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# The "Good" as a predicate

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Ανάτυπο  
ΑΠΟ ΤΗΝ  
**ΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΟΝΙΚΗ ΕΠΕΤΗΡΙΔΑ**

ΤΗΣ ΦΙΛΟΣΟΦΙΚΗΣ ΣΧΟΛΗΣ

ΠΕΡΙΟΔΟΣ Β΄

ΤΜΗΜΑ ΦΙΛΟΣΟΦΙΑΣ, ΠΑΙΔΑΓΩΓΙΚΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΨΥΧΟΛΟΓΙΑΣ

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THE «GOOD» AS A PREDICATE

PHILIP V. KARGOPOULOS

A. Let us begin by accepting Logical Atomism reinforced with Russell's theory of descriptions. According to this negative theory of substance, the world is a world of qualities. The predicates that stand for these qualities are classified as simple (indefinable) and complex (defined ultimately by analysis to the indefinable simples). We have here the brief outlines of the ontological framework within which Moore's conception of the GOOD develops\*.

B. Let us also accept the theory of knowledge that goes with the above ontology. Knowledge is either by acquaintance or by description. Simple properties are all known or knowable by acquaintance alone. Of complex qualities some are known by acquaintance (which is analyzable ultimately into acquaintance with simple qualities) and others by description (which again is ultimately analyzable into acquaintance with simples). We now have the epistemological framework within which Moore's theory of the GOOD develops.

C. Finally let us pretend to be utilitarians or rather consequentialists and claim together with Moore that obligation theory is subordinated to value theory (P.E.p.viii-ix). Here is part of the ethical framework in which Moore's theory of the GOOD develops.

D. The central problem of ethics then becomes to investigate the predicate «good» in itself, what «good» means: what «good» connotes, not what «good» denotes (is true of).

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\* In order to avoid use-and-mention confusion, I use the capitalized GOOD to denote the property, the first-letter-capitalized Good to denote the platonic idea, the concept or the final end, and finally I use quotation marks in «good» to denote the term or the predicate itself.

## PART I: THE GOOD MAY BE INDEFINABLE .BUT IS IT SIMPLE?

I I am investigating here the possibility of predicates being ontologically fundamental in the sphere of the practical. I shall therefore, attempt to reconstruct as favourably as I can Moore's theory of the «good» as a predicate. My aim is to critically approach the characterization of «good» as standing for an indefinable, simple, non-natural, intuited property. I shall argue that GOOD may be indefinable, yet it cannot be simple. On the basis of this critique, I shall offer three alternative theories that might be able to account for the indefinability of «good» without falling into the error of considering GOOD to be a simple property.

II 1 How do we specify the predicate «good»? There are two ways to specify any predicate: by intension or by extension. To specify a predicate by intension is to give its meaning, to define it. Since we know not whether the predicate «good» is definable, and also in accordance with the view of knowledge which we decided to accept (see B above), let us start with the extension of «good».

II 2 By providing the extension of a predicate one seeks to find other characteristics common to some or all of the members of the extension, so that he can specify the predicate in question in terms of these additional characteristics. There are two alternatives here: Either a) the other characteristic is true of some members of the extension, or b) the other characteristic is true of all and only the members of the extension. For example we can

specify «yellow» by extension in the following two ways: a) Canaries are yellow, Daffodils are yellow, Bears are not yellow etc. b) All and only yellow objects reflect light of 300 A (angstroms) wavelength. It is obvious that the second way is more appropriate for an adequate characterization of «yellow». Barring problems of induction we can form the corresponding universal conditional (or rather equivalence). This provides a criterion for inclusion or exclusion of objects into the extension of «yellow». It may be the case that this criteriological search is all that we are interested in when we search for the meaning of a predicate. But is it?

III 1 By providing a criterion for the inclusion into, or the exclusion from, the extension of a predicate it is clear that we don't really define even a predicate like «yellow». The main argument in support of this contention (which, unfortunately, Moore does not develop, thus leading people to wrong criticisms) is this: One may very well know wavelength is, what an angstrom is, and what 300 is; in short he does know what a wavelength of 300 A is, even if he is blind from birth. But does he know then what YELLOW is? Unless he has been acquainted with the simple quality YELLOW, the criterion will never help him to understand the meaning of «yellow». This is a powerful argument against all criteriological definitions which applies not only to «yellow» but to all predicates naming simple qualities. Therefore *if* GOOD is a simple quality then it is impossible to define it in this way by extension.

III 2 How about the predicate «good»? The first argument would apply if we already knew that the GOOD is simple. Moore offers two additional arguments against defining «good» by extension. The second argument, clearly of platonic origin, deals with the first way of defining «good» by extension (see II 2 a) and is aimed at all definitions by extension. If one asks «What things are good?» in an attempt to specify the extension of «good», and we answer by listing «Books are good, friends are good, pleasures are good, etc.», then there is a rough and ready counter-argument: «There are bad books, bad friends, bad pleasures, bad etc.». What this argument says in effect is that we cannot find in the extension

of «good» any kind of thing, say X, of which it is true that «All Xs are good».

III 3 The third argument, which is also platonic, if not in origin at least in spirit, is the «Further Question Argument» (FQA). It attacks not any groups of members of the extension of «good» but the additional characteristic that all (and only) the members of the extension of «good» are supposed to share. Let us suppose that all the members of the extension of «good» share the additional attribute «productive of happiness» or «pleasing» or «sublime» or «pious» or whatever. The fact that we can meaningfully then ask «But is happiness good?» etc. shows according to Moore that the definition of «good» as happiness-or-whatever, was wrong. Since this can be applied to any definition of «good» we can come up with, Moore concludes that «good» is indefinable.

III 4 The three arguments are related: the third can be turned into the first: Suppose I know what «pleasing» means, or what «productive of happiness» means; do I then know what «good» means? The third argument can also be turned into the second by adding the subjects modified by the additional characteristics (things, actions, activities, habits, etc.): Pleasing things are not necessarily good things, since we know that there are pleasing things which are bad or at least we can question meaningfully any pleasing thing whether it is also good.

III 5 The third argument, I believe, only makes sense in the light of the other two arguments. Otherwise it becomes a quest for analytic definitions which are nominal and thoroughly non-informative. It is true that a triangle is a three-sided figure and that it makes little sense to ask «But is a three-sided figure a triangle?» But it is also true that for the other accepted non-analytic definitions it is always possible to significantly question them. The question «Is a rational animal a man?» is significant as well as important to ask.

