepret the 'is' in the assertion 'X is good" as expressing conceptual identity between X and "good" it follows quite readily that X must be a concept. For if X is a thing, a composite of concepts, then "good" could not be identical, either conceptually or numerically, with X. Since 'good' is held by Moore to denote a concept, then, if 'X' denotes a composite of concepts, "good" could at most be a part of X and thus not identical with X. If we remember that for Moore a thing is a composite of concepts then we can readily see that if the assertion 'X is good' is not to be a category mistake, 'X' must denote a concept if it is to be potentially identical with "good". Further,

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'X' must not only not denote an object, it must denote a particular concept and not a universal concept if it is to be potentially identical with "good". If 'X' denoted a universal concept, then it could not in principle be the kind of thing identical with the particular concept Good (m). Thus the substitution instances of the variable 'X' must be particular concepts. For the first step of the procedure we are instructed to take a proposed identification of some particular concept with "good".

(C) But what is "good" that we are to identify with X? It is not enough to say Good (m), for that is again begging the question. Neither will it help us to simply pronounce the judgment 'X is good" if we once admit that 'good' is ambiguous. If we assume--and I think this is a correct assumption--that 'good' is ambiguous and assume further with Moore that its ambiguity consists in the fact that the word denotes more than one concept, then we have no guarantee that our assertion verbally expressed as 'X and good are identical' is the judgment Moore instructs us to make. This form of the Open Question argument is defective in the first instance because unless we are already aware of Good (m) we cannot be sure that it is Good (m) which we are asserting to be identical with X. For all we know, we may be using 'good' to denote a concept other than Good (m).

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Thus, in order to utilize Moore's heuristic device we must already know that which the device purportedly helps us in discovering.

Let me illustrate this point further: Instead of formulating this version of the Open Question Argument as I did above, let me replace the word 'good' by 'Good (m)'. Thus the argument becomes: (1) Assert that 'X is identical with Good (m)'. (2) Ask 'Is X Good (m)?' (3) Repeat the above steps by giving different substitution values for 'X'. The same outcome should be expected if this procedure is sound. But for the assertion given in (2) to be meaningful by Moore's theory of meaning, the assertor must at the outset be aware of Good (m); otherwise he could not even meaningfully make the assertion or ask the question in (2). If such be the case, then the Open Question Argument as a heuristic device may help one to see that Good (m) is different from other concepts; it, on this interpretation, certainly does not provide a procedure for one's becoming aware of Good (m) when he is not already aware of it.

There is, as far as I can see, only one interpretation of this version of the Open Question Argument which allows it to be both heuristically helpful and non-question-begging: Meaningfully say the sentence 'X is identical with Good (m). Meaningfully ask the question 'Is X Good (m)?'

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Repeat the above steps giving different substitution values for 'X'. To meaningfully say the words 'X' and 'Good (m)' is to use them to name some concept or concepts. Thus the instructions tell us to let a substitution value of 'X' name some concept and to let 'Good (m)' name some concept, and then to assert that those two concepts are identical. In so far as 'intrinsic value' and the other synonyms given by Moore for 'Good (m)' are not allowed to be substitution instances for 'X', the claim is that we will always discover that the concept denoted by 'X' is not identical with the concept denoted by 'Good (m)'. If we do discover the concepts to be identical, then Moore would have to hold that we are not using 'Good (m)' as <u>he</u> is using it. This procedure does not tell how to use 'Good (m)'; it tells how not to use it. In so far as there is an identity of concepts to be found, we are not using 'Good (m)' as Moore did.

I have tried to make the expression 'Good (m)' un-ambiguous: either it denotes one and only one particular concept, or it has no denotation. The point at issue is which alternative is correct. Moore gives a procedure whereby one purportedly can come to discover that the expression does have a denotation. But when we are instruct-ed to omit 'intrinsic value' and the other synonyms for 'Good (m)' as substitution values for 'X' the procedure is

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vitiated of its force. For it has not yet been established that 'intrinsic value' and the other synonyms are themselves unambiguous, that they denote one and only one particular concept. It is not altogether inconceivable that a person could be using those expressions in a different sense than did Moore. The force of my objection is that although a concept may be found which is not identical with a particular concept denoted by 'intrinsic value' and the other synonyms given by Moore, we still have no guarantee that <u>that</u> concept is Moore's Good (m); we may not be meaning by 'intrinsic value' what Moore means by it.

Thus we must already be aware of Good (m) in order to even apply Moore's procedure in more than just a few instances. This, I think, is a telling objection to the Open Question Argument as a heuristic device, but it is not yet a telling objection against Moore's position. For, of Good (m), Moore hold that "everybody is constantly aware of this notion. . . ." Thus if we are aware of Good (m) at the outset, the verbal gymnastics of the Open Question Argument may help one to <u>distinguish</u> Good (m) from other concepts. But it does not function as a positive heuristic device for allowing one to <u>discover</u> Good (m) when he is not already aware of it.

There are two final objections to be made to the

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Open Question Argument as a heuristic device: Suppose one

performed Moore's recommended procedure and discovered that

what is before his mind when he asked 'Is X good?' is not

two concepts but only one. That is to say, suppose there be

a substitution instance of 'X' such that the concept denoted

by 'X' is identical with the concept denoted by 'Good (m)'

and suppose further that substitution instance is not 'in-

trinsic value' or any of the other synonyms given by Moore.

How could Moore respond to a person who sees only one concept

where Moore sees two? One possible response is that Moore

"sees" or intuits a concept which he denotes by 'Good (m)'

which is different from the concept which the other person

intuits. Is there a difference or not? Is one person being

morally blind in not seeing how Good (m) is different from

the concept which he denotes by 'X'? Or, is Good (m)'s

difference a moral hallucination on Moore's part? How are

conflicting intuitions to be decided? No way is possible on

Moore's showing;[87] that much is admitted by Moore. Neither,

as I have tried to argue, does the Open Question Argument

help one in having Moore's intuition if he does not already

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[87]Vide William Frankena, "The Naturalistic Fallacy,"
Mind, XLVIII (October, 1939), 474-76, and Strawson, loc.
cit., for the classic formulations of this criticism; for
a recent version, vide Barton C. Cooper, "The Alleged
Indefinability of Good," The Journal of Philosophy, LVI
(December 3, 1959), 981-82.

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have it. It is, at best, a question-begging heuristic device. It does not prove; neither does it present "considerations capable of determining the intellect."

Finally, the Open Question Argument as a heuristic device does not rule out the possibility that there may be some who honestly profess to be unaware of Good (m). Moore held that everyone is aware of Good (m), but some may perform the mental manipulations indicated by Moore and still not intuit that concept. Suppose that a person followed Moore's thoughts on intrinsic value from the Principia to "Intrinsic Value" to Ethics. Such a person may well come to agree with Moore that the term 'good (m)' ought not to be applied to any possible substitution values of 'X', for all the X's do not seem to be what Moore referred to by 'Good (m)'. In his Philosophical Studies, Moore referred to that "fundamental sense" of goodness which is "a characteristic a thing would possess, if it existed quite alone."[88] If we choose to limit the denotation of 'Good (m)' to that characteristic, it is entirely possible that many will not discover a denotation for 'Good (m)' at all: they will hold it to be meaningless.

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[88]G. E. Moore, "The Nature of Moral Philosophy," as printed in Moore, Philosophical Studies, op. cit., p. 326; my emphasis. Cf. PE, p. 91, where Moore referred to a similar method of "absolute isolation."

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Is there then any such concept as Good (m)? Moore held that there was. The ultimate evidence that there is such a concept must be Moore's own intuition. In this section I have tried to give and to evaluate the procedure given by Moore which purportedly would allow one to become aware of Good (m). I think that I have successfully shown the defects in that procedure. In the previous section I have tried to give the ontological status of Good (m) if there be such a concept at all. But where there be such a concept is a question I am not able to answer, for I do not intuit it. Moore could not be wrong in his intuition if he intuited Good (m), but his intuition is not evidence for any other person that there is such a concept. I have tried to show in this section how and why the Open Question Argument must be unsuccessful as a heuristic device for becoming aware of Good (m). Whether there even be such a concept is a question that I am not equipped to answer. Moore certainly thought there was even though he was not able to show that there was. Hereafter in this paper I shall assume with Moore that there is such a concept, for to decide whether there even be such a concept is not necessary for an evaluation of the Open Question Argument as a purported proof of Moore's two major theses cited in the first section of this chapter.

2.4 Significant Questions.

I first give a form of the Open Question Argument which purports to prove that the concept denoted by 'X' when 'X' denotes an empirical concept is not identical with Good (m). That conclusion supposedly follows from the fact that the question 'Is X Good (m)?' is a significant question, while the question 'Is X X?' is not a significant question. I consider the assertion corresponding to the question 'Is X X?' in order to discover why Moore may have held the question to be insignificant. I discover four reasons why Moore may have held that the assertion 'X is X' is insignificant: (1) There is no distinction between subject and predicate; (2) The assertion may be interpreted as being about the word 'X' and not about X itself; (3) 'X is X' does not assert a proposition; and (4) The assertion is provable by the law of contradiction alone. (3) is shown to result from a mistake on Moore's part. The other interpretations are accepted and each will form the basis of a different version of the Open Question Argument in succeeding sections.

I wish to lay the groundwork in this section for

evaluating the Open Question Argument as a proof that

"Good is not identical with any natural . . . property."

I have used 'Good (m)' as an unambiguous term to denote that

which Moore intended to denote by the subject of the pre-

viously cited assertion. I am willing to admit that Good (m)

does exist even if Moore was not able to communicate to the

reader what it was. But whether it exists or not is irrele-

vant in evaluating the logic of the Open Question Argument as

a purported proof that Good (m) is not a natural property;

neither does the argument show that ". . . propositions

about the good are all of them synthetic and never analytic."

What follows may be read as a hypothetical claim on my part:
Even if there be such a concept as Good (m), the Open
Question Argument does not establish Moore's two claims.
They may, indeed, be established in other ways, but it is not
my concern in this paper to decide if these claims be true;
my concern is to see if these claims be provable through
applications of the Open Question Argument.

Moore uses versions of the Open Question Argument in
many places. ("The Refutation of Idealism," pp. 438-42
although no explicit question is raised; Principia Ethica,
pp. 15-16, 16-17, 38, 41, 67, 126, 131-32, 135; Ethics,
pp. 69-70, 88-89, 101-102)[89] In addition to using it to
attempt to prove certain assertions about what I have called
'Good (m)', Moore also used the argument to attempt to prove
assertions about "right" and "percipi". I shall limit my
consideration of this argument to his use of it to attempt to
prove something about Good (m).

A generalized form of the Open Question Argument may
be given as follows:

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[89]It should be pointed out that nowhere in the
Principia or anywhere else does G. E. Moore ever specify any
argument to be the Open Question Argument. But in later
literature directed to Moore's writings, the appellation
'Open-Question Argument' has come by convention to be
applied to the type of argument used by Moore in these
passages.

(1)   When 'X' denotes an empirical concept, let us
       assume that 'Good (m)' denotes that concept also.

(2)   To ask 'Is X Good (m)?' is to ask a significant
       question.

(3)   To ask 'Is X X?' is not to ask a significant
       question.

(∴)   The concept denoted by 'X' is not identical with
       Good (m) when 'X' denotes an empirical concept.

I think my statement of the conclusion is a precise way of
making Moore's claim that "Good is not a natural . . .
property." The conclusion says that no empirical concept is
identical with Good (m); and the converse also follows since
'. . . is identical with . . . .' names a symmetrical
relation.

The general force of this argument seems to lie in
the assertion that whenever the question 'Is X Y?' is a
significant question, then X and Y are not identical concepts.
Premise (3) is supplied by way of contrast with premise (2):
There is a difference between asking 'Is X Good (m)?' and
asking 'Is X X?' Moore thought that this difference was
sufficient to establish the conclusion that X and Good (m) are
not identical. There are at least four possible differences
between these two questions indicated by Moore. I shall argue
in the following sections that none of these differences is
sufficient to establish the conclusion that the concept
denoted by 'X' when 'X' denotes an empirical concept is not

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identical with Good (m). But first I must indicate the possible differences mentioned by Moore between the question 'Is X Good (m)?' and 'Is X X?' The differences which I will indicate are extrapolations on my part from Moore's early articles.

What is it about the question expressed in (3) that renders it insignificant? It will be easier to explain Moore's thinking if I consider the assertion corresponding to the question expressed in (3) rather than the question itself. Thus corresponding to the question expressed in (3) is:

(3a) The assertion 'X is X' is not a significant assertion.

What for Moore does it mean to say that an assertion is not a significant assertion? Four possible answers to this question are given in several of Moore's early articles and in the Principia itself.

(1) Part of what Moore attempted to demonstrate in 1900 was that there are no analytic truths.[90] An argument which he used to attempt to establish that point is relevant here. Holding that when "the predicate is simply identical with the subject" and the "proposition may be expressed in the form, A is A," Moore concluded that "we have certainly

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[90]G. E. Moore, "Necessity," Mind, IX (1900, 289-304.

not two different terms, and therefore we have no proposition," for "any proposition . . . must contain at least two different terms, and their relations."[91] Later Moore identified a particular such identical proposition as "a pure tautology".[92] Moore seems to hold that a statement of the form 'A is A' is not a proposition, but only a tautology. Why a proposition must contain two different terms is not told us in this article.

One difficulty with sentences of the form 'A is A' is given in another early article by Moore. In commenting on what may have led Hegel in his Smaller Logic to assert that utterances in accord with the Law of Identity--utterances such as "A is A; everything is identical with itself"--are justly "accused of silliness," Moore attempted to show wherein their silliness lies in his 1900-1901 article "Identity". He summarized his point thusly:

> But there still seems room to ask why these remarks are
> silly if they are true. I think, in the first place, it
> is because the same word happens to be used in subject
> and predicate. It is true, as Hegel himself remarks,
> that the propositional form always "promises a distinction
> between subject and predicate," and if a distinction is
> meant, it usually seems silly to use the same symbol for
> what is meant to be distinguished.[93]

If we wish to make a distinction between subject and predicate

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[91]Ibid., p. 295.   [92]Ibid.

[93]Moore, "Identity," p. 118.

when we assert a proposition, the same word should not occur
in both subject and predicate position of our sentence,
even if that word occurs with different meanings. As Moore
said, "We cannot enunciate all truths in the form of
puns. . . ."[94] The important point for our purpose to be
gleaned from the above passage is that sentences of the form
'A is A' are defective in some sense: one defect follows
from Moore's assumption of the nature of propositions:
propositions "promise a distinction between subject and
predicate," while 'A is A' yields no such distinction if it
be not a pun. Thus 'A is A' is a "pure tautology" and is
thus held to be an insignificant assertion.

(2) A further defect in sentences of the form 'A is
A' which is given in "Identity" and only hinted at in
"Necessity" results from the fact that any such sentences
which do not assert "a relation between two different things"
are "pure nonsense" and do not have "a contradictory."[95]
But is not 'A is not A' the contradictory of 'A is A'? If
I understand Moore correctly, he holds it not to be the
contradictory. To be a full-fledged proposition for Moore,
both the sentence and its contradictory must sometimes both
be true, although, of course, not at the same time. Since

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[94]Ibid.   [95]Ibid., p. 119.

'A is not A' can never be true, it cannot be a proposition; thus it cannot be the contradictory of 'A is A'; thus 'A is A' is not a proposition; hence it is "pure nonsense." Much argument is needed to fill in the steps of what I take to be Moore's argument, but it seems to me that the most important part of the argument is the first where it is held that every proposition must sometimes be true and sometimes be false.

Let X be a particular proposition and not-X be its contradictory. When X is true, not-X is false; when X is false, not-X is true. If X is sometimes true and sometimes false, then both X and not-X have a particular property: the property of being either true or false. That property-- referred to as "a property common" and as "some property"-- is held to be a property which belongs to every proposition.[96] Moore seems to have held that since 'A is not A' can never be true and is thus always false, it lacks an essential property of propositions, namely, the property of being true or false. Hence 'A is not A' cannot be the contra- dictory of 'A is A'; hence 'A is A' is not a proposition since it has no contradictory.

How is Moore's position to be evaluated? I think it

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[96]Moore, "Necessity," p. 298.

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is certainly false. It seems to stem from a failure to look upon the property of being either true or false as a property which a proposition may have insofar as it has at least one of the properties of being true or of being false. It need not have both to be either true or false. I think Moore is guilty of a simple confusion. I find Moore to have given no convincing reason for holding 'A is A' to be "pure nonsense."

My last point should be elaborated. Let us assume that a proposition must be either true or false and that 'A is not A' cannot be true; it must always be false. Moore's position seems to be that since 'A is not A' must be false, it is not possible for it to be true or false; it can only be false. Moore's position is somewhat similar to one's holding that if I must go to town, then the alternative of either going to town or staying at home is not open to me. To be a proposition in Moore's theory requires that the alternative of truth or falsity be open to it; such an alternative is not open to 'A is not A'.

Is being true or false a sufficient condition for being a proposition, or is it a necessary condition? If we assume it to be a sufficient condition, then it follows that if X is true then X is a proposition and if X is false then X is a proposition. That inference does not follow

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if we assume being true or false is a necessary condition

for being a proposition. When 'Tx' means 'x is true',

'Fx' means 'x is false' and 'Px' means 'x is a proposition'

there are two possible formulas to consider:

(1) (x) ((Tx v Fx) ⊃ Px)

(2) (x) (Px ⊃ (Tx v Fx))

(1) is a way of specifying a sufficient condition for being

a proposition; (2), a necessary condition. (1) is equiva-

lent to

(3) (x) ((Tx ⊃ Px) · (Fx ⊃ Px))

which yields by instantiation, simplification, and quantifi-

cation

(4) (x) (Fx ⊃ Px)

which says that for any particular x, if x is false, then

x is a proposition. Thus if being true or false is taken

as a sufficient condition for being a proposition, it follows

that 'A is not A' is a proposition contrary to Moore. But

that result does not follow from (2), which is equivalent to

(5) (x) ((Px ⊃ Tx) v (Px ⊃ Fx).

It is <u>not</u> valid to deduce (4) from (5).

The point that I am trying to illustrate is that if

being true or false is taken only as a necessary condition

for being a proposition, we may not conclude from the fact

that 'A is not A' is always false that it is a proposition.

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But neither may we conclude that it is not. Both inferences are invalid. But if we take being true or false as either a sufficient or as both a necessary and sufficient condition for being a proposition it does validly follow from the fact that 'A is not A' is false that 'A is not A' is a proposition. Since Moore later took being true or false as a defining characteristic of propositions, as being both a necessary and a sufficient condition, and since I can see no reason not to so take it, I conclude that it should so be taken. Hence it follows that 'A is not A' is a proposition and so is its contradictory, the identity statement 'A is A'. There may be other objections to sentences of the form 'A is A', but it is mistaken to hold that they are not propositions.

(3) Further reasons are given by Moore in his 1903 article "The Refutation of Idealism" for holding that propositions of the form 'A is A' are not significant assertions. In that article Moore held that in the assertion '_Esse_ is _percipi_' the copula 'is' is ambiguous, being subject to three different interpretations. The assertion may be true on either of the first two interpretations, but it will not be "important."[97] Let me give the unimportant interpretations

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[97]Moore, "The Refutation of Idealism," p. 438.

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first: (A) the statement may be an assertion that the word

'esse' is "used to signify nothing either more nor less

than the word 'percipi'." Or, as Moore further expressed it:

> The statement may be meant to assert that the word
> 'esse' is used to signify nothing either more or less
> than the word 'percipi': that the two words are precise
> synonyms: that they are merely different names for one
> and the same thing: that what is meant by esse is
> absolutely identical with what is meant by percipi.[98]

That the assertion 'esse is percipi' may be interpreted as

an identity statement is the first interpretation given by

Moore. But it is important to notice how Moore interprets

a statement of identity in this context. The claim is not

that esse is identical with percipi; it is that the words

'esse' and 'percipi' name the same thing. On such an in-

terpretation, 'esse is percipi' functions "merely to define

a word."[99] Thus what appears to be an assertion about esse

becomes an assertion about the word 'esse'. Moore does not

tell us in this article why 'esse is percipi' would be un-

important on this interpretation. To find such a reason

requires that we turn to the Principia.

Consider the following passages, both relatively long,

from the Principia:

> When A says 'Good means pleasant' and B says 'Good means
> desired,' they may merely wish to assert that most
> people have used the word for what is pleasant and for

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[98]Ibid.   [99]Ibid.

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what is desired respectively. And this is quite an
interesting subject for discussion: only it is not a
whit more an ethical discussion than the last was. Nor
do I think that any exponent of naturalistic Ethics
would be willing to allow that this was all he meant.
They are all so anxious to persuade us that what they
call the good is what we really ought to do. 'Do, pray,
act so, because the word "good" is generally used to
denote actions of this nature': such, on this view,
would be the substance of their teaching. And in so far
as they tell us how we ought to act, their teaching is
truly ethical as they meant it to be. But how perfectly
absurd is the reason they would give for it! 'You are
to do this, because most people use a certain word to
denote conduct such as this.' 'You are to say the thing
which is not, because most people call it lying.' That
is an argument just as good![100]

If right, by definition, means conducive to general
happiness, then it is obvious that general happiness is
the right end. It is not necessary now first to prove
or assert that general happiness is the right end,
before right is defined as conducive to general happi-
ness--a perfectly valid procedure; but on the contrary
the definition of right as conducive to general happi-
proves general happiness to be the right end--a perfectly
invalid procedure, since in this case the statement that
'general happiness is the right end of human action' is
not an ethical principle at all, but either, as we have
seen, a proposition about the meaning of words, or else
a proposition about the nature of general happiness,
not about its rightness or goodness.[101]

In both of these passages Moore is holding that it is not an

answer to the question of how one ought to live to point out

how people use words. That the purported definition is a

correct report is one concern; that the definition is a

reason for an ethical judgment is another. The definitional

truth expressed as a purported identity statement is not

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[100]PE, pp. 11-12.   [101]Ibid., p. 19.

