ON INTEGRATING FACT AND VALUE

by May Leavenworth

In his article, "The Relation of Fact and Value: A Reassessment,"[1] Abraham Edel has presented the hypothesis that the tradition that sharply separates fact and value, the "is" and the "ought," (thereby making science irrelevant to value inquiry) presupposes the conception of a self outside of, and apart from, the causally determined natural universe. He exemplifies this theory of the self by reference to "the free man in Russell's early essay, 'A Free Man's Worship,' brandishing his fist at matter rolling on its relentless way."

I think that there is indeed a connection between this theory, of an evaluating self separated from the universe described and presupposed by natural science, and the sharp bifurcation of fact and value. My objective in this section of my paper will be to show this connection between what I am calling the "theory of the alienated self" and the fact-value bifurcation, as exemplified by the writings of both intuitionist and prescriptivist nonnaturalists.

In neither the intuitionist nor the prescriptivist tradition do we find an analysis of the act of evaluating as being itself a natural process worthy of scientific, factual scrutiny. There is no discussion of a person's reasons for choosing his values where those reasons express biological, pychological, and sociological facts about himself and his environment as he performs the evaluative act.

Why do we have this shunning of the use of science in ethics? An answer often given is the open-question argument, which shows the permanent possibility of evaluating any set of purely factual premises. We may ask of any such set, "But is that good?" Even if we include in the set of facts the needs, desires, or interests of the person evaluating,

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he may still ask of those psychological facts about himself, "Are they good?" The nonnaturalists conclude from this that one cannot derive values from facts alone. One cannot define "good" in factual terms, for that destroys its evaluative meaning. Therefore, they claim that no amount of scientific study, which can only provide us with facts, can be of use in the determining of values. Value can only be determined in some mysterious, or random way, by the alienated self asking of matter as it rolls on its relentless way, "Is that good?" Values are nonnatural and nonfactual, while the subject matter of the sciences is natural and factual.

In the second section of this paper I shall attack this fact-value bifurcation and the theory of the alienated evaluating self on which that bifurcation is based. That is, I shall reject the idea of an evaluating self cut off from its own physical constitution within the presently existing situation. I shall replace the alienated evaluator with a concept of a self present in the world—the natural self of the biological, psychological, and social sciences. My claim will be that I thereby eliminate the basis for the sharp fact-value bifurcation of the nonnaturalist tradition. It should not be thought that by so doing I am rejecting value or reducing value to fact. On the contrary, value and the act of evaluating will be central in my thesis. But this evaluation will involve an interaction or transaction between existing entities in the world. And the values that emerge from this process will not be fact free. What I am advocating, then, is *not* the elimination of value. Rather, I am denying the possibility of separating fact and value into distinct, watertight categories. Nor will I be trying to derive values from facts alone because such an attempt would presuppose the fact-value bifurcation that I am rejecting.

Is a Naturalistic Ethic Fallacious?

But before continuing with my own theory of evaluation, I want to document, in the theories of prominent nonnaturalists, the claims I have made concerning their presupposition of the theory of the alienated self. I hope thereby to make my own position clearer by contrast.

The nonnaturalist tradition was a reaction against what I shall call limited naturalists. This type of naturalism was exemplified by Herbert Spencer who, according to G. E. Moore, defined "good" to mean "more evolved." The problem with Spencer and other limited naturalists was that their definitions neglected man's function of taking a pro or con attitude toward things and events that affect him. Though they took the naturalist position of recognizing the self as a natural entity within

the universe described and presupposed by natural science, they didn't recognize the natural act of evaluating. They failed to note the fact that man does not accept passively whatever events impinge on him. He reacts to them, sometimes positively, sometimes negatively.

The error of such definitions of "good" was exposed by G. E. Moore's open-question argument, already mentioned. One can always ask of any definition of "good," *which neglects man's evaluative function,* "Is that good?" We may ask of Spencer's definition, "Is it good to be more evolved?" Being more evolved is not necessarily to the advantage of a species. If the species is capable of evaluating, its members may take a pro or con attitude toward the more evolved characteristics of things. Moore's conclusion as to the implications of the open-question argument was that good, though a property of objects, is not to be confused with any of their natural properties, such as being more evolved. It is a nonnatural property which exists in addition to the natural properties, and which can only be intuited by the evaluator.

