

games. The concept of language, like the concept of game, is understood not in terms of an essence, but in terms of a "family resemblance."

It is clear that in this account of Wittgenstein's conception of language I have been interested more in the "over-all similarities" among languages—the general characteristics in respect of which the family resemblances are most striking—than in the important differences among them. In the next chapter I shall be interested in one group of languages, namely normative languages. My purpose in this chapter has been to lay a groundwork for constructing a clear concept of normative language. This concept, although drawn with sharp boundaries, will nevertheless conform to the general nature of language as analyzed by Wittgenstein.

## The concept of a normative language

### II

#### A. *What is a normative language?*

In light of Wittgenstein's analysis of language, a normative language may be viewed as a set of social practices defined according to certain rules governing the use of the language. There are two basic types of rules that define a normative language. Together they set the framework of a universe of normative discourse. The first type govern the use of words in expressing value judgments and in prescribing. The second type govern the use of words in giving reasons for or against value judgments and prescriptions. We carry on moral discourse, for example, when we pronounce moral judgments and utter moral prescriptions according to the first type of rules and when we justify moral judgments and prescriptions according to the second type of rules. In both cases the particular rules that set the framework of moral discourse define the language of morals. Other normative languages may be defined in the same way.

My thesis in this chapter will be that each universe of normative discourse corresponds to a point of view, and that both are determined by the rules of a normative language. To take a certain

*point of view* is to be disposed to use a certain normative language, that is, to be disposed to carry on our reasoning within the framework of a particular universe of normative discourse. The first type of rules that govern the use of a normative language, namely those for the proper expression of value judgments and prescriptions, are the same for all normative languages. Such rules were explicated in Chapters 2, 7, and 8, where I examined what it means to express a value judgment and to prescribe an act to someone. The second type of rules govern the logical relations among evaluative and prescriptive sentences on the one hand and the sentences in which we give reasons to justify value judgments and prescriptions on the other. The latter can be subdivided into rules of relevance and rules of valid inference. They are the very same rules that make up the canons of reasoning for each point of view, as stated in Chapter 4. To do our thinking in terms of these canons (and hence to take a certain point of view) is to use a normative language in accordance with such rules. This is another way of expressing the main thesis I wish to defend in this chapter.

Of the two types of rules that define a normative language, each may be thought of as governing a different type of language game. Thus rules of the first type govern the language games of expressing value judgments and prescribing. To know how to use sentences correctly for these purposes is to know how to play these language games (by following the first type of rules). The sentences whose use is governed by these rules are evaluative and prescriptive sentences, which I shall call "normative sentences" for short.

Which language games are governed by rules of the second type, that is, by the rules of relevance and of valid inference? There are two sorts of sentences governed by them, which I shall call "verification sentences" and "validation sentences" (to contrast them with "normative sentences"). Verification sentences are sentences in which we state the good-making or bad-making (right-making or wrong-making) characteristics of something in the context of verifying a value judgment or prescription. The rules which govern our use of verification sentences define the language games in which we give reasons for or against a value judgment or prescription by appealing to a standard or rule of evaluation. Validation sentences, on the other hand, are the expressions we use in giving reasons for or

against the standard or rule which is appealed to when something is being evaluated. In Chapter 3 we saw that giving such reasons consists in various kinds of appeal to higher standards or rules.

