

## A Critique Of meta-Ethics

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**Abstract:** *Meta-ethics is the analytic and conceptual deliberations of ethical terms, ethical sentence and ethical arguments. Meta-ethicists contend that there cannot be any moral standard as there is diversities on the part of human behaviors and social ethos in various societies of the world. These meta-ethicist also claim that ethical problems subsist in ethical language. This is how, according to these meta-ethicists, ethical problem can only be resolved by the analytic study of language of morals. But this claim of meta-ethicists is far from their exotica. As the world panorama, in the present spectrum, is in preferment to a global village. Owing to the effloresce of information technology the world has been constricted. The world panorama is getting closer so also an emergence of common ethos. It is an obvious fact that the concept of moral standard has been reeling off various branches of knowledge like Medical science, Jurisprudence, Business Administration, Environmental Science. So meta-ethicists cannot claim that there cannot be any moral standard or ethics. Analysis of ethical language, therefore, will not resolve any problem of ethics. It is the socio-cohesive theory of values that will resolve the problem of ethics.*

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### I. Introduction

Meta-ethics, the theoretical aspect of Moral Science, is known as critical study of language of morals. It is a descriptive and conceptual analysis of ethical terms, ethical judgments and the principles related to certain moral concepts, actions, freewill, responsibility and reason in methodology. A meta-ethicist is to find out ‘‘ what people are doing when they make moral judgments, moral terms and their inter-action to the non-ethical terms’’<sup>1</sup>. R. M. Hare in his language of morals has reduced the morals principles to the descriptive criteria of morality.

The genesis of the term meta-ethics is traced back to the second half of the twentieth century. But it is an obvious fact that a certain type of meta-ethical investigations were under current in the writings of A.J. Ayer’s ‘‘Critique of Ethics and Theology’’ and Language, Truth and Logic. The term meta-ethics for the first time revealed in Ayer’s book ‘‘On the analysis of moral judgments’’ where he used the term in the sentence ‘‘ neither in expounding my meta-ethical theory nor I recommending the opposite.’’ The pre-fix ‘‘meta’’ used in ethics has a special significance implicates ‘about’ or ‘after’. About in a sense that we are in meta-ethical deliberation, i.e., about the modus operandi of ethical language. Keeping in view of the nomenclature of the term it is on our part to cite the words of R.M. Hare as follows.

‘‘This book (The Language of Morals) deals not with the whole of ethics but with a narrowly specialized part of it. Its first object is to clarify the meaning of the ethical terms –such terms as ‘good’, ‘right’, ‘just’, ‘ought’ and so on. Its second object is to characterize the general method by which the ethical judgments can be proved or supported’’. And, ‘‘Ethics, as I conceive it, is the logical study of language of morals, i.e., descriptive and conceptual study of ethical language.’’<sup>2</sup>

Meta-ethics, it is evident that, keenly remonstrate on the various problems looming over principles of ethics, ethical terms, judgments, the methods adopted by the ethical theorists. This shows that the language of morals gives rise to ethical thoughts. If we go through the linguistic pattern of ethics we shall confront with various ethical terms like good, bad, duty of obligation, right, wrong, ought and so on. There are some sentences like ‘X is good’, Y is my duty, A ought to be performed, K is wrong, B is evil. There are also ethical judgments which possess some ethical commands. In addition to these facts there are general principles or norms such as ‘‘ You ought to speak the truth’, ‘You should not hit a man when he is down’’. Such type of judgments breed and ameliorate the language of morals when a moral linguist introspects the various aspects of ethical language he takes into consideration of uses and functions of ethical terms, ethical judgments along with the methodology that the ethicist adopt what they examine with critical aptitude. However W.K. Frankena demarcates the meta-ethical inquisitiveness into four heads.

- (I) The problem regarding the meaning or definition of ethical terms, e.g., good, right, bad, wrong, right, ought, ought not, duty and not duty, moral obligations. In brief an ethical linguist or meta-ethicist studies the nature and function of ethical terms in ethical judgments.
- (II) We know that many terms enlisted above have a normal sense. So naturally a meta-ethicist is confronted with the question how is one to distinguish between the question how is one to distinguish between a moral sense of these terms and the non-moral meanings of the said terms.