This analysis rescues the evaluative function from the limited naturalists, but at the expense of introducing mysterious, nonnatural properties into things. It also makes the evaluative function a nonnatural process. Value is not the result of a natural interaction between a man as a natural entity and his environment. Instead, Moore cuts value off from the evaluating subject and makes it the exclusive property of the object or objects evaluated. The evaluator considers the object in isolation in order to discover by intuition its nonnatural property of intrinsic value or goodness. The evaluator may, for example, imagine the existence of a very beautiful world and conclude that such a world would have intrinsic value even if it could never be contemplated by conscious beings. True, Moore says that an organic whole that included conscious beings in that beautiful world would be better, but this does not change the fact that Moore assumes that a value such as beauty could exist in isolation from any evaluator. But this could not, even theoretically, be the case if values were the result of an interaction between the evaluator and natural objects, as I believe is the case. I can conceive of objects existing apart from the observer (I am no idealist), but I believe the existence of a value such as beauty requires an evaluator to interact with the object. Moore's analysis of beauty discounts any such interaction. For him, beauty could never be in the eyes of the beholder. On the contrary, beauty has nothing to do with the beholder; it belongs to the object. The beholder only discovers the preexistent value.

The fundamental objective of ethics is then, according to Moore, to

discover the intrinsic values of things. And this can be accomplished, theoretically, by isolating the objects to be evaluated and intuiting their goodness. Once this fundamental ethical task is accomplished, science can tell us the means for maximizing the good we have discovered.

But what can be the nature of the self that performs the function of intuiting nonnatural properties? The assumption must be that of the alienated self that performs this nonnatural intuitive function. No psychological analysis of that self and its evaluating act can be given. The natural self studied by psychology—with needs, desires, interests, and so forth—cannot be the self that evaluates, for good is an objective property independent of such psychological characteristics of the evaluator. Moore's evaluator stands apart from the physically constituted organism and from particular situations. It merely intuits universal goodness. No reason can be given for a thing being good, just as no reason can be given for a thing being yellow. In both cases there is only an intuition of a simple property existing independently of the observer. By making good a nonnatural property to be discovered by intuition, Moore has rescued the human evaluating process; but in so doing he has given up the naturalist position of making the self, which evaluates, a natural entity within the universe described and presupposed by natural science. His separation of natural and nonnatural properties has also preserved the sharp bifurcation of fact and value that always accompanies the theory of the alienated evaluating self: Factual statements describe the natural properties of things, while intrinsic-value statements describe their nonnatural properties.

Another step in the trend I am describing was taken by R. M. Hare when he recognized Moore's error in making good a property of things. He pointed out that "good" is not a property term, but a word used to perform the verbal act of commending. Yet Hare, like Moore, rejected naturalism. Whereas Moore concentrated his attention upon the object being evaluated, Hare concentrates on the logic of the verbal act of commending. In both cases, a psychological and sociological account of the evaluator and his relationship to the situation is avoided. Therefore, both of them fail to see evaluation as an interaction between the natural biological, psychological, and sociological self and its environment. Instead, we have the enigmatic, alienated self taking a random pro or con attitude toward the objects in his environment and the effects of his actions. The evaluator commits himself to a course of action, a principle; but what reasons can he give for his commitment to this principle rather than some other? In Hare's discussion of

the moral choice as a decision of principle, he gives no reasons in terms of the biological, psychological, or sociological constitution of man for acting on one principle rather than another. Either the evaluator can give no reason at all for his choices or, if he does give a reason, that reason says little or nothing about himself. Hare writes:

> But suppose that we were to ask such a man "why did you choose this set of effects rather than that? Which of the many effects were they that led you to decide the way you did?" His answer to this question might be of two kinds. He might say "I can't give any reasons; I just felt like deciding that way; another time, faced with the same choice, I might decide differently." On the other hand, he might say "it was this and this that made me decide; I was deliberately avoiding such and such effects and seeking such and such." If he gave the first of these two answers, we might in a certain sense of that word call his decision arbitrary (though even in that case he had *some* reason for his choice, namely that he felt that way); but if he gave the second, we should not.[2]