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absolutely unimportant--it is unimportant for a particular concern; knowing how words are used is unimportant for arriving at ethical truths. Likewise, by extrapolation, one could say that the interpretation (A) given to 'esse is percipi' is unimportant to Moore's concern in "The Refutation of Idealism": knowing how the word 'esse' is used is not important as a source for arriving at a knowledge of what is real. Just as Moore wished to ascertain what is Good (m) in the Principia instead of how 'Good (m)' is used, likewise he wished to ascertain what is esse in "The Refutation of Idealism" instead of how the word 'esse' is used. Verbal definitions are characterized in the Principia as tautologies. And a tautology, held Moore, is not an ethical proposition at all.[102] Tautologies are not absolutely unimportant; they are unimportant relative to a particular concern which Moore had.

Thus 'esse is percipi' may be interpreted as an assertion about the word 'esse'. When it is, although the assertion may in fact be true, such an assertion is not important for discovering truths about esse. Thus interpretation (A) is held to be unimportant.

Another interpretation of 'esse is percipi' is given

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[102]Ibid., p. 73.

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in "The Refutation of Idealism" which gives an assertion

which in Moore's opinion is also unimportant. We may hold

(B) that what is denoted by 'esse' "though not absolutely

identical" with what is denoted by 'percipi' "yet includes

the latter as a part of its meaning."[103] Moore's second

interpretation can best be expressed symbolically: Let us

assume that 'percipi' denotes the concepts y and z, and that

'esse' denotes the concepts x, y and z. Thus esse and

percipi would not be completely identical, although the terms

'esse' and 'percipi' do denote some common concepts. But

such an interpretation yields an unimportant assertion

because:

> . . . from the fact that a thing was experienced we
> should not be able to infer that it was real; since it
> would not follow from the fact that it had one of the
> attributes essential to reality, that it also had
> the other or others.[104]

Thus, again, the assertion is unimportant, but it is unimpor-

tnat relative to a particular Moorean concern--the concern

for ascertaining whether there be anything real which is not

experienced.

(4) The third interpretation given to 'esse is

percipi' is an interpretation which gives a fourth reason

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[103]Moore, "The Refutation of Idealism," loc. cit.

[104]Ibid., p. 439.

for holding that statements of the form 'X is X' are not
significant is an assertion (C) that percipi can be in-
ferred from x alone, where x is a concept or concepts not
common to both esse and percipi. Failure to admit such an
x makes 'esse is percipi' an "absolute tautology."[105]
This interpretation yields an assertion that if 'esse is
percipi' is true and important at all, it is a synthetic
truth. Taking analytic truths as truths which are not syn-
thetic, Moore identifies analytic truths as those provable
by the law of contradiction alone.[106] And a "purely
identical proposition" is "proved by the law of contradiction
alone."[107] If I do not misunderstand Moore's position, he is
now holding that identical propositions are "perfectly
barren" and what makes them perfectly barren is that they are
provable by the law of contradiction alone. In this context,
an assertion is not significant if it is provable by the law
of contradiction alone.

I have been trying to explain why on Moore's showing
an assertion of the form 'X is X' is not a significant
assertion. Several purported reasons have been discovered:
(1) In such an assertion there is no distinction between

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[105]Ibid., p. 440.　　　[106]Ibid., p. 441.

[107]Ibid., p. 442.

the subject and the predicate. (2) 'X is X' does not assert a proposition. (3) It is possible to interpret 'X is X' as being about the word 'X' and not about X itself. (4) 'X is X' is provable by the law of contradiction alone. I will tentatively accept (1) as giving a good reason for holding that the assertion 'X is X' is not a significant assertion. My position closely, though not exactly reflects the idea expressed by Moore's statement that ". . . there is no meaning in saying that pleasure is good, unless good is something different from pleasure."[108] I have tried to show why (2) must be rejected because it is based on a false assumption. I shall accept (3) as a possible way of interpreting statements with the form 'X is X'; nevertheless, I shall argue below, this interpretation vitiates the force of the Open Question Argument if it is utilized to attempt to show that Good (m) is not identical with any natural property. I shall give that argument in the next section. I will agree that, given Moore's realistic epistemology, (4) may be accepted. But I shall attempt to show that only some and not all identity propositions are provable by the law of contradiction alone. I shall attempt to show how Moore's realistic epistemology coupled with his

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[108]PE, p. 14.

ontology prohibited his seeing that there are two types of

identity propositions and that once this distinction is

made the Open Question Argument again looses its force.

I began this section with a general version of the

Open Question Argument. Drawing on the investigations of

this section I can now give the argument more fully.

An elaborated form of the Open Question Argument as

used by Moore to attempt to show that "Good is not a

natural . . . property" may be given as follows:[109]

(1) Let us assume that some natural property, X, is
identical with Good (m).

(2) But it is significant to ask 'Is X Good (m)?'
It is a significant question because the assertion
'X is good (m)' either (a) offers a distinction
between the subject and the predicate of the
assertion, or (b) it is not possible to inter-
pret the assertion as being about the word 'X',
or (c) the assertion is not provable by the law
of contradiction alone.

(3) It is not a significant question to ask 'Is X X?'
because the assertion 'X is X' is not a significant
assertion because either (a) the assertion does not
offer a distinction between the subject and the
predicate, or (b) it is possible to interpret the
assertion as being about the word 'X', or (c) the
assertion is provable by the law of contradiction
alone.

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[109]I want to emphasize again that Moore also offered
other arguments to establish his conclusion. A complete
rejection of Moore's position would necessitate a refutation
of those other arguments. I want to establish only one
thesis in this chapter: Moore's position cannot be demon-
strated through his use of the Open Question Argument.

(∴) X, an empirical concept, is not identical with
Good (m).

As the substitution values of 'X' are changed so that 'X'
denotes differing empirical concepts, this procedure is
repeatable and (2) will continue to be true and the con-
clusion will continue to follow is the further claim that
Moore made about this argument. Premise (1) does not need
to be proved; it is only assumed in order to be shown
false by a <u>reductio</u> <u>ad</u> <u>absurdum</u> proof. Premise (2) is
shown to be true by "a simple appeal to facts." I shall
try to show that even when (2) is true, Moore's conclusion
does not follow. I have already tried to give Moore's
reasons in support of (3) in this section.

There are three different forms which the Open
Question Argument may take in attempting to show that X is
not identical with Good (m). Each different reason given
for holding that the question 'Is X Good (m)?' is a sig-
nificant question will generate a different version of the
argument. Section 2.5 will evaluate the argument when (b)
is given as the reason for the significance of the question
raised in premise (2); section 2.6 will evaluate the argument
when (c) is assumed as the reason; section 2.7 will evaluate
it when (a) is assumed. I will show that the argument does

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[110]Moore's phrase in PE, p. 15.

not establish its conclusion on any of these interpretation.

2.5 Identity Statements and Verbal Definitions.

In this section I negatively evaluate a first version
of the Open Question Argument. Moore held that one
reason why the question 'Is X X?' is insignificant is
that the assertion corresponding to the question may be
interpreted as being about 'X' and not as being about
X. I interpret the question 'Is X Good (m)?' as also
being about 'X' and show by examples that although the
two questions 'Is X Good (m)?' and 'Is X X?' do differ,
that difference is not sufficient to establish the
conclusion that X is not identical with Good (m).

We have discovered several reasons why Moore may have

held that the question 'Is X X?' is an insignificant

question. One reason is that the assertion corresponding to

that question can be interpreted as being about the word 'X'

and not as being about the object X. If the question 'Is

X X?' is insignificant for that reason, it would seem to

follow that Moore must hold that the question 'Is X Good

(m)?' is significant for the denial of that reason. That is

to say, he must hold that 'X is Good (m)' is significant be-

cause it cannot be interpreted as being about the word 'X';

it must be interpreted as being about X. In passing, in the

previous section, I indicated why Moore thought the asser-

tion ought not to be interpreted as being about 'X'. Such

an interpretation would not be important relative to a

particular concern of Moore's. Yet he did not show that the

assertion cannot be interpreted in such a way: he only insists

that such an interpretation would not yield an ethical proposition. Moore himself allows the possibility of such an interpretation.

In this section I will interpret the questions 'Is X X?' and 'Is X Good (m)?' as both being about the word 'X' and not as being about the object X. On such an interpretation I will agree that there is a difference between the two questions. Yet, I shall argue, that difference is not sufficient to establish the conclusion that X is not identical with Good (m). Thus one version of the Open Question Argument will be shown to be defective.

Moore held that the statement 'esse is percipi' may be taken as a statement of identity. When it is so taken, it may be interpreted as a statement about the word 'esse' as I reported above. It seems to me that, in like manner, the assertion 'X is Good (m)' may be taken to be about the word 'X'. In Moore's language, this interpretation would yield the assertion that the word 'X' denotes the same concept that 'Good (m)' denotes. Is that assertion ever true? Its truth or falsity would depend on how the two words are used, on the facts of customary usage. But such a consideration would be of only philological, not philosophical interest to the Moore of the Principia. As early as 1900 Moore indicated that "the only test that a word is correctly

used is common usage."[111] But Moore then went on to say

that he was not interested in discovering facts concerning

correct usage.[112] It was not until 1925 that Moore came to

show an interest and respect for how a phrase is "ordinarily

understood",[113] a view which contrasts with the claim in

Principia that "my business is not with proper usage, as

established by custom."[114]

Whether the assertion that the word 'X' denotes the

same property as 'Good (m)' denotes is true was not Moore's

early concern to discover. Yet the fact that this inter-

pretation is possible negates the force of the Open Question

Argument. Consider the two words 'lout' and 'looby'. Both

are adjectives and, following Moore's position that the mean-

ing of a word is the concept denoted by that word, both

denote concepts; in this case, both denote the same concept.

Suppose one were to ask (a) 'Is a lout a looby?' and also to

ask (b) 'Is a lout a lout?'. Let us interpret both questions

as being about language. Then (a) becomes (c) 'Does the

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[111] Moore, "Necessity," op. cit., p. 19.

[112] PE, p. 6.

[113] G. A. Paul, "G. E. Moore: Analysis, Common Usage, and Common Sense," in The Revolution in Philosophy (London: Macmillan, 1965), p. 64. Paul's claim is criticized, I think, mistakenly in White, op. cit., p. 29.

[114] PE, p. 6.

word "lout" denote the same concept as does the word

"looby"?' and (b) becomes (d) 'Does the word "lout" denote

the same concept as does the word "lout"?' The answers to

(b) and (d) are obvious. In one of the few places in the

Principia where Moore uses the phrase 'open question',

he characterizes an open question as one whose answer is

not obvious.[115] There is a difference between (c) and (d).

The answer to (c) is not obvious to many. A dictionary may

be needed to find the answer to that question.

If we interpret (a) in such a way that it is a

question about louts instead of as a question about the word

'lout', then the answer to (a) would also be obvious. If

one were to meaningfully assert that a lout is a looby (as

opposed to merely saying the words 'a lout is a looby'),

this assertion would on Moore's grounds be equivalent to

the assertion that a lout is a lout. Either could be

meaningfully asserted only by one who understands what the

terms 'lout' and 'looby' denote. As material rather than

formal assertions 'a lout is a looby' and 'a lout is a

lout' would be synonymous because exactly the same concept

would be denoted by the subject and predicate of both

assertions. The answer to question (a) above would be as

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[115]Ibid., p. 43; the expression also occurs on pp.
27 and 44.

obvious as the answer to question (b) to anyone who understood either question, because they are the same question. They are the same question because they are synonymous.

But questions (c) and (d) are not synonymous in the same sense, for the subject of those sentences, namely, the word 'lout' is related to different predicates. In the one case, the relation is to the word 'lout'; in the other, to the word 'looby'. That 'lout' and 'looby' may in fact denote the same concept does not prevent the question 'Is a lout a looby?' from being meaningful in a way in which the question 'Is a lout a lout?' is not a meaningful question when the questions are interpreted according to the pattern established by Moore himself.

Likewise, 'X' and 'Good (m)' may in fact denote the same concept and thus be synonymous terms despite the fact that there is a difference between asking 'Is X Good (m)?' and asking 'Is X X?' For if we interpret both questions as being about words instead of being about concepts, i.e. if we ask not are the <u>concepts</u> identical but if we ask do the <u>words</u> denote the same concept, we can discover a difference between the questions. One may be asking for information about customary usage in asking 'Does "X" denote the same concept as does "Good (m)"?' because he is not sure about the proper usage of one or the other of the

words 'X' or 'Good (m)'. He need not have to know what concepts, if any, that 'X' and 'Good (m)' denote in order to meaningfully ask the questions, while he would have to know the concepts denoted in order to meaningfully ask either question (a) or question (b) above.

If the question 'Is X Good (m)?' be expressed in the formal rather than in the material mode as Moore allows in an article contemporary to the Principia then it does not follow that this version of the Open Question Argument shows X and Good (m) not to be identical. That conclusion does not follow because of a conjunction of two reasons: (1) more than one word may denote the same concept, which Moore admits; and (2) one may raise questions about the denotation of a word without being aware of what the word denotes.

Is there any reason not to interpret the question as I did? There is only one reason given by Moore than I can find, but that reason--important thought it may be--is not relevant in evaluating the logic of the Open Question Argument. Moore held that a linguistic definition does not serve as a reason for an ethical judgment. Such may well be the case. How the word 'Good (m)' is conventionally used may not give us any reason for acting in a certain way; nevertheless such a fact does not show that the question of how words are used cannot or ought not to be raised. I

think that at this stage of his career Moore over-reacted to

his important discovery that definitions have been taken

as ethical propositions; he seemed in 1903 to want to deny

definitions any philosophical importance.

If 'Is X Good (m)?' is interpreted as a question about

the words 'X' and 'Good (m)', the question can be significant

without necessitating the conclusion that X and Good (m)

are different concepts. They may well be different

concepts but this version of the Open Question Argument

does not show them to be different. Moore himself provided

a procedure in "The Refutation of Idealism" which if adopted

destroys the critical force of this interpretation of the

Open Question Argument.

2.6 Denotative Identity and the Law of Contradiction.

I begin by distinguishing between connotative identity
statements and denotative identity statements. Using
that distinction, I show that the version of the Open
Question Argument which holds that 'Is X X?' is
answerable by considering the Law of Contradiction alone
while 'Is X Good (m)?' is not does not show X and
Good (m) to be non-denotatively identical.

Another reason why Moore held that the question 'Is

X X?' is an insignificant question is that the assertion

corresponding to that question is provable by the law of

contradiction alone. I will agree that the assertion

corresponding to the question 'Is X Good (m)?' is not

provable from the law of contradiction alone. Yet I will show that this difference in the questions does not show X to be non-identical with Good (m). In support of my thesis, I will argue that Moore's concept-inspection procedure clouds a difference between connotative and denotative identity statements. Once this distinction is drawn, this version of the Open Question Argument is easily shown to be invalid. In this section I will be concerned with showing that the Open Question Argument does not show lack of denotative identity between X and Good (m); in the next section, I will be concerned with showing that it does not show lack of connotative identity.

The assertion that 'The morning star is the evening star' is normally and, I think, correctly taken to assert that the relation of being identical holds between two objects. But such language is apt to be misleading, for, strictly speaking, it is not two things which are identical: there is only one thing which is called by two different names. There is not one thing called 'morning star' and another thing called 'evening star' which are asserted to be identical. One who remembers Butler's maxim that everything is what it is and not another thing may be tempted to argue that since everything is what it is and not another thing, anyone who attempts to identify two different things must be

guilty of a confusion: the type of confusion Moore denominates

the naturalistic fallacy in the _Principia_.[116] If we are not

careful with our language we may lead one to think we made a

mistake where no mistake was intended or committed.

Is the relation named by 'is identical with' a monadic

or a dyadic relation? That is to ask, does it hold between

two things, or is it properly a property belonging to only

one thing? It is tempting to call it a dyadic relation

because the normal locutions in which it is mentioned are

of the form 'X is identical with Y'. But this suggests

that two things, X and Y, are asserted as identical. But

if they are two things, they cannot be identical; at most,

they can only be exactly similar. If we posit two different

things as identical, we certainly seem to be contradicting

ourselves. It would appear then that 'is identical with'

names a monadic relation and every statement of identity is a

trivial instance of Butler's maxim. Or, at least, so Moore

seems to have held. But we do not have to come to this con-

clusion. We can hold that the relation is dyadic, that there

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[116]Vide Frankena, _op. cit._, p. 471. Frankena iden-
tified the naturalistic fallacy as a species of the definist
fallacy. According to Frankena, the definist fallacy is
"the process of confusing or identifying two properties,
of identifying one property by another, or of substituting
one property for another." And, "the fallacy is always
simply that two properties are being treated as one."

are two terms to this relation; but in this case, the terms being related are not things: the two terms are words. And, yet, even this way of putting it is misleading, for we may be inclined to assert that the two words themselves are identical, which would be false. Instead, we should say something such as: (1) To assert 'X is identical with Y' is to assert that the words 'X' and 'Y' denote the same thing. There is a standard distinction which goes back to at least John Stuart Mill's _System of Logic_ between the connotation of a word and its denotation. Given that distinction, we could also hold: (2) To assert 'X is identical with Y' is to assert that the words 'X' and 'Y' have the same connotation, i.e. they are synonyms. Thus we may have either denotative identity or connotative identity. I wish to show how Moore's position tends to blur this distinction between two types of identity statements.

To ask 'Is the morning star the evening star?' is not to ask 'Is the morning star the morning star?' The former question is significant; the latter is trivial. Here it is obvious that one who asks the former question is not asking the latter question; yet the difference between the two questions is not sufficient to force the conclusion that the morning star is not the evening star. That we know the morning star is the evening star follows from astronomical

discoveries; the truth of the statement is not proven by the law of contradiction alone.

One type of identity statement is represented by sentences such as:

(1) The morning star is the evening star.

(2) Scott is the author of Waverly.

(3) Cicero is Tully.

All of these are denotative identity statements; it is not enough to appeal to the law of contradiction alone to discover their truth values. As Quine cogently put the point I am trying to make:

> To say that two names designate the same object is not to say that they are synonymous, that is, that they have the same meaning. To determine the synonymity of two names and other expressions it would be sufficient to understand the expressions; but to determine that two names designate the same object it is commonly necessary to investigate the world.[117]

For Quine's point to hold, we must interpret the three examples above as being about words. What is asserted in the examples is not identity of concepts, but that two names or name-like phrases denote the same object. Identity statements of this sort are to be distinguished from statements such as:

(4) A brother is a male sibling.

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[117]Willard V. Quine, "Notes on Existence and Necessity," The Journal of Philosophy, XL (1943), 119.

(5) A triangle is a three-sided plane figure.

Let me call statements of this latter sort connotative

identity statements. These statements could also be inter-

preted as being assertions about language. For example, (5)

could be interpreted as the assertion that the word 'brother'

denotes the same concept or set of concepts as does the

word 'male sibling'. On this interpretation there is a

similarity between the first set of sentences, (1), (2)

and (3), and the second set, (4) and (5): the truth of both

depends on how the words mentioned are in fact used. In

this sense, we have to at least know how our language is

used in order to ascertain the truth of any of the assertions.

But there is an important difference between the two groups:

in the case of the former group, we have to know both how

the words are used and certain non-linguistic facts; in the

words of Quine, we also have "to investigate the world." In

the case of the latter group, we only have to know how the

words are used, but we do not have to investigate the world.

In Moore's terminology, as soon as we understand the latter

group of sentences, i.e. as soon as we become aware of the

concepts denoted by the words in the sentences, i.e. as soon

as we become aware of the connotations of those words, we may

immediately ascertain their truth value by appeal to the law

of contradiction alone. We can see that to deny any of them

would yield a sentence which is self-contradictory; such

seems not to be the case for the former group of sentences.

Consider the sentence 'A bachelor is an unmarried

man'. Let Y be the concept which both 'bachelor' and 'un-

married man' denote. When one comes to realize that the

two terms denote the same concept, i.e. have the same

meaning in Moore's language or, in Mill's language, have the

same connotation, he comes to realize that the sentence may

be interpreted as an assertion that Y is Y. This identity

can be proven by the law of contradiction alone in the

sense that the denial is a self-contradiction: Y is not Y.

And the law requires that the denial of a self-contradiction

be true.

It is important to notice that two paradoxical results

follow from Moore's identifying the meaning of a term with

the concept(s) denoted by that term: (1) only identity

statements are analytic, and (2) there is no distinction

between denotative identity statements and connotative

identity statements. I shall argue for the first result

below when I evaluate Moore's claim that ". . . propositions

about the good are all of them synthetic and never analytic."

But now I must try to establish the latter.

I have pointed out above that according to Moore's

ontology at the time of the Principia a thing, such as the

morning star, Scott or Cicero, is a composite of concepts.

Notice, for example, that the morning star and the evening

star are composed of identical concepts. If we assume as

did Moore at this period that a word means the concept

or concepts which it names, then the words 'morning star'

and 'evening star' would have the same meaning because they

denote the same concepts. It is necessary to emphasize the

point that the concepts denoted by the words 'morning star'

are not just exactly similar to those denoted by the words

'evening star'; they are one and the same. Moore held that

two numerically different things could be exactly similar

and still be numerically identical, but here we have a case

of the morning star being numerically identical with the

evening star. If there is numerical identity then there is

conceptual identity, and where there is conceptual identity

there is sameness of meaning for the words which refer to

the same objects. Thus it would seem that 'the morning star

is the evening star' should be provable by the law of con-

tradiction alone if 'a brother is a male sibling' is thus

provable. And if it is, then there is no distinction between

the two different classes of identity statements which I

have tried to distinguish.

