

MORALITY AND PSYCHOLOGY

MORALIDAD Y PSICOLOGÍA

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ABSTRACT

In this paper I suggest that, although most useful to understand and assess moral conduct, both personal and social, behavior analysis is essentially unable to account for moral experience and feelings. In accordance with Wittgenstein's views about ethics and on the basis of his famous "first vs. third person" asymmetries, I try to show that there can be no science of values in the interesting, non empirical or transcendental sense of the word. On my perspective, the most important connection that can be established is between moral decisions and the meaning of life.

Key words: morality, behavior, duty, freedom, consequences, happiness, action, determinism, Kant, Wittgenstein.

RESUMEN

En este artículo sugiero que, aunque resulta muy útil para entender y evaluar la conducta moral, tanto social como personal, el análisis de la conducta es esencialmente incapaz de dar cuenta de la experiencia moral y los sentimientos. De acuerdo con los puntos de vista de Wittgenstein acerca de la ética, y sobre la base de sus famosas asimetrías entre "primera versus tercera persona", trato de mostrar que no puede haber una ciencia de valores en el sentido interesante, no

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empírico o trascendental del término. En mi propia perspectiva, la conexión más importante que puede ser establecida es entre las decisiones morales y el significado de la vida.

Palabras Clave: Moralidad, conducta, deber, libertad, consecuencia, felicidad, acción, determinismo, Kant, Wittgenstein.

It is usually thought that psychology deals with *everything* that has to do with the human mind. In this essay I contend that this stance incorporates a serious mistake and that there is a dimension of mental life in which psychological research, behavioral considerations included, is wholly irrelevant. I have in mind above all the world of value and, accordingly, aesthetic life and moral experience. It could be argued that my suggestion creates or gives rise to obvious and superfluous problems, one of them being that it would prevent us from elaborating a unified conception, a complete theory or account (if there is such thing) of the mind. On my perspective, such a view is completely mistaken and I feel confident that once the various misunderstandings and wrong presuppositions involved are made explicit, the intellectual prejudices (and all they imply) which stand in our way towards the acceptance of the view I advocate here just vanish. In what follows I'll be assuming what I would consider to be nowadays a philosophical platitude, namely, that the word 'mind' is not a name for a any kind of entity or substance. Without wishing to appear excessively dogmatic, I won't even discuss this point. I'll just take it for granted. I have to acknowledge right from the outset that I'll try to take advantage of some of Ludwig Wittgenstein's most decisive results in the philosophy of psychology in order to disclose certain misleading asymmetries which pervade our moral language (especially, the asymmetry between 'you must do x' and 'I must do x'). I'll also try to apply in the field of moral philosophy his quite useful remarks concerning the distinction between causes and reasons for actions. My main goal, however, is to show that once we enter the realm of moral thinking and experience, empirical research becomes redundant.

THE FAILURE OF CONTEMPORARY ETHICS

I'll start off by calling attention to something rather evident, *viz.*, that the word 'ethics' has at least two different meanings, an empirical one and a strictly normative one. That is, on the one hand it points to sets of rules which are recommended on empirical grounds, mainly because it has turned out that they in general have what as a matter of fact we call 'good consequences'; on the other hand, the word 'ethics' points to a different kind of rule or imperative, that is, to what has the appearance of a universal rule of behavior which, however, was not got at through experience and which seems to be wholly independent of the consequences. Now, as is to be expected, what happens with 'ethics' happens

