

BOOK REVIEWS

(1) *Moore's Ethics : Theory and Practice*, Hasna Begum, Dhaka, The University of Dacca, 1982 (Foreword by Prof. D. H. Munro), pp. X+259; Price TK 40.00, \$ 5.00

The tremendous influence that Moore has exerted on the contemporary Anglo-Saxon ethical tradition is once again amply demonstrated by the book under review which has appeared eight decades after the appearance of *Principia Ethica* (1903). It may be safely claimed that no other work in the twentieth century moral philosophy has been as widely read and discussed as *Principia*. This makes it quite difficult for a new work to maintain freshness and originality or not to sink into the quagmire of repetitions.

But Hasna Begum, in her doctoral dissertation approved for the degree by Monash University in 1978, has shown with dexterity how this difficulty can be overcome. Both Munro's *Foreword* and the author's *Preface* make it sufficiently clear that there are ideas in *Principia* which still have not been adequately treated and that there are aesthetic and moral influences which have not been properly taken note of within philosophical circles. As Munro observes, she has "some new and interesting things to say" with regard to the theoretical part of Moore's ethical theory and she also "discusses the largely neglected chapters on practical ethics." It is here that "she breaks what is practically new ground, at least for philosophers, by considering just what in Moore attracted the Bloomsbury group and how far his views really did justify the practical conclusions that were drawn from them" (p. V).

As Hasna Begum outlines in the preface, she has selected the nature of goodness (Part I) and the ideal and practical ethics (Part II) as the main subject of her analyses and discussions. She has judiciously attended to the problems both of theory and practice within the canvas of *Principia* though the canvas has been given a dimension which by far outsizes that of any other similar work. At the same time her *Preface* forewarns the readers of some unconventional treatment of Moore's ethics, e.g. when she says that "for Moore moral's statement are factual" (p. IX). This may surprise many students of Moore's ethics, though she has reasons

which are worth considering even if to be ultimately rejected.

In the first part Hasna Begum examines 'The Doctrine of Natural Qualities' (Ch. I), the relation among 'Natural, Non-natural and Supersensible Qualities' (Ch. II), 'Goodness as Consequential Property' (Ch. III) and 'The Relation between Value-making Properties and Value' (Ch. IV). In the concluding chapter of Part I she returns to examine Moore's Concept of Goodness as a Non-natural Quality' (Ch. V) in the light of what she has earlier said.

The non-conventional nature of the work under discussion is also evident from her scanty discussion of the naturalistic fallacy. It has been independently discussed once in a small section of three pages (Ch. I, Sec. 4) and finally in the last ten pages of Part I (Ch. V, Sec. 6) where it is discussed in relation to the concept of goodness as a non-relational universal.

The wide range of interesting points raised by her demands a fuller discussion than what the reviewer can hope to accomplish in these pages. I will, however, content myself with some brief observations on a few points.

The concept of goodness as a property, the distinction among different kinds of properties and various implications arising out of these distinctions have been accorded considerable attention since it is rightly felt that the entire theoretical ethics of Moore stands on his treatment of this concept. Hasna Begum tries to show that Moore's position must be seen within the trichotomous division of qualities into natural, non-natural and supersensible. But often it appears that in Moore there are in fact two dichotomous divisions, natural and non-natural and sensible and super-sensible. The former appears to be substantive and the latter epistemic. Hence, in some cases they overlap. But the status of the super-sensible qualities is quite elusive. As she has noted (Ch. II, Sec. 4), super-sensible qualities are neither natural nor moral. But some times there may be seen a tendency to confuse what is not natural with non-natural. Moore has always asserted that everything that is not natural is not non-natural. But the temptation to disbelieve Moore on this point might have been strong in some quarters. Partly at least, some of the passages in *Principia* (Ch. IV, pp. 110-12) give credibility to the view that super-sensible qualities are non-natural. For example, he talks of metaphysical ethics dealing with "objects or properties of objects,

which certainly do not exist in time" and of metaphysicians' claim that they could give "knowledge of non-natural existence". In *Principia* of course Moore has himself admitted that the only identifiable feature of a non-natural object is its inability to exist by itself in time. Yet it is not true that generally moral philosophers misunderstand the term "non-natural" and take it "to be a kind of metaphysical or supersensible quality" (p. VIII). Hardly any serious student of Moore's ethics or any well-known writer on Moore has done it. Those who talk of "Moore's metaphysics" try to locate some elements of a Plato or a Hartmann in Moore's ethical ideas. She is, however, perfectly right in maintaining that Moore failed to make the distinction between non-natural and super-sensible qualities clear (p. 33).