My point may be put another way: If we take Moore's

concept inspection procedure of what is before our mind when

we use a term to be the source of our discovering what a term

means and if we take the meaning of a term to be the concept

or concepts denoted by the term and if we take Moore's

position that we are immediately aware of concepts and if

we take, as did Moore, the object to be composed of concepts,

then to ask 'Is the morning star the evening star?' is to

ask 'Is the morning star the morning star?' when the two

questions are interpreted as being in the material rather

than the formal mode of speech. If we take the questions

to be in the formal mode--as being about words--then the

results cited in the previous section follow: the Open Ques-

tion Argument looses its force for the reasons given there.

But if we leave the question in the material mode, it follows

on Moore's ontology and epistemology of the _Principia_ that

either denotative identity statements are provable by the

law of contradiction alone or no identity statements are

provable by the law of contradiction alone.

It seems, at best, paradoxical to hold that certain

astronomical discoveries can be made simply by taking

thought, without having investigated the world. Likewise it

seems paradoxical to hold that statements of the form 'A is

A' cannot be proven by the law of contradiction alone. Is

there any way out of this dilemma? Let me propose one which

will be developed into a further criticism of the Open

Question Argument.

Moore could hold consistently with his position that the terms 'morning star' and 'evening star' do in fact denote the same concepts, but we are not aware of all of the concepts denoted. Given Moore's theory that objects are made up of concepts it would appear that we are not aware of all the parts which compose that celestial body because it is too far away from us for us to completely experience all of it. Thus we may have only a partial awareness of the meaning of the terms 'morning star' and 'evening star', and what a person means by one term may not be what he means by the other, although the terms in fact have the same meaning. If we once admit the possibility of partial awareness of the concepts denoted by the two terms, we may discover that what is before our minds when we think of the morning star is positively different from what is before our minds when we think of the evening star. For in neither case are we thinking of the morning star or the evening star in its totality of concepts: we are thinking of different parts of it on the different occasions.

Contingent identity statements need not be held to be provable true by the law of contradiction alone if we hold that we have only partial awareness of the meaning of certain terms. In such a consideration we would have

to investigate the world in order to ascertain the full

meaning, i.e. all the concepts denoted, for a given term.

Once the empirical investigation was complete then it would

follow that the statement 'the morning star is the evening

star' would be provable by the law of contradiction alone.

It is only when we are completely aware of the denotation

of the terms 'morning star' and 'evening star' that we would

discover that there is no difference before our minds when

we ask 'Is the morning star the evening star?' from when

we ask 'Is the morning star the morning star?' Empirical

research would be necessary to discover the synonomy of

'morning star' and 'evening star'. Whether the two terms are

to be _taken_ as synonyms is a function of our degree of ig-

norance or lack of knowledge of empirical fact; whether they

are in fact synonyms depends on what the word is like,

whether we know it or not.

A difference in belief does not imply a difference in

ontological fact.[118] That a person believes that X is not

identical with Y does not imply that X is not identical with

Y. My point can be made by considering two possible senses

of 'means'. I wish to say that on Moore's theory 'morning

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[118]Cf. Moore, _Ethics_, _op_. _cit_., p. 102, where Moore
distinguishes between believing a thing to be intrinsically
good and a thing being intrinsically good.

star' need not mean 'evening star' while in another sense
the two words do mean the same. The concepts before one's
mind when he thinks of the morning star are what 'morning
star' means in one sense; the concepts which actually
constitute the morning star are what 'morning star' means
in another sense. The first may be called a partial meaning
of 'morning star'; the latter the complete meaning. I
think it does not need to be argued that a term may have many
partial meanings, ranging from person to person and even
within a person from time to time. In so far as a term
denotes only one object it has only one complete meaning.
If the complete meanings of two different terms are not
identical, then the terms do denote different things.
But it does not follow that if the partial meanings of
two terms vary, the terms denote two different things: the
terms may be being used to refer to different parts of the
same object.

One objection to the Open Question argument may be
put thusly: I will admit for the moment that 'X is Good (m)'
is not provable from the law of contradiction alone, while
'X is X' is. But that does not show that X and Good (m)
are not identical. For one may not be fully aware of the
complete meanings, i.e. of all the concepts denoted, of 'X'
and 'Good (m)' when the questions corresponding to the

above assertions are asked. The answer to 'Is X X?' is discoverable through an application of the law of contradiction insofar as the person sees that he is using the same partial meaning of 'X' in both instances, insofar as he sees that he is using 'X' to denote the same group of concepts. He does not have to know the complete meaning for 'X' in order to discover the truth of 'X is X' from the law of contradiction. When 'X' and 'Good (m)' are being used with different partial meanings then the assertion 'X is Good (m)' is not provable by the law of contradiction alone. Yet this only shows that 'X' and 'Good (m)' are being used with different partial meanings; it does not show that X and Good (m) are different; it does show that their complete meanings differ.

Such an interpretation as I have given above could arise only if one permitted X to be a complex concept and one further admitted that he does not know all of the concepts denoted by a word. Thus without modifying Moore's epistemology and ontology, I have tried to show how we need more than the law of contradiction to prove that the morning star is the evening star. I have argued that on Moore's showing the sentence 'the morning star is the evening star' would become provable by the law of contradiction alone if we had complete knowledge of the denotation of the terms 'morning star' and

'evening star'. But that knowledge--if it comes at all--

comes through experience. Thus we can distinguish between,

say, 'a brother is a male sibling' and 'the morning star

is the evening star' on the basis of our varying degrees of

awareness of the concepts denoted by the terms involved. In-

sofar as we can see that the subject and predicate terms do

denote the same set of concepts, both are connotatively

identical statements according to my interpretation of

Moore's position. But once we distinguish between deno-

tatively and connotatively true identity statements in the

only way possible given Moore's position, then this distinc-

tion yields another telling objection to the Open Question

Argument: It does not follow from the fact that 'X is Good

(m)' is not provable from the law of contradiction alone

while 'X is X' is provable, that X is not identical with Good

(m). We can account for the difference in the assertions,

but a difference in the assertions does not imply a differ-

ence in the objects.

2.7 Connotative Identity and the Law of Contradiction

A third version of the Open Question Argument holds that
there is no distinction between the subject and the pred-
icate of the assertion corresponding to the question 'Is
X X?' while there is a distinction between the subject
and the predicate corresponding to the question 'Is X
Good (m)?' I begin by showing that Moore's concept
inspection procedure blurs a distinction which may be
exhibited by distinguishing among definitional logical

truths, formal logical truths and incomplete logical truths. By employing these distinctions and using terms admitted to be synonymous, I show that there is indeed a difference between asking 'Is X X?' and asking 'Is X Y?'. A distinction between the subject and the predicate of the latter question is found, but it is not a distinction which would yield the conclusion that X is not connotatively identical with Y. Thus the third version of the Open Question Argument is shown to be defective.

Using the same distinctions between different types of logical truths, I evaluate Moore's claim that ". . . propositions about the good are all of them synthetic and never analytic." Using 'analytic' to mean 'provable by the law of contradiction alone', I show that 'X is Good (m)' may be a logical truth even if it is not analytic. I show that the most that the Open Question Argument shows, even if it shows this much, is that the statement is not a formal logical truth; it does not show that it is not a definitional logical truth.

A third version of the Open Question Argument may be generated by holding that there is no distinction between the subject and the predicate of the assertion corresponding to the question 'Is X X?' while there is such a distinction in the assertion corresponding to the question 'Is X Good (m)?' By distinguishing three different types of logical truths, I will show that even when two obvious synonymous terms are employed, there is an important distinction between the assertion 'X is Y' and the assertion 'X is X'. Nevertheless that difference is not sufficient to establish the conclusion that there is a lack of connotative identity between X and Y. The third version of the Open Question Argument will be shown to be defective.

The same distinctions between different types of logical truths will enable me to evaluate Moore's claim that ". . . propositions about the good are all of them synthetic and never analytic." We will see that even if the Open Question Argument shows that the judgment expressed by 'X is identical with Good (m)' is not analytic, it does not show that the statement is not a logical truth. Following Moore, I am limiting 'analytic' to refer to judgments provable by the law of contradiction alone.

Moore states:

> It is very natural to make the mistake of supposing that what is universally true is of such a nature that its negation would be a self-contradiction. . . . And thus it is very easy to conclude that what seems to be a universal ethical principle is in fact an identical proposition. . . .[119]

In this passage Moore certainly seems to be implying that only an "identical proposition" is of "such a nature that its negation would be a self-contradiction." This interpretation is reinforced by several other passages from Moore.[120] A proposition is an analytic proposition for Moore if it is provable from the Law of Contradiction alone. Following Kant, Moore held that a proposition is provable from the law

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[119]PE, p. 16.

[120]"Necessity," p. 294; "The Refutation of Idealism," p. 442.

of contradiction alone if its negation is a self-contra-
diction.[121]

Let me mention that a distinction should be made be-
tween a sentence and the judgment expressed by the sentence.
When this distinction is made the notion of analyticity
may be applied either to the judgment or to the sentence.
But in the _Principia_ it is the judgments which are held to
be analytic; Moore is not concerned with analytic sentences.
For Moore, there would be no difference between the judgment
expressed by the sentence 'a brother is a male sibling' and
'a brother is a brother'. The sentences certainly differ,
but the judgment expressed by each sentence is identical with
the judgment expressed by the other sentence. The reason why
on Moore's grounds that there would be no difference between
the two judgments is that upon inspecting what is before one's
mind when one makes either of these judgments, one would find
that the same concept is being denoted by the subject and
predicate terms of both sentences. I want to claim that
Moore's concept inspection procedure blurred an important
difference between 'a brother is a male sibling' and 'a
brother is a brother' and by identifying the meaning of a

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[121]Cf. Lewis White Beck, "Can Kant's Synthetic
Judgments Be Made Analytic," in Moltke S. Gram (ed.),
Kant: Disputed Questions (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1967),
p. 243; first published in _Kant-Studien_ (1955), pp. 168-81.

term with the concept denoted by that term Moore was lead to

the Paradox of Analysis from which he saw no escape.[122]

Let me argue for my claim. Consider the following

statements:

(A) A triangle is a plane figure with exactly three
     sides.

(B) A triangle is a figure with at least one side.

(C) A triangle is a triangle.

Each of the above statements is a logical truth in some

sense. A denial of any of them would result in a contra-

diction; yet only a denial of (C) would result in a self-

contradiction. Yet there are significant differences among

the three sentences despite the fact that all are logical

truths.

To know that (A) is true, one must know that

'triangle' and 'figure with exactly three straight sides'

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[122]For a representative discussion of this so-called
paradox which arose out of an interchange between C. H.
Langford and G. E. Moore in The Philosophy of G. E. Moore,
op. cit., pp. 321-42 and 660-67, see Max Black, "The
'Paradox of Analysis'," Mind, LIII (July, 1944), 263-67;
Morton G. White, "A Note on the 'Paradox of Analysis',"
Mind, LIV (January, 1945), 71-72; Max Black, "The 'Paradox
of Analysis' Again: A Reply," Mind, LIV (July, 1945), 272-
73; C. H. Langford, Review of "The 'Paradox of Analysis'" by
Max Black, The Journal of Symbolic Logic, IX (1944), 104-105;
and Max Black, "How Can Analysis Be Informative?" Philosophy
and Phenomenological Research, VI (June, 1946), 628-31. For
a later summation see Lennart Aqvist, "Comments on the
Paradox of Analysis," Inquiry, V (1962), 260-64.

have the same meaning. How can we know that these terms have

the same meaning? At least two different types of answers

are possible: (1) In a logical system, the truth of (A) can

be established in one of two ways: (a) 'A triangle is a

plane figure with exactly three straight sides' could be an

axiom in some system. That is to say, it could be postulated

as an unproved axiom that the sentence as a whole is true.

We would know it to be true in a certain logical system by

knowing it to be an axiom in that system. (b) More likely,

the semantical rules of the system would stipulate that 'tri-

angle' and 'plane figure with exactly three straight sides'

are synonyms. To know that (A) is true in this case, one

would have to do more than just inspect what was before his

mind when he asserted (A). He would have to consult the

definitions of some system. It seems to me that if we can

in any sense look upon the English language as an informal

logical system, this would be the procedure of the determi-

nation of the truth of (A) in English.[123] Let me call

statements such as (A) '<u>definitional logical truths</u>'.

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[123]<u>Vide</u> Morton G. White, "The Analytic and the Syn-
thetic: An Untenable Dualism," <u>Semantics and the Philosophy
of Language</u>, Leonard Linsky, editor (Urbana, Illinois:
University of Illinois Press, c1952), pp. 321-24, for the
difficulties in identifying synonyms in a natural language.
White holds that ordinary languages, unlike artificial
languages or logical systems, have no precise rules for
determining analyticity. I think White is correct.

A denial of (A) would <u>not</u> be a self-contradiction, although the denial would contradict either an axiom or a definition in some logical system. (2) Another way of deciding the truth of (A) is Moore's intuitive method, the method of concept-inspection. One would simply inspect the concept before his mind that 'triangle' and 'figure with exactly three straight sides' denoted by him to see that it is the same concept. In this way, the denial of (A) <u>would</u> be a self-contradiction.

How could we know (C) to be true? Again, at least two different types of answers are possible. (1) In a logical system two answers are possible, although the second one is again more probable: (a) An axiom of a logical system could be 'a triangle is a triangle'. The truth of (C) would be determined by the inspection of the axioms. (b) But more likely is that some abstract statement of the law of identity would be given as an axiom. Attention only to the form of (C) would be required to discover its truth. It would not be necessary to know any meaning for 'triangle' as is necessary for determining the truth of (A).[124] (C) could be determined to be true simply by formal considerations

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[124]It is not necessary to know the meaning of 'triangle' for it would be stipulated that each symbol in the logical system would be univocal, that all tokens of a certain type have one and only one meaning.

alone. One would "see" that it is an instance of the logical law of identity. That is to say, it is a substitution instance of what could be laid down as an axiom of the system. This is the procedure we would employ for determining the truth of (C) in English. I wish to call statements such as (C) '<u>formal</u> <u>logical</u> <u>truths</u>'. (2) Another method of ascertaining the truth of (C) is Moore's method of inspection. One would simply inspect the concept denoted by 'triangle' and by 'triangle' to see that it is the same concept.

There is a logical difference between (A) and (C). To determine the truth of (A) one must appeal both to the semantical rules and to the axioms of a language. To determine the truth of (C) one must appeal to the axioms of a system, namely, to the law of identity. Thus (A) is, to adopt Carnap's terminology, discovered to be true by both semantical and syntactical considerations, (C) by syntactical considerations alone. Moore's use of inspection as a procedure for determining the truth of both (A) and (C) obliterates that difference.

(B) also differs from (A) and (C). The difference is that both (A) and (C) are validly convertible while (B) is not. That is to say, it is not always true that a figure with at least one side is a triangle. But this difference is not sufficient to allow one to conclude that (B) is not

also a logical truth.

That (B) is a logical truth can be shown in at least two ways: (1) In a logical system containing basic arithmetical notions and a method of defining 'triangle' as a plane figure with exactly three straight sides, it could be deduced from 'x is a triangle' that 'x is a plane figure with exactly three straight sides'. And from 'x is a plane figure with exactly three straight sides' it could be deduced that 'x is a figure with at least one side'. In other words, in a system like English which counts 'a triangle is a plane figure with exactly three straight sides' as a definitional logical truth and which contains elementary arithmetical notions, it could be deduced that a triangle has at least one side. It could not, of course, be deduced that a figure with at least one side is a triangle.[125] That, though, is what was meant by claiming that (B) is not validly convertible. Let me call statements like (B) '<u>incomplete logical truths</u>.' (2) Another method, Moore's concept inspection method, could also come to the conclusion that (B) is a logical truth. By inspecting one's concept denoted by 'triangle' one could notice that the set of concepts included in that concept

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[125]I am overlooking for the sake of simplicity the claim made by Tarski and others that English is an inconsistent language.

includes the concept of having at least one straight side.
Such an inspection would not have yielded a full identity
between concepts, but it would be a partial identity. It
could be seen by inspection that it is a self-contradiction
to assert that a triangle is not a figure with at least one
side, but having at least one side would be seen to be a
part of the concept of triangle.

Thus far I have distinguished three different types
of logical truths: formal logical truths, definitional
logical truths, and incomplete definitional logical truth.
If these distinctions be adequate, then, contrary to Moore's
claim in the passage cited at the beginning of this section,
it is not quite so easy as it might appear to conclude that
what seems to be a universal ethical principle is in fact
an identical proposition, for incomplete logical truths are
never identical propositions and formal logical truths only
sometimes are.[126] If we are to admit that there are univer-
sal synthetic truths and that some of them are sometimes
confused with logical truths, the confusion need not be
between identical propositions and synthetic truths.

I wish to take a particular sybstitution instance of
'X' in the assertion form 'X is Good (m)' to further

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[126]E.g., 'p v ~ p' is a formal logical truth in some
systems; yet it is not an identical proposition.

evaluate the Open Question Argument in light of the distinctions between different types of logical truths. In particular, I will use the term 'pleasure' as the substitution instance since it is often used by Moore himself. When that substitution is made then there are two questions for our attention:

(1) Is pleasure Good (m)?

(2) Is pleasure pleasure?

Moore held that "whoever will attentively consider with himself what is actually before his mind" when he asks the first question "can easily satisfy himself that he is not wondering whether pleasure is pleasant." Let us ask ourselves both questions to see if what is before our minds is the same when both questions are asked. Suppose, following Moore, that what is before our minds is different. Would that show that 'pleasure is Good (m)' is not a logical truth? I wish to show that we need not draw that conclusion.

'A triangle is a triangle' and 'a triangle is a plane figure with exactly three straight sides' are both logical truths, even though the former is trivial in a sense in which the latter is not. Thus whoever would ask both 'Is a triangle a triangle?' and 'Is a triangle a plane figure with exactly three straight sides?' would find himself to be asking two different questions. And if he would consider

what is before his mind when he asks both questions, he would indeed find two different things to be before his mind. If we consider methods for obtaining answers to these questions open to one who seriously asks both questions, we will find that since the procedures for discovering the questions' answers differ the questions also differ. When one asks the former question, if he uses Moore's inspection method he need only consider his understanding of the law of identity; if the question be interpreted as being about language, he need consider only the syntactical structure of the question. When one asks the latter question, if he uses Moore's inspection method he needs to consider both his understanding of the concepts denoted by 'triangle' and 'plane figure with exactly three straight sides' and the law of identity; if the question be interpreted as being about language, he needs to consider the semantical formulas and the syntactical formulas of the language. Thus, on either method of finding an answer, both questions differ in that the methods of answering them differ.

Neither question would be an open question for Moore since there is only one logically possible answer to each.[127]

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[127]I am assuming that 'triangle' and 'a plane figure having exactly three straight sides' are synonyms. If that assumption is mistaken, this entire argument in this section is irrelevant.

But even though both questions be closed, the asking of one is not the same as the asking of the other. And yet the assertions corresponding to both questions are logically true.

Moore held that whoever asked himself 'Is pleasure Good (m)?' "could easily satisfy himself that he is not merely wondering whether pleasure is pleasant." I have tried to show that even when we take two terms which are synonymous questions analogous to Moore's example can be asked about the synonymous terms which are also different questions. Perhaps I can best illustrate my point by paraphrasing Moore:

> Whoever will attentively consider with himself what is actually before his mind when he asks the question 'Is a triangle a plane figure with exactly three sides?' can easily satisfy himself that he is not merely wondering whether a triangle is a triangle.

Thus if this version of the Open Question Argument were telling, we should conclude that it is a fallacy to mistakenly identify a triangle with a plane figure with exactly three straight sides. We should conclude that whoever would assert that 'A triangle is a plane figure with exactly three straight sides' would be guilty of committing something similar to what Moore held to be the Naturalistic Fallacy, that such a person would be guilty of misidentifying two different things. Thus if the Open Question Argument

were telling, no definitions at all could be offered since the asking of 'Is X Y?' would always be a different question than the asking of 'Is X X?'

What I have tried to do was to account for the difference between the two questions, a difference which occurs even when 'X' and 'Y' are assumed to be synonyms. If we cannot account for this difference between the two questions and if we assume the tellingness of the Open Question Argument, we will be drawn into what has been called the Paradox of Analysis. That paradox is one that I wish to avoid and one that I think can be avoided by making certain distinctions. But when those distinctions are made the Open Question Argument is again seen to be defective.

I have tried to show how Moore's concept inspection procedure blurred an important distinction between two different types of logical truths and how that procedure lead to paradoxical results. That the results were para-doxical should have lead Moore to question his early theory of synonymy as identity of concepts denoted by two terms. In so far as synonymy is ascertainable by inspecting what is before one's mind, The Open Question Argument may show that X is not identical with Good (m); but it would also show that a brother is not identical with a male sibling, a result

which is to be avoided if possible.

In this section I have tried to answer the Open Question Argument in two of its forms. I have tried to show how a distinction is offered between the subject and predicate of the assertion 'X is Good (m)' which is not offered by 'X is X' even when X and Good (m) are taken to be identical concepts. By the same procedure I have tried to show why 'X is Good (m)' is not provable by the law of contradiction alone even though 'X is X' is so provable; yet I have tried to argue that that difference in the assertions does not force the conclusion that 'X' and 'Good (m)' must denote different concepts or the conclusion that 'X is Good (m)' is not analytic. Given Moore's epistemology and his ontology, the Open Question Argument does not validly yield the conclusion that "Good is not identical with any natural . . . property" or that "Propositions about the good are all of them synthetic and never analytic." Both of these assertions may be true. My thesis is only that Moore has not demonstrated them to be false through his uses of the Open Question Argument.

In the remaining sections of this chapter I wish to suggest one obvious modification in Moore's ontology and one obvious modification in his epistemology and to show how the same evaluation of the Open Question Argument follows.

2.8 <u>Concepts</u> <u>and</u> <u>Objects-of-Concepts</u>.

I modify Moore's position by (1) no longer looking upon objects as composed of concepts and (2) holding that concepts, not objects, are what is directly before our minds. I show that even if the difference between the questions 'Is X X?' and 'Is X Good (m)?' does establish a difference in concepts, that difference does not establish a difference in objects-of-concepts. Thus the Open Question Argument does not function as a valid method of discovering ontological difference.