A normative language, then, consists of normative sentences, verification sentences, and validation sentences. The use of normative sentences is governed by the first type of rules and the use of verification and validation sentences is governed by the second type of rules. Within the second type, what distinguishes rules of relevance from rules of valid inference? Rules of relevance tell us what specific verification and validation sentences go with a given normative sentence, while rules of valid inference tell us that a normative sentence must express good-making or bad-making characteristics and that a validation sentence must express an appeal to higher standards or rules. If our use of verification and validation sentences complies with the rules of relevance, then the reasons we give by means of such sentences are relevant reasons. If our use of verification and validation sentences (which are already known to be relevant) complies with the rules of valid inference, then the reasons we give by means of such sentences are good reasons. This does not mean, of course, that using verification and validation sentences consists of two separate acts, i.e., giving relevant reasons and giving good reasons. To utter a verification sentence is to assert (when it is uttered in earnest and affirmed by the speaker) that an object or act has a set of good-making or bad-making, right-making or wrong-making characteristics. The point of making such an assertion is to give a reason for a value judgment or prescription. This reason will be a good reason only if the sentence expresses a relevant reason, that is, it "goes with" the normative sentence in question, and at the same time what it says is true. We decide whether the sentence expresses a relevant reason by reference to the rules of relevance governing the universe of discourse in which the sentence is uttered. We decide whether what the sentence asserts is true by verifying it according to the rules of verification. (If the sentence is a validation sentence, we decide whether what it asserts is true by verifying it according to the rules of validation.) Thus the rules governing our use of verification and validation sentences are the canons of reasoning which set the framework of a point of view.

I claimed in Chapter 4 that rules of valid inference are the same

in all normative points of view and that rules of relevance are what differentiate one point of view from another. I now repeat this claim in another way by saying that rules of valid inference are common to all normative languages and that rules of relevance are what differentiate one normative language from another. To follow one set of rules of relevance is to carry on normative discourse in one universe of discourse; to follow another set is to carry on normative discourse in another universe of discourse. The rules of valid inference, on the other hand, are common to all universes of normative discourse. They are the rules which govern the ways of reasoning analyzed in Chapter 3. In that chapter I was actually making explicit the rules of valid inference which define the verification and validation of a value judgment—*any* value judgment, whether it be moral, aesthetic, political, or of some other kind. We also saw, in Chapter 8, that these same rules govern the justification of prescriptions. They do not vary in accordance with the type of prescription involved. Consequently they do not differentiate a moral judgment or prescription from an aesthetic, a political, or a religious one.

What does differentiate one kind of judgment or prescription from another are the rules of relevance governing its justification. *Rules of relevance constitute the unifying principles of a normative language.* They are what bind together the three types of sentence (normative sentences, verification sentences, and validation sentences) which make up a single universe of normative discourse. They have the capacity to do this in virtue of the fact that they tell us what verification and validation sentences "go with" a given normative sentence. Thus if I utter a moral judgment or prescription in a normative sentence, certain reasons will be relevant to its verification and validation and other reasons will not. Reasons which are relevant to a moral judgment or prescription may not be relevant to an aesthetic one. In each case the normative sentence in which the judgment or prescription is expressed will "go with" those verification and validation sentences that express relevant reasons and will not "go with" those that express irrelevant reasons. What determines whether a given verification or validation sentence "goes with" a given normative sentence, therefore, is a rule of relevance. If one sentence "goes with" another then both sentences belong to

the same normative language. This is what is meant by speaking of "the same normative language." The rules of relevance governing all the verification and validation sentences which "go with" a given normative sentence define the whole normative language to which the sentence belongs. What does it mean to say that one sentence "goes with" another (i.e., that both sentences belong to the same normative language)? The answer may be stated in the following definition. A verification or validation sentence, V, goes with a normative sentence, N, if—and only if—a person who knows what V means and what N means (i.e., who knows how to make sense by using such sentences) has implicitly or explicitly adopted a set of rules of relevance such that the assertion expressed by V will be accepted by him as a reason for or against (i.e., as relevant to the verification or validation of) the value judgment or prescription expressed by N. Let us designate the particular set of rules of relevance so adopted R. Then we may define the whole normative language to which N belongs as follows: The normative language to which N belongs is the whole set of normative sentences (including N) and the whole set of verification and validation sentences (including V) which rules R allow to go with those normative sentences.

To use one normative language rather than another, then, means to follow three sets of rules—the rules which govern the correct use of normative sentences, the rules of relevance which tell us which particular verification and validation sentences go with which particular normative sentences, and the rules of valid inference which govern the processes of verification and validation. The rules of relevance vary from one normative language to another, and it is only when one set of such rules (defining one universe of normative discourse) is being followed that we can say a person is using *one* normative language.

