Viennese Lessons: Wittgenstein, Carnap, and Schlick

The logical empiricism of the Vienna Circle was the second great step in the development of analytic philosophy, following the turn to logic and mathematics imitated by Frege and Russell, and the practice of analysis illustrated by Moore. Although Wittgenstein was not a member of the Circle, he influenced those who were. Having moved beyond the conception of philosophy shared by his predecessors, Wittgenstein took philosophy's task to be that of finding the essence of representational thought and language, which, he believed, required discovering the scope and limits of intelligibility. This is what he meant when he said, in the notebooks he kept while writing the *Tractatus*, that his whole task was to solve *the one great problem of philosophy*, to wit, explaining the nature of the proposition.¹ He realized, of course, that this was paradoxical. Believing that philosophy's only real problem was to answer the question "*What are the limits of intelligibility*?", he also believed that the answer couldn't be stated by any proposition. Worse, he thought that propositions traditionally regarded to be philosophical simply don't exist. Hence, if philosophy was to continue, it had to be radically reconceived.

In this, Wittgenstein was (for a time) at one with Schlick and Carnap, despite their other differences. Today, I, along with many others, think their shared big idea about the limits of intelligibility and the nature of philosophy was fundamentally mistaken. But they weren't wrong root and branch. On the contrary, there are aspects of their work of nearly a century ago from we still have much to learn. I will illustrate with Wittgenstein on propositions, Carnap on modality, and Schlick on scientific ethics.

¹ Wittgenstein 1914–1916, p. 39

Wittgenstein

I begin with the *Tractatus*. Like Frege and early Russell, Wittgenstein took sentences to be the primary meaning-bearing units, but unlike them he didn't take meanings to be propositions. Rather, he denied that any entities were sentence-meanings. Although propositions were bearers of truth, Wittgenstein took them to be something like uses of meaningful sentences, rather than imaginary sentence meanings. For him, sentences were *linguistic facts* consisting of expressions standing in syntactic relations. For them to be meaningful is for them to be governed by conventions. For example, the sentence 'John loves Mary' consists in the two names standing in a certain syntactic relation R – which involves, among other things, the first name being followed by the phrase 'loves' which is followed by the second name. The sentence is the fact that the names stand in that relation. The conventions governing it stipulate (i) that the names are used to designate John and Mary, respectively, and (ii) that structures in which two names stand in R are used to represent the referent of the first name as loving the referent of the second. One who uses the sentence in this way represents John as loving Mary. This tells us what the world must be like if one's use of the sentence is to be true.

It is tempting to think that the bearer of truth is the sentence -- i.e. the syntactic structure -- in which the two names stand in R. After all, the sentence *is* governed by the conventions I gave. But it didn't have to be. Had it been governed by other conventions, it would have meant something different, and had different truth conditions. So there is something, the sentence, that *is* used to represent John as loving Mary, but *could have been used* differently, and had different truth conditions. However, there is also something that has those truth conditions essentially. Necessarily the *proposition John loves Mary* is true

iff John loves Mary. This wouldn't be so, if propositions were sentences. Wittgenstein agrees; they aren't.

Perhaps propositions somehow incorporate both sentences and conventions governing them. Perhaps the proposition that John loves Mary is *a use* of the sentence in accord with the conventions I stated. *What, then, is this thing–a use of a sentence S in accord with conventions?* Since to use an atomic sentence S is to do something, *a use of S* is a cognitive doing, an act or operation of some sort. It is the act of using the two names to designate the two people, while using the relation R to represent the referent of the first name as loving the referent of the second. This *repeatable act type* represents John as loving Mary, because *for any agent to perform it is for the agent to represent them that way.* So, elementary propositions are representational act or operation types. For them to be true is for them to represent things as they really are. Since they are *repeatable*, they are a kind of abstract object, distinguished from concrete events in which they are performed.

This reconstruction fits several tractarian themes. (i) It explains the meaningfulness of a sentence without positing an independent entity as its meaning. (ii) It identifies the truthbearer, *a meaningful use*, as something the truth of which is defined in terms of its representational accuracy. (iii) It preserves the idea that the constituents of the sentence are isomorphic to the constituents of the atomic fact that makes a use of it true. (iv) Since conventions governing use are those governing the sentence's constituents, no extra convention governing the sentence as a whole is needed. (v) The proposition has its truth conditions essentially because any *possible* agent using the sentence in this way represents the same thing as being the same way. This is encouraging, but it isn't exactly what Wittgenstein had in mind. Uses of sentences do represent, or, *picture*, reality. But Wittgenstein's pictures are supposed to be *facts*, not *acts*. Still, this doesn't mean that sentences, which *are* tractarian facts, are the primary bearers of truth after all. Wittgenstein distinguishes propositions from sentences, which he calls *propositional signs*.