Suppose we assume, contrary to the Moore of "The Refutation of Idealism," that we do not directly experience objects or properties. What is before our minds when we think of X is, to continue to use the word, a concept. But now the concept is neither X itself nor a part of X; it is a concept <u>of</u> X. If this simple modification be admitted, it is relatively easy to show that although two concepts may in fact be different, the difference to be disclosed by conceptual inspection, it does not follow that the objects-of-concepts differ.

An example may help to make my point clearer. Narcissus fell in love with an image of himself. Suppose that in addition to his reflection in the pool with which he fell in love, he also saw an image of himself in a curved bottom of a silver bowl. At that time Narcissus would be confronted with two images: Let us call them image A and image B. Image A, the reflection in the pool, is a different image from B, the image in the silver bowl.

It is at least numerically different, but another difference
also results from the distortion resulting from the curvature
of the silver bowl which does not occur in the reflection
from the flat surface of the water. Suppose Narcissus
raised a question concerning the identity of image A and B.
By inspecting the two images he may correctly notice that
the two images are not identical. Is he justified in con-
cluding that that of which they are images are not identical?
Of course not. Difference in images does not necessarily
imply difference in that of which they are images.

In the _Principia_ Moore maintained that intrinsic
goodness was an objective property that a thing sometimes
possessed, while still holding that that property was not
identical with any natural property. If we make a distinc-
tion which Moore made in _Ethics_ between thinking an action
to be intrinsically good and that action's being intrinsically
good, [128] then we can see that even if one's concept of X
is found by inspection not to be identical with one's concept
of Good (m), it does not follow that X and Good (m) are not
identical _in_ _themselves_. Moore appealed to the following
psychological fact in the _Ethics_:

> . . . a man certainly can believe with regard to a
> given thing or state of things, that the idea of it

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[128]Moore, _Ethics_, _op_. _cit_., p. 102.

does please somebody, and is desired, and even desired
for its own sake, and yet not believe that it would be
at all worth while that it should exist, if it existed
quite alone.[129]

In Moore's own words, that fact

. . . shows conclusively that to judge that a thing is
intrinsically good in not the same thing as to judge
that some man is pleased with it or desires it or
desires it for its own sake.[130]

Unless we posit an isomorphism between concept and object-

of-concept, i.e., unless we hold that that which is before

our mind is the object itself as Moore held earlier, it is

not the case that because one thinks the concepts to differ,

the object-of-concept also differs. The same point can be

put another way: Unless we posit an isomorphism between

thought and reality, it does not follow that because two

thoughts differ, that that of which they are thoughts also

differ.

One could hold that that which is before one's mind

when he asks 'Is X Good (m)?' is positively different from

that which is before his mind when he asks 'Is X X?' Let

us go further and assume (falsely) that the difference in

the questions does constitute a difference in the concepts

which are before the mind when the questions are asked. But

just as it is possible for two different words to name the

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[129]Ibid.   [130]Ibid.

same concept or for two different images to be reflections
of the same object, it is also possible for two different
concepts to be concepts of the same quality, whether that
quality be empirical or a priori and for two different
thoughts to be thoughts of the same thing.

This modification in Moore's theory results in the
criticism of the Open Question Argument which I am now
trying to present. The modification in Moore's theory
consists in (1) no longer looking upon objects as composed
of concepts and (2) holding that concepts, not the objects,
are what is directly before our minds.[131] When this modi-
fication is made Moore can still hold to his concept
inspection procedure for discovering what is before his mind
and can conclude that the concepts may in fact differ. But
he cannot thereby conclude that the objects of the concepts
differ: he cannot conclude that X and Good (m) are different
through an employment of the Open Question Argument. The
concept inspection procedure as an integral part of the

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[131]My distinction between concepts and objects-of-
concepts is similar to Moore's distinction between sense
data and physical objects given in Chapter II of G. E. Moore,
Some Main Problems of Philosophy (London: George Allen &
Unwin Ltd., 1953); vide p. 29. These lectures were given
"in the winter of 1910-11." Moore, of course, did not make
the distinction as I did. But once it is admitted that
what is before the mind may be different from what is external
then the distinctions raised in this section can be made.

Open Question Argument destroys the force of that argument

for proving a difference in the properties of which we

have concepts.

The distinction between concept and object-of-concept

prohibits a valid use of the Open Question Argument as an

instrument for discovering ontological difference among

objects-of-concepts.[132] But it still may be held that the

Open Question Argument can serve as an instrument for

distinguishing differences among the meanings of the terms

of our language. I shall argue in the next section that the

Open Question Argument cannot serve that function either.

2.9 Meaning and Concept.

I assume that 'Good (m)' does denote Good (m). I
investigate in what senses 'X' may denote Good (m)
without the assertor of 'X is identical with Good (m)'
being aware that they denote the same concept. I
delineate three senses in which a term may be said to
denote the same concept as another term denotes. I
show it is only when an individual is concerned with
what he means by two terms at a particular time that
he can use the concept inspection procedure of the
Open Question Argument to show that 'X' denotes a
different concept for him at that time than does

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[132]Henry Veatch, "On Trying to Say and to Know What's
What," Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, XXIV
(September, 1963), 83-84, shows that Moore can fruitfully
be interpreted as having been primarily concerned with the
ontology of goodness in the Principia. Vide also Henry
Veatch, "Non-Cognitivism in Ethics: A Modest Proposal for
Its Diagnosis and Cure," Ethics, LXXVI (January, 1966),
104-109, for an elaboration and further clarification of
that claim.

'Good (m)'. That result follows from the inspecting of what is before his mind: the Open Question Argument is superfluous in establishing that conclusion.

Moore holds that if a person does not believe that two different terms denote the same concept, there is a sense in which the two terms are non-synonymous. This section is an attempt to specify different ways in which a person's individual awareness or lack of awareness of meaning is sufficient to establish identity or difference of meaning. In particular, I will investigate to what extent the Open Question Argument based on a person's ability to "see" a difference between the concept denoted by 'desired' and the concept denoted by 'Good (m)' establishes a difference in meaning between 'desired' and 'Good (m)'. We will discover that there is a sense of meaning in which a person's awareness that two terms denote the same concept is sufficient to show synonymy between the two terms and there is a sense of meaning in which a person's lack of awareness that two terms denote the same concept is sufficient to show lack of synonymy. I will introduce distinctions which imply that 'synonyny' is being used in two different senses in the preceding sentence. I will conclude that there is one sense in which Moore has shown that 'Good (m)' is not synonymous with 'pleased', but that lack of synonymy is shown by Moore's own inspection of what is before <u>his</u> mind when <u>he</u>

uses the two terms; it is not shown by the Open Question Argument. I will show that there is another sense in which Moore has not shown that 'Good (m)' is not synonymous with 'pleased' and that he has not shown that it must be non-synonymous with 'pleased'.

Moore relates in his <u>Ethics</u> that he wishes "to concentrate attention upon one particular usage" of the word 'good'.[133] Admitting that 'good' has many senses, there is one meaning of the word which he wishes to explicate, a meaning which we employ when we judge of a thing that "it would be worth while that it should exist, even if there were absolutely nothing else in the universe besides."[134] Moore tells us that he wants to show that 'good' is at least sometimes used in this sense, a sense or concept which I earlier used the term 'Good (m)' to denote.

One way of showing that there is such a sense is to show how the meaning of 'Good (m)' can be distinguished from some of the other things sometimes taken to be intrinsically good. After using the version of the Open Question Argument reported in my last section, Moore concluded that:

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[133]Moore, <u>Ethics</u>, <u>op</u>. <u>cit</u>., p. 100.

[134]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 101.

> . . . to say that a thing is intrinsically good is not
> the same thing as to say that it is desired: and this
> follows absolutely, if even in a single case, a man
> believes that a thing is desired and yet does not
> believe that it is intrinsically good.[135]

Several comments on this passage are in order: First, Moore

is now concerned at least in part with language; he wishes

to present a meaning for the term 'good. Second, although

his concern is in part with language, the units of meaning

are not themselves linguistic, but are still concepts.

Third, one way of expressing Moore's claim is to say that

when 'good' is used in his sense, the word 'good' is not

synonymous with the word 'desired'. Four, and most impor-

tantly, the difference in synonymy between the two terms

is established "if even in a single case, a person believes

a thing is desired and yet does not believe that it is

intrinsically good." If I do not misinterpret Moore's

remarks, he holds that it takes only one person's awareness

of a concept which a word may denote in order to justify

that concept's being held as one meaning of that word.

Although a person may be using a word in a sense in which

no other person uses it, that is still a meaning for that

word.

I think it is established on Moore's showing that

there is such a concept as Good (m), if for no other reason

than that at least Moore himself is aware of Good (m).

Still taking concepts to be what is before one's mind when one thinks of the meaning of a word (and ignoring the ontological status of concepts), I wish to present several senses in which it may be possible to hold that Good (m) is one possible meaning for the word 'good' and then to consider whether or not the Open Question Argument is sufficient to show that other terms must be nonsynonymous with 'good' when 'good' is used to denote Good (m).

Let me speak of private intensions and of public intensions of a term in order to try to make my point clear. Let 'X' be some non-ambiguous term for an individual a. What is before the mind of that individual when he thinks of X is what I mean by the private intension of the term 'X' for a. The private intension of 'X' for b, another individual, need not be what the private intension of 'X' is for a. And the private intension of 'X' for a could vary on different occasions of a's thoughts of X. So let me call what is common to all of a's private intensions of 'X' the private necessary intension of 'X' for a.[136]

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[136]Although the phrase 'necessary intension' is borrowed from Henry S. Leonard, An Introduction to Principles of Right Reason (New York: Henry Holt and Company, c1957), pp. 243 ff., I am not using 'intension' in Leonard's sense. For Leonard, an intension of a term is "any set of characteristics that is common and jointly peculiar to the extension of that term." (p. 612) And the extension of a term is "the group or class of actual things to each of which

Let me call the set of all concepts common to <u>all</u> private

necessary intensions of 'X' the public necessary intension

of 'X'.[137] Private necessary intensions are relative to

individual users of the term; public necessary intensions

are not relative in the same sense.

It was stipulated that 'X' is unambiguous for a.

That was to say that 'X' has one and only one private

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the term refers or applies." (p. 611) Since Leonard allows
intension and extension to both concrete terms--terms
"purporting to refer or apply to objects or events having
definite locations in space and time" (p. 609)--and to
abstract terms--terms purporting to "refer or to apply to
things that are abstract" (p. 608)--it follows that the
intension of a term for Leonard may sometimes be something
physical. As I use the term, an intension is always mental
in the sense that the intension is before the mind: whether
the intensions also be external to the mind or only internal
is a question I do not have to decide in order to make
my point. Leonard's terminology is adopted here because of
his distinction between the necessary and merely contingent
members of an intension of a term. Although I am adopting
his terminology, I am not using it in his sense either.
In my use, the private contingent intension of a term for
person a at time t is the total of all the concepts denoted
by that term for a at time t. It is what is before his
mind at time t when he thinks of X at time t. The set of
concepts common to all of the different private contingent
intensions of 'X' for a is the private necessary intension
of 'X' for a. I use these terms because I know of no
others that exactly express what I think needs to be
expressed to get clear about Moore's sense of concept.

[137]This statement clouds a lot of epistemological
questions. For, in one sense, no concepts are common to
different people, i.e., each person has only his own
concepts before his mind. Yet, in another sense, each
person potentially is able to think of the same thing as
another person. In this latter sense, there is a possibility
that a term could have a public necessary intension.

necessary intension for a. It is conceivable that 'X'

has a completely different private necessary intension for

b. And it is also conceivable that 'X' could have more

than one private necessary intension for b. In both of

these latter cases it would seem that the term 'X' would

have no public necessary intension. But there is a way

open to us to say that 'X' does have a public necessary

intension and still hold that 'X' denotes different concepts

for a and b and that it denotes more than one concept for b.

Let us decide to use a new set of symbols to avoid confusion.

Let us assume that 'X' denotes n different concepts (denotes

n different private necessary intensions) and use 'X (1)',

'X (2)', . . . , 'X (n)' as symbols for the ambiguous 'X',

each of which denotes one and only one of the private

necessary intensions denoted by 'X'. And to be yet more

precise, let 'X (1) (a)' be the symbol for what 'X (1)'

denotes for a. To say now more precisely what I said very

roughly earlier when I said that 'X' could have a completely

different private intension for b than it does for a is to

say that X (1) (a) is a different concept than is X (2) (b).

To say that 'X' has more than one private necessary intension

for b is to say that X (2) (b) is a different concept than

is X (3) (b).

To speak of the public necessary intension of 'X'

was to speak imprecisely. A more precise way would be to speak of the public necessary intension of 'X (k)' where 'k' denotes one and only one precise concept among the many concept denoted by 'X'. 'X (k)' would have a public necessary intension if and only if all users of the language recognize 'X (k)' to denote the same concept of which they are aware. In this way we can speak of <u>the</u> meaning of 'X (k)' but we can only speak of the <u>meanings</u> of 'X'. That is to say, a term has a public necessary intension if and only if all private necessary intensions of that term have a common element. Let 'Good (m)' be the term which denotes that concept of intrinsic goodness recognized by Moore. 'Good (m)' does have a private necessary intension for Moore. The only evidence that can be given and needs be given is Moore's own testimony that 'good'--'Good (m)' to use my terminology--denotes a concept for Moore.

Could a speaker be using two different terms to denote the same concept and yet not be aware that it was the same concept? That is to ask in this context, can a person be using synonymous terms without being aware that they are synonymous? In particular, does the fact that a person can be sure that something is desired while doubting that that thing is identical with Good (m) show that 'desired' and 'Good (m)' do not denote the same concept?

In order to distinguish between the momentary concept and the continuing concept which a term denotes for an individual I will use the phrases 'private contingent intension of "X" for a at time t' and 'private necessary intension of "X" for a'. The private contingent intension of 'X' for a at time t is what is before a's mind when he thinks of X at a particular time t. It is, in a sense, the concept which 'X' denotes for a at time t. The private necessary intension of 'X' for a is the element or elements common to all of the private contingent intensions of 'X' for a. It is, in another sense, the concept which 'X' denotes for a.

With these distinctions before us, we can see that the question with which we are concerned can be interpreted as at least four different questions. When 'X' and 'Y' are the two different terms, the question 'Can a speaker be using two different terms to denote the dame concept and yet not be aware that it is the same concept?' can be seen as an ambiguous question which may be interpreted to mean at least the following:

(1) Can 'X' and 'Y' have the same private contingent intension for a at time t if a is not aware of the sameness of intension?

(2) Can 'X' and 'Y' have the same private necessary intension for a if a is not aware of the sameness of intension?

(3) Can the private necessary intension of 'X' for a

be the same as the private contingent intension of
'Y' for a at time t if a is not aware of any
sameness?

(4) Can the private contingent intension of 'X' for a
at time t be the same as the private necessary
intension of 'Y' for a if a is not aware of any
sameness?

It is important that we keep these questions distinct.

These questions could be asked by a or about a by another

person. I wish to consider them only as being asked by a

in order to see if the Open Question Argument will help

a in giving an answer to them. Since we are only concerned

with the question of a's using two different terms to

denote the same concept, we do not have to consider the

private necessary or contingent intensions of 'X' and 'Y'

for anyone other than a. Neither need we consider the

public necessary intensions of 'X' and 'Y' at this stage.

As the next paragraph will show, the Open Question Argument

does not allow a to decide if his private necessary inten-

sions for 'X' and 'Y' are the same or not.

The Open Question Argument can yield Moore's result

only when it is applicable to question (1) above. It is

not telling in all instances to the other three because they

all ask, in part or in whole, about the private necessary

intensions of the terms for a. Since it is at least possible

for a speaker not to be completely aware at any time of all

the constituents which go to make up his private necessary intension of a term, it may not be obvious to him at any given moment which constituents are common to all of his uses of a term. When he lacks such an awareness, his asking 'Is X Y?' could be significant without the necessity of his concluding that X and Y are not the same concept for him. The significance of his question results from an interpretation similar to that given by Mrs. Warnock, viz., 'Is my analysis correct?'[138] To ask 'Is my analysis correct?' in this context is to ask 'Is the private necessary intension of "X" for me the same as is the private necessary intension of "Y" for me?' They could be the same and he be unaware of it. That is not the type of question that could be answered by inspection of what is before his mind at the momment. Perhaps it could not be answered at all.

Similar remarks may be made about questions (3) and (4). To the extent that they are questions about private necessary intensions and to the extent that the questioner be unsure about his private necessary intensions, the Open Question Argument does not prove a lack of identity between private necessary intension and private contingent intension at time t.

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[138]Mary Warnock, Ethics Since 1900 (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 25.

It is only to the considerations raised in question
(1) that the Open Question Argument is always relevant.
A speaker could not be unsure of what was the private
contingent intension of a term at time t for him.[139] The
speaker could be sure by inspection what a term 'X' meant
to him at time t, i.e., he could be sure of the private
contingent intension of 'X' at t. He need only to look
into his mind to discover that particular private contingent
intension. Thus, any significant question of the form
'Is the private contingent intension of "X" at time t the
same for me as the private contingent intension of "Y" for
me at time t?' would show that the concepts are not identical.
For, if when he inspected the two concepts he would have
found them different, he could not significantly raise the
question. The answer would be immediately obvious to him;
the question would not be an open question to him: he could
see that the concepts were not identical.

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[139]Of course it may be objected that by the time
the Open Question Argument can be raised, it would no longer
be time t. And that at time t plus n, because of the
fallibility of human memory, the questioner cannot be sure
of what the private contingent intensions of his terms at
time t was. To the extent that this objection is telling,
I would have to conclude that the Open Question Argument does
not succeed in proving or disproving identity of denotation
of private contingent intensions at time t for a questioner.
In the body of the paper I am acting on the assumption that
the time lag between use, inspection, and question is not
important.

I conclude from the above remarks that there is at least one sense in which a person could be using two different terms to denote the same concept and not be aware that his terms do denote the same concept. This sense of concept is what I have tried to suggest by the phrase 'private necessary intension of a term "X" for a'. When 'concept' be interpreted in this way, the significance of the Open Question cannot be taken as proof that the concepts differ.

There is another sense in which a person could be using two different terms to denote the same concept and could not be unaware that his terms do denote the same concept. This sense of 'concept' is what I have tried to suggest by the phrase 'private contingent intension of a term "X" for a at time t'. When 'concept' be interpreted in this way the significance of the Open Question can be taken as proof that the two concepts are different <u>for the questioner</u>. The insignificance of the Open Question can be taken as proof that the concepts are identical <u>for the speaker</u>.

Moore claimed that the concept which I am denoting by 'Good (m)' has a "distinct meaning" and "everybody is constantly aware of this notion."[140] Suppose a person said

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[140]PE, p. 17.

to Moore: "I do not find any such concept as the one you tried to present in the Principia. I am aware that the word 'good' is ambiguous and can be used in many different senses, but I denote by 'Good (m)' the same concept which I denote by, say, 'desired'." How could Moore respond to such a person? It seems to me that at least two different kinds of reply are open to Moore:

(1) From the fact that a speaker used the same term as Moore, i.e. 'Good (m)' or 'intrinsic goodness', it does not follow that the speaker uses the term to denote the same concept as Moore uses it to denote. The worst we can say about the speaker is that he is misusing the term 'Good (m)'. Moore took that term and tried to give it a precise meaning. He tried to have it to refer to one and only one concept. If the speaker intends to refer to a different concept, then, for ease and possibility of clear communication, he should use a different term, say, 'Good (d)'. And for that speaker 'Good (d)' and say 'desired' would denote identical concepts. In admitting that tokens of the type 'good' were ambiguous, Moore implicitly admits the possibility that tokens of the type 'good' could sometimes be used as synonyms for natural properties.

(2) Moore could reply that such a person who uses 'Good (m)' as a synonym for 'desired' is confused. Moore's

reply would be that such a person has confused Good (m)

with something else; he has confused two different concepts.

This reply could be based only on Moore's own intuition, on

his own inspection--which on his own showing is not verdical.

But what if the person based his reply also on his own

intuition and truthfully reported that he did not find

himself to be making such a confusion? It seems to that

there would be no way to settle the dispute.

But what if the dispute between Moore and his opponent

be about public intensions and not about private intensions?

What if 'concept' be interpreted as public necessary inten-

sions? The public necessary intension of 'Good (m)' is the

set of all concepts common to all private necessary intensions

of 'Good (m)'. The Open Question Argument now becomes

relevant. On the assumption that a person is clear about

the private necessary intension of 'Good (m)' for him, his

asking 'Is that which we desire to desire (to use one of

Moore's common examples) Good (m)?' could serve as an

indication of whether or not that which we desire to desire

is to be <u>excluded</u> from the public necessary intension of

'Good (m)'. For the significance of the question to him would

show that that which we desire to desire is not a part of

his private necessary intension of 'Good (m)'; and, thus,

since it cannot be common to <u>all</u> private necessary intensions

if it be excluded from his, it is not a part of the public

necessary intension of the term. My notion of public

necessary intension of a term's having to include what is

common to all private intensions of that term is at least

in keeping with the spirit of Moore's claim cited above

that an individual's recognition of a proposed definition is

requisite before such a definition could be considered the

meaning of that term. But if the question be insignificant,

he cannot conclude that that which we desire to desire is

part of the public necessary intension of the term. Before

he could draw that conclusion, he must investigate all other

private necessary intensions. All that he can conclude is

that it is a part of his private necessary intension. When

the Open Question Argument does work, its force is opposite

to Moore's intension.

We may conclude, then, that the Open Question

Argument can be used to show that some concept X is not

part of the concept denoted 'Good (m)' when 'concept' is

interpreted as public necessary intension. To eliminate

X from the concept of 'Good (m)' would take only one

person's failure to recognize it as part of that concept.