- (III) The third category of problem delineated by a meta-ethicist relates to somewhat non-ethical problems or related terms to ethics. This relates to the analysis of certain terms or concepts like 'actions', conscience, freewill, intention, promising, motive, responsibility, reason, voluntary.
- (IV) We have also certain problems to be discussed and these problems relate to the methodology of meta-ethics. Problems discussed here are what type of justification or proof be given or ethical or value judgments, i.e., what is the nature of moral reasoning and argumentation.<sup>3</sup>

The above issues of meta-ethics can be synchronized into two categories, viz, (i) those stick to the meaning, analysis, use or functions of broader words in ethical expressions. (ii) those belong to the field of ethical methodology which vent to the working and stability of various ethical arguments.

In common parlance, whatsoever, meta-ethics the logic of ethical language deals with moral and non-moral use of ethical terms, non-ethical terms or concepts related to language of morals and the nature and functions of ethical judgments. So meta-ethics is nothing but the linguistics analysis of ethical concepts. A.J. Ayer, Moore, K. Bair, M.G. Singer, Abraham Edel, C.L. Stevenson and others study ethical concepts, principles and judgments by incorporating their own methods, namely, emotive method, naturalist method, cognitive method. Let us observe their analysis of ethical language which is elucidated as follows.

'Moral Cavity is something intellectual enterprise of the meta-ethicists, in which they express their reactions with regard to certain actions especially through language. There is a good number of terms popularly known as ethical terms, viz, good, bad, right, wrong, ought, ought not, duty, non-duty could be used both ethically and non-ethically. When these terms are used in moral judgments they are predominantly used in ethical sense, e.g., "telling lie is not good, so do not tell a lie." This vindicates that in an ethical judgment a particular ethical term is emphatically used. In the aforesaid ethical statement the ethical term 'good' is morally sound but meta-ethicists like R.M. Hare of the view that 'good' can also be used in non-moral sense as this motor car is good. G. E Moore holds that in most of the cases we form ethical propositions by incorporating ethical terms like virtue, vice, duty, right and ought. These terms have important role in making ethical judgments.

While introspecting the syntax of terms Hare has made a distinction between the term 'moral' and 'ethical'. According to him these two terms are not of the similar nature as the term moral which implicates the meaning of ethical term, viz, right, wrong, good, bad. On the other hand the term ethical points out the use of ethical terms in different contexts. But in B.S. Sanyal's writings it is observed that these terms are similar in nature. However Toulmin holds that "ethical words are used at on extreme in fully developed and logically complex judgments designed to harmonize the aims and actions of the community. At the other extreme, they appear in unpounderably and logically crude interjections, exclamations and commands – which release the emotions of the speaker, or act like goods upon the hearer."<sup>4</sup>

Problem of meaning, however, has a basic theme in the analytic study of ethical terms. A.J. Ayer holds that "In every case in which one would commonly be said to be judgment, the function of the relevant ethical word is purely emotive. It is used to express feeling about certain objects, not to make any assertion about them. Indeed some of them are used in such a way as to give the sentences in which they occur the effects of commands."<sup>5</sup> Ayer again holds that "ethical terms not only express feeling or emotions, they are calculated also to arouse feeling and stimulate actions. Some ethical terms are used in such a way as to give the sentences in which they occur in effect of commands."<sup>6</sup>

Whether ethical terms are definable or not, in this context meta-ethicist opine that ethical terms are partially definable as they possess both descriptive and emotive features. Partial definition, in the sense that in respect of their emotive meaning they cannot be defined. "Cannot" in the sense of logical 'cannot'. But with regard to their descriptive meaning they can be defined. C.L. Stevenson exerts that "ethical terms have descriptive as well as emotive features. Emotively they are not definable. By citing the example of 'good' he says "if the term good is indefinable, then, if a definition is expected to preserve its customary emotive meaning. It has no exact emotive equivalent." But descriptively, some meta-ethicists, opine ethical terms are both vogue and ambiguous and for such terms a kind of definition called persuasive definition have been suggested, it is for this reason ethical terms are definable.

Moore in Principia Ethica holds that "there is no distinction between ethical and non-ethical terms. He has made it clear that 'good' refers to one and only kind of property whether in ethical senses or non-ethical senses of the propositions in which it occurs". Recently John Hartland Swan, making this clear in connection with 'good' say "I did not assume in advance that there are two kinds of 'good'—the one is a moral and the other is a non-moral predicate,"<sup>7</sup>

For what purpose ethical words are used? In this context Hartland says "It has now become clear that 'good' and 'bad' means exactly the same thing whether used in moral or non-moral sense - and we mean the same thing. It implies that their logical functions is identical in both cases." This implicates that

the word good is used for the purpose of commanding, whether we commend a car, or a person or an action, i.e, to command is to guide actions.