Hare never returns to a fuller analysis of the first type of reason that he has given. There is only this parenthetical acknowledgment that to say one chose because one felt that way is to give some reason for the choice. Had Hare pursued this line of thought he would have been forced into a consideration of the state of the evaluator as an important factor in the determination of value. For to feel like choosing one way rather than another in this particular situation is to recognize, though perhaps vaguely, that there is something lacking in the present situation, and that this lack creates a desire to alter the situation. This realization would have led to the recognition of a two-way interaction between the evaluator, with needs and desires, and his environment, and hence to the acceptance of the self as described and presupposed by natural science. It would have led to a rejection of Hare's nonnaturalism. But Hare gives no further attention to the state of the evaluator.

He goes on to discuss the second type of reason a person might give for choosing a certain set of effects. This is the type of reason in which a person says "I was deliberately avoiding such and such effects and seeking such and such." Hare gives this analysis of such a reason:

> Let us see what is involved in the second type of answer. Although we have assumed that the man has no formed principles, he shows, if he gives the second answer, that he has started to form principles for himself; for to choose effects *because* they are such and such is to begin to act on a principle that such and such effects are to be chosen.[3]

In this analysis of reasons there is a strained avoidance of the fact that the most common answer given to the question, "Why did you

choose this set of effects rather than that?" would be something like, "Because I had a desire for, or an interest in, the effects I chose," or "I thought they would satisfy the requirements of the situation" (where the requirements of the situation would include biological, psychological, and sociological needs of human beings). It is these original and basic reasons for choosing which tell us about the properties of the evaluator. And it is this type of reason that Hare ignores. According to Hare, when we commend a thing or an action, the only reason we can give for doing so is that it conforms to a standard or principle that certain effects are to be chosen (or we are beginning to form such a principle). The principle is itself a reason for our commendation. But on Hare's analysis we can give no reasons in terms of human needs or interests and the requirements of situations to justify commitment to these particular standards and principles in the first place. The evaluator is a blank slate that doesn't really know why it formulates and adheres to one principle rather than another.

In contrast to Hare's analysis of principles, in the next section I shall present the hypothesis that principles are empirical generalizations that have resulted from many instances of evaluating in conflict situations and observing the effectiveness of actions chosen in fulfilling human needs, interests, or desires. The reason for choosing our principles of action will be that actions in accordance with the principles generally satisfy the human requirements of the situations in which they are applicable.

But such an analysis will not work as long as the theory of the alienated self and the sharp bifurcation of fact and value is retained. For the claim will always be made that to give reasons for principles in terms of the human requirements of the situation is to commit the naturalistic fallacy of trying to derive value judgments from statements of fact. Hare's refutation of naturalism follows these lines.

The argument that Hare gives attacks the type of naturalist who "claims he can deduce a moral or other evaluative judgment from a set of purely factual or descriptive premisses, relying on some definition to the effect that V (a value-word) means the same as C (a conjunction of descriptive predicates)."[4] Hare then points out that this definition in descriptive terms eliminates the possibility of commending anything for being C. It destroys the evaluative function of the value word.

I would agree that this is, in fact, a good refutation of someone who "claims he can deduce a moral or other evaluative judgement from a set of purely factual or descriptive premisses." For if anyone makes such a claim he is assuming the same sharp fact-value bifurcation as-

sumed by the nonnaturalists he hopes to refute. He is assuming the theory of the alienated evaluating self, and if one starts with the premises of the nonnaturalists he cannot avoid reaching their conclusions.

Hare first saddles the naturalist with his own presuppositions and then proceeds to annihilate naturalism in ethics so conceived. But in fact all he has shown is the impossibility of getting a naturalist ethics out of nonnaturalist presuppositions. His refutation is final with respect to such limited naturalists as Spencer, who ignored man's evaluative function. And it is final with respect to anyone who makes the sharp bifurcation of fact and value. However, Hare's refutation does not touch a naturalism—such as the one I shall now discuss—which makes man's evaluative function central but gives a naturalist account of it, rejecting the sharp bifurcation of fact and value and its correlate, the theory of the alienated self.

Values Generated by an Evaluating Animal?