with the whole family of related terms, that is, with words like 'rules', 'obligations', 'duty', 'good', 'right' and so on. These two meanings are not completely unrelated to each other but, as I hope to make clear, they are nevertheless independent. A way of justifying this basic distinction is that it enables us to understand why ethical controversies leave us in general unsatisfied: what happens is that most philosophers who try to give an account of the difficulties of ethics inadvertently pass from one domain to the other and thus in the end they don't manage to clarify anything at all. Before going into the details, I'd like to put forward a purely historical hypothesis as to why this is so. Now it is impossible not to realize, when we compare the present situation of the philosophy of language or the philosophy of mind with that of ethics, that much more impressive progress has been achieved in the former branches of philosophy than in the latter and what I suggest is that this state of affairs is to a great extent due to the fact that in the end Wittgenstein said very little about the puzzles of ethics and therefore, unlike others, this area of philosophy did not benefit from his approach, methods and treatment. That is why ethics is still a field in which new theories (some of them quite ingenious indeed) are constantly produced, instead of developing the sort of elucidatory analysis that Wittgenstein taught us to carry out. For example, in general after Wittgenstein's demolition of both Cartesian sort of skepticism and Moore's refutation of it, doubts about the reality of the external world simply do not seriously arise. Practically nobody would discuss nowadays as if *On Certainty* had not been written. Unfortunately, although on the few occasions in which he approached the subject of ethics Wittgenstein was—as always—astonishingly clear, he did not exercise his thinking on moral issues. So what is left to us is to attempt to carry out philosophical analysis of concrete ethical puzzles keeping Wittgenstein's own work constantly in mind. As I'll try to make clear below, theorizing in ethics is practically useless, since if what we are given is indeed a theory, then the most it can do is to tell us something about the way people actually behave. However, what as a matter of fact people do or don't do is a completely different thing from what they *ought* to do, and about what we must or ought to do ethical theories say practically nothing worthwhile. Thus I hold that what has remained unexplained is what could be called the 'emergence or normativity'. One of my tasks here will be to try to throw light upon this rather elusive subject.

ACTIONS AND FREEDOM

I think it would be useless to deny that if something depicts contemporary ethical discussions that something is their artificial character. As an instance of it I'll briefly consider one of the puzzles which most seem to trouble philosophers, namely, the old conflict between liberty or freedom of the will and the naturalistic and deterministic scientific view of the world. The difficulty is relatively easy to

state. First, we just assume that in some way or another science does propound a mechanistic view of the universe (at least as long as we concern ourselves neither with the micro nor with the macro-cosmos), the universe being the whole set of things, properties and relations located within the general framework of space-time; secondly, we point to the purely linguistic fact that in order to be held as responsible for his or her actions, a human being must be free. However, since human beings are part of the world, then we face the following dilemma: either we abandon our scientific outlook, something that nobody wants to do, or we have to concede that human beings are not morally responsible for their actions, a view which we all repudiate. Indeed its consequences are utterly counter-intuitive: not even the worst of murderers would be guilty of his crimes; it would even be unfair to blame him, since he could not be held responsible for his actions. Seen in this way, the problem really seems an alarming one.

Intuitively we immediately feel that some sort of confusion must underlie the whole problem and I don't think we have to go very far to find out that the trouble is created by some grammatical misunderstanding. We can tentatively assess the issue as follows: determinism is the view according to which, given a particular conceptual framework, a mechanical and on the whole exact description of the ways things behave can be elaborated. For instance, seen as objects defined in purely physical terms (mass, velocity, etc.), and having recourse to mathematical language (to equations), the world can be conceived as a deterministic system. Notice, however, that the condition for determinism to give rise to a sensible way of speaking is precisely its peculiar linguistic framework. However, it should be obvious that if we suddenly shift from one linguistic or conceptual framework to a completely different one, as we surely have to do if we want to speak of morally responsible beings at all, we either have to redefine 'determinism' or simply to forget about it. But what we certainly are not entitled to do is to mix up both vocabularies and linguistic frameworks, as if they could be merged into each other and as if, having done just that, we could go on speaking meaningfully. Naturally, if we don't reject or don't question the implicit views of the puzzle, then we indeed are in trouble and, I dare say, are faced with a problem that admits no solution whatsoever. But the least we can say is that the issue is founded on rather shaky ground.