Keeping in view of the above it is worth quoted that the opinion of R.M. Hare, George Henrick, C.L. Stevenson and very recently Glen O. Allen. These ethicists have of these view that there is a distinction between the ethical meaning of certain ethical terms and their non-ethical meaning.

Glen O. Allen in his article entitled "The IS ought Question Reformulated And Answered" has distinguished these senses of the term 'ought' - 'the 'theoretical ought', the 'practical ought' and the moral ought". It is said that "ought statements are of three distinguishable kinds which I shall call theoretical, practical and moral."<sup>8</sup> But W.K. Frankana raked of another issue which relates to various non-ethical terms like 'action', 'conscience', 'freewill', 'intuition', 'promising', 'responsibility', 'reason which has affinity to the ethical concepts. But R.M. Hare in his language of morals shows that all value words have their distinctive function, i.e, either to command or to guide choices, or to guide our actions. According to him these value words are purely functional terms. These value words are to be found in value judgments which have descriptive and evaluative force. Hare concedes value words are ethical terms which could be used in non-ethical sentences. For example "My driver rides the good motor car." However these value words lack of defining characteristics but to some extent they could be defined ostensively. For example "this parrot is good". Hare is of the opinion that the word 'good' is not analyzable in the way the naturalist suggests as 'good' is not the name of a complex property. It is the feature of good that it could be applied to any number of different classes of objects, e.g, we have good cricket bat, good refrigerator and so on. The same is true in case of red which is non-ethical. The standard of goodness as that of the meaning of 'red' is normally something which is public and commonly accepted. Evaluative meaning is always contrast for every class of object for which the word 'red' is used where as in case of descriptive meaning for every class of objects the meaning varies from object to object. Hare again says that "evaluative meaning of an object is primarily as we can use the evaluative force of the word in order to change the descriptive meaning for any class of objects"<sup>9</sup> The primary function of the word good is to commend, i.e, commending any thing is to choosing and to choose is to guide our actions. For example when we use the word good in order to commend morally we are always directly or indirectly commending people. Even when we use expression 'good action' or others like it, the reference is indirectly to human characters. This makes the difference between the word 'good' and 'right'.

Emotivists emphasize moral terms such as 'good', 'right', 'ought,' used in moral contests express the speakers approval or pro-attitude but terms like 'bad', 'wrong', 'undesirable', 'worthless' express the speaker's dis-approvals or co-attitude.

"Value terms are both descriptive and evaluative force. Value terms have a special function in language, that of commending, so they plainly be cannot defined in terms of other words which themselves do not perform function; for this is done we are deprived of a means of performing the function. But with words like 'puppy' this is not apply; One may define 'puppy' in terms of other words which will do the job. Whether two expressions will do the same job is decided by reference to uses."<sup>10</sup>(Hare)

According to C.L.Stevenson ethical terms have two aspects, namely, emotive and descriptive aspects. Emotive aspect of a term points to both hearer's and speaker's point of view, i.e, full of emotions. On the other hand descriptive aspect of a term points to the cognitive mental process.

Thus to say

- (i) "This is wrong" means I disapprove this, do so as well.
- (ii) "He ought to do this" means I disprove of leaving this undone, do so as well.
- (iii) "This is good" implicating I approve of this, do as well. These are the "working models" expressing the two kinds of meaning of ethical terms and judgments. The first kind of meaning is called imperative clauses and the second kind of meaning is rendered by the declarative clauses.

We have already, keeping in view of the above, deliberated the ethical terminology with regard to meaning, uses and implications of ethical terms with their relation to non-ethical terms, ethical judgments, ethical principles, and above all their relation to our actions, choices and commands. Hence it is obvious that ethical words along with the non-ethical words have prime role in meta-ethics so as to enable the ethical reasoning prescriptive, descriptive and evaluative.

**Ethical Judgements:**The other epoch-making feature of moral or ethical language is ethical or moral judgments. So it is obvious that it is the duty of the meta-ethicists to study ethical judgments in analytic method, i.e, the structure, nature and functions of ethical judgments. This shows that ethical judgments serve as bases in formulation of an ethical system. Ethics as a special branch of logic owes its existence to the function of moral or ethical judgments as a guide in answering questions of the following form:

What shall I do?