III 6 The three arguments combined are used to show that «good» is indefinable, at least by extension. The first argument is conditional on the simplicity of GOOD and therefore it is not conclusive at this stage of the game. There remains to examine the

other two arguments, the «platonic» ones. What can be said in their favor?

III 7 The original platonic arguments against defining «good» by extension function within the context of sophistical relativism and subjectivism in matters of ethics. In a dialectical framework they are used to show that while different people disagree about what is good, about the extension of «good», that is, they still presuppose a concept of the GOOD in itself, a universal meaning of «good», an idea of Good which makes this disagreement possible, and which the socratic dialectic, moving from particular different opinions about the good, which constitute its extension, towards the universal same intension (meaning), will reveal. What the platonist, in effect, claims is that the disagreement about what is good should not be taken as a basis for claiming that there is no «good» in itself, but rather the contrary: it is because there is such a pure predicate like «good-in-itself», the idea of GOOD, the universal meaning of «good», that people can significantly disagree about its particular applications, its extension, that is. And this sounds plausible since when we disagree strongly about X being good or Y being good we seem to believe or to presuppose that we are talking about the same thing when we use the same term «good».

IV 1 Turning back to Moore, one should ask why is the predicate «good» indefinable? The answer «Because it is simple» is either a hypothesis or is merely begging the question. Instead we should try to show why «good» cannot be defined in terms of its extension.

IV 2 There are two striking things about the extension of «good». The first is that it can be enormous. Of almost all things we can say that «good», its contradictory, or its contrary can significantly be applied to them. In this respect «good» is like «yellow» and even more: since locutions like «yellow experience», «yellow activity» are clearly non-sensical.

IV 3 The second striking thing about the extension of «good» is that one cannot easily discern anything common in the members of this huge extension. A good thief, a good man, a good submarine, a good tree, a good relation, a good college, a good course, all seem to have nothing in common. If no common cha-

racteristic can be found in this huge extension then «good» would be indefinable.

- V 1 An important objection must be raised and answered here. Is it possible that «good» is properly applied to a few things and by another non-proper way (metaphorically, teleologically) it is applied to the rest? In this case we can say that «good» applies properly to «man» or «action» and improperly to «thief», «book», «submarine», «tree» etc. To this suggestion there are three counterarguments.
- V 2 To accept that «good» is properly applied to «man» or «action» is to implicitly accept that «good» *by itself* is indefinable, and thus to grant Moore's point about the indefinability of the «good».
- V 3 Even if «good» is properly applied to «man» or «action» or to some other such thing, still we must define it even in conjunction together with the terms it properly modifies. Now, any attempt to specify «man» or «action» will bring forth a host of other terms, which are really the ones that we tried to avoid by our move. In the case of the «good man» for instance we have to decide about «good father», «good citizen», «good worker», «good patriot», «good businessman» etc. and I am sure that with a little effort we will reach the «good thief» (at least as part of the «good property holder» —if property is theft— and who can say with certainty that it is not?). The effort to define «good man» brings forth a number of «good so and so» terms which are not different in kind than the «good thief» etc., the terms to which, as the objection goes, «good» applies only improperly. We are back to our predicament.
- V 4 Finally, there is no simple way to relate the various senses of the «good so and so». A good thief is not a good man, but so is a bad thief too. A bad citizen may not be a good man, a good citizen is not necessarily a good man, a good citizen in a bad state will most likely be a bad man etc. Even quasi-biological terms like «father» cannot be related to «good man» in a simple way: a good father is not necessarily a good man.
- VI 1 It is clear then that the predicate «good» cannot be determined by extension. But is it simple? By investigating the

simplicity of GOOD we are in effect studying the further question «Why is the predicate «good» indefinable?» Moore taking probably into account the fact that «good» can be applied almost to anything, and also in accordance to his ontological reduction to qualities (see A ) concludes that «good» stands for a simple, non-natural, intuited quality. Assuming that we have no difficulty with the non-naturalness of the GOOD we turn to its simplicity: Can GOOD be simple?

- VI 2 One can show that GOOD is not a simple property. If I understand Moore's conception of a simple quality, then there are three conditions that a simple quality should fulfill. I shall proceed to explain each one of them, and show how «good» fails them as opposed to «yellow».
- VI 3 A simple property should be immediately intuited. It should be immediately intuited if an object is good or not good as it is immediately intuited that an object is yellow or not yellow. But it is obvious that one must know a lot of things about an object before he can intuit its goodness. Only an expert in, say, submarines could tell us that a specific submarine is good or no-good, and even he has to learn a lot of things about the specific object in question. On the other hand anyone would be able, under normal circumstances, to tell you whether a submarine is yellow or not.
- VI 4 Secondly, given Moore's ontological reduction to qualities (which are simple), even before specifying the subject of our discourse (objects, actions, submarines, etc.) we should be able to tell whether GOOD is involved, as we immediately know whether YELLOW is involved. (whether or not there is something good in a situation as we know whether or not there is something yellow in the situation). But while in any situation I can detect the presense or absense of YELLOW, without a need for specification, I cannot talk about the presense of GOOD (or the absense thereof) without a clear specification of what it is that we are talking about. This clearly points to the fact that GOOD, instead of being simple, is rather complex.
- VI 5 Finally an intuited judgment about a simple quality like YELLOW is not to be changed or doubted. Contrary to this, we do change

our minds about «good» in two ways: A. We may judge an action or an object to be good and upon further information, or upon applying the same criteria to a similar situation, or even by the mere passage of time we change our opinion about it. Here one might claim that the argument against Moore is rather weak since we do change our opinions about yellow as well: under a certain light we may judge an object to be yellow, and later come to change our mind about it. Yet according to Moore's epistemology, we do not change our minds about what we perceived, but about the colour of the object. This, however, could be said also about our intuition of «good»; ie. that our intuition of «good» in a situation, relative to our knowledge of the situation, and to the given ends, *is always the same*: any further information may change our judgment about the GOOD involved but now it is a different thing that we are talking about: what we considered good in the past continues to be good relative to what we knew then. This seems to me to be weak defense. I believe that in most cases judgments about the goodness of a situation are rather sophisticated, and are voiced with a certain awareness that they may very well be contestable: This is never the case with judgments about «yellow». Similarly the change of judgment about something being «good» does not need additional knowledge: sometimes a good night's sleep is enough to change one's mind.