Let us consider some examples showing this function of rules of relevance. I take as my first example the judgment that a novel is a good novel, as expressed in aesthetic language, in moral language, and in political language. When the judgment is expressed in aesthetic language, only certain reasons will be accepted as relevant to its justification. In other words, only certain verification and validation sentences will be accepted as properly going with the normative sentence "This is a good novel." Suppose that the verification sen-

tence "The writer draws his characters with great skill" is accepted as expressing a good-making characteristic of the novel. We would then have *prima facie* evidence that the value judgment is an aesthetic one, that it belongs to the universe of discourse of literary criticism. For the verification sentence which goes with the normative sentence expresses a reason of a sort that is typical of literary criticism. Let us suppose, furthermore, that the verification sentence "The style is loose and at times obscure" is accepted as stating a relevant reason *against* the judgment that the novel is a good one. We would then have further, confirmatory evidence that the normative language is aesthetic. This hypothesis is still further confirmed if we find that, when the standards of evaluation being used in the foregoing verification sentences are brought into question, a validation sentence like the following is considered relevant: "Appropriate standards for evaluating a novel are such that any novel which fulfills them conveys to the reader a clear imaginative grasp of human motivation and character." Evidence that the normative language being used is not aesthetic would be the fact that such a validation sentence as the following was considered relevant: "A standard for evaluating a novel must be such that, when it is fulfilled, a novel has the power to make the reader a better man or woman than he or she was before reading it." If the standards of a writer's skill in presenting human character and the clarity of his style were validated in this way, we would begin to think that the original value judgment of the novel was not intended as an aesthetic judgment but as a moral one. The rules of relevance which define an aesthetic normative language in this example would include such statements as "A writer's skill in presenting human character is relevant to evaluating a novel," and "Characteristics of the writer's style are relevant to evaluating a novel."

The normative sentence "This is a good novel" is uttered in the universe of moral discourse when such verification sentences as the following are accepted as relevant: "The writer succeeds in arousing the reader's indignation concerning vicious behavior." "No indecent act is allowed to go unpunished." "The general effect of the story is to strengthen our moral convictions." If these are taken to be relevant reasons in support of the judgment that the novel is good, we have *prima facie* evidence that the normative language involved

is moral, not aesthetic. Similarly, we have *prima facie* evidence that the judgment of the novel is being made in the universe of political discourse when the following reasons are considered relevant: "The hero of the novel is the leader of our party." "The writer condemns reactionary groups which struggle to gain control of the state." The final victory in the story belongs to our fatherland."

In the foregoing example I have merely tried to indicate the sort of evidence which would give us good reasons for saying that the normative language was of one kind rather than another. I have not tried to state the particular features of a rule of relevance that make it defining of aesthetic discourse, moral discourse, or political discourse. This is a complicated and difficult task, as many recent studies of the differentiae of moral, aesthetic, and political discourse show. But as I pointed out in Chapter 4, it is a task that goes beyond the scope of this book, since I am concerned here only with elucidating the concept of a normative language in general.

My second example shows how the prescribing of an act may take place in three different normative languages. Suppose a friend of ours is going to buy a new suit but cannot decide which suit to select among various possibilities. We then say to him "You ought to buy the brown one." If we consider as a relevant reason for his buying the brown suit that it is well worth the price being charged for it, then our prescription is in the universe of *economic* discourse. Our prescription is in the universe of *aesthetic* discourse if we consider as a relevant reason the fact that the style and color of the suit look well on our friend. We use the language of *prudence* when we consider such reasons as the following—the suit is comfortable; it will wear well; it is proper dress for the purposes our friend has in mind; our friend needs a new suit; and so on. In all three universes of discourse, the relevant reasons are expressed in verification sentences, and the relevance of the reasons allows the verification sentences to go with the normative sentence which we utter.