Ans. Do this.(Imperative)

In view of the above Prof. K.P. Mishra holds that moral judgments and principles have the feature of prescriptivity, i.e, the quality of prescription - to guide our actions. Hare says moral language which includes moral judgments falls in the jurisdiction of prescriptive language. It may be noted here that Hare uses the word imperative in a special sense, i.e, to mean advice or recommendation but not command. But what we understand every ethical or moral judgment must contain a value word. This is how an ethical judgment is also called a value judgment. An ethical judgment has the characteristics of describing the facts, expression of emotion and an attitude to choose or commanding our actions. An ethical judgment, whatsoever, deals with four types of inquisitiveness, viz, (i) Casuistry (ii) Ethics (iii) Meta-ethics. It ponders the structural point of view along with the nature of the content expressed by them. Structurally every ethical or moral judgment has a value word. This implicates ethical judgment is not only evaluative but prescriptive and descriptive by syndrome.

In view of the above, it is observed that in social life man renders ethical verdicts or judgments. Here Prof. Abha Singh commends "Man commends or condemns certain actions. He also makes recommendations of certain courses of actions and in doing all these he has certain moral attitude, certain considerations for pattern of moral behavior."11

Ethical judgments, very often, are made on the basis of ethical principles or maxims, sometimes on the basis of ethical principles or maxims, sometimes on the basis of social harmony, sometimes on the basis of consequences and sometimes on the basis of rational approach. Hence in ethical judgments it is possible to arrive at an ethical conclusion on the basis of factual premises.

Example: Those who do good work are honoured

Ram has done good work

Ram is honoured

Let us enumerate the nature of ethical judgments:

Different meta-ethicists define the nature of ethical ethical judgments from different point of view. Let us cite a few of them. According to R. Carnap "value judgments are neither true nor false as they are not more than a command in a misleading grammatical form."12

Example: 'Never hit a man when he is down'.

Again ethical or value judgments may fail to satisfy verification criteria and indeed in some sense like imperatives as they have lack of descriptive criteria(A.J. Ayer).13

Moreover no moral judgment can be a pure statement of facts. A judgment is not moral if it does not provide without further imperative premises, i.e, a reason for doing something. Moral judgments and imperatives cannot be entailed by factual premises, yet there are some looser relation than entailment which holds between them.

Example: Never says what is false(Universal Imperative)

S is false(Factual Containt)

Do not say S(Singular imperative)

All ethical judgments are covertly universal in character. Which is the same as to say that they refer to and express acceptance of a standard which has an application to other similar statements. In this connection R.M. Hare comments "If I say that a certain motor car is a good one, I am not merely saying something about that particular motor car, i.e, to say something about that particular car, merely, would not be to commend. Here to commend is to guide choices, i.e, to know the principles for choosing motor cars is to be able to judge between motor cars or to tell a good one from bad one."14

A.J. Ayer on the basis of his principle of verifiability holds that a sentence to make a sense must be either tautology or in a varifiable sense of perception. So it is obvious that all meaningful propositions are classified into two categories, viz, those which are true by distinction and those which are empirically true. Ethical judgments are not inducted either of these two categories. So ethical principles are not statements proper, i.e, they are pseudo-concepts as they are emotive and lack of facts.

For example:

When somebody says, 'killing is wrong' he is giving a command like 'do not kill'. This implicates the speaker's ejaculations or emotions with regard to certain actions.

According to Prof. K.P. Mishra moral principles are taken as major premises and moral reasonings as deductive by nature. But it is contained that moral principles cannot be taken as major premises and moral reasoning cannot be deductive in nature. It is shown that the deliberate use of general principles as Hare points out the uses of such principles reveal the features of a particular case, i.e, not to make deductive inference. A moral judgment is justified by appealing to a moral rule and a moral rule is justified by appealing a higher rule.

Prescriptivity is the vital feature of ethical judgments which makes it most decisive appearance. If a person is not willing to accept prescriptions resulting from universalizations of his proposed action than he has to reject this action as solution of his moral problem. Both of these features are necessary in case of a

moral judgment. If we only emphasize the descriptive or universalizability part of moral judgment and neglect the prescriptive part than in saying that one ought to do 'A'. One does not prescribe to oneself. One could decide that he and anyone in like circumstances ought to do 'A', and then without any hint of going back on what he had decided, not to do 'A'.

We have already discussed the nature and logical analysis of moral judgments. We have also quoted the views of meta-ethicists with regard to the nature and components of ethical and moral reasonings with examples. Let us examine the functions of ethical judgments.

The function of ethical judgment is to persuade, i.e, to advise a person to do such and such actions. This leads us to a difficulty in distinguishing their function from that of propaganda, i.e, in Hare's language "it must be part of the function of a moral judgment to prescribe and guide choices".