- 3.11 We use the perceptible sign of a proposition (spoken or written, etc.) as a projection of a possible situation. (The method of projection is the thinking of the sense of the proposition.)
- 3.12 The sign through which we express the thought I call the propositional sign. And the proposition is the propositional sign in its projective relation to the world.
- 3.13 A proposition includes all that the projection includes, but not what is projected. Therefore, though what is projected is not itself included, its possibility is. A proposition, therefore, does not actually contain its sense, but does contain the possibility of expressing it.
- 3.14 The propositional sign consists in the fact that its elements, the words, are combined in it in a definite way. The propositional sign is a fact.

Propositional signs are syntactic structures which, though meaningful, aren't individuated by what they mean. A proposition combines the sign with a projection. Recall, "The method of projection is the thinking of the sense of the proposition." A proposition *represents* objects, which are projections of the names in the propositional sign. The proposition represents these objects as standing in the relation projected from the linguistic relation that unites the names in the propositional sign. Wittgenstein says, the proposition "*includes all that the projection includes, but not what is projected.*" *What is projected*, is the sense of the proposition--the possible fact, whose actuality would make the proposition true. It isn't "included" in the proposition because *there are no merely possible facts* in the tractarian ontology for real, existing false propositions to include. Nor

² Italicized quotations are from the Pears and McGuinness translation; others are from the Ogden translation.

are the objects and relations projected from constituents of the propositional sign *included* in the proposition. But, Wittgenstein tells us, the rest of the projection, namely, the conventions governing uses of the constituents of the sentence, are somehow included in the proposition. They determine the fact that would have to exist if the proposition were true.

How are conventions included in the proposition? Wittgenstein isn't clear. Having identified the propositional sign as a purely syntactic structure, he says the proposition is *the propositional sign in its projective relation to the world*. Unfortunately, this language, *the sentence S in its relation to the world*, doesn't pick out an entity other than S -- any more than the phrases *Soames-in-his-relation-to-USC*, *Soames-in-his-relation-to-his-wife*, or *Soames-in-his-relation-to-Vienna* pick out entities other than me of which I am an essential part. There aren't several me's, or me-complexes, here, just misleading ways of talking about the fact that I teach at USC, live with my wife, and lecture in Vienna. The same is true of Wittgenstein's talk of propositional signs *in their projective relations to the world*. Fortunately, we can remedy this. Propositions are *uses of sentences in accord with their conventions*. Although this view departs from the tractarian doctrine that propositions are facts, not acts, the modification preserves important tractarian themes while avoiding well-known tractarian and contemporary puzzles about propositions.

In taking this step, we remain true to the tractarian idea that although propositions aren't sentences, talk of propositions is talk about sentences. But this too must be modified. It is essential to thought that agents represent things as being certain ways. It's not essential what, if any, artifacts they use in doing so. Any organism whose cognitions can be true or

³ See Soames (2015), (2016), (2018, chapter 2).

false represents things as being various ways. Sometimes it may do so by using symbols. But we needn't think that agents *always* use symbols when *thinking of* something as being some way. When they perform representational cognitive acts linguistically, the propositions they affirm may be uses of symbols. When they non-linguistically represent things as being various ways, the propositions they affirm don't involve symbols. Thus we needn't accept 4.0312 of the *Tractatus*, "*The possibility of propositions is based upon the principle of the representation of objects by signs*."

The tractarian account of *elementary* propositions is an incomplete realization of three valuable insights. (i) Declarative sentences are representational, not because they express primitively representational Fregean or Russellian propositions, or because they name possible facts, but because of how they are used. (ii) They are bearers of truth because they are used to represent things as bearing properties. (iii) A use of an atomic sentence is true at a world-state w iff were w actual things would be as anyone who *used the sentence in that way* would represents them.

This approach allows different propositions to be true at all the same world-states. Thus we may ask, *What use of which sentence is identical with the proposition that John loves Mary*? There is no more reason to take it to be a use of a sentence of one language than there is to take it to be a use of a sentence of another. The proposition we are after is something all *representationally identical* uses of candidate sentences have in common. Now, consider the act type of using *some sentence or other* to represent John as loving Mary. Anyone who uses a *particular* sentence *S* in this way, thereby performs a representational act type one can perform without using S. If acts of using particular sentences are propositions, then, it seems, this general act type should also be. What about the act of predicating *loving* of John and Mary, cognizing the two *by any means at all*. It's the best candidate for being the proposition that John loves Mary. If it's *not* possible to perform this representational act *without using a sentence*, then the proposition is the act of using some *sentence or other* to represent John as bearing that relation to Mary. If, as I believe, it *is* possible to perform the general act without using a sentence, then it alone is the proposition we seek. However, even that is too simple. There really isn't just one proposition with the content *that John loves Mary*; there are many. Thus, we should reject the assumption that sentential clauses, *that S*, are fine-grained enough to pick out unique propositions. This, I contend, greatly expands the solution space for Frege's puzzle, Kripke's puzzle about belief, and many others.⁴