If any of the standards or rules which we implicitly appeal to in evaluating the brown suit are themselves brought into question, they must be validated. Both rules of relevance and rules of valid inference will govern such validation, but only the rules of relevance will tell us which normative language the original prescription belongs to. Thus if the validation sentence "Any standard according to

which the economic value of the brown suit is measured is a valid standard" is allowed to go with the normative sentence "You ought to buy the brown suit," then we have evidence that the normative sentence belongs to the universe of economic discourse. The prescription is made in the universe of aesthetic discourse if the following validation sentence is considered relevant: "A standard for judging the suit is appropriate when it pertains to the appearance of the suit." In the case of the universe of prudential discourse, a relevant validation sentence would be: "Any standard is valid whose fulfillment would further the self-interest of the buyer of the suit." The rules of relevance that are followed whenever one of these sentences is made to go with the given prescription determine the normative language to which the prescription belongs.

It may be seen in both of these examples that one and the same normative sentence may belong to more than one normative language. It is quite possible that a novel is good for both aesthetic reasons and moral reasons, or for both moral reasons and political reasons. Similarly, we may prescribe to our friend that he ought to buy the brown suit not only from an economic point of view but also from an aesthetic point of view or from the point of view of prudence. Thus it may be said that universes of normative discourse sometimes overlap. (This corresponds to my claim in Chapter 4 that points of view sometimes overlap.)

Just as there may be normative sentences which are common to more than one universe of discourse, so also may there be verification and validation sentences common to more than one universe of discourse. For example, the verification sentence "The brown suit fits you well" may occur in the language of aesthetic discourse and also in the language of prudence, since the fact that the suit fits well may be a good-making characteristic both from the aesthetic point of view and from the prudential point of view. If all we know is that the verification sentence is given as a relevant reason for buying the suit, we do not know which universe of discourse or normative language is being used. A similar ambiguity would occur in the case of a validation sentence such as "This rule of conduct is valid because the effect of its being followed in society is to further the common welfare." For such an appeal may be made in the universe of moral discourse or in the universe of political discourse. The

same standards and rules may thus be shared by different points of view. It is only when we know the *whole set* of rules of relevance governing the validation of a standard or rule that we know which universe of discourse it belongs to. There is no feature inherent in the standard or rule itself which tells us whether it is a moral one, an aesthetic one, or of some other kind. Once we know the whole set of rules of relevance governing verification and validation, we know which verification and validation sentences go with a given normative sentence and thereby know in which universe of discourse the normative sentence (and its relevant verification and validation sentences) occurs. The whole set of rules of relevance *define* the universe of discourse.

I shall now consider four corollaries to my thesis that it is rules of relevance which differentiate normative languages. 1. Normative languages cannot be distinguished according to their uses and purposes. 2. Normative languages cannot be distinguished according to who is competent or qualified to use them. 3. Normative languages cannot be distinguished according to the methods of justification appropriate to them. 4. Normative languages cannot be distinguished according to the cultures in which they are used.

1. What makes a language a normative language? The answer lies in the fact that it is used for expressing value judgments, for prescribing, and for justifying value judgments and prescriptions. These uses or purposes are common to all normative languages, since they are what *make* them normative. Consequently they cannot serve as the basis for differentiating one normative language from another. When we express a moral judgment and when we express an aesthetic judgment we are playing the same language game, namely expressing a value judgment. We are using two different languages in the same way for the same purpose. What occurs here is *one use of language*, not *the use of one language*. In like manner, an act of prescribing is one use of normative language, though many different normative languages may be so used. To utter a moral prescription, an aesthetic prescription, or a political prescription is to perform the same linguistic act within the framework of three different universes of discourse. A similar argument holds for justifying value judgments and prescriptions in different universes of discourse. To utter a verification or validation sentence for the purpose of giving reasons

for (or against) a value judgment or prescription is to perform a certain kind of linguistic act. It is to use language in a certain way for a certain purpose. Which particular language we in fact do use in this way is not to be discovered in the nature or purpose of the linguistic act itself.