In fact, I think that the idea that human beings *could* be seen as totally determined by physical causes can be rejected on entirely *a priori* pieces of reasoning. I'll put it this way: to speak of freedom, in a metaphysical (as opposed to a political) sense, is to speak of actions capable of being qualified in different ways, one of which is "being free". But it is a sheer mistake to think that human actions can be simply divided into 'free' and or versus 'not free' or 'determined' actions. Normally we just don't say that our actions are free: in order to qualify them as such, certain circumstances must hold, certain conditions have to be fulfilled. No normal speaker would say that his going to the kitchen, his getting a can of tuna fish from a shelf in the store or his locking his house before going out

are a manifestation of his free will. And the same happens with 'not free' or 'determined'. So in the first place what we should admit is that the basic division of our actions is into 'free', 'not free' and 'spontaneous' or 'natural'. Before going on, a comparison with other problematic notions could perhaps be useful here.

Let us then consider acting and thinking or speaking and thinking. It is just false to say that we normally speak "thinkingly" or with thinking, meaning by that that an internal process, carried out thanks to a mental and private language, accompanies our speech. It does not follow, of course, that we act "thinklessly" or without thinking, implying by that that we are mere robots or that we speak like parrots or answering machines. In order for us to ascribe thinking to somebody we have to look around, that is, to the context in which the action is embedded. For example, suppose that someone is suddenly summoned to the police station and is asked a series of delicate questions. He or she listens attentively and answers very slowly, weighing his words. There we would say that he speaks thinking what he is saying; or suppose that at the end of a departmental meeting two colleagues clash and one of them, still under the impact of a decision he strongly argued against, insults the other. That is an occasion in which we would say that a person spoke without thinking. But if I am reading the newspaper and stand up to get a pen to solve a jigsaw puzzle or ask someone to pass me one, it would be most inappropriate to say of me that I acted either thinking or without thinking. I just say something which acquires a perfectly determined meaning because it fits into a situation in which I am, so to speak, moving around. To insist that I either act and speak with thinking or without thinking simply amounts to trying to force a particular description upon facts, a description which impoverishes our possibilities of linguistically catching reality.

Let us now return to the "liberty *versus* determinism" puzzle. I said that we have not two but three main groups of actions and that by far the most numerous one is precisely the one which tends to be most ignored by philosophers, that is, the actions which are carried out neither freely nor forced upon us. The importance of this trichotomy is particularly relevant for ethics, for what I wish to maintain is that moral actions are nothing but a special kind of free actions. This is a point which has been established countless times, but perhaps I. Kant reached the limits of philosophical explanations when, in stating his three transcendental conditions of morality, *viz.*, the existence of God, the immortality of the soul and the freedom of the will, he said that human beings were moral agents because they simultaneously were members of the physical world and of the intelligible world. I think that Kant was right, except for the fact that he established his point in a mythological way. What we have to do is to recuperate his insight without using his terminology. Accordingly, I shall say that human beings may be moral agents because they are linguistic beings. It is natural language itself which guarantees our metaphysical freedom, for the distinctions we need in order to describe ourselves as free, and therefore as moral agents, are drawn in it. Now in this connection I need to dissociate myself, for reasons that will hopefully

emerge later on, from the usual view according to which every member of our species is automatically a moral agent. I think that what is essential to the beings of our species is that, thanks to their being linguistic, they are in a position to become moral agents. A shark, a tiger, an ant, a rat, etc., lack the linguistic platform which would enable them to become moral agents. Here we can once more draw the parallel with the two other examples just given: human actions divide themselves not simplistically into moral and immoral actions, but between moral, immoral and neither moral or immoral (*i.e.*, amoral) actions. The usefulness of this proposal will be seen a bit later.