B. Secondly, we may change our minds, not only with respect to something being good or not, but with respect to GOOD itself. This never happens with our simple intuition of YELLOW History, even personal history, and anthropology give us many examples of such radical changes in the conception of GOOD.

VI 6 The following example illustrates the three criteria of the simplicity of predicates, and shows how «good» fails them, while «yellow» passes them.

Consider the following course of events: I stop typing, I go to the next room, take a yellow pen, a black pen and I write the following two doodles on the manuscript:



According to the criteria of simplicity one should be able to judge:

1. Whether there is anything good in the situation, even without specifying, in the situation, what it is that we are talking about. We know that there is something yellow involved here; but one has no idea about anything good involved here.

2. After specifying the yellow doodle as the subject of discourse, one should be able to tell whether it is good or not, as it is easy to tell that the doodle is yellow. To the question «Is the yellow doodle good?» the ordinary response would be «Good as what? as a doodle? (it is rather bad), as a copy of the black doodle? (it is rather good), as a signature? as a signal? as an example?».

3. Our judgement of the goodness of the doodle ought to be relatively stable, but as you can see in the above parentheses, judgments concerning the goodness of the doodle are subject to change.

The last two clauses above (2 and 3) indicate the following three things about «good». The first is that additional information can change our judgments about the GOOD of a situation. The second is that in all cases we rely on a lot of additional information, a lot of other predicates, before and in order to use the predicate «good»: as I said earlier this points to the complexity rather than the simplicity of «good». The final point is that, as we include more and more of the total situation, it becomes more appropriate to talk then about the goodness or not of anything that is involved in the situation.

Of course one might object that the doodle is really an insignificant example, to which «good» does not even deserve to be contemplated to apply. Yet this is not so. If, instead of the doodle in my paper, I painted a swastika or a hammer-and-shackle on a public wall I am sure that these doodles would give rise to some moral indignation or approval.

VI 7 We must return now to the objection that was raised at the end of VI 5 A and was partly answered there. The objection is the following: It may be the case that in actual situations it is hard to know whether an object, an event, a relation, etc. is

good or not. But once a specification is given, and *relative to that specification*, there is an appropriate intuitive judgment concerning the goodness of the thing specified: this judgment, intuitionists might argue, is the same for all people, and will never change, relative always to the specification given.

The argument in effect is saying that, given a description of an action, everyone would intuit the goodness or non-goodness there of. In an ideal situation then, apart from actual life we do have a clear intuition of the GOOD, as Moore believes.

Now, if this argument is used to support the simplicity of «good» it fails miserably: for it accepts that we have to know many things about a situation before we can determine whether it is good. It also admits the complexity of the «good», for it implies that if we take out of an action a part of it (like the motive, or the ulterior motive, or the knowledge or ignorance of the agent) then our judgment can be changed: from considering it a good action we end up considering it a bad action or vice-versa. This may not change our judgment relative to the original situation, but it shows clearly that «good» is complex, since abstraction or addition of parts of a thing influence our decision about its goodness.

Furthermore the decision to describe an action or an object in one way rather than another is itself moral. It is not the case that we have neutral descriptions which clearly apply to an action or an object, and that our evaluation starts after the description is established. Notice how many ways people have for describing a mistake: error, oversight, miscalculation, etc. and how descriptions change with respect to the person who commits the error. There are no clearcut ideal cases, as there are no clearcut ideal descriptions, whereupon we could exercise our intuitions of GOOD. The «ideal» itself is an evaluative term, as much as the «trivial» is. As a matter of fact this move towards ideal descriptions is itself a moral stand, which is taken by the law. To say that the GOOD can be clearly intuited in ideal descriptions is to put the cart before the horse. Our aim is to explain values, not to presuppose them: We may hope to explain the «ideal» in terms of the «good» but not vice-versa. The fact that

in Law we discuss ideal situations under ideal descriptions should not be taken as an absolute. This too is an evaluative stand (and pretty parochial at that), as one can see from the problems of interpreting the Law.

VII 1 We have so far decided that the predicate «good» is indefinable by extension, that it does not stand for a simple quality, and that there are a lot of other evaluative terms to be taken care of together with «good». We have also decided that Moore's conception of the «good» cannot function even if we assign a proper subject-matter to which «good» applies, because this decision itself represents an evaluative stand, which, furthermore, is arbitrary.

VII 2 In the rest of the paper, I shall offer three theories of the «good», which take seriously the indefinability of «good» and try to meet the other stipulations of the preceding paragraph. The leading question, as always, is: «We know that «good» is an indefinable predicate, but what is it that makes it so? What kind of a predicate is it?»

VII 3 The first solution is full-scale Platonism. The «good» is indefinable in terms of its extension because as a meaning or an idea it is presupposed in all its applications and all the disagreements about it. The specifics of this solution are contained in III 7. What must be said here is that such a view is hardly explanatory. It tells us, at most, that something is good if it partakes of the idea of Good.

VII 4 The second solution maintains that there can never be a unified theory of the good. For the term «good» is always syncategorematic: alone it does not make sense: There are good cameras, good thieves, good patriots, good trees, and in general good *x*s and good *y*s, but there is no «good» -in-general. «Good», therefore, cannot be defined because it is a syncategorematic term. We can specify for each «good *x*» and «good *y*» what it is that makes it a «good *x*» or a «good *y*» but this can only be done on the basis of our knowledge of *x* and *y* and not on the basis of «good» -in-general. You cannot specify what a good *x* is unless you know about *x*. Conversely if you do know about *x*, then you could stipulate with some accuracy what a good *x* might be.