One might object that the purposes for which we use moral language are different from the purposes for which we use aesthetic language. Well, what is this difference? Must we not say that we use moral language to guide the *moral* conduct of people, or to make a *moral* appraisal of their character, or to give them *moral* advice, or to educate them *morally*? What is this but to say that in guiding the conduct of people (or in appraising their character, or in giving them advice, or in educating them) we appeal to moral standards and rules rather than to aesthetic, political, or prudential standards and rules? And what makes a standard or rule a moral one rather than some other kind? Here I submit that we must refer to the kinds of reasons considered relevant in justifying value judgments and prescriptions used in the guidance, appraisal, advice, or education. What determines whether reasons are relevant is the set of rules of relevance implicitly assumed in the process of guiding, appraising, advising, or educating. So it is misleading to say that we use moral language for purposes different from those for which we use aesthetic language. Moral advice is advice given by means of moral language; aesthetic advice is advice given by means of aesthetic language. But giving advice, whether by means of one language or another, is still giving advice. It is using language for one kind of purpose in one kind of situation. To say that a person is giving moral advice rather than aesthetic advice is to say that he is carrying on normative discourse in the universe of moral discourse rather than in the universe of aesthetic discourse. Of course we might want to say that giving moral advice is giving advice from the moral point of view and giving aesthetic advice is giving advice from the aesthetic point of view. And this is perfectly correct. But it is not saying anything different from what has already been said. For the canons of reasoning that define each point of view are the rules of relevance that differentiate one universe of discourse from another.

<sup>2</sup> In his essay "Ordinary Language" (*Philosophical Review*, LXII, 2, 1953), Professor Gilbert Ryle makes the distinction between the

phrases "the use of ordinary language" and "ordinary linguistic usage." To talk about the use of ordinary language is to talk about language that is common or colloquial, used by everyone in the ordinary affairs of everyday life. It is not to talk about a specialist's use of his technical language. Ordinary language is thus to be contrasted, for example, with the language of physicists. Professor Ryle points out that no sharp dividing line can be drawn between ordinary and nonordinary language.

There is no sharp boundary between 'common' and 'uncommon,' 'technical' and 'untechnical' or 'old-fashioned' and 'current.' Is 'carburetor' a word in common use or only in rather uncommon use? Is 'puir' on the lips of Everyman, or on the lips only of Everywoman? What of 'man-slaughter,' 'inflation,' 'quotient' and 'off-side'? On the other hand, no one would hesitate on which side of this no-man's-land to locate 'isotope' or 'bread,' 'material implication' or 'if,' 'transfinite cardinal' or 'eleven,' 'weir' or 'suppose.' The edges of 'ordinary' are blurred, but usually we are in no doubt whether a diction does or does not belong to ordinary parlance. (*Ibid.*, pp. 167-168.)

In contrast to the use of ordinary language, the ordinary use of a linguistic expression refers to a standard, typical or normal use of a word or phrase, aside from whether the word or phrase is a part of ordinary language. Thus there can be a nonordinary use of a word found in ordinary language, and an ordinary use of a word found in technical language.

Whether an implement or instrument is a common or a specialist one, there remains the distinction between its stock use and non-stock uses of it. If a term is a highly technical term, or a non-technical term, there remains the distinction between its stock use and non-stock uses of it. If a term is a highly technical term, most people will not know its stock use or, *a fortiori*, any non-stock uses of it either, if it has any. If it is a vernacular term, then nearly everyone will know its stock use, and most people will also know some non-stock uses of it, if it has any. (*Ibid.*, p. 168.)

In discussing the use of normative language I have been discussing both the use of ordinary (nontechnical) language and the ordinary (stock) use of expressions (such as "good" and "ought"). All normative languages are part of the ordinary language we use in

everyday life. One does not have to be trained in a specialty or possess technical knowledge in order to be able to use at least some of the language of morals, of art criticism, or of politics. Nevertheless, all normative languages shade off into technical languages. Thus ordinary moral discourse shades off into the technical discourse of moralists, the ordinary language of art criticism shades off into the sometimes highly technical jargon of professional critics and scholars, and so for the other universes of normative discourse. In each case it would be an arbitrary act to separate ordinary normative language from technical normative language. For much of the vocabulary of evaluative and prescriptive terms that have stock uses in everyday life will also have the same stock uses in the reflective discourse of specialists.