If we identify propositions as representational cognitive acts, we must individuate propositions in the way we individuate other act types. Consider *driving to work* and *traveling to work*. Anyone who performs the first act performs the second as well. But since there are many ways of getting to work, one can perform the second without performing the first. So, the acts are different. *When we apply this lesson to propositions, we generate representationally identical propositions that are cognitively distinct, because they place different demands on agents who entertain them*. These propositions are not merely true at the same world-states. They are representationally identical; they represent the same things as being the same way. Still, they are cognitively distinct, agents can often bear a propositional attitude to one without bearing it to the other. All of this follows if we take propositions to be cognitive acts including, but not restricted to, *uses of sentences* in accord with conventions.

⁴ See chapters 3, 4, and 5 of Soames (2015).

This modification and reconstruction of the tractarian account of elementary propositions can be extended to non-atomic propositions, while avoiding the problems caused by the very different tractarian analysis of non-atomic propositions. We also avoid the tractarian conclusion that necessarily equivalent propositions are identical, which obscured the breakthrough that its conception of atomic propositions might otherwise have been. True, Wittgenstein himself wouldn't have seen things this way. Without his identification of propositions with their modal truth conditions, the *Tractatus* couldn't have been the tool for transforming philosophy's self-conception in the way he wanted. But had he properly generalized his account of atomic propositions to all propositions, our philosophy of mind, language, and psychology would have been better off.

Carnap

Having extracted philosophical gold by reconstructing tractarian propositions, I will now combine them with Carnap's account of modality in *Meaning and Necessity*.⁵ The best current accounts of possible-world states identify them, not with concrete universes disconnected from ours, but with *properties the world can coherently be conceived to have*. These include both metaphysically possible world-states and those that are only epistemically possible. The actual world-state is a property the universe does instantiate. Metaphysically possible states are those that could have been instantiated. *Epistemically possible states are properties we can coherently conceive to be instantiated, which we can't know apriori not to be instantiated.*⁶

⁹ Rudolf Carnap, *Meaning and Necessity*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press), 1947.

⁶ Soames (2005 chapter 8), (2010 chapter 6), (2011).

For insight into these properties, I start with Carnap's notion of *a state description*, which is a complete, consistent, set of atomic sentences or their negations. Truth values of complex sentences at state descriptions are determined using familiar accounts of quantifiers, truth functions, and modal operators. To update this, I replace Carnap's atomic sentences and their negations with *propositions* that are *uses* of atomic formulas, and their negations, in accord with conventions governing them -- including allowing variables to be used to name any object. Complete, consistent sets of such propositions are used to define world-states. Let D be a domain of objects under consideration. Let B be the set of properties expressed by simple predicates of a Carnapian language, including an existence predicate. A world-description S_{w} is a set each member of which is either an *atomic* proposition that predicates a property in B of objects in D or the negation such. S_{w} is complete iff for each atomic proposition, either it or its negation is a member of S_{w} . It is consistent iff its members can't be known apriori not to be jointly true. A world-state w is the property of making the propositions in the state-description S_w true. To conceive of w as being instantiated is to conceive of every member of S_w as true, while taking the objects in the universe to include only those in D. Other propositions are true at w iff they are apriori consequences of the claim that w, so conceived, is instantiated.

A structure of world-states is a set of epistemically possible states; the one that is instantiated is *actual*. A state is epistemically possible iff it can't be known apriori not to be actual Those that could have been instantiated are *metaphysically possible*. [Possibly S] is true at w iff S is true at some state *metaphysically possible* from w. World-states metaphysically possible from one state may differ from those possible from another. The truth values, at w, of modal propositions are determined by w's position in the space of states. The actuality

operator picks out the world-state @ of any context at which it is used. If S expresses proposition p in context C, a use of [Actually S] in C expresses the proposition *that p is true at* @. Its truth value at any world-state is its truth value of p at @.

To sum up, a world-state is a property that determines a complete story of what the universe would be like if w were instantiated. Since it's not part of that story to specify what the universe would be like if other world-states were instantiated, the propositions in terms of which w is defined don't contain explicit information about other states. Nevertheless, for any state w* and proposition p, we can evaluate the truth value of the proposition *that p is true at w** at any world-state. We need only remember that a proposition can be true at a world-state without being one of the propositions that define it.