This theory accounts for the indefinability of the «good» but at a high cost: no unified theory of the good. There is some truth in it, because «good», as all syncategorematic terms, cannot function out of contexts. Going beyond syntax, we can say that goodness does not make sense except within contexts. But the theory goes too far. It leads to breaking down context into very limited small contexts: the good *x* is defined solely in terms of *x*, the good *y* is defined only in the context of *y* etc. This is like saying that being a good legislator has to do with legislating alone, being a good thief has to do with theft alone etc. Yet the contexts within which «good» functions are much larger, larger than any of the contexts in which the other evaluative terms function. A good legislator is good not only relative to the context of legislating alone, but relative to larger contexts, called state, society, or history. Similarly the goodness of the thief has to be accessed within the context of the times, the abilities of the local police, etc. And the larger contexts themselves have to be characterized as «good or bad» with reference to other more inclusive ones: a good legislator in a corrupt state might be an impossibility. It so happens that most or all of these «good *x*s» and «good *y*s» are not so diverse. They continue to be syncategorematic, since «good» in these cases has no sense without the *x*s or the *y*s, yet there are larger contexts where goodness in *x*-ing and goodness in *y*-ing are related. This theory therefore is limited and incomplete even though it points to some very important properties of evaluative terms: namely that they are complex terms, not simple terms, they only function in contexts. This also leaves the possibility open for contextual definition which is available for all syncategorematic terms. Finally the solution is consistent with naturalism for it has to maintain that we cannot define «good man» or «good life» except by studying and knowing many things about «man» and «life».

The difficulties and shortcomings of this theory are: 1. The lack of a unified theory of the good, 2. The fact that it does not explain why all uses of «good» are syncategorematic, and what does it mean to say that «good» is syncategorematic, 3. Finally the fact that «good» has *only* a syncategorematic use has to be

shown. We know that some uses of «good» are syncategorematic, but are all of uses of «good» syncategorematic?

VII 5 Aristotelianism is, I believe, the theory which can combine what is best in the previous theory and, at the same time, more than adequately, handle the aforementioned inadequacies. According to this theory the predicate «good» is ultimately indefinable because most «goods» are considered good and defined in terms of further «goods», and the final Good is indefinable because there is no further good to define the final Good in terms of it. This says that all «goods» except for the final Good are syncategorematic because they are in effect only «good for —». Now «good for —» is a syncategorematic term because it cannot function alone, without the terms that fill the blank. In fact this is what we mean when we say that most uses of «good» are syncategorematic: they are only «good for». This is also why most «goods» are syncategorematic. On the other hand the final Good cannot be defined. It can only be *identified or specified* (as Happiness or what ever): it is not «good», it is «the Good» (a substantive, that is). This final good if identified provides the most general context within which all other «goods» can be defined. The Aristotelian theory in this way provides a unified account of the Good, *if* (and I emphasize the conditional as Aristotle does too) if there is a final Good, and our theory is correct if our identification of the Good as Happiness or whatever is the correct identification. The theory is also able to account for the other evaluative terms.

VIII To conclude, I believe I have shown that the attempt to isolate and define evaluative predicates is bound to fail because evaluative predicates are syncategorematic and inseparable from the terms and the contexts in which they function. Among them the predicate «good» is the most difficult to isolate for it functions only in very large contexts. The «good» as a predicate, therefore, is indefinable, but its indefinability has nothing to do with its simplicity, but rather with its complexity.

## PART II: THE GOOD IS INDEFINABLE. BUT IT IS NOT UNSPECIFIABLE

I 1 Recent moral thought, after Moore, often rests on an implicit jump from the position that «good» is indefinable to the position that «good» is unspecifiable. In the previous essay, I have argued that «good» is indefinable, not because it is simple but rather because it is complex. Partly in order to counter the aforementioned jump, and partly in order to unpack the complexity of «good», I shall argue here that «good is indefinable, but it is not unspecifiable.

I 2 My general argument is that «good» is indefinable because there are more than one senses of «good». This however does not mean that «good» is unspecifiable. If we determine the fundamental senses of «good» by providing the criteria for the proper application of «good» then «good» shall be specified, even though it will remain undefined. Given that definition is itself a problematic concept for the whole of knowledge, theoretical and practical, specification might, after all, be all that we should be striving for in ethics.

I 3 Specifically I will argue that there are three basis kinds of uses of «good» which must be clearly distinguished. The next task is to proceed from *uses* to *senses* of «good» and to establish the relations between the senses of «good» as a methodological foundation for ethical discourse. In the course of the argument, I shall also refute the «Further Question Argument» as it is usually stated by people like Moore. My argument is that the usual form

of the FQA, among many other things, rests on an equivocation which confuses one sense of «good» with another. Consequently the FQA should be modified in such a way, so that in the first place it does not rest on an equivocation. In the second place it should be modified so that it is not merely a negative argument (one used to refute all theories of «the good») but a heuristic and a positive argument which will help us in finding and supporting a theory of the «good».

I 4 The aim of this essay then is both methodological and substantive. For it will, hopefully, show that ethical discourse already contains a frame work which is adequate to specify the appropriate denotation for the basic senses of «good», a task which so far was taken to be arbitrary. The outcome bears close similarities to the ethical theories of Aristotle, together with necessary modifications which derive out of the great Kantian revolution in Ethics. The theory which I shall propose, rests on some fundamental concepts which constitute part of the proper specification of «good». These concepts must be further specified, according to the guidelines which I have set up. It is my belief that two specific theories which might be able to specify these concepts are naturalism and marxism. The reasons for this is not in order to complete an already syncritistic picture, but a direct outcome of the methodological analysis of the specification of «good».

II 1 We can all agree that grammatically «good» is an adjective. Adjectives, normally<sup>1</sup>, have three possible uses corresponding to three senses. They have a syncategorematic<sup>2</sup> use (as «yellow» does in «yellow fever»), an adjectival use (as in «yellow flower»), and a substantive use (as in «The yellow in Van Gogh's landscapes»). Similarly, the syncategorematic «black» in «black

1. I say «normally» in order to avoid either illegitimate adverbial use (like using «good» instead of «well») or strictly idiomatic use in naming The institution «Good Will», the «Good Fairy» e.t.c.).

2. Quasi-syncategorematic is a better term, since syncategorematic has been used for *connectives* and *constants*. But to avoid turning an already difficult term into a more indigestible one, I shall keep «syncategorematic».

humor», the adjectival in «black cat», and the substantive in «The black of the night». To get away from colours, we also have «true enemy», «true statement or true theory» and «The True is the subject matter of Logic. (Frege)».