In Ch. III Hasna Begum takes up the problem concerning goodness as a consequential property and provides an extremely insightful and interesting analysis of the related issue.

She appears to agree in general with Ross' understanding and interpretation of Moore's ethics (pp. 42-48). In this connection she makes use of Ross' suggestion that Moore's use of 'property' must be understood in Aristotelian sense of *proprium* which meant an attribute common and peculiar to every member of a species but which does not belong to the essence of the species though invariably follows from it. In this sense it is mid-way between the *essence* and the *accidents*. But from this, at least in my humble opinion, it does not follow that as a *proprium* goodness is factual or fact-reporting. Hasna Begum seems to have been misled by the fact that since a *proprium* "always accompanies the essential qualities" it must always signify some definite natural characteristics. But to call goodness a *consequential* or a *toti-resultant* property is not to make it factual or fact-reporting. The emphasis on the consequential or supervenient nature of goodness is laid precisely for the reason that though some natural characteristics must always be present before we may judge anything to be good, it may never be identified with any or some of these characteristics. She indeed refers to Moore's statement in "The Nature of Intrinsic Value" that 'intrinsic properties (natural) seem to *describe* the intrinsic nature of what possesses them in a sense in which predicates of value never do.' But she interprets it to mean that while natural properties describe the *intrinsic nature of things*,

non-natural properties describe the *things* which possess the intrinsic properties (p. 57). But I hope, Hasna Begum realises that when she tries to make such a distinction she is treading on a very slippery ground. I fear, she is already committed to slip into the Lockean 'substance' or the Kantian 'thing-in-itself' when she seeks to draw the distinction between 'describing the thing' and 'describing the intrinsic nature of the thing'. But what is it to do the former without being the latter? Her views, nevertheless, lead her to take a descriptivistic stance. She has expressed her agreement with Kovesi on certain points but she can also claim proximity to writers like Geach and Foot.

Hasna Begum earnestly believes that to call something beautiful or good is to describe. Her reason being that complete description of an object must include its non-natural qualities. She also contends that at least in some cases in describing the natural intrinsic properties of an object, "we are implicitly mentioning non-natural property of it" (p. 67). If one is swayed by her argument, one may be led to think that there is no difference between the logic of description and the logic of evaluation. Kovesi had indeed tried to show in *Moral Notions* that factual statements describe facts and value-statements describe values. Perhaps, taking the cue from him she says that complete description of an object must include both natural and non-natural properties like beauty and goodness. It may, however, be the case that she is using 'description', in a non-technical sense i.e., in the sense of saying anything about something. She does not consider the possibility that to ascribe a 'non-natural' property in Moore's sense is not to describe at all but to evaluate some object. The difficulty lies, to some extent at least, in Moore's use of the term 'property' which the author never questions. Moreover neither Moore nor she think it possible that non-natural properties like good are consequential or derivative in the sense of being 'consequence' of the criteria or standard according to which natural characteristics are called good. Thus, the relation between value-making characteristics and value may be 'criterial'.

It is indeed true that to say 'good'/'beautiful' is to *imply* some characteristics. But since no particular characteristic or set of characteristics is *necessarily* meant, it may not be specified which characteristic(s) is (are) meant. Hence, no description necessarily follows in all cases. Nevertheless in some cases where the range of

possible characteristic (s) so implied is completely determinate in a certain universe of discourse (either functionally or conventionally), there may be difficulty in drawing the line between evaluation and description.

Discussing the relation between 'value-making' qualities and value (Ch. IV) she holds that it is logically necessary, and not based on empirical generalisation or causal necessity. She makes it to be one of identity or entailment since it is based on objective intrinsic properties. Her refutation of Moore on this point does not seem to quite convincing. Moore denies the logical nature of this relation because intrinsic value depends on the intrinsic nature (natural qualities) of a thing and these are not true by definition. As Moore says, "Judgements of intrinsic value are synthetic and not analytic." If the relation in question is to be logical, it may close the possibility of difference in judgements concerning value-making qualities. It is also difficult to agree with her when she puts in Moore's mouth the view (originally found in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I, Ch. VI) that good is indefinable" because there are many ways in which goodness may describe the intrinsic nature of things that are good" (p. 140).

The upshot of her enquiry is the suggestion that fact-value or is-ought distinction is not involved in the naturalistic fallacy. She suggests that the basic confusion in the minds of the naturalists is concerning natural and non-natural properties. It is, as she reiterates "the fallacy of confusing goodness with something other than itself, and the fallacy of treating a synthetic proposition as an analytic one".