The theory I shall now outline assumes that evaluation is carried out by human beings as described by biology, psychology, and other social sciences. Contrary to Moore, it may be a fact that beauty is in the eyes of the beholder. The act of evaluating is limited by the physical constitution of the evaluator, where the elements of this constitution are discoverable by the natural and social sciences. I use the term "physical" here to include psychological and sociological, as well as biological elements. Nor do I want to exclude by the term such elements of the evaluator's constitution as "consciousness," although of course I would exclude any purely introspective analysis of that phenomenon divorced from behavior.

The next element in this theory of evaluation is the situation in which the evaluator finds himself. Evaluation is a process of dynamic interaction between the evaluator and this situation, where the evaluator tries to meet the requirements of the situation. And the constitution of the evaluator—his needs, desires, and interests—plays an important role in setting up those requirements. Those actions and objects that meet the requirements of the situation have value.

This theory is of course a generic theory of value. It does not attempt to say what things are superlatively valuable, although it does suggest ways in which our value judgments may be improved, as I shall discuss presently. For the moment I am interested in presenting the generic theory which attempts to bring out the basic elements in the act of evaluating itself. In this respect it is similar to R. B. Perry's theory of

"value as any object of any interest." It differs from Perry in putting greater emphasis upon the total situation in which values arise, so that interests are not cut off from one another but rather form parts in an integrated whole. Hence it is closer to John Dewey's position in his *Theory of Valuation.*

My way of dealing with the problem of means and ends is also similar to Dewey's. This problem is a variation on the fact-value dichotomy theme. It arises from consideration of goal directedness in human action. The separatist, such as Moore, claims that means are the instruments for achieving ends where the ends (values) must be determined independently from the means and that science can tell us the facts about means but not ends. Dewey's way of dealing with this means-ends problem is to deny that ends can be determined apart from means and from presently existing situations, including the interests of the evaluator. Ends as values are to be construed as ends-in-view which guide our actions, where such consciously held goals are the results of appraising the requirements of the situation, including the requirements of the human constitution.

The importance of this analysis for the question of the relation of empirical science to value inquiry is that the sciences can give us the information we need in determining the action that will best fill the requirements of the situation. That is, it can aid us in determining ends (where I mean by this "ends-in-view which guide actions") and not merely means, as the separatist claims. The means-ends dichotomy is thus broken down, and so also is the barrier to the use of science in determining value. Psychology can supplement our own immediate knowledge of our constitutional needs as well as of the possibilities for future character development, growth of interests, and so forth; the various social sciences can tell us about the interlocking network of institutions in our society as well as in other societies and their effects upon human conduct; and all the sciences can tell us about any other empirical requirements of the present situation. The more such information the individual has the better will be his choice of the best action to meet the requirements of the situation. Value judgments will be improved by the careful use of science in ethics.

It should be clear by now that my association of value with that which meets the requirements of the situation is not to be construed as some kind of supreme principle of morality sufficient in itself to tell us what to do in any situation. It is a generic theory of value, requiring the careful use of science for the improvement of values. And if the objection is raised that many very immoral acts have been per-

formed as attempts to meet the requirements of situations, such as Nazis burning the bodies of Jews, the answer should by now be clear. It is just such faulty, narrow assessments of the requirements of situations that a theory such as the one I am proposing is designed to prevent. Any consideration of the claims made by Nazis to justify their actions will show that they did not make careful use of empirical science in ethics to improve their value judgments. The unempirical claim of the superiority of the aryan race is just one obvious example of such a failure. So I am not reducing ethics to a relativism that says any assessment of the requirements of the situation is equally acceptable. Quite the contrary, I am saying that we must use all of the empirical knowledge available to improve our value judgments. The generic theory is that the act of evaluating is always an assessment of the requirements of the situation and an attempt to meet the requirements. But some such assessments are better than others where the criteria for better and worse may be the results of empirical science, including the sciences that investigate the constitution of evaluators and the possibilities for change in that constitution through the development of more inclusive interests.

This brings me to the question of standards and principles. They do have a place in the theory I am presenting, for the particular judgments of value that I have been discussing may be generalized to form principles and standards of individuals and of society. Just as particular judgments of value are judgments of what meets the requirements of situations where the evaluator is a part of the situation and where the empirical sciences are used to determine those requirements, so also principles will be judgments of what generally meets the requirements of situations of a certain type.