MORAL DUTY

Let us now concentrate on the idea of moral obligation as something linked to and dependent upon free human action. The first thing to recall is that one of the essential features of psychological language in general is a certain asymmetry which holds between the first and the third persons. Broadly speaking, when we apply some psychological verb or some psychological notion (like 'desire', 'imagination', 'belief' and so on) in the first person we *give expression* to something, while when we employ it in the third person we *describe* somebody's behavior, which naturally takes place in a particular setting. This can be easily seen in the case of the concept of pain. When I say 'It hurts' or 'I'm in pain', I replace the natural expressions of pain by words, that is, I "humanize" my pain; on the other hand, if I say 'He is in pain' I allude to the only thing I have access to, that is, his reactions. Therefore, what I do is to describe his behavior. I may ascribe pain (that is, a sensation) to him because I have criteria, that is, because there are certain objective factors in the whole situation of which I am aware and which entitle me to say that he suffers, he is in pain, etc. In both my case and his we speak of the same thing, that is, pains, but we can't make use of the concept of pain in exactly the same way: it is quite obvious, I suppose, that I don't need criteria to express my pain and it would be utterly absurd to say that when I assert that someone is in pain I mean what I have when I am in pain, but this time in his body. This kind of transference is logically and conceptually impossible. All this was demonstrated in the *Philosophical Investigations* and I won't say anything else about it.

What I want to do, however, is to apply this explanatory model to the case of moral notions, for I think that it does throw light upon our subject. So our question is: what do we speak about when we speak of moral obligations? If what I have said so far is right, it follows that we systematically have to provide not one but two accounts of moral life: one thing is to speak of others' moral duties, that is, to speak of people's moral obligations from the point of view of other people and another one is to speak of one's own moral obligations. In the first case we have to take into account genuine rules of action, usually justified on utilitarian or consequentialist grounds; in the second case, we try to say something which, for

reasons that will soon become evident, cannot be put into words. Here too we are strongly inclined to speak of "rules", but it should be clear that 'rules' must have in this second case a different meaning. I'll try to make this clear.

Let's first characterize morality as a whole. When we speak of moral rules we speak of rules of behavior, but what is the proper domain of these rules? Moral rules cover a certain area of human action characterized by the fact that in it legal normativity is just inoperative. To put it bluntly: whenever human actions cannot be assimilated by law, we speak of morality. There is a whole realm of human actions which it would be senseless to try to regulate legally. For example, two persons agree to meet at a certain place and at a certain time and one of them arrives one hour later. He did something wrong, but he just can't be sent to jail for that; or suppose that someone starts whistling right now, during a lecture: he may be admonished, people can turn their back on him, but he can't be fined. There is no way of establishing a standard or paradigm to measure the amount of damage he did. So countless human actions may be repudiated or encouraged, but they can't be part of any legal system. Moral rules ("You should not whistle while someone else is reading a paper"), therefore, can't be anything but recommendations to act in a certain way, recommendations established by experience, that is, because experience has shown that they tend to promote the good life better than others, in the sense that if they are applied, human well-being, human happiness, human harmony is increased. And 'good life' can only mean here something empirical like 'pleasant life', 'agreeable life', 'peaceful life' and so on.

Now I want to hold that, although very important, this sense of 'morality' is nevertheless a secondary one. One way of showing this is asking: what would we lack if we only had this notion of morality? The answer is simple: we just wouldn't know what moral feelings are and, more generally, what moral experience is. So it is moral language as used in the first person that really matters and what has to be elucidated. To do that, however, and to understand why in this sense psychology in general is irrelevant to morality, I have to introduce first certain key terms and to draw one grammatical distinction.

THE MEANING OF 'I MUST'

The situation to be examined is the following: what is the difference between 'you must do x', when someone else says that to me and 'I must do x' when I say it to myself, using 'must' in a moral sense, that is, when 'must' is not an order I have to obey or a piece of advice about how to get something I desire. What I have argued so far is that although the other person and I we both speak of the same thing, that is, moral obligation, we actually say different things. The only thing the other person can do is prescribe or recommend to me a particular line of behavior, but obviously that can't be what I do. As I said, in my own case I express something, but What?