The second part of the book, devoted to 'Ideal and Practical Ethics' (Ch. VI) begins with an enquiry into Moore's views on conduct and the Ideal. Specially, Hasna Begum's criticisms of Moore's method of isolation are quite convincing. As I have also tried to show earlier,* many of the concepts like pleasure, pain, consciousness *et al* do not admit of the application of Moore's celebrated method. Moore's views on aesthetics, specially on representative art, are subjected to some pertinent criticism (p. 180). Indeed, Moore's views on aesthetics suffer from a sort of crude realism. But she does not give enough support to her

*SHAIKA, S. A., 'Moore's Evaluation of Sidgwick's Hedonism', *Indian Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. I, No. 2, Jan. 1974. Also in *Studies in Ethics*, Vidya Mandal, Delhi, 1981, pp. 26-35.

assessment of Moore's position as standing half way between classical utilitarianism and deontology (p. 189). Moore's analyses of 'right' and 'duty' surely belie any such interpretation. Deontological strand is discovered not so much in one's approach towards intrinsicness or extrinsicness of value as in non-dependence of duties on values.

Finally, a few words about her treatment of Moore's influence on the Bloomsbury Group (Ch. VIII). Though it is known to any student of modern English literature, student of philosophy are not quite conversant with this aspect of Moore's influence. Apart from P. A. Schilpp's *The Philosophy of G. E. Moore* we do not find any account of this phenomenon in any philosophical discussion. Since mainly Moore's influence is of historical, literary or personal nature, I don't have much to say. However Hasna Begum deserves to be congratulated for clarifying some of the misunderstandings and prejudices against a number of fascinating personalities like J. M. Keynes, Clive Bell, E. M. Forster, Leonard and Virginia Woolf, Lytton Strachey and others. Her discussion makes us realise how perniciously Moore's views can be interpreted and may be turned into an excuse for justification of slavery and tyranny (vide Clive Bell's views, on civilization, pp. 203-208) in the name of cultivating an elitist culture based on Moore's views concerning aesthetic enjoyment. But she has tried to set the perspective right by putting in contrast the views of Leonard Woolf. That Moore's emphasis on freedom and personal affection led the members of the Bloomsbury Group to adopt a non-conventional and free mode of personal life is understandable. As long as honesty, integrity, frankness, tolerance and mutual understanding mark the life-style of the persons involved, freedom from conventional sexual morality is not wrong. But short of these qualities, it may become a licence for simple debauchery.

This book is sure to be widely read as it is of great value to Moorean scholarship. All students of contemporary ethics in general and of Moore's ethics in particular will find it very useful. The bibliography could have been updated and some important omissions avoided.

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(2) *Epistemology and Ethics of G. E. Moore*, Shukla Sarkar, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1981, pp. 202, Rs. 70.

Persuing the book under review, one should feel like congratulating Dr. Shukla Sarkar for having done a very sustained piece of philosophical writing, no less commendable are the wealth of data and the richness of her interpretations. One might be reminded of Allan White's book on Moore, but Sarkar's intensions are different from those of White. Sarkar's project has been to approach Moore's ethical ideas through his position in epistemology. There are two parts of the book one devoted to Moore's epistemology, the other to his ethics. One of the chapters in the second part of the book is proposed to relate Moore's ethical ideas to his moral notions. This would have been Sarkar's most interesting piece if she had developed Moore's moral epistemology at a greater length and a manner what Jonathan Harrison has done for Hume. Sarkar has instead justified her plan of the two parts of the book in terms of methodical grounds, i.e., Moore's analytic approach common to his epistemological and ethical inquiries. Anyway Moore's epistemological views have weighed heavily with Sarkar, and that is a case not without reasons.

In a sense, analytic philosophy had begun with Moore's asking certain questions, in his dislike for abstract statements and persistent search for clarity. In the first part of her book Sarkar has argued that Moore's theory of empirical knowledge is a position which could be described as common sense realism. The notion of sense data is conceptually related to the position, and determines his analysis of 'knowledge', providing him with an answer to scepticism. Sarkar could have remarked in this connexion that the sceptical attitude which marked the course of British empirical thought had received in Moore an un-British accent. There have been appeals to common sense in Berkeley, whose so-called idealism was brought under heavy fire by Moore. Hume's impressions of sense, was Moore-like in their simplicity and distinctness. In many of his moods Moore looked back to his empiricist predecessors without of course any acknowledgement of indebtedness. It would have been an interesting task for Sarkar to have put

Moore on the map of Anglo-Saxon philosophy. Her section on 'certainty' is extremely well-written and closely argued. The entire discussion of Moore's *meta-epistemological* views is a decided improvement upon Moore's other commentators, and I deem it to be a contributory piece of writing.