The space of states is relativized to *contextually varying inquiries*. Those relative to an inquiry are all possibilities relevant to it. For each inquiry, there may be another inquiry requiring more fine-grained states, in which case, no state may be a maximally informative story about the universe that answers every conceivable question, and evaluates every conceivable proposition. Rather, world-states are *treated as maximal* for particular purposes. This doesn't mean they are unreal. The properties are real. It is the use to which we put them that is relative to us.

Next consider instances of the Kripkean necessary aposteriori that predicate essential properties of objects they can be known to possess only empirically. The function of the needed evidence is to rule out epistemically possible, but metaphysically, impossible states at which the propositions are false. With this in mind, let S express a contingent truth p and $\lceil Actually S \rceil$ expresses the proposition *that p is true at* @. Since it is true at every world-

state, including those that are only epistemically possible, empirical evidence is never needed to establish it. Thus, it's not necessary aposteriori, despite the fact that $\lceil \text{Actually S} \rceil$ is trivially inferable from S, and may not be known by us in any other way. How can this be?

The mystery can be dispelled by imagining a tiny universe consisting of two blocks side by side, with a third on top. This world-state, *Tiny*, is *the property of containing blocks* 1 and 2 side by side, with block 3 on top. Since we can easily comprehend this property, we can know, just by thinking about it, that if it were instantiated, block 3 would be on blocks 1 and 2. So, if p is the proposition that one of them is sitting on the other two, it is knowable apriori that p is true at Tiny. The point generalizes. If the world-states relevant to an inquiry are finitely specifiable, then, for every such state w, and every proposition p the truth of which is calculable from the propositions in the state description S_w defining w, the proposition *that p is true at w* is knowable apriori. This applies to the actual worldstate (relative to an inquiry), as much as any other. Thus, the proposition expressed by a use of [Actually S] is typically *knowable* apriori, even if it's not *known* apriori. Since the actual state @, relative to an inquiry may be complex, we may not know the world-story in terms of which @ is defined, and even if we did might not have calculated all its relevant consequences. In such cases, our only practical way of learning that p is true at @ is by inferring it from p. So, when p is aposteriori, the knowledge we express by saying [Actually S] is typically aposteriori, even though *what we know* can, in principle, also be known apriori.

So far, so good. Now a puzzle. The empirical evidence required to know Kripkean necessary aposteriori truths is needed rule out metaphysically impossible, but epistemically

possible, world-states at which they are false. This may seem to suggest that *if p is false at an epistemically possible state then p isn't apriori*. Thus, it may seem, that apriori truths are true at all such states. But that conclusion threatens the *contingent apriori*. How can p be false at a metaphysically possible state (which contingency requires), while being true at all epistemically possible states? Surely no *metaphysically possible* state is *epistemically impossible*. Since a metaphysically possible state is a property the universe could have had, it shouldn't be incoherent to suppose the universe does have it, in which case metaphysically possible states *are* epistemically possible. Thus we must either give up the contingent apriori, or explain why apriority doesn't require truth at all epistemologically possible states.

We can't give up the contingent apriori. Suppose agent X at @, knows apriori *that S iff S*. From this X can reason, without evidence, (i) that *it is true at this very world-state that S iff S* (said demonstrating @), (ii) that (*it is true at this very world-state that S*) *iff (it is true at this very world-state that S*), and (iii) that *S iff it is true at this very world-state that S*, which X knows apriori. Since this *is* the *contingent* proposition *that S iff actually S*, it is knowable apriori.

To solve our puzzle we must explain how it *can be known apriori to be true*, despite being *false at some world-states we can't know apriori not to be actual*. Surely, it seems, if it's knowable apriori (i) *that p is true* and (ii) *that if w were actual, p would be false*, then it must be knowable apriori *that w isn't actual* (in which case w isn't epistemically possible). After all, apriority is closed under apriori consequence, isn't it? No, in fact, it isn't. Why not?

Let world-state w be the property of making propositions $q_1...q_{100}$ true (where these are expressed by $S_1...S_{100}$). Let 'w' name w and let 'PW' be the property name [the property making it true that $S_1,...,$ that S_{100}], which also names w. Finally, let p be some further proposition. For it to be true at w (i.e. at PW) is for p to be an apriori consequence of the claim *that PW is instantiated*.

Now consider (1a,b).

1a. Proposition p is true at PW – i.e. at the property *making it true that* $S_{1,...,}$ *that* S_{100} . 1b. Proposition p is true at w.

The relationship between these propositions is like that between propositions (2a,b), where 'logicism' is a proper name of the proposition that arithmetic is reducible to logic.

2a. Russell attempted to establish *that arithmetic is reducible to logic*.

b. Russell attempted to establish logicism.