Let us pay attention to the following linguistic detail: with regard to human actions, the word 'because' may have at least two different, irreducible meanings. It may have first an empirical meaning, in which case what someone offers is a causal explanation. For instance, we can say of Johnny that he went to the restaurant *because* he was hungry. In this case, we explain his action by means of the usual kind of causal connection we establish in primitive, pre-scientific explanations. Needless to say, this has nothing to do with morality: the person in question did something that was in an obvious sense good for him and that's all there is to it. However, 'because' may also be used in a different way, and this is due to the interesting and somewhat strange fact that a person may act against his own interests, against what is actually best for him. In principle everybody could put himself in a situation such that he would afterwards say that he did something *because* that was for him the right thing to do, although he knew in advance that in doing what he did he was acting against what as a matter of fact was better for him. My claim is that only of people who can act in this way does it make sense to say that they act morally or immorally. But just as we don't usually act or speak with or without thinking and we normally act neither freely nor not freely, the question whether our actions have moral value doesn't necessarily arise. I would even be more emphatic: it very seldom arises. It would be most absurd, for example, to try to determine what is morally more valuable, to drink vodka or gin. The issue and the decision cannot go beyond the realm of facts, preferences, inclinations, tastes and so on. Naturally, as we shall see in a moment, not all our actions are, so to speak, on the same level. Nonetheless, for the time being let us rest content with the idea that it is possible to discern two uses of the word 'because' and, therefore, two different kinds of explanation: explanations by *causes* and explanation by *reasons*. Empirical research (psychological research included) materialize in what are called 'causal explanations', while moral allegations and justifications have to do with reasons. Whether or not 'causal explanations' in psychology means exactly the same as in (say) physics is irrelevant for our purposes. The point is that reasons are not in turn explained in terms of causes and that the attempt to do that is tantamount with reducing one meaning of 'because' to the other, which is obviously absurd. Thus what we need to investigate is rather something different. Our problem here is to determine whether within the framework of a naturalistic conception of the world (which is the one we would all normally accept), there is something else apart from causes. Aren't we committed to a second world involving values, abstract entities and what not, if we insist on saying that explanations by reasons are not in the end causal explanations?

It is very easy to get confused here. Very roughly speaking, I think that the point of causal explanations is to provide means for the manipulation of the world. This is clearly what happens in physics and, I think, also in psychology. Once we identify the cause of, say, a pain, we can (in principle) get rid of it. But when we put forward reasons to explain our actions we do something different: we make it

(or try to make it) intelligible as a result of a free decision. Thus the point of being able to provide reasons for our actions is that in doing so we mark ourselves as free agents, that is, as beings whose behavior is not imposed upon; and in this way we put ourselves in a position to give our lives the physiognomy we choose for it. Thus the importance of reasons and, therefore, of morality is that it shows how free from external compulsions we are prepared to be, how far in the way of freedom we are ready to go. So it turns out that the importance of morality is that it is connected with the perennial issue of the meaning of life. This stands in need of some clarification.

Once more, it was Kant who, initially against Hume—but I'd say against all those who think that a person can only be put in motion by causes (be they physiological, neurophysiological, sexual, economical, etc.)—argued that human beings can also be led to act by reason. As I have already pointed out, he used to maintain that human beings are simultaneously part of both the physical and the intelligible realms. Once more, what he asserts is unassailable, but the way he puts it is misleading. I think we can translate what he holds into a more intelligible language by saying that linguistic beings, like human beings, can act moved only by intellectual representations (I hate the expression 'mental representations' and therefore I avoid it). It is in their capacity or status of linguistic beings that persons can escape from causal coercion. This does not prove that we are free beings all the time. What it does prove, however, is that we can occasionally act as free agents. When do we act in such a way? When we conceptualize the situation in which we are embedded in moral terms, and that apparently is something we just can't do all the time. But there surely are situations in which that is possible, that is, situations in which we can act without taking into account causes and consequences. That is to act morally. Let's give an example. I'm standing on the street waiting for a bus and a beggar passing by asks me for money. I can either give him something or nothing. If I calculate that my help will be practically useless, that I won't have money to get a coke a bit later (and I am thirsty), etc., and I decide not to give him money, then my action has no moral character at all. But the same happens if I decide to give him money and if my decision was reached on some sort of calculation. If, for instance, I said to myself something like "Poor man", "He must be hungry", "One more victim of the system" or whatever, then I was pushed to act by causes of some sort (passions, pity, hate, etc.) and then again my act lacks moral value. However, if I am able to put aside factual considerations and let myself be guided by reasons, reasons which concern my life as a whole, then my decision, regardless of its content, will be a moral one. Here I have to say that we should reject Kant's idea to the effect that the intellectual representation involved is of a universal principle, called by him the 'categorical imperative'. And I think this is wrong because his maneuver does represent, one way or another, a kind of transference from third person to one person considerations. As J. S. Mill showed, what in fact gives support to Kant's categorical imperative is the fact that in general to act in accordance with