Moore's failure to recignize a particular X as part of his

concept is the only fact to which we need appeal in order

to conclude that the concept denoted by 'Good (m)' does not

contain X as a part of its public necessary intension.

I have concluded that the Open Question Argument does not yield the conclusion Moore thought it to yield when 'concept' be interpreted as the private necessary intension of a term. The fact that the Open Question Argument can be significantly raised shows only that the questioner is unsure about the private necessary intensions of his terms.

When 'concept' is interpreted as private contingent intension at time t, the Open Question Argument has more force. When an individual wishes to determine if two terms denote the same concept for him at any given time, he can raise the question 'Is X Y?' to see if it is significant. If it is significant, he may conclude that the two terms denote different concepts; and if it is insignificant, he may conclude that the two terms denote the same concept. But if inspection be included as an essential part of the procedure, then the actual raising of the question is superfluous. For all that he needs to do is to inspect the concepts to see if they are the same or not. If they are or are not, he can tell by direct inspection. Thus there is no need for him to even raise the Open Question Argument. The essential and telling part of the Open Question Argument is not the raising of the Open Question; it is the inspection of one's own concepts. The most the procedure

allows one to conclude is about how he uses terms. He cannot conclude from his usage that others use the same terms either differently or the same, or that his usage is different from those of others.

When 'concept' is interpreted as public necessary intension, the Open Question Argument can be used to rule out certain concepts (i.e., certain private necessary intensions) from the public necessary intension of 'Good (m)'. But this is not to say that other terms of the type 'good' do not include those concepts as part of their public necessary intensions. Since 'good' is ambiguous, it is to be expected that several public necessary intensions are associated with 'good'. We may show by a use of the Open Question Argument that 'Good (m)' does not include any empirical concept as part of its public necessary intension; the question still to be answered is: Does it have a public necessary intension?

I have tried to show how there may be at least two different senses of 'meaning' even if we assume Moore's concept denotation theory of meaning: a sense in which an individual's use of a term to denote a concept is sufficient to establish a meaning for that term, and a sense in which an individual's failure to see that a term denotes a concept is sufficient to prohibit the calling of that concept a part

of the meaning of that term. I include these two senses by way of contrast. For I think it is plain that Moore intuited the concept of Good (m). But I do not at all think it plain that anybody or, especially, everybody else also has intuited that concept. In some places Moore quite rightly held that whether there is such a concept is not a matter of proof; neither is its difference from empirical concepts a matter of proof: both are matters of intuition. Yet in other places he took the Open Question Argument either as a heuristic aid to enable another person to intuit that concept or as a proof that Good (m) was not identical with any empirical concept. I think I have shown how both procedures are defective.

There is a highly important sense in which Moore did not refute ethical naturalism: he left open the possibility that 'good' may denote many "natural" properties. There is at least one sense of 'good' in which it does not: the sense denoted by Moore's use of 'Good (m)'. Moore has shown that there is one sense (even if he never made clear what that sense was) in which it is possible to hold that an assertion that an object is intrinsically good is not to ascribe a natural property to that object. But he has not ruled out the legitimacy of those senses of 'good' which do. No refutation of ethical naturalism has been given by Moore

through his use of the Open Question Argument. He has not shown any other sense of 'good' to be illegitimate. All that he has shown is that if one identifies another sense of 'good' with Moore's special sense of 'good' the Naturalistic Fallacy occurs. But Moore did not show even this much through the Open Question Argument.

CHAPTER III

R. M. HARE AND THE OPEN QUESTION ARGUMENT

3.1 <u>Hare's</u> <u>Reasons</u> <u>for</u> <u>Rejecting</u> <u>Ethical</u> <u>Naturalism</u>.

I sketch Hare's position to introduce the terms 'pre-
scriptive' and 'descriptive' in order to explain what
constitutes a naturalistic ethic for Hare: Ethical
naturalism holds that moral terms have only descriptive
meaning, that moral disputes are ultimately verbal
disputes when all non-moral facts are agreed on, that
moral conclusions can be inferred from factual premises,
and that moral judgments can be established by appeal to
the use of moral terms. Hare rejected naturalism because
it left out the prescriptive element and for other
reasons which I indicate. One of the other reasons is
his thought that the Open Question Argument shows
ethical naturalism to be a fallacy.

That R. M. Hare employed a form of the Open Question

Argument in <u>The</u> <u>Language</u> <u>of</u> <u>Morals</u> is now a commonly

accepted position in philosophical literature.[1] Hare's

announced purpose in employing the Open Question Argument

was to show the inadequacy of a naturalistic interpretation

as a correct description of the language of morals. He put

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[1]For example, see Roger Hancock, "The Refutation of
Naturalism in Moore and Hare," <u>The</u> <u>Journal</u> <u>of</u> <u>Philosophy</u>,
LVII (May 12, 1960), 326-34; John F. Lange, "R. M. Hare's
Reformulation of the Open Question," <u>Mind</u>, LXXV (April,
1966), 244-47; and Svetozan Stojanovic, "Hare's Argument
Against Ethical Naturalism," <u>Mind</u>, LXXXII (April, 1963),
264-76.

his position thusly:

> Naturalism in ethics, like attempts to square the circle and to 'justify induction', will constantly recur so long as there are people who have not understood the fallacy involved. It may therefore be useful to give a simple procedure for exposing any new variety of it that may be offered.[2]

In this section I will attempt to do three things: First, I wish to give what I take to be several main theses of Hare's. Second, I wish to explain what Hare means by a naturalistic ethics. Third, I wish to mention what I take to be Hare's major reasons for rejecting any naturalistic ethics. In the second section of this chapter I will give three different versions of the Open Question Argument as used by Hare in attempting to refute naturalism in ethics. Then I will show in the following three sections that none of Hare's versions of the Open Question Argument provides a refutation for ethical naturalism. In the last section of this chapter, I will give what I take to be some telling naturalistic rejoinders to Hare.

A major claim made by Hare is that the language of morals is "one sort of prescriptive language."[3] To understand the language of morals requires getting clear about

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[2] R. M. Hare, The Language of Morals (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1961), pp. 92-93. The original printing of this work was in 1952.

[3] Ibid., p. 1.

prescriptive language. Language is prescriptive when it is used to guide choices. But not all choice guiding involves prescriptive language. To guide choices is implicitly or explicitly to provide an answer to the question "What shall I do?' But an answer to that question may be provided in at least two ways: either by telling someone to do something or by getting someone to do something.[4] Persuasion, propaganda, and force are ways of getting someone to do something. Yet telling someone to do something is not the same thing as getting someone to do something, for we are successful in our act of telling a person what to do whether that person does as we tell him or not; he must do it before we are successful in getting him to do it. Hare recognizes at least two methods of telling someone to do something: One way is to utter an imperative sentence to tell him directly; the other way is to use a value term in an assertion to commend what it is we want him to do. We can command an action, but we can commend a certain action without commanding that that action be done. For Hare, then, prescriptions can be divided into at least imperatives

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[4]*Vide* Hare's contribution to the symposium on "The Freedom of the Will," *The Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Volume XXV (1951), 201, for exposition of this point.

and value judgments.[5]

Moral judgments are a subset of value judgments.[6] To use a term as a value-word is to use it "for commending or its opposite."[7] A term such as 'a good x' is a value term because it can be used for commending, but it need not always be so used. When it is not, it is not being used evaluatively, although it is still a value-term in that context.[8] That which allows us to use a term to commend is the prescriptive meaning of that term.[9] In addition to having prescriptive meaning, value terms also have descriptive meaning.[10] To use a term evaluatively is to use it both descriptively and prescriptively in a particular

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[5]E.g., LM, p. 14; R. M. Hare, _Freedom and Reason_ (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1964), p. 27.

[6]Cf. FR, pp. 26-27, where Hare states, "Not all moral judgments are value judgments." I take this to be a careless locution on Hare's part. What he intended to say was that to use a moral term without prescriptive meaning is not to use it as a value term; _vide_ LM, pp. 124-26.

[7]LM, p. 79

[8]_Vide_ FR, p. 27, where Hare admits that he makes this statement "true by definition"; cf. LM, p. 164; cf. also the quote in note 6 _supra_.

[9]_Vide_ FR, pp. 26-28. I am assuming the reader is familiar with Hare's terminology.

[10]_Ibid._, p. 28. See Hare's "Prescriptivism," _Proceedings of the British Academy_, XLIX (1963), 116-119, for an example which clearly distinguishes prescriptive and descriptive elements.

context. Any term which can be so used is a value term.

Not all value judgments are moral judgments: aesthetic judgments, for example, are non-moral value judgments.[11] Aesthetic judgments are not moral judgments because the golden rule argument "cannot be used in aesthetics."[12] To make a full-fledged value judgment requires several factors being present: a willingness to universalize the principle on which the judgment is made, the use of the value terms with prescriptive force, a consideration of the facts of the case, attention to the interests and inclinations of the people concerned, and "a certain power of imagination and readiness to use it."[13]

In all value judgments there is a prescriptive element. When the prescriptive element is missing, the judgment may be of the form of a value judgment, but the value terms are not being used in their primary sense; thus the judgment is not a full-fledged value judgment. Such, in summary form, are some major theses of R. M. Hare.

In the above paragraphs I have not been concerned with giving a complete exegesis of Hare's position, but I do

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[11]FR, p. 139.

[12]Ibid. *Vide*, p. 145, for the reason for the inapplicability of the golden rules argument in aesthetic judgments.

[13]Ibid., pp. 91-94.

intend for what I have said to be recognizable by one familiar with Hare's terminology as an accurate skeletal statement of Hare's position. My major purpose has been to introduce the terms 'descriptive' and 'prescriptive' in order to use them to explain in the following what constitutes a naturalistic ethics for Hare.

As Hare indicated, the term 'naturalism' "has been used very loosely."[14] Hare at one point proposed that 'naturalism' be limited in its application to "those theories against which Moore's refutation (or a recognizable version of it) is valid."[15] But, as Roger Hancock pointed out, this will not do; for "it would be trivially true that naturalistic theories are false, and no further argument would be required."[16] Such an approach would be for Hare to make his case against naturalism valid by definition.

In The Language of Morals, Hare tells us that naturalistic theories are those theories which "leave out the

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[14]LM, p. 82.

[15]Ibid. Hare in "Broad's Approach to Moral Philosophy," The Philosophy of C. D. Broad, Paul Arthur Schlipp (ed.), (Vol. X in The Library of Living Philosophers. New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1959), p. 565, similarly characterizes naturalism, but goes on to hold that naturalism is "any theory which treats an evaluative expression as equivalent to a descriptive expression."

[16]Hancock, op. cit., pp. 326-27.

prescriptive or commendatory element in value judgments, by
seeking to make them derivable from statements of fact."[17]
If we accept Hare's distinction between evaluative, pre-
scriptive and descriptive terms, what Hare means by 'natu-
ralism' in The Language of Morals may be summarized as
follows: Moral terms are a species of value terms.[18] And
we find that the special function of value terms is to
commend.[19] But, naturalistic definition of 'good'--
a typical value term--is a definition of 'good' in purely
descriptive terms. Or, to put the same point another way,
it is a definition of 'good' which makes no reference to its
prescriptive meaning. Generally, naturalism is the defining
of value terms by using terms which are purely descriptive.
According to Hare in a letter to me dated November 17, 1969,
"The error of the naturalists is to analyse the word in such
a way that all of its uses would have to be descriptive."

When we come to Freedom and Reason we discover that
the naturalists are a sub-set of a more general set, viz.
the descriptivists.[20] Descriptivism is the view which holds

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[17] Ibid., p. 82.

[18] Ibid., pp. 79-80.

[19] E.g., Ibid., p. 91.

[20] FR, p. 3.

that the descriptive meaning of moral judgments "exhausts

their meaning."[21] One type of descriptive meaning makes

reference to the empirical properties of an object; a non-

naturalistic descriptivist would be one who held that moral

terms are to be defined in terms of non-empirical properties.

But I have not yet said enough to fully characterize

the ethical naturalist, for Hare also suggests that a natu-

ralist is one who holds that a value dispute is purely verbal

when all of the non-verbal facts of the case have been

agreed on.[22] And naturalism is the view that holds that

moral conclusions can be inferred from certain factual

premises which are not themselves moral judgments.[23] It is

also the view that moral judgments can "be established by

appeal to the use of words."[24]

Naturalism is thus a many-headed monster. To sum up:

according to Hare, to hold to a naturalistic ethics is to

hold to at least the following assertions: (1) Moral terms

have only descriptive meaning; (2) Moral disputes ultimately

resolve to verbal disputes when all of the non-verbal facts

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[21]FR, p. 3.

[22]Ibid., p. 17; vide p. 21 for a similar comment.

[23]Ibid., p. 86.

[24]Ibid., p. 198.

are agreed on; (3) Moral conclusions can be inferred from factual premises which are not moral judgments; and (4) Moral judgments can be established by appeal to how moral words are used.

In the last section of this chapter I wish to comment upon the correctness of this characterization of ethical naturalism; but, for the moment, I want to indicate why Hare held, as he further stated in his letter, that ethical naturalism

> . . . is an error within ethics. It is . . . an error consisting in a wrong answer to the question 'what is the meaning or analysis of some moral word or concept?'

There are several reasons given by Hare for rejecting ethical naturalism. To completely evaluate all of them would go substantially beyond the scope of this paper, but it is necessary to mention them in order not to give the impression that Hare rejected naturalism solely because of the Open Question Argument. The central reason for rejecting natural-ism depends upon Hare's thesis that there are prescriptive uses of moral terms; thus to the degree that these prescrip-tive uses are omitted by the naturalists, naturalism is to that degree incomplete.

Hare's major reasons for holding that there are prescriptive meanings for moral terms are summarized by

him in two places.[25] We find that according to Hare there

are at least four reasons for positing prescriptive meaning:

(1) Prescriptive meaning is necessary in order for a value-

word, such as 'good', to have a constant meaning in all of

its contexts. We call both a sunset good and a fire-

extinguisher good; we call a man good and a chronometer

good.[26] Hare held that the only meaning of 'good' common to

all of these various locutions is a constancy of prescriptive

meaning. That is to say, in all cases we are commending.[27]

If we hold that 'good' has a different meaning in each

case "because the virtues required in objects of different

classes are different," we should, said Hare using Urmson's

phrase, wind up with "a homonym with as many punning

meanings as the situation it applied to."[28] If the meaning

of a term is that which is common to all usages of the term,

then the alternatives according to Hare are to conclude that

'good' has a constant prescriptive meaning or else to con-

clude that 'good' has as many meanings as it has descriptive

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[25]LM, p. 172; FR, p. 84.

[26]Hare's examples, LM, pp. 138 ff.

[27]Ibid., p. 140. Following Hare's suggestion on p. 27
of FR, I have replaced the phrase 'evaluative meaning' used
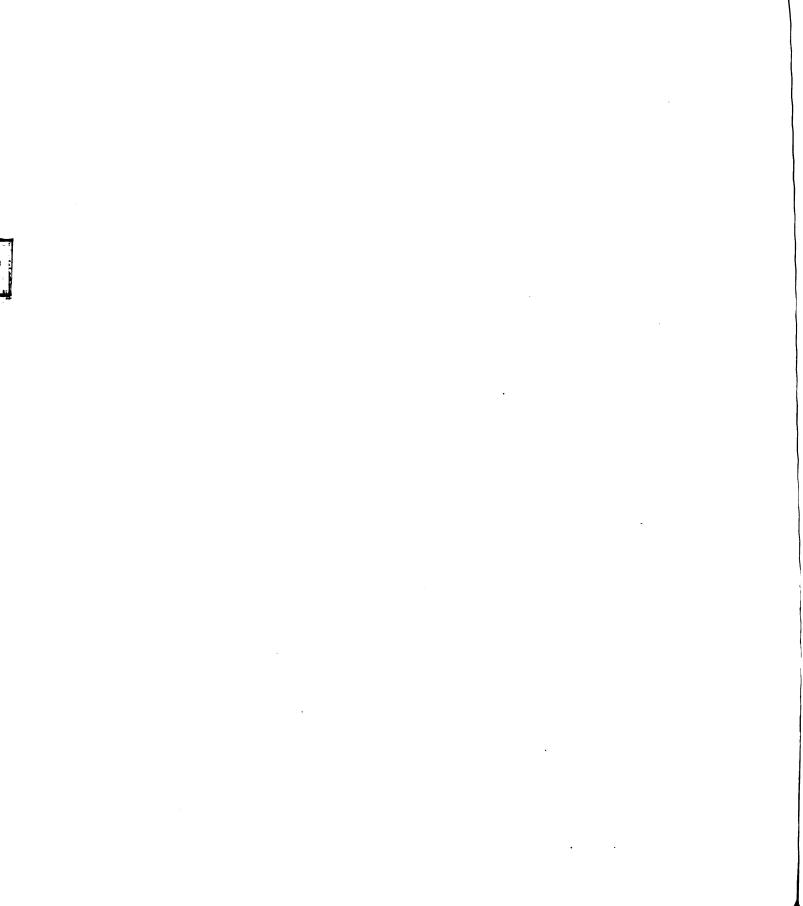in LM with 'prescriptive meaning'.

[28]J. O. Urmson, "On Grading," Mind, LIX (April, 1960);
cited by Hare, LM, p. 140.

meanings. Hare pithily put his position as:

> When we call a motor-car or a chronometer or a cricket-
> bat or a picture good, we are commending all of them
> but because we are commending all of them for different
> reasons, the descriptive meaning is different in all
> cases.[29]

Hare's distinction between the meaning of the word 'good' and the criteria for its application is worth mentioning at this point. If we think about different classes of objects, we discover that within each class we would choose certain objects for certain reasons and reject others for the same reasons. The criteria by which we choose from objects within a class is the criteria by which we apply the word 'good' to the objects in that class. But as we change classes of objects the criteria by which we choose also change. We can thus distinguish between the criteria by which we apply the word 'good' to objects in a particular class and what the word 'good' means. I call an object 'good' for some reason; there are criteria according to which I attach the label 'good' to an object within a class. Those criteria, the descriptive meaning for the term 'good' in that context, vary as the classes vary because the criteria for applying the term vary. Yet, holds Hare, common to all uses of 'good' is a common meaning—the prescriptive meaning.

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[29]LM, p. 118.

Hare did admit that 'good' is sometimes used "with no commendatory meaning at all."[30] Such uses are the inverted comma use, the ironic use, and the conventional use.[31] In the inverted comma use, "we are . . . not making a value-judgment ourselves, but alluding to the value-judgments of other people."[32] To say 'x is good' is, in this use, to say that x fits the standards for commendation in its class, although we are not commending x or its class. The ironic use of 'good' is the use of 'good' not to commend but to do "rather the reverse." The conventional use of 'good' is the use:

> in which the speaker is merely paying lip-service to a convention, by commending, or saying commendatory things about, just because everyone else does.[33]

But all of these uses, I should point out, seem to require in some sense that an evaluation be made. The first requires an evaluation within a certain class even though the speaker does not intend to commend anything within that class. The second presupposes an adverse evaluation. The

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[30]In a letter to me dated November 17, 1969, Hare stated: ". . . it is possible to correctly use 'good', on occasion, in a purely descriptive way (e.g. in Urmson's example when I say 'She has a good figure' in order to help a man who is meeting a girl at the airport to identify her.)"

[31]LM, pp. 124-25.   [32]Ibid., p. 124.

[33]Ibid., p. 125.

third is an evaluation according to standards not accepted

by the speaker. Since the standards are not accepted, the

object evaluated is not commended. And it would seem to

follow that in those cases the words are not being used as

value words, for value words are used for commending or its

opposite.[34] Thus there are cases in which 'good' is used

in making an evaluation but not for commending. It seems

odd to me to say that a word is used to evaluate but is

itself not being used as a value word. Such an oddity does

follow from Hare's holding that to be a evaluative use

necessarily involves commending.

Hare also offers other reasons for positing

prescriptivism: (2) A second reason for rejecting naturalism

evolves from a consideration of how 'ought' implies 'can'.[35]

(3) The problem of backsliding requires in Hare's estimation

the positing of prescriptive meaning.[36] (4) Naturalism

does not pass the Open Question Argument test.

That naturalism is not shown to be untenable by Hare's

versions of the Open Question Argument is the central thesis

of this chapter. Nevertheless it is necessary out of

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[34]_Ibid._, p. 79.

[35]_Vide_ FR, chapt. 4, "'Ought' and 'Can'."

[36]_Vide ibid_, chapt. 5, "Backsliding."

fairness to Hare to point out that he does not rest his

rejection of ethical naturalism solely on naturalism's

purported failure to pass the Open Question Argument test.

I intend to show that Hare is not able to refute naturalism

through any of his uses of the Open Question Argument. In

order to do so, I will begin by giving three versions of the

Open Question Argument as used by Hare. That is the purpose

of the next section. In the following three sections, I

will show how each of those versions is unsuccessful in

establishing Hare's conclusion.

3.2 Three Instances of the Open Question Argument.

I give a general version of the Open Question Argument
and then extract three concrete instances of it from
Hare's writings.

Hare offers both a general version of the Open

Question Argument and at least two instances of how that

argument can be used in particular cases to discredit

naturalism. I will give the general version first; then

I will give the two particular instances. In addition,

I will show that the two instances are really three different

instances of the Open Question Argument.