In both cases, the (a) and (b) propositions predicate the same property of the same things; the (a) proposition differs from the (b) proposition only in what it takes to entertain it.

To entertain proposition (2a) is to predicate *attempting to establish* of the pair Russell and the proposition *that arithmetic is reducible to logic*, identifying that proposition by entertaining it. By contrast, to entertain proposition (2b) merely requires predicating *attempting to establish* of Russell and the proposition that arithmetic is reducible to logic, *without placing any special constraints on how one identifies it*. It follows that anyone who entertains or believes proposition (2a) thereby entertains or believes proposition (2b), but not conversely.

Similar comments apply to (1a) and (1b). To entertain proposition (1a) is to predicate *being true at* of the pair p and world-state w, cognizing w, i.e. *being such that* S_i , *that* $S_2,...,that S_{100}$, by entertaining its propositional constituents. By contrast, to entertain

proposition (1b) requires predicating *being true at* of p and world-state w, without constraining how one cognizes w. If follows that anyone who entertains, believes, or knows proposition (1a) entertains, believes or knows proposition (1b), but not conversely. So, when p is a contingent aposteriori truth which is an apriori consequence of the claim *that PW is instantiated*, proposition (1a) is knowable apriori. Since knowing it without empirical evidence *guarantees* knowing proposition (1b) without evidence, (1b) is also *knowable apriori*, even if the only knowledge we actually have of it is aposteriori.

What makes this possible is that sentences (1a) and (1b) express cognitively different but representationally identical propositions; knowledge of the first guarantees knowledge of the second. Although there are ways of entertaining proposition (1b) that don't allow you to recognize its truth without appealing to empirical evidence, there are other ways of entertaining it -- namely by entertaining proposition (1a) -- that do allow you to establish it apriori. For a proposition to be apriori, there must be some way of entertaining that allows one to recognize its truth apriori; this is so even if there are other ways of entertaining it that don't allow this.

Next, consider a use of sentence (3), which predicates *being true at* of p and the actual world-state @.

3. Actually P / The proposition that P is true at this very world-state.

This use (3) involves cognizing the actual world-state @ as *this very world-state* (the one we experience). When @ is identified in this way, we can know proposition (4) apriori, even if the proposition p, expressed by sentence P, is knowable only aposteriori.⁷

⁷ In this sentence, and in examples (3) and (4). 'P' is used as a schematic letter for a sentence that expresses proposition p.

4. Actually P iff P / the proposition *that P* is true at this very world-state iff P Thus, propositions (3) and (4) are both knowable apriori. Nevertheless, proposition p - i.e. *that P* -- isn't, apriori. Since it *is* an apriori consequence of propositions (3) and (4), *apriority isn't closed under apriori consequence*.

To see why, let *that P* be the contingent truth *that SS is a philosopher*. The proposition that *actually SS is a philosopher* is then true at all metaphysically possible world-states. It is knowable apriori, because it is an apriori consequence of the claim *that PW is instantiated*, and hence of the claim *that @ is instantiated*. The biconditional *that SS is a philosopher is true at @ iff SS is a philosopher* is false at some metaphysically possible states. Still, we can know it apriori, *because there is a way of cognizing it*, using the sentence "*Actually SS is a philosopher iff SS is a philosopher iff SS is a philosopher*" such that when we cognize it that way, we don't need evidence for its truth.

The key point is that the cognitions of @ required to come to know (5a) and (5b) apriori are radically different and *can't be recognized apriori* as cognitions of *the same world-state*.

5a. The proposition that SS is a philosopher is true at @.

b. The proposition that SS is a philosopher is true at @ iff SS is a philosopher When we are thinking about @ in a way that allows us to come to know (5a) apriori, we can't thereby see that (5b) is apriori, and when we are thinking @ in way that allows us to know (5b) apriori, we can't thereby see that (5a) is apriori.

This doesn't prevent us from knowing the conjunction of (5a,b) apriori. We can, after all, safely accept the conjunction of *sentences* (6a) and (6b), in which 'PW' is the articulated name of the property that is the actual world-state @, which is indexically demonstrated in (6b).

- 6a. The proposition that SS is a philosopher is true at PW.
- b. The proposition that SS is a philosopher is true at this very world-state iff SS is a philosopher.

Knowing each of these propositions apriori, we can know the proposition expressed by the

conjunction (6c) apriori.

6c. (The proposition that SS is a philosopher is true at PW) & (the proposition that SS is a philosopher is true at this very world-state iff SS is a philosopher)

But since knowing the proposition expressed by (6c) without evidence guarantees knowing

the representationally identical proposition (6d) without evidence, it too is knowable

apriori.