it increases human happiness. In my view, what Kant did not sufficiently appreciate is something that Wittgenstein clearly perceived and stated beautifully in his *Notebooks*, where he says that “Only from the consciousness of the *uniqueness of my life* arises religion—science—and art”.² I think that this applies to morality as well. But if so, then nothing can be more wrong than the idea of trying to act along a universalizability principle, that is, a mechanism which would confer moral character to an action precisely by eliminating its uniqueness. In my view, there can’t be anything more personal than a moral dilemma. Accordingly, my proposal consists in saying that our intellectual representation is that of our life as a whole and thus we act in one way or another depending upon how we would like it to be designed, what physiognomy each of us wants his or her life to have. Thus if it is causes (regardless of their nature) that make us act, then we simply don’t take advantage of our capabilities of freedom; if it is by reasons that we act, then we show that we are free beings and to that extent moral agents.

At this stage I would like to recall that not every member of our species is automatically a moral being. That is, in my opinion, a useless conception of both humanity and morality. To become a moral being is an achievement; it is not something given. This, together with the perception of how people generally behave, should convince us that in fact there are very few real moral people. This becomes transparent when we understand that there is a kind of opposition between empirical happiness and moral requirements, between empirical pleasure and moral reward, and not everybody is prepared to give way to “existential demands”. It is obvious that there is nothing to praise in a person who acts in a way that the outcome is such that he or she benefits him or herself. In general, we don’t become moral heroes just because we try a line of behavior which most probably will have pleasant consequences for us. A person like that may be clever, smart, brutal, attractive, effective, powerful, successful and so on, but not moral. It seems to me that the test to evaluate whether someone is or is not a moral agent is precisely to determine whether that person is or is not able to act against his or her own interests. If someone is able to take a decision while putting aside the potential consequences of his or her actions and acts only through the intellectual representation of the jigsaw puzzle of his or her life and then decides to act accordingly, then that person is a moral agent. By definition, a moral agent is someone who takes decisions and acts without taking into account consequences. In the rational reconstruction of the whole situation what we find is that the action in question was not factually motivated.

Now there is a subtle difficulty involved in this. Kant used to think that if an action has pleasant consequences then it just can’t be a virtuous one, since as I have already said there is nothing to be praised in an action whose main beneficiary is the agent himself. I have doubts about this. I think that once again

2. L. Wittgenstein, *Notebooks 1914-1916* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979), 79e (4).

Kant points to an important truth, but he misidentifies it. I think that what is important is how a person faces a dilemma. Roughly speaking, it can only be empirically or morally. If he faces it morally (which implies that he will have no regrets regardless of the consequences since he will be in peace with himself), then the factual consequences may be good or bad, but the point is that in such cases they just don't matter. Indeed, when someone acts in a morally right way the consequences of his actions are, first, irrelevant (since they were never taken into account) and, secondly, contingent with respect to one's decisions. The fact that an action happens to have good consequences for the agent is theoretically unproblematic, for it had them as it were just by chance. It could be argued that on this view we can't account for cases in which people say that they act morally while, as a matter of fact, they were moved to act by prosaic motivations. But here the objection is ill placed: surely one can fool other people (perhaps even systematically) but, in the relevant sense, one can't fool oneself. Put in religious terms: one can't fool God. Here I have to dwell upon the fact that morality is a strictly personal affair. So if someone lies, he knows that he lied and, therefore, he knows that he did not act on moral grounds. But the point is that none of this prevents it from possibly being the case that one can act morally and that the action has good consequences. There seems to be no logical incompatibility in this. But it is clear that for the moral agent good consequences are mere good luck. So contrary to what Kant had said, it appears that it is not impossible to be a good man and also a happy one, in the usual sense of the word.