We cannot define a normative language in terms of the technical training and competence of those who know how to use it. In this respect normative discourse differs from the discourse of physics or electrical engineering. One can plausibly define these universes of discourse in terms of the qualifications a person must have in order to be competent in them. But we cannot say simply that the language of morals is the language of moralists, in the way that we can say that the language of physics is the language of physicists (i.e., the language they use *as* physicists). Aesthetic discourse cannot be identified with the discourse of art critics, but the discourse of electrical engineering can be identified with the discourse which electrical engineers carry on *qua* electrical engineers. It is true that the discourse of electrical engineering overlaps with the discourse of physics, but this fact can be accounted for in terms of overlapping education and training in the two fields. The overlapping of normative languages cannot be accounted for in this way because they are not languages used only by people educated or trained in special skills.

In general, any technical language can be defined as the language which is used by a certain group of people when they are communicating with one another about a common field of interest and are using skills they have acquired through special education and training. Knowing how to use the technical language correctly is, of course, one of those skills. An ordinary language, whether normative or nonnormative, cannot be so defined, since the very fact that

it is an ordinary language implies that there is no special skill required for using it correctly. This holds both for the ordinary (standard, stock) uses of expressions and for nonordinary (unusual, nonstock) uses of expressions.

3. My third point is that normative languages cannot be distinguished according to the *methods* which are appropriate for carrying on rational discourse in each language. The reason for this is that the methods of rational discourse used in morals are the same as those used in art criticism, in politics, in religion, and in any other universe of normative discourse. Which *particular assertions* will count as relevant and good reasons in each universe of discourse will vary, but the *methods* of reasoning are governed by rules of valid inference and these rules are the same in all normative languages. They are the rules which define the processes of verification and validation. To verify a value judgment or prescription is to reason in a certain way, and when we reason in that way we are carrying on (with others or with ourselves) normative discourse. It does not matter in which universe of discourse such reasoning is done. The logical pattern of discourse remains the same. Similarly, the method of validation remains constant regardless of what kinds of standards or rules (moral, aesthetic, political, or other) are being validated. The method is defined by certain rules of inference and these govern the validation of standards and rules in all universes of normative discourse.

Rules of relevance, on the other hand, do not define one basic method of reasoning common to all universes of normative discourse. They tell us which particular verification and validation sentences go with which particular normative sentences. In virtue of this fact they comprise the unifying principles of a normative language. Different rules of relevance demarcate different normative languages and as such are to be contrasted with the methods of verification and validation common to them all. However, these rules of relevance are not entirely unconnected with the methods of verification and validation. Their connection can be made clear by considering the question: When a reason is offered in justification of a value judgment or a prescription, under what conditions is it a good reason? The answer is that a reason is a good reason under two conditions—when it is expressed in a verification or validation sen-



tence that is *relevant*, and when what is said in the sentence is *true*. The relevance of the sentence is determined by the rules of relevance of the normative language concerned. The truth of the sentence is determined by the methods of verification and validation, as analyzed in Chapter 3. Thus although rules of relevance vary from normative language to normative language while rules of valid inference remain constant, both sets of rules must be appealed to in deciding whether a reason is a good reason. The differentiae of a normative language are based on certain features of a reason which make it a good reason in the given universe of discourse. (They are the features which make the reason a *relevant* one.) Common to all normative languages are the features which make a reason a verifying or validating reason, according to the rules of valid inference which define the methods of verification and validation. A good reason in morals is not necessarily a good reason in aesthetics, but what makes a reason in morals a verifying or validating reason is the same thing that does so in aesthetics.