6d. (The proposition that SS is a philosopher at @) & (the proposition that SS is a philosopher is true at @ iff SS is a philosopher).

What one *cannot* know apriori is the lambda abstracted version (6e) of (6d).

6e. λw [(the proposition that SS is a philosopher is true at w) & (the proposition that SS is a philosopher is true at w iff SS is a philosopher)] @.

Proposition (6e) is an apriori consequence of (6d), because there is a way of entertaining (6d) that allows one to make the apriori inference. But there is *no* way of *knowing* (6d) apriori that allows one to make the inference. Hence, both (6e) and (7) are apriori consequences of premises that can be known apriori, even though they can't themselves be known apriori.

7. SS is a philosopher

So, apriority is not closed under apriori consequence.

The key Carnapian insight leading to this result is that the propositions defining possible world-states don't include all propositions true at those states. The insight about propositions needed for the result, gotten by modifying Wittgenstein, is that representationally identical propositions may be cognitively distinct.

Schlick

I will close by looking at Schlick's book *Problems of Ethics*, whose time has, after decades of dismissal and neglect, finally come. Unlike other logical empiricists, who held that moral language has only emotive content, and so makes no contribution to cognitively meaningful statements, Schlick recognized moral truths capable of motivating action. Unlike the British anti-emotivists, Ross and Pritchard, who took knowledge of basic moral truths to be synthetic apriori, Schlick took it to be aposteriori. Ethics itself, like other empirical inquiries should, he thought, aspire to be a science- a science of human nature including psycho-biology and sociology.

For Schlick, ethical behavior is conduct we demand from others and ourselves, conduct we fundamentally desire that relates us to others. This, for him, is a rock-bottom. If our most basic desires of this type can be identified, there is no further question of justification to be raised. It is nonsense to ask, *Is what we most fundamentally value really valuable*? We simply value what we do. He wanted to know what *conduct we most value and why*? Realizing that different individuals might have different moral standards, over and above differences stemming from varying factual circumstances, differences in available actions, and gaps in their non-normative knowledge, he was confident that we would find many common values.

He took the morality to be a hierarchical system of norms specifying good conduct in various circumstances. The claim that something is a group norm is a factual claim about what conduct group members desire and expect. Sometimes, there is highest moral norm, sometimes top norms are independent. Either way, one *justifies* the claim that an act is morally good by citing the norm under which it falls, while justifying lower-level norms in

terms of higher level norms. The process ends with the highest norm, or norms, for which no further moral justification makes sense.

Schlick's next step was to subsume moral norms under higher, non-moral norms. It might be that *moral* good could be shown to be a special case of a more general kind of good...If [so]...the question, "Why is moral behavior good?" can be answered by "Because it is good in a more general sense...The highest moral norm would be justified by means of...a higher principle of life. (p. 24)

How is such subsumption supposed to help? Thinking of morality as a system of demands -- which are often inconvenient or worse -- that we place on ourselves and others, Schlick asks why we make these demands. In part because we wish to constrain others. But why do we constrain ourselves? In part because we need their cooperation and can only get it by being seen as conforming to rules we impose on them. But if that were the whole story, we would feel fine about cheating when not detected. Since we don't, we must find value in living up to norms connecting us to others. Schlick wanted to know how and why.

He found the answer in our psycho-biologically based social attachments to others, which he took to be as basic to us as the desire to eat when hungry, while being more important for achieving happiness than many other natural desires. His point is reinforced by our recognition of our own mortality, leading, as we age, to increasing satisfaction derived from contributing to others, whom we have come to love, and who we hope will long outlast us. For Schlick, our social impulses, which lead us to value others, are central to our well-being. Today, social scientific versions of this view maintain that our genetic endowment, our early family experience, and the facts of the human condition provide us with a motivational base that ties us by affection, social affiliation, and mutual interest to our fellows. This is the raw material that generates reasons for other-regarding action, the authority of which is recognized by most human beings.

Because cooperation promotes survival, we have been bred by natural selection to be social animals. It is not just that we need what others can provide, and so are impelled by self-interest to depend on them. We are also disposed to form cognitive and emotional attachments to them. Parents are innately disposed to nurture and love their young. Children naturally bond with parents, while emulating all with whom they are intimate. In our early years we form reciprocal bonds of affection and trust in which our well-being and self-conception is intertwined with others. Entering into games and collective activities, we learn the rudiments of fairness, adhering to common rules and earning rewards proportional to the value of our efforts.