Hare holds that he can give "a simple procedure"

for exposing the fallacy in any variety of naturalism

that may be offered:

Let us suppose that someone claims that he can deduce a moral or other evaluative judgment from a set of purely factual or descriptive premisses, relying on some definition to the effect that V (a value-word) means the same as C (a conjunction of descriptive predicates). We first have to ask him to be sure that C contains no expression that is covertly evaluative (for example 'natural' or 'normal' or 'satisfying' or 'fundamental human needs'). Nearly all so-called 'naturalistic definitions' will break down under this test--for to be genuinely naturalistic a definition must contain no expression for whose applicability there is not a definite criterion which does not involve the making of a value-judgment. If the definition satisfies this test, we have next to ask whether its advocate ever wishes to commend anything for being C. If he says that he does, we have only to point out to him that his definition makes this impossible, for the reasons given. And clearly he cannot say that he never wishes to commend anything for being C; for to commend things for being C is the whole object of his theory.[37]

What is it that purportedly prevents our commending anything

for being C? Hare tells us that

. . . if it were true that 'a good A' meant the same as 'an A which is C', then it would be impossible to use the sentence 'An A which is C is good' in order to commend A's which are C; for this sentence would be analytic and equivalent to 'An A which is C is C'.[38]

Hare's general position, then, is that naturalistic defi-

nitions debar our using 'good' to commend, for definitions

are analytic statements and analytic statements cannot be

used to commend. As we shall shortly see, Hare gives at

least three different reasons for holding that analytic

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[37]LM, pp. 92-93.

[38]Ibid., pp. 90-91.

sentences cannot be used to commend. Each reason may be used to generate a different instance of the Open Question Argument.

In addition to his general version of the Open Question Argument, Hare also employed two concrete instances of it. The first instance is to be found on pages 84-85 of The Language of Morals. Let us assume C to be a set of characteristics descriptively defining a good picture. Assume that C, for example, are those factual characteristics of a picture which have:

> a tendency to arouse in people who at that time are members of the Royal Academy . . . a definitely recognizable feeling called 'admiration'.

We cannot on this assumption say, argues Hare, that the members of the Royal Academy have good taste in pictures, for "to have good taste in pictures means to have this definitely recognizable feeling of admiration for those pictures, and only those pictures, which are good pictures." If we accept C as a definition of 'good picture', to say that the members of the Royal Academy have good taste in pictures is only to say ". . . they have this feeling of admiration for pictures which have a tendency to arouse in them this feeling." Thus if we accept the definition, "we debar ourselves from saying something that we sometimes want to say." "What we wanted to do was to commend the

pictures which the members of the Royal Academy admired."

Now we can only say "that they admired those pictures which

they admired." Hare generalized this particular version

of the argument as:

> If 'P is a good picture' is held to mean the same as
> 'P is a picture and P is C', then it will become
> impossible to commend pictures for being C; it will be
> possible only to say that they are C.

Hare's second example is from pages 85-86 of The

Language of Morals. Let us define the sentence 'S is a

good strawberry' as 'S is a strawberry and S is sweet,

juicy, firm, red and large'. But such a "proposed definition

would prevent our saying something that we do succeed in

saying meaningfully in our ordinary talk." And what would

be prevented is our saying that a strawberry is good because

it is sweet, juicy, firm, red and large. Hare concluded:

> This--as we can at once see if we think of ourselves
> saying it--does not mean the same as saying that a
> strawberry is a sweet, etc., strawberry because it is
> sweet, etc. But accordingly to our proposed definition
> this is what it would mean.

Hare held that if we define 'S is a good strawberry' as 'S

is a strawberry and S is sweet, juicy, firm, red and large.'

On one very plausible interpretation, Hare's argument

leads to a dilemma: Either this argument is obviously in-

valid or there are no descriptive definitions at all. Con-

sider a descriptive definition of 'X is a triangular plane

figure' as 'X is a plane figure and X is three-sided'. I
do not think that the acceptance of that definition rules
out our saying of a particular plane figure that it is
triangular because it is three-sided. There is at least
one sense in which a "because" answer of this type would
be perfectly acceptable even though definitionally true.
Thus it cannot be the fact alone that 'S is a good straw-
berry' may be descriptively defined that prohibits our not
being able to say a strawberry is good because it is sweet,
juicy, firm, red and large. There must be more to Hare's
argument than I have suggested.

The "more" of Hare's argument takes two forms. I
find two clarifications which, although Hare does not
apparently differentiate between, it would be helpful to
distinguish. Each generates a different instance of the
Open Question Argument. The first is found in the following
passage:

> . . . if it were true that 'a good A' meant the same as
> 'an A which is C', then it would be impossible to use the
> sentence 'An A which is C is good' in order to commend
> A's which are C; for this sentence would be . . . equiva-
> lent to 'An A which is C is C'. Now it seems clear that
> we do use sentences of the form 'An A which is C is
> good' in order to commend A's which are C. . . .[39]

Hare's second objection is found in the following passage:

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[39]_Ibid._, pp. 90-91.

. . . a sentence of the form 'An A which is C is good' cannot without change of meaning be rewritten 'The English sentence "An A which is C is good" is analytic'. For a sentence of the latter type certainly could not be used for commending, whereas sentences of the former type can be and are; we commend strawberries which are sweet, etc., by saying 'A strawberry which is sweet, etc., is good', but we never do this by saying 'The English sentence "A strawberry which is sweet, etc., is good" is analytic'. This latter sentence, if it were used, would not be a commendation of sweet straw- berries; it would be a remark--and a false one--about the English language.[40]

The gist of Hare's two objections is now easy to state:

(1) An analytic sentence of the form 'An A which is C is C' cannot be used for commending; a sentence of the form 'An A which is C is good' can be used for commending; therefore 'a good A' cannot be defined purely descriptively. (2) The statement '"An A which is C is good" is an analytic sentence in English' cannot be used for commending; but the statement 'An A which is C is good' can be used for commending; therefore the statement "'An A which is C is good' is an analytic sentence" is a false statement about the English language. Thus Hare has two objections to descriptively defining 'good strawberry'.

We thus have three arguments to consider in evalu- ating Hare's uses of the Open Question Argument:

(A) When 'a good picture' is defined as a picture

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[40]Ibid., p. 91.

which tends to generate a certain feeling in the members of the Royal Academy, it will not be possible to commend the tastes of the members of the Royal Academy because they admire good pictures. We want to so commend their tastes. Hence 'good picture' cannot be descriptively defined in this manner.

(B) Because 'An A which is C is good' (where C is some list of purely descriptive predicates) can be used for commending and because 'An A which is C is C' cannot so be used, 'a good A' cannot be defined as 'an A which is C'.

(C) Because 'An A which is C is good' can be used for commending and because '"An A which is C" is analytic in English' cannot so be used, 'a good A' cannot be defined as 'an A which is C'.

The arguments above are not completely stated. Some transitional remarks are omitted. Yet I have said enough to give the general idea behind Hare's proposed refutation of naturalism through his use of the Open Question Argument. I shall now endeavor to show why none of these arguments establishes Hare's conclusion. The next section will deal with argument (A); the following with (C); the following with (B).

3.3 <u>Standards</u> <u>and</u> <u>Commending</u>.

I show that although we can commend by using a standard, a standard cannot be used to commend itself. I reject Hare's first instance of the Open Question Argument because it is based on the false assumption that a standard can be used to commend itself.

In this section I wish to show how Hare overlooked an essential feature of the logic of standards. When that feature is made explicit, it will be seen that the first of Hare's instances of the Open Question Argument breaks down. The missing feature is the fact that a standard cannot be used to evaluate itself.

A meter in length has been defined in several different ways. Originally, a meter was intended to be equal to one ten-millionth of the distance from the equator to the pole measured on a meridian. Later a meter was defined as the distance between two lines on a platinum-iridium bar preserved at the International Bureau of Weights and Measures near Paris. That bar, which served as the standard for defining the length of a meter from 1889 to 1960, is commonly referred to as the International Prototype Meter. Since 1960, the length of a meter has been defined as 1,650,763.73 wavelengths of the orange-red radiation of krypton[86] under specified conditions. For the sake of simplifying my presentation I wish the reader to assume it still be pre-1960 and the International Prototype Meter

still be the standard for defining the length of one meter. The logic of my argument will not be affected by those assumptions.

Suppose a person in the business of manufacturing meter sticks raises a question about what length would be a good length for a meter stick. In such a case, a descriptive meaning for the term 'good length for a meter stick' can be given: A good length for a meter stick is a length which closely approximates the length of the International Prototype Meter; the closer the approximation, the better the length of the meter stick. We have a standard which allows us to evaluate the length of a meter stick. Let us acknowledge with Hare that in saying of the length of a manufactured meter stick that it is good, that we are commending the length of that stick.

Could we commend the length of the International Prototype Meter? Certainly we could. But the standard by which we commend could not be the same standard we appeal to in commending manufactured meter sticks. To try to commend the standard for measuring up to itself is to try to do the impossible.

Let me explain why Hare is correct in holding that we cannot commend the tastes of the members of the Royal Academy for having good taste in pictures when 'good taste in

pictures' is taken as equivalent to 'admire good pictures'

and 'good pictures' is defined as Hare proposes. To descrip-

tively define 'a good picture' as Hare does in his example

does rule out our saying that the members of the Royal

Academy have good taste in pictures. To descriptively

define 'a good length for a meter stick' as I have done

does rule out our saying that the standard itself has a

good length, when 'good length' is defined by the standard.

The point is that the standard cannot be used to evaluate

itself. It is that by which evaluations are made. If the

taste of the members of the Royal Academy is proposed as the

standard for good pictures, their taste cannot be evaluated

by itself. It is that by which evaluations of pictures are

made.

Thus a naturalist who defined 'a good picture' as a

picture which tends to generate a certain response in the

members of the Royal Academy would, as Hare correctly points

out, be unable to evaluate the taste of the member by

appealing to their tastes as the standard of evaluation.

But the naturalist need not agree to Hare's conclusion that

this inability shows that 'a good picture' cannot be defined

descriptively. Such a naturalist might well assert that

Hare's argument would prove too much if it were correct: It

would prove that there could be no standards whatever, for

there is always something that we cannot non-tautologically say about the standard which we can say about things which are judged according to that standard--we can always use the standard to evaluate other things but we cannot use the standard to evaluate itself.

Hare is left with only one out by which to attempt to salvage the tellingness of this use of the Open Question Argument. He may claim that ". . . what we wanted to do was to commend the pictures which the members of the Royal Academy admired." It is possible to commend a standard, but such a commendation cannot be by the standard itself: it must be according to another standard. We can indeed commend the meter stick in Paris. We can commend it, for example, for its durability, its usefulness, etc. But we cannot commend it for its length. We can commend a picture which the members of the Royal Academy admire for many things. We can call it a good picture because it fits in nicely with our color scheme, because it can be sold for a profit, etc. We just cannot commend it in this case because it is a good picture qua picture. That is, we cannot commend it by calling it a good picture if 'a good picture' means only that which it was descriptively defined to mean. We may have to quit saying some of the things we want to say if we want to have standards.

A naturalist could argue that Hare was simply being illogical, that he was trying to commend the uncommendable; he was trying to apply the standard to itself. The naturalist could hold that Hare missed an essential part of the logic of standards. Standards are used so that we can commend things for measuring up to the standard, but we are not able to commend the standard for measuring up to itself. To attempt to apply the standard to itself is to commit a category mistake. To say of the members of the Royal Academy that they have good taste in pictures when the standard for being a good picture is measured by the taste of the members of the Royal Academy is to commit a logical faux pas. Hare is correct in holding that we normally do want to say of the members of the Royal Academy that they have good taste in pictures (when they in fact do). But this only shows that we do not normally take the taste of the members of the Royal Academy as our standard for a good picture. It does not show that no descriptive standard is possible.

I think I have shown that one version of the Open Question Argument as used by Hare does not establish the point he thinks it does. It does not show that we can have no descriptive definition of 'good picture'. We can have empirical standards; we just cannot evaluate the standards

by themselves. We can even evaluate the standard if we
appeal to another standard. In this case, we can evaluate
the tastes of the members of the Royal Academy; but we
cannot evaluate their tastes by means of the pictures they
admire. To attempt to do so would involve an applying of
the standard to itself. To point out that such a procedure
is impossible does not show that we can have no descriptive
standards as Hare thought; it is only to point out something
about the logic of standards which Hare apparently over-
looked.

3.4 Definitions and Commending.

I use Hare's own method of avoiding the Paradox of
Analysis as a way of vitiating the force of the third
instance of the Open Question Argument: I show, contrary
to Hare, that we should expect object-language defini-
tional sentences to have different uses than do
metalanguage sentences. It follows that this version
of the Open Question Argument is based on a logically
irrelevant fact: the fact that ". . . a sentence of the
form 'An A which is C is good' cannot without change of
meaning be rewritten as 'The English sentence "An A
which is C is good" is analytic'." Thus Hare does not
show that 'a good A' cannot be defined as 'an A which
is C'.

What of the third instance of the Open Question
Argument used by Hare? I propose to evaluate it in this
section while withholding evaluation of his second instance
until the next section. In both cases, I will be concerned
with showing that the Open Question Argument does not

establish Hare's point.

Hare would have us compare the following:

(1) An A which is C is good.

(2) The English sentence 'An A which is C is good'
     is analytic in English.

According to Hare, if (1) and (2) do not have the same

uses, then 'a good A' and 'C' do not have the same meaning.

To elucidate this claim, let us consider Hare's discussion

of one who defines a puppy as a young dog.[41] As Hare

correctly said, the sentence 'A puppy is a young dog" is

normally used as a definition. Yet it is misleading in this

form, for it has the same form as sentences which are not

normally definitions, and "it is elliptical and this

obscures the fact that it is a definition." Hare went on

to say:

> We could correct both these faults at the cost of a
> certain artificiality by saying instead 'The English
> sentence "If anything is a puppy it is a young dog
> (and vice versa)" is analytic'. This has the merit of
> disentangling the synthetic part from the analytic
> elements of the original definition.[42]

Hare is thus giving us a method of dealing with definitions.

It is not that a definition stated as 'A puppy is a young

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[41]Ibid., pp. 86-91.

[42]Ibid., p. 87.

dog' is wrong as a definition.[43] It is that such a form is misleading. Hare proposes that 'A puppy is a young dog' can be expanded into an overt definition in such a way that "the meaning . . . is preserved." Such a expansion would be of the form 'The English sentence "A puppy is a young dog" is analytic'.

Hare recommended this procedure of expansion because it separates the synthetic part from "the analytic elements of the original definition." An important insight is expressed by this proposal. The sentence 'A puppy is a young dog' is an implicitly definitional sentence in the English language. But the statement that it is analytic is itself a metalinguistic statement which is itself not analytic. The former is an analytic statement in the English language; the latter, although it also is a statement in the English language, is at a higher logical level, for it is about a statement in the English language. To state that a sentence is a definition we need speak at the metalinguistic level.

Let us see how Hare used this method of expansion in order to escape from the paradox of analysis mentioned earlier. Hare's indicated intent in expanding 'A puppy is

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[43]Ibid., p. 87.

a young dog' was to show that Moore's and his refutations of naturalistic definitions of 'good' did not involve this paradox. Hare wanted to show that although 'puppy' means the same as 'young dog', they cannot always be substituted for one another in all contexts.

If 'A puppy is a young dog' is definitional, it would seem that this sentence is equivalent to 'A young dog is a young dog' which is a trivial statement. It would seem that all definitions are no more than trivialities. But, by expanding both of these sentences according to Hare's proposal, we can obtain:

> . . . 'The English sentence "If anything is a puppy it is a young dog" is analytic' does not mean the same as 'The English sentence "If anything is a young dog it is a young dog" is analytic'. And therefore the abbreviations of the sentences, 'A puppy is a young dog' and 'A young dog is a young dog' do not mean the same.[44]

We can see by using Hare's method why the sentence 'A puppy is a young dog' does not mean the same as the trivial 'A young dog is a young dog'. The expansions of these sentences are:

(3) The English sentence 'A puppy is a young dog' is analytic.

(4) The English sentence 'A young dog is a young dog' is analytic.

Both (3) and (4) are true, but neither is analytically

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[44]Ibid., p. 90.

true. They are true statements about sentences in the English language, but they are about sentences of a lower logical type. Although Hare did not show why (3) and (4) do not mean the same, the answer is to easy to discover: (4) is a statement which indicates that a certain sentence in the English language is what I called earlier a formal logical truth; (3) is a statement which indicates that another sentence in the English language is what I called earlier a definitional logical truth. These two meta-linguistic sentences do not mean the same for although the verbally-same predicate is being applied, it is being applied for different reasons to different sentences. Not only are the criteria for the application of the predicates different, the subjects to which the predicates are applied are also different.

Let us notice how Hare attempted to apply these considerations to naturalistic definitions of 'good'. Consider the following comment by Hare:

> . . . a sentence of the form 'An A which is C is good' cannot without change of meaning be rewritten as 'The English sentence "An A which is C is good" is analytic'.[45]

Two conclusions are drawn from this passage: The first is that 'The English sentence "An A which is C is good" is

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[45]Ibid., p. 91.

analytic' is a false sentence about the English language. The second conclusion is that 'An A which is C is good' does not have the same meaning as 'The English sentence "An A which is C is good" is analytic'. An implicit conclusion is that 'a good A' does not mean the same as 'an A which is C'.

Let me evaluate Hare's second conclusion. For ease of reference I shall refer to the two sentences as:

(1) An A which is C is good.

(2) The English sentence 'An A which is C is good' is analytic.

Hare holds that (1) is used to commend A's which are C's while (2) cannot be so used. Thus, he argues, since (1) and (2) have different uses, (1) cannot be rewritten as (2) "without change of meaning." Here sameness of meaning is equated with sameness of usage.

Was Hare able to show (1) and (2) not to have the same meaning since they have different uses? I think not. For if he did,

(3) A puppy is a young dog.

and

(4) The English sentence 'A puppy is a young dog' is analytic.

could be seen not to have the same meaning, for (3) is not

ordinarily used to define 'puppy' while (4) is.[46] That is,

(3) and (4) have different uses. To use an old distinction,

(3) is an object-language sentence, (4) is a meta-language

sentence: (3) is analytic, (4) is synthetic. Holmes ob-

jected to Hare's argument as follows:

> The point is that if consideration of how the sentences
> are _in_ _fact_ used is to count as a difference in meaning
> in the one case, it must also count as a difference in
> the other. And if it does not make a difference in the
> one case, then likewise it does not make a difference
> in the other. But to equate meaning and use so neatly
> in one instance and not in the other is to beg a
> crucial issue against the naturalist.[47]

A naturalist could respond to Hare by correctly asserting

that if (1) and (2) differ in meaning because of different

uses, then so do (3) and (4). While if (3) and (4) have

the same meaning despite their having different uses, then

so do (1) and (2). (3) and (4) are used differently, for

(4) is used to remark about the English language, while

(3) is used to give a definition. In other words, (3) is

the actual giving of a definition, while (4) is a report

that a certain definition is taken as correct in the

English language. (3) and (4) are sentences at different

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[46] Robert Holmes, "The Case Against Ethical Natural-ism," _Mind_, LXII (April, 1964), 294. The _ad_ _himinen_ argu-ment given in this and the next paragraph is a slight modification of an objection put forward by Holmes.

[47] _Ibid._, pp. 294-95.

logical levels of language. It is not suprising that they

have different functions, since they occur at different

levels: there is a difference between using a definition

and giving a definition, just as there is a difference

between giving the rules of a game and playing a game by

those rules.

A naturalist could agree that (1) and (2) are not

identical in the sense that they do perform different

functions. Yet, in so insisting, it would not follow that

he must commit himself to holding that (2) is not a proper

way of analysing (1). There are two further facts which

he may cite in his support: First, it is likely that no

two expressions can be interchanged in all contexts without

some change of use. Thus, as Holmes said, "It counts little

against the ethical naturalist to point out that this is

true of the definition he proposes for value terms."[48]

Second,

> . . . it is simply incorrect to suppose that there is
> never an alternation of meaning when we expand, in the
> way Hare does, a sentence containing a definition.[49]

As Hare himself indicated, his expansion method which gives

(4) from (3) results in "a certain artificiality."[50]

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[48]_Ibid._, p. 292.   [49]_Ibid._

[50]LM, p. 87.

My objection so far has been <u>ad</u> <u>hominen</u> against Hare. Its force is only that Hare cannot have it both ways: He cannot hold that (1) and (2) do not mean the same despite difference in uses (and there certainly are differences in uses) while holding that (3) and (4) do mean the same despite difference in uses (and there certainly are differences in uses). Let me offer a criticism which is not <u>ad</u> <u>hominen</u>.

That (1) and (2) have different meanings was not the only conclusion which Hare reached. From his assumption that (1) and (2) have different uses it was at least implicitly held to follow that 'a good A' does not mean the same as 'an A which is C'. If Hare's argument were sound, it would follow from the fact that since (3) and (4) have different uses, 'puppy' would not mean the same as 'young dog' and Hare's expansion process would be subject to telling criticism. We would thus be right back into the paradox of analysis since we can always find different uses for definitional and meta-linguistic sentences about definitional sentences.

We need to distinguish at least two types of statements: definitional statements and meta-linguistic statements about definitional statements. That sentences at two different linguistic levels have different uses is irrelevant to

any claim concerning the use of terms in definitional sentences. That a meta-linguistic sentence does not function as does an object language sentence has no bearing on how the terms of an object language sentence are used; difference in sentence use in this case does not imply difference in term use. Even if Hare holds to an equation of meaning and use as he seems to, he has not shown that 'a good strawberry' does not mean the same as 'a strawberry which is sweet, juicy, firm, red and large'. The factor on which he has based his argument is logically irrelevant to his conclusion. To hold that an object language sentence cannot be used to commend because a meta-linguistic sentence about it cannot be so used is to be guilty of the same mistake as would be committed by one who held that we cannot assert 'grass is green' because the sentence is written in black ink. A category mistake is being committed in both cases.

Hare's third argument against naturalism does not establish the intended conclusion.

3.5 Analytic Sentences and Commending.

I agree with Hare that 'an A which is C is C' cannot be used for commending while 'an A which is C is good' can. I employ Hare's procedure for showing that although 'a puppy is a young dog' and 'a puppy is a puppy' do differ in meaning, it is possible to hold that 'puppy' and 'young dog' are synonyms. Hare's own procedure destroys the force of the second instance of the Open Question Argument.