4. I turn now to a fourth corollary of the principle that rules of relevance differentiate normative languages. The same set of rules of relevance may be followed in many different societies or cultures. The concept of a universe of normative discourse is a cross-cultural concept. All sorts of cultures, for example, may use the language of morals. Their moral codes (i.e., their moral value systems) may differ. But if people in the various cultures follow the rules of relevance that define the universe of moral discourse when they try to justify value judgments and prescriptions, they all have a moral language (and a moral code). Similarly, they all carry on aesthetic discourse, no matter how diverse may be their arts and their attitudes toward the arts, if they reason about judgments of art according to the rules of relevance that define the language of aesthetics. The same considerations hold for the language of politics, the language of religion, the language of custom or etiquette, and for the other universes of normative discourse. It is a major mistake to define "realm" *ethnocentrically*, that is, to define it in such a way that only the morality of one's own culture is truly a morality, only the arts of one's own culture are genuine arts, etc. Such ethnocentric definitions would make it absurd to talk about the moralities, the arts, the

political systems, the religions, or the codes of etiquette of different societies. But it is clearly not absurd to talk this way, if we are willing to follow common usage. It is in order to account for this common usage that I define each "realm of value" in terms of a particular universe of normative discourse, distinguished from all other universes of normative discourse by a unique set of rules of relevance.

### *B. Normative languages and points of view*

This analysis of normative language provides us with a further clarification of the concept of a point of view. I said in Chapter 4 that taking a certain point of view involves a disposition to reason according to certain canons of reasoning, and that these consist of the rules of relevance and of valid inference. We now see that the canons of reasoning are actually rules governing the use of a normative language. They define a certain universe of discourse in which we express value judgments and prescriptions and give reasons for or against them.

Given this correlation of points of view with normative languages, what is the relation between a point of view and the value systems which belong to it? Two or more value systems belong to the same point of view when the same normative language is used in justifying the standards and rules which occur in them. As people try to live by each system, and as they make judgments and prescribe conduct in accordance with it, they carry on normative discourse according to certain rules of relevance and rules of valid inference. It is the rules of relevance which tell us which particular universe of discourse is involved. The value systems may be made up of different standards and rules arranged in different hierarchies of relative precedence. But as long as their validation is carried out in one universe of discourse, the value systems all belong to one point of view. Thus two dissimilar sets of standards and rules may both constitute *moral* codes if it is the language of morals which people use when they try to justify them or justify applying them to particular cases. What makes a language the language of morals are the rules of relevance that determine which verification and validation



sentences go with which normative sentences. To follow them is to take the moral point of view, regardless of which standards and rules make up the value system belonging to it.

In light of this account of points of view, how is the relative precedence of value systems belonging to different points of view to be understood? In Section A of Chapter 6 the relative precedence of value systems was defined as follows. One value system *V* takes precedence over another value system *V'* if and only if, according to a given way of life, it is better to live in accordance with *V* than in accordance with *V'*, whenever the two systems conflict. A way of life consists of many different value systems arranged in an order of relative precedence. Each system belongs to a different point of view, so that conflicts between systems may be thought of as conflicts between points of view, and the precedence of one system over another may be thought of as the precedence of one point of view over another. If we correlate points of view with normative languages, what does it mean to say that two points of view are in conflict or that one point of view takes precedence over another?

To say that two points of view are in conflict is to say, first, that there are reasons both *for* and *against* a given value judgment or prescription, and second, that the reasons *for* belong to one universe of discourse and the reasons *against* belong to another. To say that one point of view takes precedence over another (according to a given way of life) is to say that the reasons belonging to one universe of discourse *weigh more heavily* than the reasons belonging to another. A person who is living that way of life must act in accordance with the value system that takes precedence. This means that the reasons *for* his acting in a certain way outweigh the reasons *against* it. The reasons *for* consist in verification and validation sentences of the normative language corresponding to the point of view to which the superior value system belongs. The reasons *against* are reasons stated in the normative language of the opposing value system. Each set of reasons is given in a different universe of discourse. Suppose that a way of life includes both a moral value system and a prudential value system and that when the two systems are in conflict the way of life stipulates that the moral system shall take precedence. According to such a way of life, moral reasons outweigh reasons of prudence whenever it is the case that to act morally is not

to act in one's own interest and to act in one's own interest is to do what is immoral. Anyone who intends to live that way of life must allow moral reasons to make a stronger claim to his assent than reasons of prudence, whenever both sorts of reasons are relevant and are in opposition to each other. In such a way of life, we might say that the universe of moral discourse "takes precedence over" the universe of prudential discourse.