- II 2 There is little doubt that such a three-fold classification exists for the uses of «good» as well. Examples are available: Of the syncategorematic «good»: in «good thief». Of the adjectival, probably, «good man». Of the substantive, in «happiness is the Good». The interesting question, however, is whether the three-fold classification is adequate to specify all the possible uses of «good». By «adequate», we mean fulfilling the following two conditions: 1. All normal uses of «good» should fall under at least one of these categories. 2. Any normal use of «good» should fall under at most one of these categories.
- II 3 The point, of course, is not to meet every possible challenge concerning any specific use of «good», but rather to find the criteria that a use of «good» has to fulfill in order to be included in any of the categories. The discussion of the criteria will lead beyond the uses to the senses of «good». Finally the interrelations of the senses of «good» will point to a proper methodological foundation of ethics as the theory of the «good». Let us begin then, by taking the uses of «good» one at a time.
- III 1 The first condition that both the syncategorematic and the adjectival uses of «good» have to fulfill is that «good» in both cases must function as a modifier. Put in another way, in both cases «good» cannot stand alone, with the definite or the indefinite article attached to it («the good» or «a good»). In this way the two uses are distinct from the substantive. Of course the way in which «good» modifies in the case of the syncategorematic use differs from the way it modifies in the adjectival. In the first case it can properly be only an adjectival attachment (as in «good thief») and only improperly can it be a separable predicate («Is a good thief good?»). In the latter case both uses are legitimate.
- III 2 More specifically, the use of «good» is syncategorematic in a sentence of the form «J is a good X» if it is false that «J is both X and good». To avoid cases in which J is not an X while he is good, (as in «good Samaritan») let us divide the conjunction:

The use of «good» in «J is a good X» is syncategorematic if it is true that «J is an X» and false that «J is good». To tune the criterion to use we can say that a use of «good» is syncategorematic if the user of the statement «J is a good X» is willing to accept also the statement «J is an X» but unwilling to accept «J is good» or that «J is an X» follows from the original statement but «J is good» does not.

An example is in order. From «Jones is a good thief» it does follow that «J is a thief» but it does not follow that «Jones is good», as from «Jones is a suspected thief» it does follow that «Jones is suspected», but not that «Jones is a thief». Generally, in all such cases where from «J is AB» it does follow that «J is B» but not that «J is A», we call the use of A syncategorematic.

- III 3 The use of «good» in «J is a good Y» is adjectival if it follows from this that «J is both Y and good», that «J is Y» and «J is good». The difficulty with this use, as we shall see later, is precisely the suitable Y. Provisionally, though, we can use the example «Smith is a good man» from which it follows that «Smith is a man» and that «Smith is good» or also from «The 'vie Boheme' is a good life» it follows that it is both a life, and that it is good.
- III 4 Finally the use of «good» is substantive if it can stand alone in an identification sentence as a subject or as a predicate, with the definite article attached to it. Examples of this are «Happiness is the good», «The good is Utility» etc<sup>3</sup>.
- IV 1 So far I have only made trivial remarks about grammar and syntax. The point, however, is to get beyond use to sense. The ultimate goal is to specify the senses of «good». One possible way of approaching the problem is to discuss the meaning of «good» in the different uses. We can use a loose sense of substitutability not in order to strictly define the various senses of

3. Attention must be paid not to confuse the proper substantive use with the schema of litotis, as in «The Good shall inherit the earth when it means the good men. Similarly one should not confuse the substantive with the idiomatic use, «This store sells dry goods». Finally, one should be careful to exclude the locution «a good» (as in the «pleasure is a good» which is properly «pleasure is a good thing»).

«good» (in this case we would need synonymy, not substitutability) but in order to distinguish the senses of «good». The substitutes, therefore are not proposed as synonyms of «good» but as «substitutable evaluatives». The criterion of success is whether the statements which result from the substitutions still continue to be meaningful and still carry an evaluative content, which could be the interpretation of the original statements.

IV 2 For the substantive use of «good» (The Good) there can hardly be a meaning substitute. Except in the cases of oblique talk a substantive cannot be replaced except by an expression with the same reference, not with the same meaning, or even the same kind of meaning (if this locution makes sense). The best one can do then is something like the Aristotelian «the End» or «the Final Goal».

IV 3 For the adjectival use of «good» something like «moral» is a suitable substitution: The moral man is both a man and he is moral, similarly with the moral life. This, as one will readily notice, solves the possible problem of ambiguity in the case of the «good thief». If by «good thief» we mean the moral thief, as in the crucifixion story, then from «J is a moral thief» it follows that «J is a thief» and also that «J is moral». But what about the man who is good at being a thief?

IV 4 For the syncategorematic «good» there are many evaluative-substitutes. A good thief may be an efficient thief (according to a manual for thieves), or an easily caught thief (according to the police manuals) or a thief with a good reason for being a thief (according to Victor Hugo). Similarly a good car is a car which sells (for the car salesman), a fast car (for the speed buff), an economic car (for the stingy or the environmentalist) a big car (for the American of the fifties) etc.

One might, however, have the feeling that the substitution of «good» with any one of these evaluative terms fails, because the criterion which we laid out for the syncategorematic use seems not to hold: From «Jones is an efficient thief» it follows that «Jones is a thief» and also that «Jones is efficient». This feeling is wrong. Jones may be an efficient thief but an inefficient familyman, and consequently the statement «Jones is efficient»

may very well be false. It is obvious that evaluative terms cannot stand alone as predicates. Nobody and nothing is simply and unqualifiedly efficient, good, ridiculous, pedantic, etc. Rather X is efficient in his work, or in his family life, or in his love affairs; he can be ridiculous in appearance, or in manners, or in opinions; pedantic in character, in his writing, in his thinking, in his cleanliness, etc. In short, evaluative terms are not simple, they are complex.

On the other hand, even if the feeling that the evaluative substitutes cease to be syncategorematic were correct (which it is not), then we could easily show that they are not proper substitutes: they could never capture the meaning of the syncategorematic «good». When we are saying of a thief that he is a «good» thief, we are making a very general statement. «Efficient» may be only one part of this «good» and also from a certain viewpoint. Let me make the point clearer by an example.

McIntyre has argued that this syncategorematic use of «good» (which he calls functional) does not involve a fact-value distinction. From the facts: This pistol is accurate, reliable, lethal, concealable, marketable, light, quick, it follows that it is a good pistol. Now lethality may be a desirable property in a military weapon, or for the Far West, but it may be an undesirable property for a police weapon, or for a home-protection weapon. Similarly a car with big engine, a well built body, a big trunk, air-conditioner etc. may be a «good» car for the fifties but it is a bad car for the seventies, even if one could afford the high gasoline prices. In all cases where we judge something to be good, the next question which is both obvious and necessary is «Good for what? and for whom? and according to whom?».