The second important function of the moral judgment is to guide our actions, i.e, if a man has no intention of doing what he ought, to tell him that he ought to do something may not be accepted by him as a reason for. A value judgment may not be followed but a non-value judgment may be followed. Value judgments have both descriptive and evaluative force. Ethical judgments are also called value judgments it is because of the fact that they possess value words. So it is obvious that ethical judgments have both descriptive and evaluative force. The main job is to guide choices and to influence actions.

The third function of moral judgments is to entail imperative. This implicates that one judgment entails another is simply to say that that one cannot assent to the first and descend from the second if he not mis-understood anybody or on the other hand this 'cannot' is a logical cannot if someone assent to the first and not to the second. This is in itself a sufficient criterion for saying that he does not mis-understood the meaning of one or the other. For example:

$$X = 2$$

$$X^2 = 4$$

In the above reasoning the first mathematical judgment entails the second mathematical judgment. Likewise one similar ethical judgment will entail other similar ethical judgment.

R.M. Hare is of the view that ethical judgments performs dual functions, viz, Prescriptive Function and Descriptive Function.

- (i) Prescriptive Function : This function augments individual to perform certain actions by dint of imperatives, e.g, stealing is wrong, it is bad to hit a man when he is down or do not tell a lie in which imperative are involved so as to enable man to guide conduct.
- (ii) Descriptive Function: The second function of moral judgments is 'Descriptive Function', i.e, to make moral judgments universalizable. Here moral judgment entails imperative of universal nature. Here we mean to every particular moral judgment there corresponds a universal judgment to the effect that a certain feature of a thing is judged, a reason for making a certain moral judgment about it.

For Hare the problem of ethical judgments is much more significant in the sense that he has held moral judgment that entail imperatives and they are also universalizable. However Hare emphasizes on ethical principles by incorporating certain principles we render moral judgments.

Example: All who ought to dishonor elders ought to bag pardon. (Universal Imperative)

You have shown disrespect to your elder. (Statement of Facts)

You ought to bag pardon. (Imperative)

In view of the above, it is a fact that a moral judgment is used to guide choice than it must be directly or indirectly aimed at same moral agent (the speaker himself or somebody else). Moral judgments are used to apprise actions and choices without being addressed to the agent addressed who is not in a position to guide choice. This shows that moral judgments are not used always to guide choices. However they are used to apprise actions and choices of fictional characters and of unknown and non-existent moral agents.

But Hare's contention is that "it might be held that the law of excluded middle does not apply to commands. This is a mistake if it is implied that commands are peculiar in this respect. Here the fact is that our language possesses way of speaking in a three valued way and ways of speaking in a two valued way and these two ways are available in both the indicative mood".<sup>15</sup>

Never hit the man when he is down (Universal Imperative)

That man is down (Factual statement)

Don't hit that man (Singular Imperative, i.e, service condition)

A.J. Ayer reiterates "that moral judgments it is because of lack of descriptive content, cannot be come under the domain of truth or falsity and naturally the so called arguments constituted on the basis of those judgments are not amenable to formal demonstration"<sup>16</sup> In fact Ayer went to the extent in maintaining that there is no scope for argumentation in ethics as ethical propositions has lacked the verifiability criteria. His own words, again, run as follows:

“It is plain that the conclusion that is impossible to dispute about questions of value follows from our theory also”. For as we hold that such sentences as ‘thrift is a virtue’ and ‘thrift is a vice’ do not express propositions at all, we clearly cannot hold that they express incompatible propositions.

**Moral Principles:** Why do we have principles? There are three reasons to answer why do we have principles. The first reason is applied to anyone else even to a clairvoyant who decide to choose something because of his prodigy. The second reason implicates to common man or mediocre who do not have foresight. The third reason is that without principle the fact of teaching could be impossible. As what has been taught to us it is because of principles. Mahatma Gandhi holds that ‘Man without principle is just a ship without a sailor’. In particular when we learn to do something, i.e., what we learn is always a principle.

Without principle we could not learn anything whatever from our elders this would mean that every generation will have to start from committing mistakes and learn something. Even each generation, however, were able to teach itself, it could not but approaching principles; whether self teaching or teaching for others everything goes on principles and these principles are to guide our choices and actions.