To sum up: the moral 'I must' has nothing to do with concrete facts and goals. It is not our moral duty to act always in such or rather in such a way. How we must act in order to act morally is something that cannot be put into words. Nobody can speak for others, prescribe for others what is the morally good decision, except in the secondary or derivative sense. Here only the subject has authority and the only thing he can do is to state the reasons which let him satisfied and which could perhaps explain (in the sense of make them understandable) his deeds to others. The morally good action (and therefore the morally good reason) is the one which, quite independently of the consequences for me, leaves me satisfied, in a transcendental sense.

At this stage, one serious problem could be raised. It could be asked: can someone be morally satisfied with himself because he acted without taking into account the potential consequences of his action even if, as a matter of fact, it turned out that his action had terrible consequences for other people? Could a dictator argue in this way: 'I did what my moral consciousness ordered me to do. I only did my duty, regardless of the consequences. So I'm satisfied with myself, even if I regret that the consequences were such and such'. On the face of it, this looks like a *reductio ad absurdum* of the view I've been advocating. In my defense, however, I would say that this objection arises out of a serious misunderstanding, for the whole situation is ill-described. First, our ignoring the consequences as a condition for an action to have moral character or value means 'ignoring the

consequences so far as the subject himself is concerned', not 'ignoring the consequences of our action for others'. When other people are involved, it is not the moral dimension which is at stake and thus we unavoidably have to carry out some sort of calculation. If I am a manager and fire someone because he arrived late at work, I am neither moral nor immoral: I act as a labor agent, not as moral one. If a state man declares war to a neighbor country, he acts as a political leader, not as a moral one. And so on. So we have to distinguish different planes or, borrowing an expression from Wittgenstein and adapting it for our purposes, different "acting as". Actions and consequences are moral in so far as they are free and concern only the agent himself, his or her life. But, if an individual's decisions affect other people as well, if they in one way or another have to do with them, then both the decision and the action are neither moral nor immoral. They acquire another character (political, religious, commercial, etc.). Morality, I insist, is a strictly personal affair. When I use 'I must do x' morally, I speak about something which concerns me and only me. It's my life, in so far as it depends upon me, which is at stake.

THE EMERGENCE OF NORMATIVITY

If what I have said is right, it follows that we have to recognize two sources of normativity. One is the set of social requirements for coexistence. In this context people can be either forced to do or to avoid certain things (law) or they may be induced or advised, in the strongest possible sense, to behave in certain ways. This is what could be called 'social morality'. In this context, only utilitarian sort of mechanisms may be useful. It is here too that social psychology may apply. People may be conditioned to act in this rather than in that way, to buy this product but not that one, to vote for this candidate and not that one, and so on. Here we have typically operant behavior. But I maintain that there is another source of obligation, a source which is entirely personal, a road open only to highly civilized people, that is, to people who are able to refrain from earthly paradises. Here only reasons avail and, as Wittgenstein pointed out, whereas someone can ignore the causes of his action, he can never be said to ignore the reasons of his action. Thus if an action is explained by reasons then the agent cannot be said to have acted by causes, even if such causes existed, for this would amount to saying that we are causally determined to be free, which is meaningless. So the realm of morality is alien to the world of causes. It is not of course another world, but it is a domain in which causal explanations are just irrelevant. Few things are as absurd as, for instance, trying to explain aesthetic experience by alluding to causes. But if this is really so, then it is true that there is an aspect of human, individual life which can't be scientifically accounted for. And this is, I think, an important result.