What I am saying here is that evaluative terms are syncategorematic not only because they must always stick with what they modify, but also because they must always be understood within a general situation (preferably social) which is changing. To put the matter in an Aristotelian way, syncategorematic «goods» are relative not only to the terms they apply but to a final end (What they are good for—Ethics, and for whom—Politics).

Can the problem be avoided by using the idea of perfection

(perfect car, perfect thief, perfect father etc.)? I believe that this answer is absurd for it involves predictions about radically changing and unforeseeable situations. To give an example, a few centuries ago, it would make sense to talk about «The perfect King». Now such a talk is absurd, for a king, no matter how perfect he is, is still not good enough.

V 1 The attempt to specify «good» via the route of meaning and substitutability, while it offers good insights, it still does not solve the problem of specifying the senses of «good». Let us now face the problem head on. What do we mean by specification? Using logical terms, we can say that the aim is to fix the denotation of the various senses of «good». Specifically we isolated three uses of «good»:

1. «J is a good X» but not «J is good» (Syncategorematic)
2. «J is a good Y» and also «J is good» (Adjectival)
3. «Z is the Good» (Substantive)

By specification, then I mean the X, Y, and Z. The problems for each of these cases are: In the first place, are there Xs, Ys, and Zs of which one of the senses of «good» is true? In the second place, what kinds of things are Xs, Ys, and Zs? In this way by fixing the denotations of «good» we shall specify «good» even if we leave it undefined.

V 2 Concerning the specification of the syncategorematic «good», which is to say the Xs, there are four points to be made. The first is that there are virtually unlimited Xs. Almost anything can be good in syncategorematic sense: persons, objects, events, properties, actions, relations, groups, qualities: a shepherd, a car, a revolution, a technical skill, a move in chess, a contract, an army, a colour.

The second point is that all judgments which involve the syncategorematic «good» can change in more than one ways. They change with respect to our knowledge of the situation, and with respect to the point of view from which the judgement is drawn. The latter change, and in part the former, can be subsumed under change with respect (or relative) to ends, which is to say, to the substantive «good». Something is good, syncategorematically, for the short run or for the long run, for one person

or for the whole community, etc. The third point trivially follows from the second: Syncategorematic «goods» are functional «goods».

The fourth point relates to the first, and links this stage of the inquiry to the next. Since Xs are virtually unlimited, the weight of specifying the Xs falls upon the precise specification of the other two categories, the Ys and the Zs. According to our second condition for the proper specification (II 2) Ys and Zs cannot be Xs. This specifications is not by mere exclusion (ie. everything can be X except for Ys and Zs) because Xs are considered «good» with respect to Ys and especially Zs. The weight therefore, on the specification of Ys and Zs for specifying Xs, becomes all the more evident.

V 3 There are two main problems in specifying the denotation of the adjectival use of «good», the Ys, that is, of which «good» can be true or false. The first and main problem is whether there are any proper Ys: Do Ys exist? This is a difficult problem because as we said earlier, evaluative terms are complex. They function within (and only within) complex situations (social historical). This appears to be contrary to the adjectival use, where «good» appears as separable predicate (ie. The good Y is good). The main challenge then is to find these unqualified, unconditional «goods» on the face of the complexity of «good» as an evaluative term. The specific way in which this challenge appears is that for any Y that we may consider as a proper specification of the adjectival «good», a case can be made, that it is not really a proper Y, but rather it is (or can be taken as) an X, a syncategorematic «good». Our attempt, then, is to show that there are unconditionally good things, proper denotations of the adjectival «good».

The second problem is to separate among the possible candidates for Y the proper ones: which one can really accept the predicate «good» unqualifiedly and simply. I am not searching here for the things that are unqualifiedly good, but for *what kinds of things can unqualifiedly be said to be good*,

Since our problem in its concrete form, is to find Ys which cannot be Xs, we have at hand a strict criterion for distinguishing the two. The following seeming tautology, does not hold for the

syncategorematic «goods», the Xs: it holds for all and only the Ys.

A. «The good Y is good»

Our search is for the proper Ys to complete schema A. With respect to use and specification of «good» there are two conditions contained in the above schema A:

1. The Y has to be such, that the second «good» in the schema can be predicated of it without any qualification. This distinguishes Ys and Xs for no X could unconditionally and unqualifiedly be called «good». Here is also the reason why many moral philosophers have focused their attention on the unqualified «good». Their aim was to define «good» and the only place where the «good» appears as a separable predicate is here. But the way they conducted their search was not systematic, and often led them to confusing the adjectival «good» with the substantive, the Ys with the Zs.

2. The Y has to be such that it can stand next to the first «good» in the schema A and be modified by it. In other words Y must be such that the locution «good Y» makes sense. This condition, as we shall see later, distinguishes the Ys from the Zs.

These two formal conditions, therefore, which are contained in the schema A are sufficient to distinguish the Ys from both the Xs and the Zs. But what do they tell us about the Ys themselves? It is in the material conditions for Ys that we will find the answer to this question. But before we formulate the material conditions, we must have some concrete Ys, which are not Xs.

The possible candidates for Ys are separable into three categories, which I shall call families: 1. The «man»-family, comprising of «man and other terms specifying either parts of man (soul, character) or kinds of man (homo sapiens, homo faber, homo ludens, homo politicus etc.) stages and functions of man (child, father, citizen).

2. The «life»-family, comprising of «life» and other terms specifying parts of life (action, activity) or kinds of life (vita

activa, vita contemplativa, «La vie Boheme», etc.).

3. The Kantian «will»-family, comprising of «will and other related terms like «motive», «intention», «effort» etc.

The proper way to weed out undesirable Ys in the above lists is to show that they can be taken as Xs. The proper Ys are the ones which under no circumstances can be taken as functional, as Xs. Applying this method, we can see that all the terms in the «man»-family, with the exception of «man» are not proper Ys. They can be taken as Xs, and they fail the first formal condition. The criteria for the goodness of a child or a father or a neighbor are functional, and no different in kind from the criteria of the goodness of a thief: a good child is judged «good» in relation to parents, to family, to school, to society, as well as with respect to his coming manhood, or her coming womanhood: the goodness of a stage is relative to the goodness of the whole process.