Principles are changed keeping in view of the ground reality. In this context Hare holds that “a good driver is one whose actions are so exactly governed by principles which have become a habit with him that he normally does not have to think just what to do.”<sup>17</sup>

Whether a given course of action is right or wrong, it has to be incorporated in a moral principle. Meta-ethicists claim that moral reasoning are deductive inferences. In such type of inferences a universal principle acts in the major premise, facts about the moral conduct that implicate the minor premise. Thus the conclusion is a particular moral judgment. Hare asserts that moral judgments are the source of moral principles. He again says that all decisions are creative acts that is they create or recreate moral principles. As a result of this morality must emphasize two prominent factors namely (i) teaching of conventional principles (II) making of decisions and principles. Moral principles are universal imperatives. In order to guide the actions moral principles have to answer the question “What shall I do?” The command or advice is ‘Do this’ (Single Imperative).

Prof. K.P. Mishra says that in order to apply moral principles one has to decide whether the action under consideration is an action covered by the principle or not? This implicates that one has to make moral judgment that this action is morally justified. Many meta-ethicists think that no principle, no way of life is more valid than the another. In common parlance it shows that ultimate ethical principles must be arbitrary.<sup>18</sup> Hare also concedes this statement.

Principles are modified time and again.” A few among them, the rebels, will shout from the house tops that some or all of the old moral principles are worthless. Some of these rebels will advocate new principles of their own, some will have nothing to offer”<sup>19</sup>. Hare asserts.

Let us deliberate the importance of principles. Morality or moral principles regain their vigor when ordinary people have learnt afresh to decide for themselves that is what principles are to be adopted? To be more accurately what principles shall be applied to teach our children. As the phenomena of the world are heading through the material progress for this reason principles shall be formulated keeping in view of the acceptance of the mass people, i.e., not likely to differ enormously from those which their fathers come to destruct. For example the ethical principles of Aristotle resemble those of Aeschylus more than they differ from them. We ourselves shall perhaps come back to something recognizably like the ethical principles of our grandfathers. But there are certain changes occurred on the part of the principles adopted by our grandfathers. As a result of this some principles coined by the new generation are adopted. This is how ethical principles oscillate from generation to generation.

**Subjective versus Objective Principles:** Subjective principles are based on the concept of pleasure, pain, happiness, taste. These principles relate to individual speculations that differ from person to person. This is how subjective principles are not universalizable. Thus they belong to individual values which entail non-moral actions. On the other hand objective principles emphasize on a set of norms or principles that are bestowed upon to us by our forefathers, the institutions and those of the intuitionists to guide our actions. However objectivists says ‘of course you know what you ought to do; look at what your conscience tells you; if any doubt reckons then go by the conscience of the vast majority of man. In this context Hare exhorts that” moral principles or standards are first established then they get too rigid, and the words used in referring to them become too dominantly descriptive; their evaluative force has to be painfully revived before the standards are out of danger. In the course of revival, the standards get adopted to changed circumstances; moral reforms takes place and its instrument is evaluative use of value language. The remedy, in fact, for moral stagnation and decay is to learn to use or value language for the purpose of which it is designed.”<sup>20</sup> Objective moral standards are the conscience of society. It augments individual actions to ameliorate the interest of the society. This is how it belongs to the social values which guide our moral actions that entail social values.

Hare and Bair differentiate moral rules from moral principles. According to them moral principles are more general than those of the moral rules. Singer holds that moral principles are more fundamental than other moral rules. However moral rules implicates those actions which are generally right or wrong. Actions prohibited by moral rules are usually wrong, actions required by them are such that it is generally wrong not to do this. Permissive actions and actions prohibited by no moral rules are generally not wrong. This vindicates that moral rules cover only three types of actions, namely, prohibited actions(i.e. non-moral actions), required actions( i.e moral actions serve the interest of the society) and permissive action(i.e, the extra-moral actions serve the emotional empathy of a person or persons languishing in distress). The first action conflict with other two types of actions which come under social values. But it is the moral rules which act resolving the moral conundrum. It is on the part of the moral rules to uphold the principles of ‘generality’. It is because of this reason Singer holds that moral principles are source of all moral rules. Moral rules are valid but moral principles are absolutely valid.

Moral principles are prescriptive by nature. According to Hare moral language which inducts moral principles are coming under prescriptive language. The reason why actions are in a peculiar way revelatory of moral principles is that the function of moral principle is to guide conduct. This is how, Hare remarks, language of moral is one short of prescriptive language. Hare emphasizes the practical nature of morality by connecting actions, choices, imperatives and moral rules. Like moral principles, moral rules are universal imperatives, they say either to do something or not to do something.