One could feel that Sarkar had dwelt at length on Moore's views about 'proposition', and naturally about the problem of meaning and reference. She does touch upon the issue, as though in a haste, and passes on. She should have noted that Moore admits the difference between direct apprehension of sense data and propositions, though he is unable to give an analysis of this difference. Sarkar could have suggested that apprehension or sense data requires sensing and no understanding, while propositions require understanding and no sensing.

Coming over to the second part of the book, dealing with Moore's ideas about ethics one's expectations mount up in looking for the justification of the long prolegomena on theory of knowledge. Could one not say that Moore's search was for the moral sense data? And hence the question arises what constitutes the meaning of ethical assertions, objects named or concepts named? In this regard the section on the idea denoted by 'good' and the ways of knowing it is significant. Ethical knowledge is knowledge of propositions about the intrinsic worth of objects, and such propositions are intuited as self-evident. Sarkar has taken care in bringing home Moore's variety of intuitionism, and his dismissal of the possibility of moral argument. In the section on Ideals she has mentioned Moore's views about aesthetic judgment. This was a test case for showing that Moore's intentions lay more towards axiology than ethics. To an extent Moore's question 'what is good?' becomes synonymous with 'what is value?' and under Moore's influence Richard Hare too has paid more attention to the logic of value terms than the typically ethical notion 'good'.

Moore's notion of the naturalistic fallacy has been a fertile one, and it has come to be reformulated in more than one way. Moore's notion of the fallacy is parasitic upon his notion of analysis, and the entitative simplicity of the moral sense data. One could wish that Sarkar had spelt the metaphysical presupposition of Moore in clearer terms. For Moore the very attempt

to analyse the unanalysable is to commit the naturalistic fallacy. It must be admitted that this is quite ideosyncratic with Moore. The other things that he says about values and facts in connection with the ill-named fallacy are but restatement of ethical ideas one comes across in Hume and Kant. It is a pity that Sarkar concludes his account with Stevenson's rejoinder to notion of the naturalistic fallacy. She could have shown the parasitic nature of Moore's ethic on his epistemology, and his metaphysics too, if she had cared to refer to Richard Hare's formulation of the fallacy in *The Language of Morals*. It is at Hare's hand that the fallacy assumes the character of a useful logical tool against the descriptivist in ethics. Logic is not the basis of ethics with Moore, but epistemology is. And in the venture of showing this Sarkar's achievement has been an admirable one. I have no doubt that her book will have wide audience, and that she will have her critics too. This is no mean praise in philosophy.

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BOOKS RECEIVED

1. *Gangesa's Philosophy of God* : Dr. John Vattanky S.J., The Adyar Library and Research Centre, Madras : First Edition, 1984; Rs. 100/- pp. xvii+422.
2. *Knowledge and Reality* : Dr. J.J. Shukla, Gujarat University, Ahmedabad: First Edition, 1984 ; Rs. 10/- pp. xxxi+275.
3. *God, Free Will and Morality*: Robert J. Richman, D. Reidel Publishing Company, Dordrecht : First Edition 1983; \$ 36.95, pp. xi+195.
4. *Evil and Evolution : A Theodicy* : Richard W. Kropt, Associated University Press, Cranbury, N. J. 08512 : First Edition, 1984; \$27.50 pp. 12+204.
5. *Communication, Identity and Self Expression* : Essays in Memory of S. N. Ganguly : Ed. by S. P. Banerjee & Shefali Moitra : Oxford University Press, Post Box 31, Bombay 400 039 : First Edition 1984: Rs. 110/- pp. viii + 234.
6. *A Study of the Ethics of Bertrand Russell* : D. D. Bandiste : Lipika Prakashan, Indore : First Edition 1984 : Rs. 50/- pp. 6 + 160.
7. *Plato's Esoteric Logic of Dialogue Writing* : A. S. Beg : Kitab Ghar, Educational Publisher, Aligarh : First Edition 1984; Rs. 40/- pp vi + 69.
8. *Tevaram* : T. V. Gopal Iyer : Institut Francais D'Indologie, Pondichery : First Edition, 1984 pp. CCXXV + 428.

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