Terms like «soul», «character» etc. would only be Yz if we could exactly identify them with «man» (and also if we could take away from them their metaphorical character as in «good heart»). But most people who speak of «soul» and «character» do so precisely because they want to draw a distinction between man as a whole and certain parts of «man» which they take as essential. In this way they succeed to turn «man» as well as «soul» and «character» into functional concepts<sup>4</sup>. The criteria of goodness of soul or character are relative to a general situation, usually metaphysical or social, and thus soul and character become functional, as parts of larger wholes.

The same happens to the «Life»-family. It is only «life» that passes the test of non-functionality, and is a proper Y. The

4. The paradigm example here is Christian Ethics which commits two errors both leading to absurdity; a) man is made into parts by division (body-soul etc.) and is turned into means (for the glory of God). b) «life» is made into a part by addition (of pre-life and after-life) and into means toward a further end (after-life). This utter destruction of the fundamental moral concepts «man» and «life» leads to the fundamental paradoxes of Christianity, which arise out of the question: «Will the good man be saved?» (in other words, «is he really good?», «Will a good life lead to a good after-life?», «Is a good life really good?»).

rest (action, activity) are parts of life, and means to ends.

From the above discriminations we can extract the material criteria for proper Ys. The proper Ys, so far «man» and «life», have two essential characteristics: 1. They are *non-functional* (they cannot be taken as functional), and 2. They are *wholes*. Materially therefore, proper Ys are non-functional wholes. In aristotelian language, they are proper ends, *telea*, for they are wholes which contain their ends in themselves— immanent ends, «entelechia».

The ways we specify «man» or «life» however, no matter how abstract, lead us back to functional concepts. I do not refer here merely to such specifications as «citizen», «family-man» or to «social life», «political life», but even to the most abstract specifications like «rational animal» and all the «homines» and «vitae» which I outlined earlier. These concepts, if they are in the least informative, lead to functional concepts like «philosophical life» which is not necessarily «good», as the good philosopher is not necessarily a good man. In short these specifications fail the first formal condition, and both material conditions.

The only proper specification of «man» is one which conforms with the formal and material conditions outlined: «Man as a whole, and as an end in himself», «Life as a whole and as an end in itself». Which brings us to the Kantian «will»-family.

It would be difficult here to conceive of the place that a strict deontology like Kant's, would have in a theory of value like the one I am writing. At the start it seems that «will» and its family («motive», «intention») fail the conditions for being proper Ys. Not only do they not denote wholes, they are also in need for objects outside themselves, they always aim further. There is no will, motive, intention without an object. This makes all the will family functional. Yet we do have the feeling that good will is (unconditionally) good, and this allows it to pass the formal conditions outlined. But the reason that makes the good will good, is not the objects at which it is directed, but rather the conformity to rules. I explain: the good will is good, even if it produces disaster, not because it would have produced value, had the situation been different, not because it will statistically

produce more good than evil, but because it acts out of respect for the law.

I am drawing here a theory of value, and according to the material criteria of this theory, the «good will» has to go. In my theory there is no unconditional «ought» unless it is directly related to an unconditional «good» (like «good man» or «good life»). For Kant the reverse is the case: there is no unconditional «good» unless it is out of respect for an unconditional «ought». I shall grant the validity of this radically alternative approach, and continue with my inquiry.

The reason why I am willing to grant this validity, is precisely the fact that Kant and I do not share the same ontological framework for Ethics. For Kant, the proper unit of this framework, is conscious action, and the essential characteristic of this unit is that it falls under a single rule (Rule in effect is what makes an action—or movement—conscious). In this way his moral universe is broken down to minimal parts comprised of one action under a single rule. In my system actions (conscious or unconscious) are characterized by ends. If a movement has a separable end, then it is an action. In this way my moral universe is not chopped up into single actions-under-single-rules, but rather is formed into bigger and bigger wholes where previous ends of actions become means to further ends. This does not mean that I am willing to accept a grand all-inclusive whole, in a Hegelian fashion, at least for Ethics. And here is a point at which I and Kant might agree: that one of the *wholes* that we should accept is *man as an end in himself*. I add *«life as an end in itself»* even though Kant would really disagree with this addition. Kant dreams of a just afterlife which makes life into a part (even though Kant does not see this part as functional towards an afterlife). The only «just afterlife» which I am willing to accept is the verdict of future history, that we, in our times, did not spend our lives as merely a means to further ends of history. But again this verdict is not a business of further history alone but our business, to the extent that we determine our future now.

The main problem then, surrounding the adjectival «good» in this theory of ethics is the following: Is it possible to specify

«man» and «life» in such a way that we do not conceive of him and his life as means, as merely functional? Given the social and historical nature of man, such a task seems impossible. Social concepts are functional since they refer to relations of parts to wholes and also because they are already overloaded with normative content. On the other hand stages of history are trivially and descriptively functional, since the earlier stages become means to later ones. This, I take, then, to be the challenge to Naturalism and Marxism in the field of Ethics: to give us a definition of man and life as wholes, which does not turn them into means in any way what-so-ever. Both life and man, have a natural dimension (biological, or psychological) whose exploration is a *sine qua non* of ethics. Here is where Naturalism has its strongest claim. On the other hand, man and life, as concepts, have a historico-cultural dimension which is equally essential to Ethics. The reason why Marxism has a strong claim to this task, is among others its sensitivity to history as part of its method.

V 4 The search for the specification of the substantive «good» is in effect the search for the suitable Z or Zs to fill the sentence «Z is the Good». The search for Z, however, has been seriously hampered, especially in modern times, by what is known as the «Further Question Argument» (the FQA). Therefore our positive search will be carried out at the same time with the dissolution of this fallacious argument. There are three points of criticism against the FQA.

The FQA is used to show that in principle any definition of «the Good», as Z, is impossible. In short the argument runs as follows: For any Z that is suggested to be «the Good», it can be meaningfully asked: «But is Z good?». This shows according to the users of the FQA, that any definition of the «good» is bound to fail. In Part I, sect. III, I have shown that it is only in the case of analytic or nominal definitions that such an argument makes sense. Here, I shall so one step further. The users of the FQA miss the point that what is involved here is *not* definition but specification, or rather identification. It is only absurd in the case of a definition of a term to ask whether a part of the definition applies to the definiendum. In the case of identification

or specification the criteria are different. In the case of «Z is the Good» it is obvious that we are involved in identification.