I have shown why one of Hare's two arguments against descriptively defining 'a good strawberry' does not work. His other argument is that since 'an A which is C is C' cannot be used for commending, while 'an A which is C is good' can be used for commending, 'a good A' cannot be defined purely descriptively. The conclusion drawn by Hare is that 'a good A' cannot be defined as 'an A which is C' when 'C' is purely descriptive.

Again, for the ease of reference, I want to refer to the following sentences by number:

(1) An A which is C is good.

(2) An A which is C is C.

Hare held that if 'a good A' means the same as 'an A which is C', then (1) and (2) must be synonymous; thus 'a good A' does not mean 'an A which is C'. This argument I now wish to challenge.

I will agree with Hare that (1) can be used to commend while (2) cannot be so used. But what does this fact prove? Hare was able to show how

(3) A puppy is a young dog.

differs in meaning from

(4) A young dog is a young dog.

while still holding 'puppy' and 'young dog' to have the same meaning. Using Hare's argument one could hold that

(1) and (2) also differ in meaning. One could agree with

Hare that (1) and (2) have different uses and thus have

different meanings without having to draw the conclusion

as Hare did that 'a good A' and 'an A which is C' have

different meanings. In whatever way it is possible to hold

that (3) and (4) differ in meaning while still holding that

'puppy' and 'young dog' are synonyms, it is likewise possible

to hold that (1) and (2) differ in meaning and still hold

that 'a good A' and 'an A which is C' are synonyms. I do

not say that they are synonyms; I am only holding that Hare's

argument does not show them to be non-synonymous.

As Holmes said about Hare's exposition of the paradox

of analysis and his method of showing the possibility of

analytic definitions:

> This nicely saves us from having to undercut all
> analytic definitions, but it would appear to salvage
> the naturalist's definition as well. For if he grants
> Hare's argument up to this point he need only maintain
> that although 'good' does indeed stand for those
> properties designated by 'C', the sentences in which
> these expressions occur are not exactly identical in
> meaning in all contexts. . . . Thus when we say that
> 'An A which is C is good' we are not _simply_ saying 'An
> A which is C is C'.[51]

That is to say, if the paradox of analysis jeopardizes all

definitions by reducing them to trivialities, it jeopardizes

naturalistic definitions as well. If, on the other hand,

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[51]Holmes, _loc. cit._

non-naturalistic definitions can be salvaged by Hare's
method, there is no good reason why naturalistic definitions
cannot also be salvaged. More specifically, if the differ-
ence between (3) and (4) on Hare's analysis does not
necessitate the conclusion that 'puppy' and 'young dog' are
non-synonymous since they are not mutually replaceable in
all contexts, neither does the difference in meaning between
(1) and (2) necessitate the conclusion that 'a good A' and
'an A which is C' are not synonyms since they are not
mutually replaceable in all contexts. It is beside the
point to say that we can do things with (1) that we cannot
do with (2) in order to try to show that 'a good A' cannot
be defined as 'an A which is C'.

In this section I have tried to show how one of the
concrete versions of Hare's Open Question Argument does
not have the force he thought it did. My points have been
primarily critical in this and the previous two sections.
In the final chapter, I will show why in principle no version
of the Open Question Argument can be successful in casting
out naturalistic definitions of 'good'. But before that is
done, I wish to suggest that Hare has not accurately
characterized ethical naturalism.

3.6 The Naturalistic Rejoinders to Hare.

I give possible naturalistic rejoinders to each of Hare's four ways of characterizing ethical naturalism. I show that each of his ways is either inaccurate or arbitrary or overlooked some important insight which the naturalist may have obtained.

In this section, I will argue for two theses: (A) Hare has not accurately characterized ethical naturalism; (B) Some naturalists can, following Hare, admit the prescriptive elements in some moral judgments without being guilty of a fallacy.

An ethical naturalist according to Hare is one who holds to at least the following theses: (1) moral terms have only descriptive meaning; (2) moral conclusions can be inferred from factual premises which are not moral judgments; (3) moral judgments can be established by appeal to how moral words are used; and (4) moral disputes ultimately resolve to verbal disputes when all of the non-moral facts are agreed on. I wish to give what I take to be a possible rejoinder to each of these theses in turn.

(1) Moral terms sometimes have only descriptive meaning. It seems to me that Hare is not using the term 'naturalism' in its traditional sense for at least two reasons. First, I think Hare failed to make a distinction between the status of a standard and how that standard is to be used. To say that something meets a standard is to

evaluate that thing and it is sometimes to commend that

thing. But when we talk about the standard itself we are

not necessarily evaluating or commending; we are telling

what the standard is. And when the standard is such that

it can be recognized through empirical observation, that

standard traditionally has been called naturalistic.

Likewise in ethics. When an ethical term such as 'good'

is defined so that there are some observable characteristics

which an object must have before that object is properly

called 'good', then that ethical definition is naturalistic.

And there are naturalistic moral theories of this sort. And

yet when an object is judged to be 'good' according to the

criteria established by those standards evaluation and some-

times commendation do occur. It is the status of the

standard that normally has been taken to determine if an

ethical system be naturalistic or not. The occurrence or

non-occurrence of evaluation and commendation is irrelevant

in deciding if the standard is naturalistic. In our

particular case it is how 'good' is defined and not why

it is defined or how the definition is used, i.e., how

the standard is applies, that determines whether the

definition is naturalistic. It is, I think, because Hare

failed to distinguish between talking about standards

themselves and assertions that things meet standards that

he was led to offer his analysis of what consititues a naturalistic definition.

Let me cite examples to show that naturalism in ethics is the sort which I have tried to indicate it is, that naturalism in ethics is the view that value terms are to be defined so that there is some empirical criteria for ascertaining when they are to be applicable. Ewing stated, "I think we may understand a naturalistic view of ethics as one which . . . analyses ethical concepts solely in terms of the concepts of a natural science."[52] Brandt tells us that:

> The essence of naturalism is the proposal that the meaning of every ethical statement is such that the truth of the statement can be determined . . . by observation and the methods of science.[53]

Abelson said, "Ethical naturalism maintains that 'good' and other ethical terms refer to scientifically determinable relations between things."[54]

Hare held that a genuinely naturalistic definition "must contain no expression for whose applicability there

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[52]A. C. Ewing, The Definition of Good (New York: The Humanities Press, 1966), p. 36.

[53]Richard B. Brandt, Value and Obligation (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1961), p. 252.

[54]Raziel Abelson, Ethics and Metaethics (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1961), p. 184.

is not a definite criterion which does not involve the making of a value-judgment."[55] But if this be the case I fail to see how it is possible for any definition to be naturalistic. For, as Hare correctly said, "Almost every word in our language is capable of being used on occasion as a value-word (that is, for commending or its opposite)."[56]

My first reason for holding that Hare did not use the word 'naturalism' in its usual sense is that traditionally the question of what makes a definition naturalistic is the status of the standard itself. Hare was concerned not with the status of the standard but with the use to which the standard is put. If "almost every word in our language" is capable of being used evaluatively, it says little against traditional naturalistic definitions that they are also capable of being used evaluatively.

My second reason for disagreeing with Hare's criterion for determining if an ethical analysis be naturalistic is that it seems that there would be no such naturalistic theories at all (ignoring for the moment the correctness of such theories). For, as Lange said:

. . . all naturalists with whom I am familiar are plugging descriptive value-expressions into the

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[55]LM, p. 92.

[56]Ibid., p. 79

definiens, and doing so without facial twitches. It is true that when we claim that an x is satisfying, we are normally commending that x, but this does not preclude the possibility that we are saying something true about x. The fact that 'satisfying' is a value-word does not hinder an empirical investigation to discover that situations and practices tend to be satisfying.[57]

I know of no actual ethical theory which defines ethical terms in such a way that ethical statements cannot be used for prescribing or commending. And yet I do know of ethical theories which purport to define ethical terms in such a way that empirical criteria are offered for the verification of ethical statements.

(2) Moral conclusions sometimes can be inferred from factual premises. Let me now turn to another way of characterizing naturalism in ethics to see if Hare's arguments show this sort of naturalism to be untenable. An ethical naturalist, on this view, is one who analyzes moral words in such a way that moral statements are equivalent to or are deducible from statements of fact. Where C is a conjunction of descriptive predicates and V is the value word which is defined as C, Hare claims that the "whole object" of such a definition is "to commend things for being C".[58]

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[57]Lange, op. cit., p. 245. Vide Roger Hancock, "A Note on Naturalism," Ethics, LXXVII (October, 1966), 64, for an example of an ethical naturalist (Dewey) who "recognized the prescriptive function of value judgments."

[58]LM, p. 93.

I wish to suggest that this is not the whole object.

First, at the level of ethical analysis, the object of one who defined V as C is to report on how V is used in the making of value judgments. His object is to describe, not to commend. It seems that Hare in this passage is objecting to someone other than to the ethical naturalist. Perhaps his objection is to a user of the term V who defines it as C.

Let me give a summary of Hare's position: There is a close connection between value judgments and commending. We guide actions by commending; we guide actions by making value judgments.[59] Moral judgments, a species of value judgments, also guide actions.[60] If value judgments guide actions, they entail imperatives. If they do not entail imperatives, they are not value judgments.[61] For, by definition, to be a value judgment requires that an imperative be entailed.[62] Thus since entailing imperatives and guiding

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[59]Ibid., p. 127. Cf. Christopher Johnson, "Commending and Choosing," Mind, LXVI (January, 1957), 67-68. Johnson forcefully argues that since 'commend' is a performatory verb the reason for uttering 'x is good' "is irrelevant" to commending, i.e. our purpose for commending is irrelevant for an act of commendation to take place. N. Fotion, "Commending and Evaluating," The Philosophical Quarterly, XII (January, 1962), 75-76, shows that evaluating is different from commending.

[60]LM, pp. 1, 91.   [61]Ibid., p. 164.

[62]Ibid.

action are "much the same thing" a value judgment by defini-
tion must guide actions. And Hare concludes a value judg-
ment must also be a commendation, since commendations guide
actions also.[63]

There is much that could be said against Hare's
position, for several unjustified leaps are made. But it
will be sufficient for my purpose to point out that on
Hare's analysis if a judgment is not intended as a guide
for actions then that judgment is not a value judgment.
Admittedly, this is an inference on my part, but I think
that Hare does hold to such a position. And a further
inference on my part is that the truth of this statement
follows from Hare's definition of what constitutes a value
judgment. And this brings me to my point: Hare does not
prove that value judgments necessarily involve commending;
he only defines them to do so.

There is another response a naturalist could make
to Hare's second characterization of the naturalist. I
wish to make my point by way of an example: Consider the
rules which define a game, and consider how one may apply
the rules in evaluating possible moves in that game. For
the person who is actually engaged in playing the game, the

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[63]Ibid., p. 172.

rules have a prescriptive force which is missing for one not playing that game. The rules may be completely descriptively given by one not playing the game; the same set of rules take on a prescriptive force for one who has decided to play the game.[64] What would be completely descriptive standards from one viewpoint would be evaluative standards from another viewpoint.

The ethical naturalist could hold that he is simply describing a game, the game of morality. Insofar as his descriptions are external to the game they lack prescriptive force. Yet he could hold that moral judgments could be inferred from purely factual premises if an important proviso is attached. His inferences would be of the form: Given the descriptive rules which define the game, one ought to do such-and-such _if one wants to play that game_. A commendation is being given; but the commendation is not absolute: it is relative to a person's choice to play the game or not.

Here would be at least one case in which a naturalist could from purely descriptive principles infer a value

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[64]_Vide_ Kenneth R. Pahel, "Stephen Pepper's Ethical Empiricism and the Myth of Analytic Naturalism," _The Southern Journal of Philosophy_, V (Spring, 1967), 51, for an elaboration of this distinction which comes from H. L. A. Hart's _The Concept of Law_.

judgment about what ought to be done. But would the naturalist be giving moral advice? Apparently Hare would hold that he was not, for Hare held that "to make a value judgment is to make a decision of principle."[65] If I interpret Hare correctly, he would hold that the moral decision is the decision to play a certain game, to act in conformity with certain principles. He seems to not allow a judgment concerning the application of a principle to count as a moral judgment. I find his position to be odd. It is certainly desirable to distinguish between decisions of moral principle and decisions of how one's moral principles are to be applied. Yet, it seems to me, that according to conventional usage, the latter sort of decision should also be countenanced as a moral decision. A naturalist could hold that the latter type of a decision is a moral decision, and as such could be inferred from purely factual premises: the factual premises stating the rules of the game and other factual premises describing a person's situation. It is only for the person who chooses to play by a certain set of rules, who chooses to act on certain principles, that the rules become prescriptive as well as descriptive.

Let us remember that the ethical theorist *qua* theorist

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[65]LM, p. 70.

is not involved in the game of making moral judgments: he is external to the game. As an external spectator, he should be able to descriptively describe the rules of the game and from those rules infer moral judgments which for him may completely lack prescriptive force. Hare would call such judgments "conventional" and hold that they are not genuine moral judgments. I am trying to suggest that any ethical theorist, not just the naturalist, is limited to conventional judgments.

(3) Moral judgments sometimes can be established by appeal to usage of moral words. By distinguishing between internal and external moral judgments, I have shown how at least sometimes moral judgments can be inferred from purely factual premises. But I do not wish to hold that all moral judgments are so inferable. At least one type is not--the decision to play the game. As Hare rightly holds, such a decision is not inferential at all: it is volitional.[66] And it is this element that Hare in one place holds the naturalist omits in his theory.[67] The naturalist could certainly agree with Hare that he omitted this element, for he could hold that naturalistic theories are only about the

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[66]FR, p. 198.

[67]Ibid.

epistemological status of moral standards; the naturalist need only point out that his theories as such do not attempt to give an answer to why a person adopts any particular standards: his theories are about the status of the standards.

Suppose one is faced with the task of choosing between incompatible moral principles, and suppose further these are basic moral principles.[68] To call them basic principles is to assume at the very minimum that there are no other principles which the person holds to which he can appeal in supporting these principles. Without arguing for the position, I wish to agree that the acceptance of such basic principles is volitional: in this case the person cannot derive his moral principles from a consideration of how moral words are used.

Hare is correct in holding that basic moral principles are not obtainable from considering the use of moral terms. But once the basic principles are adopted, those principles can be verbally expressed. In a sense, the person who makes a moral decision always makes a linguistic decision--a decision concerning the criteria of application of his value

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[68]Vide Amartya K. Sen, "The Nature and Classes of Prescriptive Judgments," The Philosophical Quarterly, XVII (January, 1967), 52, for a useful way of distinguishing basic from non-basic moral judgments.

terms. His decision involves his committing himself to applying his terms by certain standards. After--but not until--such a decision be made, I can see no good reason for denying that that person's moral judgments can be established by a consideration of how he uses moral words. Of course, considerations of how others use moral words is logically irrelevant to the agent's further value judgments once he makes a decision of principle.

I am holding that some moral judgments can be established by appeal to how moral words are used, but they cannot all be. Hare has gone too far in taking issue with the naturalist: The naturalists need not hold that linguistic considerations always determine moral judgments; he need only hold they sometimes are.

(4) Moral judgments do not always evolve to verbal disputes. A naturalist, according to Hare, holds that moral disputes ultimately resolve to verbal disputes when all the non-moral facts are agreed on. I wish to suggest that a naturalist need not hold that position at all.

Let us imagine a dispute between a fundamentalistic Protestant and a conservative Roman Catholic. Let us assume that both sincerely want to do what is the will of God. A serious dispute could arise between them concerning how the will of God is to be ascertained. For both, the

statement 'Doing the will of God is morally right' could be taken as a definitionally analytic sentence. For both, the adjectival expression 'the will of God' could have prescriptive meaning in sentences of the form 'X is the will of God' in the sense that both would sincerely assent to imperative of the form 'Let me do X.' The dispute would be about the criteria for applying the term 'the will of God'. Or to use the language I used earlier, the dispute is about the standards to which one appeals in evaluating actions to see if they conform to God's will.

To what standards could each appeal? To perhaps oversimplify the issue: the Protestant fundamentalist would hold that the standard is a literal interpretation of the Bible; the conservative Catholic, to the teachings of the Roman Catholic church as promulgated by its authorities. I think it is not necessary to argue that these standards are not always in agreement.

What then of the dispute? Is it purely verbal? In one sense it is not. For a decision must be made about which standard to accept: that decision must involve a volitional element if Hare is right--it must involve a choice about what to do.[69] But in another sense, it is a

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[69]Cf. Hare's discussion between himself and the communist; LM, p. 49.

dispute about what to say: it is a dispute about the criteria of applying the term 'the will of God.'

I will make the point I'm getting at in another way. It was once customary to classify ethical theories as objective, subjective, emotive, prescriptive, etc. The objective ethical theories are distinguished from the others by holding that when one makes a judgment such as 'X is good' one is saying something about X, which the other theories deny. The distinction is between saying something about X as opposed to doing domething to X, whether the doing be interpreted as expressing approval of X, commending X, or so on. When objective ethical theories are distinguished from other ethical theories by this criterion, it is possible to discover a plethora of naturalistic ethical theories as types of objective ethical theories, each distinguished from the other by what it is that is taken to be asserted of X when it is asserted that X is good.

We can now say of the fundamentalistic Protestant and the conservative Catholic that both are making objective judgments when they assert 'X is the will of God' while still holding that they are appealing to different standards in making these judgments. Their judgments are objective because of their appeal to standards.

The question that still needs to be faced concerns the

epistemological status of the standards themselves. In one sense, contrary to Hare, a dispute about standards is a verbal dispute. To the extent that the standards determine the criteria for applying a term (the term's descriptive meaning for Hare) the dispute is about meaning: a dispute about how a term is to be used. In another, and perhaps more important sense, the dispute is not verbal: it is a practical dispute about which criteria to use in evaluating actions. The naturalist could hold that Hare is correct when he holds that one must choose the standards; linguistic consideration alone need not be sufficient for determining the choice. The standards need not be objective, but once they are chosen, objective ethical judgments are possible. But the naturalist could further hold that once the standards are chosen, statements such as 'A literal interpretation of the Bible is the standard for ascertaining the will of God' can become for certain members of our society definitional truths. And from a definitional truth coupled with certain factual statements, moral judgments may be logically inferred.

I would like to think that although our moral judgments must ultimately be based on conventional standards that the standards are not arbitrary. It seems to me that the ethical naturalist can perform a useful job by delineating

the various standards which people appeal to in making moral judgments. Even if the naturalist must agree with Hare that the adoption of the standard is a matter of volition, nevertheless it may be possible to discover good reasons for adopting certain standards as opposed to others. But at least one good reason is ruled out at the outset: that the standard is true by definition. It becomes true by definition only _after_ it be adopted. There was no inherent feature of the international Prototype meter that required its being the standard for a meter's length. Yet once it was adopted as a standard, definitional truths about the length of a meter became possible. Likewise, even if there be no feature about any moral standard that logically requires its adoption, nevertheless once it is adopted, definitional truths about morality become possible. Not all moral judgments are analytic: the decision to adopt a standard does not follow from any analytic judgment; yet once a standard be adopted, further moral judgments can be derived from premises which may contain analytic judgments.

The naturalist cannot tell us which standards we ought to adopt. But neither can Hare on his analysis. Indeed the "ought" judgment can arise only after we have standards. Yet the naturalist can perform a useful function by carefully characterizing possible standards and by giving

the reasons for the adoption of each.

CHAPTER IV

THE OPEN QUESTION ARGUMENT

AND ETHICAL THEORY

4.1 The Open Question Argument.

I give a general version of the Open Question Argument
inductively derived from the writings of Moore and
Hare.

The writings of G. E. Moore and R. M. Hare have been

and continue to be influential in twentieth-century ethical

theory. Each of these men has been concerned with giving

analyses of certain notions thought to be central to moral

philosophy. In order to keep this paper within manageable

bounds, I have limited my expositions to their analyses of

the term 'good' as it is purportedly used in moral contexts.

Each of these men was concerned with demonstrating that a

naturalistic analysis of 'good' as it is used in a moral

context is untenable and each employed forms of the Open

Question Argument in order to substantiate his claim that

naturalism in ethics is a fallacy.

Moore, the introducer of the phrase 'the naturalistic

fallacy', argued for the fallaciousness of ethical naturalism

by asserting that no sentence of the form 'X is good' can be

analytic because it can always be asked with significance if X is good, while it cannot be asked with significance of the obviously analytic 'X is X' if X is X. Moore's form of the Open Question Argument rested on the assumption that something can always be done with sentences of the form 'X is good' which cannot be done with certain analytic sentences. From this assumption it purportedly follows that sentences of the form 'X is good' are never analytic.

Hare likewise used a similar procedure in his attempt to show the fallacy inherent in ethical naturalism. Hare based his case on the assumption that something can always be done with sentences of the form 'X is good' which cannot be done with analytic sentences. In this case, sentences of the form 'X is good' can always be used to commend X, while certain analytic sentences cannot be used to commend. Thus, concluded Hare, sentences of the form 'X is good' cannot be analytic sentences when they are used in a moral context, for in that context the function of value words such as 'good' is always to commend.

Let me now give a general form of the Open Question Argument as it is applicable to the word 'good' when it is used in moral contexts:

(1) Assume that 'X is good' is analytic.

(2) But something can always be done with 'X is good'

that cannot be done with analytic sentences.

(3) Therefore 'X is good' cannot be analytic.

In order for this general form of the Open Question Argument

to function as a purported refutation of ethical naturalism,

I shall assume that the term 'good' in the above sentences

names some property or relation in the physical world for

which some specific empirical procedure can be given in

order to determine whether X does in fact have that property

or is in that relation. Our main question now is this:

Does the Open Question Argument in its general form show

that 'X is good' is not analytic in its moral context?

4.2 Analytic Sentences.

Because of the difficulties found in Moore's concept-
inspection procedure, I argue that the Open Question
Argument must be limited to an evaluation of the
purported analyticity of certain sentences (and not
certain judgments).

Before we can decide if the Open Question Argument

shows sentences of the form 'X is good' are not analytic,

it is necessary to get clear what we mean by analyticity.