The institutionalized principles and standards of a society provide implicit or explicit major premises from which particular judgments of value may be derived. That is, if we accept the institutions and the time-tested values embodied in them, these institutionalized principles are the basis for normative judgments. Yet they are also verifiable facts. Hence, particular value judgments may be derived from empirically verifiable facts. Yet these facts are not, of course, value free. I am not saying that we can derive values from pure facts. I am saying that some facts incorporate values. Facts about human institutions are integrated with values in this way. John R. Searle discusses this way of attacking the fact-value problem in his article "How to Derive 'Ought' from 'Is.' "[5]

Institutionalized values will, of course, always be subject to reevalu-

ation. We may always ask of them, "Are they good?" Moore's open-question argument serves only to point out the permanent possibility of evaluating. It is, however, in this reevaluation process that my naturalist thesis differs from Hare and other antinaturalists. On my thesis, evaluation is not the act of an evaluator alienated from its physical constitution. Hence, on my theses, reasons for changes in standards can be given in terms of that constitution of the evaluator within a particular worldly situation.

It should be noted that I do not commit the naturalistic fallacy of saying "good" means some set of characteristics within the situation being evaluated. "Good," as Hare says, is a term used to commend. My deviation from Hare lies in giving a naturalistic analysis of commending and choosing, where such evaluative functions involve an evaluator within a situation trying to meet the requirements of the situation.

Conclusion

I have presented the view that an evaluative act is always an act of assessing the requirements of a worldly situation of which the physically described evaluator forms an integral part. That may be taken as a naturalist definition of what it is to be an "evaluative act." Instead of defining "good" I have given the naturalist's presupposition of the universal characteristics of any act of evaluating. Although acts of evaluating will differ in content they will always have this universal form.

And if the antinaturalist, trying to impale my new naturalist definition on the open-question argument, asks something like, "But is it good or right to assess the requirements of situations?" he is asking me to make a value judgment about making value judgments. And this metaevaluative act must either be the act of an alienated evaluating self questioning my naturalist account of what it is to be an evaluative act, or it is a second-order naturalist evaluation of the practice of evaluating. If we take the latter interpretation, the antinaturalist would simply be asking whether we should ever evaluate at all! The question makes sense grammatically, but when interpreted is reduced to absurdity.

Of a naturalist definition such as " 'Good' means evolved," it makes sense for Moore to ask, "But is it good to be more evolved?" This is because such definitions of "good" give particular evaluative content, and Moore's open question shows that we may, as I have argued, always reevaluate evaluative content. A central point in the naturalist thesis is that we may always reevaluate any given assessment of the requirements of a situation, including methods, standards, and factual infor-

mation used, in order to find a better assessment. In so doing, we are evaluating the content of a particular evaluative act. It makes sense to ask of evaluative content, "Is that good?" Such a question simply leads us on to better and better evaluations in a possibly infinite sequence. But to try to use the open-question argument against a naturalist account of evaluating itself (instead of a naturalist account of the meaning of the word "good") leads either to the reduction to absurdity in the foregoing paragraph or to the theory of the alienated self, depending upon one's interpretation of the metaevaluative question.

And, if our antinaturalist wants to cling to the theory of the alienated evaluator and hence to values unrelated to the facts of man's physical existence in the world, my thesis does not give arguments to dissuade him from doing so. I am content if I have succeeded in paving the way for those of us who do want to get back to doing ethics related to physically constituted human beings. I believe we may do so, without being harassed by claims of having committed the naturalistic fallacy, if we reject the theory of the alienated evaluating self.

NOTES

1. Abraham Edel, "The Relation of Fact and Value: A Reassessment," in *Experience, Existence and the Good,* ed. I. C. Lieb (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1961), pp. 215–29.
2. R. M. Hare, *Language of Morals* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1952 [Galaxy Books, 1964]), pp. 58–59.
3. Ibid., p. 59.
4. Ibid., p. 92.
5. John R. Searle, "How to Derive 'Ought' from 'Is,'" *Philosophical Review* 73 (1964): 43–58.