Bair carves out three characteristics of moral rules from the condition of universal prodigy. First the purpose of the rule is to streamline the actions of the individuals. Secondly the rule should not be self defeating. Thirdly the rules should be viable to teach others. Bair concedes that morality implicates acting on universal principles, i.e, these principles are not like the rules of the thumb of an egoist which can be violated at any time to serve the interest of the agent. An egoist abides these rules of the thumb, viz, ‘Honesty is the best policy’, ‘Always give a penny to a begger’.

Bair concept of absolute morality comprising moral rules which are universally valid corresponds to Singer’s notion of fundamental rules. Bair holds that moral rules differs from society to society. These variations are due to divergent socio-cultural imbroglios. But R.M. Hare does classify moral rules as Singer and Bair as he emphasizes moral principles to instill and imbue man’s moral beliefs, systematize his moral thinking.

Moral rules are classifiable according to their importance and generality. In the cases where two rules conflict the rule which is more generality over-ride the other. At the top of the hierarchy there are some fundamental rules which justify every other rule but they themselves are not vindicated in this approach. They could be vindicated by an appeal to a way of life or to the moral point of view or the supreme principles. This is the nomenclature of rules in ethics.

Moral language in view of the above deliberation it is evinced that it is evaluative, normative, prescriptive and to some extent descriptive also. It contains value and non-value terms, moral ethical judgments and above all moral principles or rules. Various ethicists discussed about the constituents of ethical phenomena. These ethicists have of the view that it is extremely difficult to formulate an objective moral standard as some of these ethical thinkers asserts that moral language simply express one’s emotions. There is no factual content in it. It has lack of verifiability criteria. These ethical or moral concepts followed by the language are subjective nature. This is how it is not easy to formulate a universal moral standard. But this view of the meta-ethicists is not tenable. As this is the age of globalization, i.e, the global phenomenon are getting together; the globe is highly shrunken. This is how it needs to upgrade an inclusive ethics. It is the theoretical aspects of ethical language consisting of human conduct being augmented by voluntary actions. Hence in order to establish an objective moral standard it requires the inclusive study of ethics which incorporates various principles of different branches of knowledge including humanities and natural sciences. Such an attempt will enable us to perform various actions, viz, moral, non-moral and extra-moral actions. We shall deliberate this study in the socio-cohesive theory of values.

**Descriptive or Naturalist Method of Meta-Ethics:** Descriptive or naturalist method envisages ethical judgments are simply statements rendering some properties to things, i.e, ‘Golden mountain is very high’. This method again says that ethical terms like good, ought, right can be defined in terms of some non-ethical terms. But naturalist oppose this view as this method commits naturalistic fallacy. Moore asserts.

**Non-naturalistic Method of Meta-Ethics:** This method advocates that ethical terms cannot be defined at all since they do not have any naturalistic property. The subscribers of this method are Sidgwick, Butler, Rashdall, Moore and others.

Sidgwick questions ‘‘What definition can we give of ‘ought’, ‘right’ and other terms expressing the same fundamental notion? To this I should answer that the notion which these terms have in common is too elementary to admit of any formal definition.....’’

What the non-naturalist claim is that when we say that an event has such and such consequences, i.e, we are making empirical statements which are verifiable in nature. But once these consequences are good, than our statements are not verifiable,i.e , it is not convertible to empirical statements. One ethical statement can be transformed to other ethical statements but the same cannot be rendered into such statements which have no reference to any other ethical terms. However ethical terms can be described in terms of other ethical terms.

**Intuitionist Cognitivist Method:** The exponents of this method are Sidgwick, W.D. Ross, G.E. Moore. These intuitionists claim that in addition to our empirical knowledge there is another faculty called intuition. Intuition means immediate experience. Intuitionists claim that knowledge is self evident. This method holds that some of the ethical judgments are self evident and such are not analyzable.

**Non-cognitivist or Emotive Method:** A.J. Ayer is an exponent of this view concedes ethical judgments are simply expressions of emotion or ejaculations. For example when someone asserts ‘‘killing is wrong’’ he simply expresses his emotions. But Carnop holds a slightly different view . According to him, when somebody says ‘killing is wrong’ he is giving a command like ‘Do not kill’.