When a person commits himself to a way of life, then, he commits himself doubly. He commits himself to *living* in accordance with those value systems that take precedence over others (in situations where they conflict), and he commits himself to *thinking* in such a way that reasons in one universe of discourse are given greater weight than reasons in another universe of discourse. In stating what a person's way of life is, we may speak in terms of living according to certain sets of standards and rules, or we may speak in terms of carrying on discourse according to certain sets of canons of reasoning. In cases of conflict, these must always go together. If it is better for a person to live in accordance with value system *V* rather than value system *V'*, then it is better for him to allow reasons offered in the first universe of discourse to outweigh opposing reasons offered in the second.

What is the principle by which we determine whether reasons of one sort are to weigh more heavily than reasons of another sort? It is the same principle as that by which we determine the order of relative precedence among value systems in a way of life. In Section A of Chapter 6 I pointed out that when we commit ourselves to a certain way of life, we *decide* that one value system *shall* take precedence over another when the two are in conflict. That one value system takes precedence over another is simply one of the principles to which a person subscribes in the act of choosing a way of life. By choosing that way of life he *makes* one value system take precedence over another. In like manner a person's commitment to a certain way of life is his decision to have reasons belonging to one universe of discourse count more heavily than reasons belonging to another. This decision is simply part of the person's *ultimate normative commitment*. We cannot give *reasons* to show why moral reasons, for instance, ought to outweigh reasons of prudence, when they are in opposition to each other. We can only say we have chosen

a way of life which involves placing greater weight on moral reasons than on those of prudence. Another way of life will involve placing greater weight on reasons of prudence. In order to determine whether moral reasons are "really" superior to reasons of prudence, we must find out whether the whole way of life to which we are committed is justified. And as we saw in Chapter 6, this requires our investigating whether it would be preferred to others under conditions of a rational choice.

It may be the case, of course, that as choices among ways of life become more and more rational, there will be more and more agreement that one way of life is to be preferred to all others. Let us suppose that this does occur, and that the way of life in question is such that its moral value system takes precedence over all its other constituent value systems. We may then claim that, whenever moral reasons are opposed to other sorts of reasons, the moral reasons "really" outweigh the others. If someone were to challenge this claim, only the appeal to a rational choice among ways of life could serve as a reply. There is nothing in the universe of moral discourse itself which shows that moral reasons outweigh all others. Nor is there any higher principle outside all universes of normative discourse which requires that moral discourse take precedence over other kinds of discourse. That reasons of one sort are to outweigh reasons of another sort is precisely something we decide upon when we choose a way of life. The only further question that can legitimately be raised here concerns the justifiability of this choice, and this question can only be answered in terms of the concept of a rational choice.

## "Realms of value"

### 12

#### A. *How values may be classified*

In Chapter 1, I considered briefly the meaning of the verb "to value," which is approximately synonymous with "to hold precious or dear." A person values something when he has a certain sort of pro-attitude toward it. When the word "value" occurs as a noun, it may be used either to designate the concept of desirability (goodness, rightness, valuableness) or it may be used as a substantive. It is in the first sense that we speak of the value of something; it is in the second sense that we speak of a person's (or group's, or society's) values. In this chapter I shall be using the noun "value" in this second sense.

When "value" is used as a substantive and we talk of a person's "values," I suggest that the word refers to three sorts of things—the value judgments and prescriptions accepted by the person as being justified (whether or not he has ever in fact tried to justify them); the standards and rules which the person would appeal to if he were asked to justify his value judgments and prescriptions; and all other standards and rules which constitute the value systems the person has adopted, consciously or unconsciously. Thus a person's values