This fusion of natural sentiment with early experience and rational principle gives birth to morality. Sentiment infuses our participation in games and activities with those we like and admire, and whom we hope will return the favor. Often our companions are models of the people we wish to become. The rules governing our shared activities are often impersonal principles that apply to anyone who occupies a given role in the effort. Because they define the accepted terms of participation in a mutually beneficial activity, it is in the self-interest of each to obey them. But the rules are more than prudential. Rule violations by friends bound by ties of social affiliation, carry psychic risks beyond the loss of the selfregarding benefits secured by participation. Volitions are affronts to one's socially affiliated fellows, to one's friendship with them, to one's image in their eyes, and to the person one wants, with their help, to become. With this, instrumentally useful rules obeyed to secure benefits of group action become principles to be honored even when no one is looking. In this way, sentiment, social affiliation, and recognition of mutual interest are incorporated into moral commitments.

To complete this basic picture, we must assign truth conditions to *ought* statements in ways that explain why the truth of such claims normally provides us with reasons for action. Consider, to begin with, cases in which we use a sentence *A ought to do X* to express the *prudential* judgment that A's doing X would advance A's welfare more than doing anything else, from a range of relevant acts. Since agents typically want to advance their welfare, recognizing that performing X would increase it nearly always provides them with a potentially motivating reason to do it. So, if it is true that A prudentially ought to do x, A will have a reason to act as we advise. To derive this prudential *ought* from a factual *is*, we need facts about what A's welfare consists in -- which we may take to include, health, safety, companionship, freedom of action, development of A's capacities, enjoyment of sensual pleasures, opportunities for excitement and the pursuit of difficult goals in concert with others, and the ability to contribute to the welfare of others A cares about and to benefit from those who care about A.

Suppose we can derive prudential *ought-statements* from factual truths about these recognized values and the actions that would promote them. Still, the result is limited. If A prefers an action X that would benefit B whom A cares about, even though performing X would diminish A's own welfare, then A *ought not*, prudentially, do X. But that needn't mean that A *ought not* do X, all things considered. If A cares more about B's welfare than A's own, A may still think "*I ought to do X*," because A wants to benefit B more than anything else. This suggests that *the prudential statement* is true iff doing X would most

advance A's welfare, while the statement reflecting what A most values is true iff doing X will satisfy A's most important desires. Both may be derivable from factual premises.

What about moral statements? The challenge is to find facts about normal human agents supporting claims that they *morally ought* to do X that provide them with potentially motivating reasons. These must include facts about *other people* agents care about plus *relationships and activities* from which participants derive value that couldn't be had if they couldn't rely on others to play their parts. Moral reasons include facts about the impact of one's actions on the welfare and *activity or relationship-based expectations* of others. If an action would advance the welfare of those one cares about, one may have a moral reason to perform it. Similarly, if an action conforms to expectations of those with whom one voluntarily interacts in an activity providing benefits for all, then one normally has a prima facie moral reason to perform it.

Imagine a voluntary group activity that benefits all if each plays his or her part, but which fails to be beneficial if one or more opt out. Realizing this, and wishing to avoid hostility that would result from discovery that one is shirking, one has a self-interested reason not to cheat. One will also have a moral reason when one cares for the other participants, or when one doesn't want to be the kind of person one would condemn, if one were in the position of another participant. The strength of this moral reason is proportionate to the importance of one's role in the activity, the benefits produced for participants, and the centrality of the activity in the social life of which one is a part. The acts one morally ought to perform are those one has the strongest moral reasons to perform, provided that they don't require sacrifices out of proportion with the benefits they secure.

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Weighing these reasons raises deep conceptual challenges. Still, the determinants of the needed calculations -- the effects of an action on one's welfare and that of others, and the relation of the action to the activity-based expectations of others -- are factual matters. If their relative strengths and their manner of combination are also factual, it may, in principle, be possible to derive *moral oughts* from factual premises about what *is*. At any rate, it's not obvious that that this isn't possible. Thus, we should be open to the idea that moral facts, like other facts, are capable of being investigated and known, even if that knowledge is sometimes hard to achieve. So, I think, Schlick would have thought.

Still, here is a worry. Although moral objectivity is welcome, it may seem that an objectionable moral relativity comes with it. In grounding moral reasons in interests and values of an agent, one must give up the idea that moral obligations are binding on all rational agents, who could, in principle, entirely lack fellow feeling with others. The point is illustrated by facts that would, ordinarily, be regarded as relevant to establishing moral obligations: for example, (i) the fact that lying or breaking a promise subverts the trust that makes one's lie or promise possible, (ii) the fact that free riders in a collective effort ask others to do what one refuses to do oneself, (iii) the fact that benefiting oneself sometimes seriously harms innocent others. Imagine a rational agent lacking concern for others who calculates benefits for himself alone and always acts accordingly. Because facts (i)-(iii) don't touch his interests, he won't recognize them as reasons for acting. Of course, a race of relentless interest-maximizers might sometimes coordinate their actions to achieve mutually beneficial ends. But although they may seem to behave cooperatively, they don't behave morally, because they will cheat whenever they can get benefits without incurring the costs of participation, and because genuine reciprocity will be absent.