Another non-cognitive view about ethical judgments is that they express the attitude and feelings of the speaker. When we say that killing is wrong or that ‘‘One should not tell a lie’’.It shows that speaker is only expressing his ill feelings or attitudes about it . But such judgments do not assert anything. This view, according to Hospers, should not be confused autobiographical definitions. To express an attitude or feeling is not the same as to state that have one. ‘‘Hurrah’’ express joy but I am feeling joyous is an autobiographical sentence asserting that one has the feeling. Again Stevenson holds that ethical judgments express attitudes and they also evoke attitudes or feelings in the minds of the hearers. For example ‘‘Telling lie is wrong’’ does not express only one’s attitude, it also evokes the unfavourable attitude of the hearer with regard to telling lie. This attitude based on belief.

**Prescriptive Method:** R.M. Hare a non-cognitivist holds that moral judgments are prescriptive by nature. He says ‘‘The reason why actions are in a peculiar way revelatory of moral principles. It is that function of principles, i.e , to guide conduct and guide our actions as well. The language of morals is one sort of prescriptive language. This is what makes ethics worth studying

Moral judgments, keeping in view of the above, are prescriptions or commands or recommendations for a good conduct or a better living. Thus when somebody says an action is right or good he is not merely using a prescriptive language or deriving a subjective feeling. He is rather using an evaluative language . Ethical language may describe certain features of prescriptivity which is a primary feature of ethics. But in addition to this feature there is also a secondary feature of ethical statements, i.e , descriptive criteria.

**Evaluative Method:** This method is adopted in the sphere of ethical reasoning . An ethical reasoning or judgment is restored on the basis of ethical principles or maxims, sometimes on the basis of social harmony, sometimes on the basis of consequences, whatsoever, certain rational approach is possible in evaluative method. It is possible to arrive an ethical conclusion on the basis of the major premise having a universal imperative, the minor premise consisting of a factual proposition relating to human conduct. Out of these two premises the conclusion is derived, i.e, a singular imperative called command. The question of validity is also enforced to this type of reasoning.

However in the sixties or early sixties there came a time when certain prescriptivists dominated the meta-ethical discussions based on the logic of moral imperatives. The language of moral is supposed to be a prescriptive language. Man, moreover, gives moral verdicts or judgments. From this he recommends certain courses of actions and in doing all these he has certain consideration for pattern of moral behavior.

## II. Conclusion

We have already gone through different aspects of meta-ethics, the logical or analytical study of ethical language. It is a well known fact that meta-ethics is the theoretical analysis of ethical terms, ethical judgments, ethical principles along with their methods. We have also observed that there are different schools of meta-ethics, viz, cognitive school, prescriptive school and intuitionist school. The meta-ethicists of different schools differ diabolically. These meta-ethicists of different schools study ethical language with their own glasses . They evaluate the moral concepts according to their own methods. This is how ethical language is languishing in utter contradictions. Some argue that the nature of ethical language is cognitive and prescriptive.



Moore asserts there is nothing like ethical language. Cognitivists entrust ethical language as descriptive in nature. But emotivists proclaim that their language in ethics is purely emotive expresses the feelings of emotions or sentiments or attitudes by it may have descriptive features. Moreover prescriptivists hold that ethical language is usually prescriptive in nature. But intuitionists like G.E. Moore and W.S. Ross carve out that there is nothing like ethical language. Mean while it is on our part to quote the observations of T.E. Hill.

“Worst of all, torching here and there upon the area of today’s ethical thought, one has the impression of being confronted by a jungle in which trunks, branches, vines are interwin in rich but tangled profusion quite without unifying principle or common purpose”.<sup>20</sup>

The difficulty with the naturalists or definst theories is that they reduce the ethical sentences to factual or descriptive statements but in fact ethical statements are normative. They are relative to certain norms and standards. It is also erroneous to suppose that the extreme views they express are merely attitudes, favorable or unfavorable. It has already been seen in the above deliberation that ethical sentences express certain attitudes, these are evaluative, prescriptive and descriptive in nature. The intuitionists are not fare well as there is no decision procedure to evaluate whether there are any non-natural and indefinable property for the words like ‘good’ or ‘right’. However we accept something good or right with reference to certain existing beliefs or a set of norms controlling our social life or that an action is termed good or right in comparison to other similar actions. This shows that ethical sentences are neither emotive nor descriptive as they don’t describe any indefinable property. They are evaluative as they are normative in nature. They regulate our individual and social values. In this sense some ethical principles function as regulative principles of our moral life which is purely practical. Normative ethicists, out and out, criticize met-ethics a kind of moral antagonism or skepticism looming over ethical bankruptcy by interpreting theoretical aspects of ethics. This interpretation of meta-ethicists does not enable us to deliver an objective moral standard that provide us principles of actions to regulate moral, non-moral and extra-moral actions enumerated in the last chapter.

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