We shall see that the criteria for determining analyticity

were not the same for Moore as they are for Hare. Kant,

the first to use the terms 'analytic' and 'synthetic',

defined analytic judgments as judgments in which 'the

connection of the predicate with the subject is thought

through identity."[1] In an analytic judgement the predicate

concept adds nothing to the concept of the subject but

merely breaks "it up into those constituent concepts that

have all along been thought in it."[2] It was analytic judge-

ments of this sort to which Moore was making reference

when he held that sentences of the form 'X is good' do not

express analytic judgements. By the time that Hare made

his claim, the notion of what constitutes an analytic judge-

ment had been broadened. Those who accepted the exhaustive

character of Kant's distinction between synthetic and

analytic faced the problem of what to do with logical truths

which were not in the traditional subject-predicate forms.

For example, 'either it is raining or it is not raining'

expresses a judgement which is logically true; yet it does

seem to be either analytic or synthetic since, having no

logical subject, the predicate neither is contained in nor

adds to the subject. Because of examples such as this which

did not fit into Kant's dichotomy and which seemed to be

closer in nature to analytic than to synthetic judgements,

logicans broadened the notion of analyticity to make

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[1] Immanuel Kant, _Critique of Pure Reason_, trans.
Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan & Co ltd, 1961),
p. 48.

[2] _Ibid._

analytic truths co-extensive with logical truths. Thus when

Hare claimed that sentences of the form 'X is good' are not

analytic, the content of his claim was different than

the content of Moore's claim: by Hare's time the concept of

what constitutes an analytic judgement had been broadened.

I have been somewhat loosely interchanging the phrases

'analytic judgement' and 'analytic sentence', but there is

a substantial difference between the denotation of these

two terms. One method of distinguishing between the two

is by pointing out that analytic judgements are expressed

by analytic sentences. The distinction is between what

the sentences are about and the sentences themselves.

Another method of making the same distinction is by consider-

ing how one ascertains the analyticity of a judgement and

how one ascertains the analyticity of a sentence. In the

former case, a method analogous to Moore's inspection

method is required; one attends to the concepts before one's

mind which he employes in the making of the judgement. In

the latter case, it is the language itself that must be

considered. If I was correct in pointing out the difficulties

in Moore's inspection-of-concepts procedure because of the

looseness of the term 'concept', and if ethical theory is

concerned with analysing the language of morals, I think I

am justified in now limiting an evaluation of the Open

Question Argument to its application as a possible procedure

for determining that <u>sentences</u> of the form 'X is good' are

not analytic sentences. Perhaps this is a needless dis-

tinction to make because it seems unexceptionable to hold

that if a certain sentence is not an analytic sentence then

the judgement which is expressed by that sentence is also

not an analytic judgement, and so does the contrapositive.

Nevertheless, it does seem easier and more in keeping with

the spirit of ethical theory to limit our discussion to

analytic sentences.

Our question now becomes: Does the Open Question

Argument it its general from show that 'X is good' is not an

analytic sentence when that <u>sentence</u> is employed in a moral

context?

4.3 Two Types of Analytic Sentences.

By distinguishing between definitional and formal
analytic sentences, I show that the Open Question
Argument has an implicit premise: that definitional
analytic sentences and formal analytic sentences have
the same linguistic function.

Contrast the two sentences:

(1) Every bachelor is a bachelor.

(2) Every bachelor is an unmarried man.

The truth of the former is discoverable by noticing that

it is an instance of the sentence form

(3) Every _____ is a _____ .

which we take to be an analytic sentence form in English.
To know that sentences having this form are true requires
knowledge of the meanings of only the syncategormatic words
of (3). Sentences such as (1) which are discoverable to be
true solely by attention to their logical form are what I
called earlier formal logical truths. In the present con-
text, they will be referred to as _formal_ _analytic_ sentences.

Sentence (2), on the other hand, is not a formal
analytic sentence. In order to discover its truth-value,
knowledge of more than its form is needed: We must know
the meanings of the non-logical terms 'bachelor' and
'unmarried man'. It is because we can substitute 'bachelor'
for 'unmarried man' and thereby transform (2) into (1) that
we can hold (2) to be analytic. It is an instance of what
I earlier called a definitional logical truth. In this con-
text I shall refer to sentences such as (2) as _definitional_
analytic _sentences_.[3]

Since 'X is good' is not a formal analytic sentence,
if it is to possibly be analytic at all, the several versions
of the Open Question Argument which we have considered must

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[3]This is a relatively standard distinction in logic
texts, although the terminology marking off that distinction
varies.

be interpreted as taking 'X is good' as a definitional

analytic sentence. A general form of our argument can now

be expressed with more precision as:

(1) Assume that 'X is good' is a definitional analytic
sentence.

(2) But something can always be done with 'X is good'
that cannot be done with a formal analytic sentence.

(∴) Therefore 'X is good' is not a definitional
analytic sentence.

By putting the Open Question Argument in this form we can

see that the Open Question Argument rests on an implicit

premise, viz.:

(3) Definitional analytic sentences and formal analytic
sentences have the same linguistic functions.

If (3) can be discredited, the Open Question Argument will

be seen not to yield the conclusion its proponents thought

it to yield.

4.4 Formal and Definitional Analytic Uses.

By the use of examples, I show that definitional and
formal analytic sentences do have different uses in
English. I conclude that the Open Question Argument
is based on a faulty premise.

Let us see if definitional analytic sentences and

formal analytic sentences have different uses at the object

language level. And let us see further if the difference in

uses justifies our concluding that 'X is good' is not a

definitional analytic sentence.

Contrast the following sentences:

(1) A triangle is a three-sided plane figure.

(2) A triangle is a triangle.

It is when (1) and (2) are used as object-language sentences
that I want us to direct our attention. Do the sentences
have the same use? Can something be done with the defi-
nitional analytic sentence that cannot be done with the
formal analytic sentence? Even if something can be done
it does not follow that (1) and (2) are not both analytic.

Is a person doing anything different when he says

(1) A triangle is a three sided plane figure.

than when he says

(2) A triangle is a triangle?

I think he is. I think definitional analytic sentences
play a different role in the English language than do
formal analytic sentences.

Suppose I am trying to teach a person what a plane
figure is. I am not trying to teach him synonyms for the
word 'plane figure'. If I were going to do that, I would
say 'The term "plane figure" means . . . .' where the ellip-
sis would be filled in by some verbal synonym for 'plane
figure'. I would be employing a metalanguage: I would be
mentioning the term instead of using it. In my supposition,
I am trying to teach the person about plane figures, not

about the term 'plane figures'. Suppose further that the person was able to recognize squares, rectangles, circles and triangles. To get him to come to understand what a plane figure is, I could say: 'A triangle is a three-sided plane figure', 'A circle is a perfectly round plane figure', etc. In all of these cases I would be using definitional analytic sentences in order to teach the person what a plane figure is. Could I do the same thing by employing the corresponding formal analytic sentence? What could I teach him by saying 'A triangle is a triangle', 'A circle is a circle', etc.? Surely nothing about plane figures. Here is at least one use for definitional analytic sentences for which we cannot use the corresponding formal analytic sentences. And yet we do not wish to say that 'A triangle is a three-sided plane figure' is not an analytic sentence because there is something which we can do with it that we cannot do with the formally analytic 'A triangle is a triangle'. The implicit premise of the Open Question Argument is a faulty premise.

That 'X is X' does not have all of the uses as does 'X is good' does not show the latter to be non-analytic: it shows it to be a different kind of analytic than is the former _if it is analytic at all._

4.5 Metalanguage and Object Language

By employing the common metalanguage--object language distinction, I argue that difference in linguistic use at the metalinguistic level shows nothing about use at the object language level.

It is now commonly accepted by philosophers that a useful and necessary distinction must be made between using a term or an expression in a given language and mentioning those terms or expressions.[4] Two levels of language are appealed to in order to make this distinction: In the object language the terms or expressions are used; in the metalanguage the terms or expressions, by being named, are mentioned. The metalinguistic terms or expressions can themselves become the elements of an object language when they in turn are being mentioned at a different level of language; in the latter case, discussion is at a meta-metalinguistic level. All of these levels may be found in the English language itself.

Moral philosophy, as I understand it, is an activity carried on at the level of object language; ethical philosophy, an investigation of the language of morals, is at the metalinguistic level. Let me show that the Open Question Argument has no force at either the object language or meta-

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[4]For a statement of this distinction, see Willard Van Orman Quine, Methods of Logic (revised edition; New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), pp. 37-38.

language level of the English language. On the one hand we have the sentence

(1) X is good.

as it is used in the making of actual moral judgments. It is an object-language sentence relative to the language of ethical theory. On the other hand, the sentence

(2) 'X is good' is analytic in English.

is a sentence of a metalanguage, in this case, a sentence of the language of ethical theory. It does not purport to be analytic at all: it is a description, either correct or incorrect, which, by mentioning sentence (1), states something about sentence (1).

Corresponding to sentences (1) and (2) are

(3) X is X.

(4) 'X is X' is analytic in English.

The Open Question Argument has no force at a metalinguistic level. Sentence (2) is about a sentence purported to be a definitional analytic sentence in moral language; sentence (4) is about a sentence purported to be a formal analytic sentence in moral language. But since sentences (2) and (4) have different subjects--different sentences of the object-language are mentioned--it matters not at all to point out that something can be done with (2) that cannot be done with (4) for, in this situation, what are being contrasted in

their uses are sentences (2) and (4) themselves and not just
the subject matters of those sentences. That (2) and (4)
have different uses shows nothing at all about the uses of
(1) and (3), for the statement to the effect that (2) and
(4) have different uses is about (2) and (4): it is a meta-
metalanguage statement about (2) and (4) and <u>not</u> <u>about</u> <u>(1)</u>
<u>and</u> <u>(3)</u> <u>at</u> <u>all</u>. To say that two metalanguage sentences have
different uses is not to say anything about the corresponding
object-language sentences.

4.6 <u>Meaning</u> <u>and</u> <u>Moral</u> <u>Language</u>.

I argue that Moore and Hare were led to the position
of non-natural properties and prescriptive meaning
because of their implicit assumption that a term's
meaning must be what is common to all of its uses.
I show how Hare made his most telling objections
against naturalism true by definition. I hold that
both have insights about moral language, but that moral
language is too rich and complex to fit into either
stereotype. I hold it is too soon to talk about <u>the</u>
moral meaning of 'good'; first we need to delineate
which uses of 'good' are moral uses, a delineation
which ought not to come by definition.

Moore and Hare seem to assume that the meaning of a
term was what was common to all uses of that term. Moore
put the universal element as a necessary, though perhaps
not a sufficient, condition when he held that

. . .to say a thing is intrinsically good is not <u>the</u>
<u>same</u> <u>thing</u> as to say that it is desired: and this
follows absolutely, if even in a single case, a man
believes that a thing <u>is</u> desired and yet does <u>not</u>

believe that it is intrinsically good.[5]

Moore, unable to find a natural property as that which was denoted by the word 'intrinsic good' on all occasions of its use, turned to the supposition that the term denoted a "non-natural property" in order to find some common "property" for 'intrinsic good' to always denote. Hare followed in the same tradition: finding no criteria of application common to all uses of 'good' and not finding even a common use for 'good', he marked off a sphere of language, namely, moral language, with a common use and posited yet a different kind of meaning--the prescriptive meaning of value terms. Common to all moral uses of 'good', holds Hare, is its commendatory functions--its prescriptive meaning.

My argument with Moore and Hare is not with their claims that they have discovered and described certain uses which the term 'good' has. Their analyses have been impressive. My objection--and this is especially true in the case of Hare--is to their implicit claims that a naturalistic use is not a moral use. Moore was the more openminded because he acknowledged that 'good' is correctly used in many senses. Hare agreed, but he made an additional claim to

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[5]G. E. Moore, Ethics (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 102.

which I am objecting. A naturalistic use of 'good' is permissible said Hare; but if it omits the commendatory function, <u>it is not a moral use</u>. Such a use is either the conventional, ironic or inverted comma use, but it is not the essentially moral use.

Hare, in places, spoke as if his analysis of moral language was not purely descriptive but something made true by definition. For instance he said of his analysis of 'I ought to do X' when it is being used as a value judgment:

> Thus I am not here claiming to prove anything substantial about the way in which we use language; I am merely suggesting a terminology which, if applies to the study of moral language, will, I am satisfied, prove illuminating.[6]

And yet Hare claimed that naturalism in ethics was on a par with attempts to square the circle. Has Hare only made his case true by definition, or has he discovered something substantial about the uses of moral language?

I think the answer to both of the above questions is 'yes'. He has discovered different uses to which what passes in ordinary English for moral language is often put. But he has, by definition, delineated the meaning of the vague term

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[6]R. M. Hare, <u>The Language of Morals</u> (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1961), p. 169. See also pp. 22 and 164 for instances of Hare's making something "true . . . by definition". <u>Vide</u> Hare, <u>Freedom and Reason</u> (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1964), p. 27 for yet another example.

'moral language'.[7] By redefining the term, the range of the locutions which pass for moral uses has been limited by Hare to the commendatory.

Let me approach the point of this section by another route: As Ofstad said:

> It is semantically unfruitful to presuppose that there exists something like <u>the</u> ordinary use of ethical terms. Maybe a certain interpretation has a high frequency. This, however, should not be assumed at the outset, but be proposed as a hypothesis or come as a result of research.[8]

It seems to me that Hare, intent on finding common uses for the term 'good' and not finding any, redefined the term 'moral language' in such a way that all uses of a term of moral language would have something in common. If there be no common element, the assumption seems to have been, the term has no meaning.

It seems to me that ethical naturalism as I character-ized it is shown by Hare to be a false analysis of moral language, not because there are no such uses in ordinary moral language, but because there are no such uses in what

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[7] <u>Vide</u> FR, p. 47, where Hare comments on the ambiguity of 'moral'. Roger Hancock, "The Refutation of Naturalism in Moore and Hare," <u>The Journal of Philosophy</u>, LVII (May 12, 1960), p. 327, holds "there seems to be no way of picking out ethical from non-ethical words."

[8] Harold Ofstad, "The Function of Moral Philosophy," <u>Inquiry</u>, I (1958), 45.

Hare takes to be moral language.

The dispute between the naturalist and Hare is this: Both admit that 'good' is sometimes used as the naturalist says it is. Hare holds that that use is not its moral use; the naturalist holds that it is. How is this dispute to be settled?

One method is the stipulatory procedures of Hare. But ethical naturalism becomes a fallacy by stipulation. It seems to me that Hare was led to his stipulation because of what he took as a necessary requirement for a word to have meaning. If the word 'good' is to have a moral meaning, he assumed, the word must have a common usage.

I want to first echo the suggestions of Fisher and Katz, and then to suggest a new approach to the analysis of moral language. According to Fisher:

> Many of the conflicts which arise from attempts at
> defining 'good' are as much problems of definition
> in general as they are problems of value theory.[9]

Katz opted for a similar position when, in attempting to account for the difficulties in obtaining precise definitions of philosphically important words, he said:

> . . .such difficulties result from relying on one or
> another inadequate conception of what constitutes a

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[9] John J. Fisher, "On Defining 'Good'," The Journal of Philosophy, LI (November 11, 1954), 730.

description of the meaning of a word.[10]

My suggestion is this: It is still too soon to argue about <u>the</u> meaning of 'good' as it is used in a moral context. Much work still needs to be done: The vague 'moral language' needs to be made more specific; agreement as to what constitutes a definition has yet to be reached. In the meantime, let us adopt Wittgenstein's slogan which he used to cite at the Moral Science Club at Cambridge: "Don't ask for the meaning; ask for the use." But let us slightly modify his slogan to: ". . . ask for the <u>uses</u>." Let us see what people do when they use 'good' in a moral context and when 'good' is used in those borderline cases which may or may not be moral. Perhaps we shall find that 'good' is not always used in a purely descriptive manner, that 'good' is not always used to express an emotion, that 'good' is not always used with a commendatory function, <u>etc</u>. We may reach the conclusion which Tarski long ago reached regarding the word 'true':

> We should reconcile ourselves with the fact that we
> are confronted, not with one concept, but with several
> different concepts which are denoted by one word; we
> should try to make these concepts as clear as possible
> . . . ; to avoid further confusions, we should agree

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[10] Jerrold J. Katz, "Semantic Theory and the Meaning of 'Good'," <u>The</u> <u>Journal</u> <u>of</u> <u>Philosophy</u>, LXI (December 10, 1964), 739.

to use different terms for different concepts; and then we may proceed to a quiet and systematic study of all the concepts involved which will exhibit their main properties and mutual relations.[11]

If ethical theory be not normative but only descriptive as is often claimed, if we realize that our moral words are often both vague and ambiguous we may come to realize that refutations of opposing theories are out of place: We may come to realize that any theory which describes at least some of the uses of moral language has something of significance to contribute. We may come to see that an analysis which purports to give an analysis of _the_ use of moral terms is analysing only a part of a field which is much richer than we have hitherto realized. In a way, Nowell Smith pithily put this same point when he said of Hare and his critics:
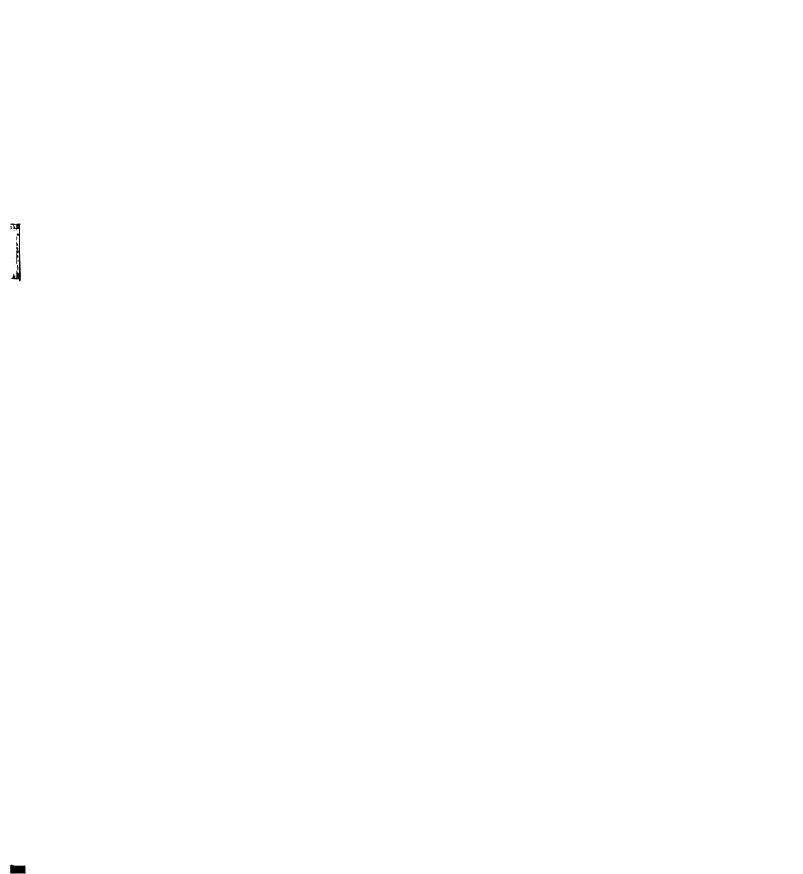
> It seems to me, not that he and they have got hold of different ends of the same stick, one of which is right and the other not; but that they have got hold of different sticks; and in philosophy there are right and wrong ends of sticks, but no right and wrong sticks.[12]

The dispute between the naturalist and his opponents is not primarily a dispute about how moral language is to be analyzed; it is a dispute about the limits of moral

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[11]Alfred Tarski, "The Semantic Conception of Truth," _Philosophy_ _and_ _Phenomenological_ _Research_, IV (1944), 355.

[12]P. H. Nowell Smith, Review of _Freedom_ _and_ _Reason_ by R. M. Hare, _Ratio_, VI (December, 1964), 200.

language itself.

4.7 Ethical Naturalism.

I conclude that no refutation of ethical naturalism can be provided by the Open Question Argument.

It has been thought by many that the Open Question Argument provided a final refutation of ethical naturalism. Sesonske reported a fairly common opinion when he said:

> The famous 'open question' argument was accepted by many as a conclusive refutation of any attempt to define ethical predicates in terms of natural properties. . . .[13]

We found that since the phrase 'ethical naturalism' is not always precisely used, it was first necessary to specify a meaning for the term in order to investigate whether the Open Question Argument refutes ethical naturalism. Ethical naturalism, as I understand it, is the position which holds that moral terms can legitimately be defined so that the criteria of their application is empirically ascertainable. I do not look upon ethical naturalism as a view which necessarily denies that moral words are used for many purposes besides their fact stating function. If a distinction may be made between a speaker's concern or purpose in making a moral judgment and the topic of his concern or

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[13]Alexander Sesonske, "Value and Obligation: The Foundation of an Empiricist Ethical Theory," *University of California Publications in Philosophy*. XXXI (August 30, 1957), 2.

the referent of the moral judgement, it seems to me that it is the status of the latter alone which makes a moral world naturalistic.[14] Naturalism is the view that a man in making a moral judgement asserts that an object does have one or more certain empirically ascertainable characteristics; it is neutral as to why the person makes such an assertion.

The claim of the ethical naturalist is that such judgements do occur in the language of morals, but he would be foolish to insist that this is all that happens when a moral judgement is made. Whether naturalism is a correct description in the language of ethical theory of what occurs in the language of morals is to be settled by attending to moral language; I think I have shown that a refutation of a naturalistic ethical theory of this sort is not provided by the Open Question Argument. Whether ethical naturalism is a fallacy or not is still an open question.

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[14]Although 'concern' and 'topic of concern' are adopted from Leonard, I am not using them in his sense. Cf. Henry S. Leonard, An Introduction to Principles of Right Reason (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1957), p. 140. The reader will notice the similarity between Leonard's distinction between concern and topic of concern and Hare's distinction between phrastic and neustic. Cf. LM, p. 18.

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