This suggests that some facts *we* take to support moral conclusions don't provide reasons for *all conceivable rational agents* to act. How then do they provide *us* with reasons? Couldn't we know both those facts and our own interests, without taking them to provide *us* with reasons to act? If so, then the idea that we have duties that *can't* be shirked is false. This is a challenge to moral objectivity. Surely, reasons for action do depend on potentially motivating values. If these can, in principle, vary without limit, no mere *facts* provide *all rational agents* with reasons to perform other-regarding acts. Thus, no objective morality can bind them all. This has, for decades, been taken to be a conceptual truth by many philosophers and social scientists. If it is such a truth, nothing can override it.

The Schlick-inspired way out is not seek the impossible. An objective morality for *all possible rational agents* is not what he sought, or what we need. Instead, we need a morality grounded in human nature, governing normal *human beings*. As he emphasized, this requires a rich species-wide psychology, or psycho-biology. But how rich is the species-wide psychology, or psycho-biology. But how rich is the species-wide psychology, or psycho-biology. But how rich is the species-wide psychology, or psycho-biology, that he takes to ground human morality? Although it may be rich enough to get morality started, more may needed to reach the expansive morality he seeks. As the social scientist James Q Wilson has emphasized in *The Moral Sense*, there is evidence that human beings are predisposed to other-regarding moral behavior. Human communities at every time and place have shared our native sociability, our prolonged dependence as infants, the bond between parent and child, social attachments with friends, family, and neighbors, and the intertwining of our self-interest and self-conception with a desire, not only for the good opinion of others, but also for their well-being. Yet, despite this commonality, only a few communities have recognized rich moral obligations beyond family, friends, and tribe. Why, if morality is grounded in our

innate endowment, should expansive morality be unusual? Why do we think it is *morally better* to recognize some obligations to those outside our tribe? *What does this even mean*?

We know that patterns of social organization that require agents to extend moral standing beyond family, friends and tribe tend to be better in advancing human welfare than those that do not. Although this is important, it isn't enough. It *is* best for humanity that agents internalize this lesson, But recognizing this it doesn't solve the problem, because a concern for humanity is not everyone's cup of tea. So, we ask, *Is it true that those whose conceptions of morality aren't universalistic ought to treat outsiders with sympathy, fairness and reciprocity?*, Schlick can't say they morally *ought* to treat outsiders this way unless doing so would, in the main, advance interests they already have. Would it? Perhaps such a change would advance their culture to the benefit of their descendants, whom they may care about. But such a historical transformation is speculative; there seems to be no guarantee it will ever come. Must we resign ourselves to the thought that these agents don't form a moral community with us?

I think not. Universalistic moral conceptions typically tie fairness to reciprocity. If less universalistic cultures wish to reap the benefits of cooperative interaction with more universalistic cultures, they must realize that reciprocity in dealing with outsiders is expected, and so come to find it to be in their interest to reciprocate. If they do, then, increased participation in mutually beneficial activities may change the attitudes of all parties, expanding the moral universe of each. It was just such reciprocity that led our descendants, and most of us at different stages of our lives, to extend empathetic moral concerns we initially restricted to the near and dear to larger groups. This suggests that the proper response to the those with limited moral horizons is to work to expand them by engaging them reciprocal social interaction, on the basis of the commonalities they already share with us. It is hard to imagine that Schlick wouldn't agree.

What is true of the relationship between cultures with mismatched moral universes may also be true of mismatched individuals, or groups, within a culture. All societies contain some who fail to accord significant moral status to some of their neighbors. The centrality of reciprocity to our moral lives dictates that morally expansive neighbors offer their more morally isolated fellows opportunities for cooperative interaction, *conditional on the willingness of all parties to engage in genuinely reciprocal behavior*. If the required reciprocity isn't forthcoming, such offers should be withdrawn. There is, after all, a price to be paid for opting out of practices of mutually beneficial concern. If there wasn't, moral virtues would never be acquired.

This is the conception of morality to which we are led by pursuing Schlick's view of psychology as the basis of ethics. It is one in which moral systems are social institutions that evolve into richer systems capable of increasing human welfare by increasing the scope of human cooperation. As social cooperation increases, psychologically and biologically-based values are extended, creating new moral relationships that allow previously underivable oughts to be derived from expanded factual premises about what agents value and are able to contemplate. It is this conception – not of changing moral *opinions* but of expanding moral *reality* – that those who value Schlick's contribution are called upon to elaborate and refine.

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