The second point against the FQA is that it rests on an equivocation of two senses of «good». Given a statement P «Happiness is the Good», the FQA users argue that the meaningfulness of the question Q: «Is happiness good?» disproves the statement P. Yet the term «good» in Q is different from the term «the Good» in P. In Q the term «good» is syncategorematic or adjectival, depending on what the questioner means, but it cannot be substantive. The FQA then makes sense only if you mistake the other two uses of «good» for the substantive.

By the above two points, I am not saying that a statement like P, «Happiness is the Good», cannot be meaningfully questioned. But since it is an identification, the proper way to question it is: «Is happiness the Good?» and not as the FQA users do: «Is happiness good?». The man who utters P is proposing a Z, and is making an identification of Z with the Good, which may very well be false. Yet it is not false in principle, as the FQA suggests. It may be merely be an erroneous identification, a wrong hypothesis.

Before making the third point against the FQA, let us go back to our positive search for the proper Zs. The statement «Z is the Good» is an identification. In order for it to be true, Z must be identical, or closely identical to the Good. This is to say that Z and the Good must share all or most of their properties. For the purposes of the search however it is enough that they share one distinctive property. We are in search, therefore, for the one distinctive property that «the Good» shares with Z, and which it (the Good) does not share with any other term. One unique property of «the Good» is that the predicate «good» does not significantly apply to it. The locution «the good Good» does not make sense. This observation makes our search easy. For as we said earlier there is hardly anything in our universe of discourse which cannot be characterized as «good» or «bad» (see: first point about syncategorematic «good»). Now there are some concepts to which «good» or «bad» cannot significantly apply. These are concepts like Happiness and Justice, for there

is no sense to locutions like «good happiness», «bad happiness», «good justice» or «bad justice». Now since the «Good» shares with «happiness» and «justice» this distinctive characteristic which it does not share with most other terms, it is I believe justifiable to take as plausible candidates for Zs, the terms «happiness» and «justice». Before we proceed with this hypothesis, let us return to the FQA for the third point.

What I did in the previous paragraph was to turn the FQA against its users. For what I am saying is that in order to ask meaningfully «Is happiness good?» it has to be possible for happiness to be good or bad, and if this is so we should be able to talk of «good happiness» and «bad happiness». In effect then the users, or rather, the misusers of the FQA, assume that the question «Is the Good good?» makes sense, which is patent nonsense. This third point concludes the dissolution of the FQA in its negative misuse form. There is however a proper use of the FQA which is both heuristic and positive.

The proper way of using the FQA is, in effect, what I take to be the first criterion of the specification of the substantive «good»: For any  $Z^1$  that one is willing to propose as «the Good», one has to ask: «Is there a good  $Z^1$ ? Is there a bad  $Z^1$ ?» If both questions are answered in the negative, on account of the fact that there is no sense to the locutions «good  $Z^1$ », «bad  $Z^1$ » then  $Z^1$  is a proper candidate for being the proper Z, or «the Good». If on the other hand «good  $Z^1$ » and «bad  $Z^1$ » do make sense then  $Z^1$  cannot be «the Good», because it does not share with «the Good» one essential property of it, and therefore its identification as «the Good» is false.

This formal criterion is fundamental for the specification of Zs. Notice how it ties with the second criterion for the specification of Ys. As I stipulated there, any proper Y has to be able to stand next to the first «good» in the seeming tautology «The good Y is good». This eliminates all the proper Zs from being Ys and distinguishes the two categories once and for all.

Our brief parting with the hedonists will afford us with the first move towards additional material criteria for the specification of the substantive «good». Clearly «pleasure» cannot be a

Z since the locution «good pleasure» and «bad pleasure» make perfectly good sense. This rules out pleasure. But why are there good pleasures and bad pleasures as opposed to good happinesses and bad happinesses? The reasons I believe are two-fold: 1. Pleasure as opposed to happiness can be seen as a means to an end. 2. Pleasure as opposed to happiness has a clear object outside of itself. These two characteristics unpack the extremely dense notions of *self-sufficiency* which Aristotle uses to characterize happiness. They also show the seat of the «Hedonistic paradox». Finally they form our second criterion for the proper Zs. This criterion is a material one and is useful to eliminate some of the terms that passed the first criterion, like «benevolence», «beneficence», «utility». Benevolence and beneficence for example both have to have objects, and they can be taken as means to ends. Both these concepts make no sense unless they are related to other concepts like happiness and justice, how else could we understand them?

What I have done here, of course, is to specify «the Good» or more precisely to formulate the criteria for the proper specification of «the Good». I have not specified «happiness» or «justice». Nor have I shown that «happiness» and «justice» are the only Zs. But I have provided the criteria for the proper Zs, and thus the weight rests on the contenders, or on the ones who will propose other Zs. If the new Zs pass the criteria then they should be accepted.

The important question however is to specify or define «justice» or «happiness» in such a way so that the definitia do not fail the criteria at hand. We must find a definition of «happiness» and a definition of «justice» which cannot become means either in a social order or in a historical process. This, once again, is the challenge to responsible naturalism.

## ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Η εργασία αυτή ανήκει στον χώρο της μεταηθικής και είναι μια οντο-λογική διερεύνηση της έννοιας του Αγαθού από την σκοπιά της αναλυτικής φιλοσοφίας. Στο πρώτο μέρος εξετάζεται η θέση του G. E. Moore ότι το Αγαθό δεν επιδέχεται ορισμό γιατί αναφέρεται σε μια απλή ποιότητα. Με την ανακατασκευή των τριών βασικών επιχειρημάτων του Moore προκύπτει η θέση ότι το Αγαθό δεν μπορεί να οριστεί όχι γιατί είναι απλή ποιότητα αλλά γιατί είναι σύνθετη. Στο δεύτερο μέρος γίνεται συστηματική διερεύνηση της σύνθετης φύσης του Αγαθού, για να καθοριστούν με σαφή λογικά κριτήρια οι διάφορες έννοιες του Αγαθού και οι μεταξύ τους σχέσεις.

Τομέας Φιλοσοφίας

ΦΙΛΙΠΠΟΣ Β. ΚΑΡΓΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