

# Value judgments

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## A. Judging and expressing a judgment

At the beginning of Chapter 1, I distinguished the process of evaluation from the outcome of the process, a value judgment. What a value judgment is can be understood largely in terms of the process of evaluation, since the sole aim of the process is to arrive at such a judgment. In this chapter I shall add, to what has already been said about value judgments, some further considerations that will help make clear what we do when we judge the value of something. I shall also try to clarify the way we use language when we express or pronounce a value judgment.

### 1. EVALUATIVE CLAIMS AS JUDGMENTS

When we arrive at a judgment as the result of a process of evaluation, we pass a verdict upon the worth or value of something. We make a claim about how good or bad it is, or about whether it is right or wrong. Judging in this sense is not the same as judging in another ordinary sense, that of assessing the empirical properties or the worth of something under less than optimum conditions. In *The Moral Point of View* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1958) Professor Kurt Baier has defined "value judgment" entirely

in terms of the latter meaning of judging. He wishes to use the term only in reference to situations in which we must, as we say in common speech, "use our judgment" in making an assertion.

A man may be a good judge of character, or of distance, or of speed. We say that he is a good judge of these things if he can usually judge these things correctly. And we say that he has this power if he can get correct results *under conditions other than optimum*; that is to say, when the pedestrian, reliable methods of verification have not yet been used, as when a person has to judge someone's character after a short acquaintance, or when he has to judge distances without being allowed to use a tape measure, or speeds without a speedometer. Judgment, then, involves giving correct answers under difficult conditions. (K. Baier, *op. cit.*, p. 55.)

Although this is certainly one of the ways we use the word "judgment" in everyday life, it is not of any special philosophical importance when we want to understand what a value judgment is. A value judgment does not cease to be a value judgment when it is made *under optimum conditions*. What we want to know as philosophers is not the difference between judging a person's character after a short acquaintance and assessing that character when we know him well. It is rather the difference between judging (evaluating) a person's character under *either* condition, and judging distance or speed. We do not make *value* judgments when we are estimating ("judging") how far away something is or how fast it is going. But we do make a value judgment of someone's character when we assert that he is dishonest, even if we do not have to use our judgment (in Professor Baier's sense) in making the assertion.

In the sense of the word which I wish to elucidate here, a judgment may or may not be made under optimum conditions. To call an assertion a judgment is, in its wildest sense, to indicate that it is made as a result of a process of weighing the reasons for and against whatever it is that is being asserted. To call it a value judgment is to indicate that the process was one of trying to decide upon the true value or worth of the thing being judged. This is what I have analyzed in Chapter 1 as the process of evaluation. When we begin such a process, we enter upon a course of reasoning for the purpose of coming to a decision about the value of something. We do this when there has been some doubt in our own

mind or some dispute with others about the matter. The process of evaluation is thus aimed at deciding an issue, settling a question, or resolving a doubt. The decision which terminates the process consists in making a claim, namely that the evaluatum has a certain value or disvalue. To call this claim a "judgment" is to draw attention to the fact that it is the result of a process of weighing reasons. It is to say that the person who makes the claim is committed in a certain way; if the judgment is challenged, he must be disposed to give reasons in support of it. This is why it is always legitimate to demand that a value judgment be justified. We shall see in the next chapter that the first step in a rational response to this demand consists in retracing the process of evaluation whereby the person arrived at his judgment.

By going through the process of evaluation, one attempts to establish the claim that the evaluatum fulfills (or fails to fulfill) a standard to a certain degree or that it complies with (or violates) a rule. One attempts to justify one's grading or ranking of the evaluatum. But to have successfully established this claim is not to have justified the value judgment completely. For the value judgment not only consists in the claim that the evaluatum has a certain value. It also contextually implies a further claim, the justification of which requires one to go beyond the process of evaluation. This is the claim that the standards or rules used in the evaluation process are appropriate or valid. How this claim can be justified is a question I shall consider in detail in Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6. Here I only wish to point out that a value judgment *explicitly* claims that something fulfills (or fails to fulfill) a standard or that something is (or is not) in accordance with a rule, and *implicitly* claims that the standard or rule correctly applies to the thing in question.

## 2. THE EMOTIVE THEORY OF VALUE

This conception of a value judgment contradicts the so-called "emotive" theory of value. According to that theory, any sentence in which an alleged value judgment is stated merely "expresses" (evinces, displays) a pro-attitude or con-attitude on the part of the person who utters the sentence. To utter such a sentence is not to pronounce a judgment, since it is not to make an assertion of any sort; it is simply to express one's attitude toward something. This

theory raises important questions about the language of value. What various functions does normative language have? How are we using language when we express value judgments? If my view of value judgments is correct, then evaluative sentences are utterances in which we do make assertions, and assertions which people can affirm or deny on rational grounds.

Suppose we grant that evaluative sentences do express some kind of assertion. Such sentences may still express (in another sense of "express") the attitudes of the speaker. Any evaluative sentence does evince or display the speaker's attitude, if we mean by this that anyone who understands the sentence can infer with some degree of probability the speaker's attitude toward what the sentence is about. But how important is this fact for our understanding of value language? If in no way denies that value judgments can be rationally justified, since an evaluative sentence may express an assertion *as well as* evince an attitude. Moreover, attitudes themselves are not necessarily irrational. We may justify attitudes just as we may justify assertions, although the methods of justification may not be the same.

Nor is the expression of attitudes a *distinctive* function of value language. In the first place, when we say that evaluative sentences express attitudes we must remember that neutral attitudes as well as pro- and con-attitudes may be so expressed. The early emotivists completely overlooked neutral value judgments (that the evaluatum is fair, so-so, unobjectionable, etc.). Neutral judgments are clearly evaluative in that they are one way in which we *grade* things. Therefore we cannot say that the expression of pro- and con-attitudes is the distinctive function of value language. Not all value judgments show that we like or dislike, favor or disfavor something. Neutral value sentences express a different sort of attitude, in which we are neither for nor against a thing, neither like nor dislike it. I would suggest that, because neutral value judgments were overlooked, the expressive quality of value language appeared to the emotivists to have more importance than it does. In the second place, the fact that a sentence evinces an attitude in no way implies that it expresses a value judgment. I evince my attitude when I say in a terrified voice "The house is on fire," but this is not pronouncing a value judgment; I am not making an assertion as a

result of a process of evaluation. Similarly I might say "What a terrible noise!" and so give direct expression to my con-attitude toward the noise, without grading or ranking the noise according to a standard. Consequently, the expression of pro-attitudes and con-attitudes is not a distinctive feature of value language. Nor does all value language have this feature. We can, of course, take into account neutral attitudes and say that value language expresses these as well as pro- and con-attitudes; but then have we said anything important about value language?

### 3. JUDGMENT AND EXPRESSION

Let us consider further the relation between value judgments and the language in which they are expressed. It is possible for a person to judge something to be of value without expressing it in a sentence or other kind of utterance; a value judgment must be capable of being stated but need not actually be stated. We may think of it as a capacity to answer a question. The act of answering is the linguistic act of pronouncing the judgment. The question is "What is the value of this object (act, event, etc.)?" and the answer is the uttering of a value judgment, "The value of this object (act, event, etc.) is V." Now the state of being able to answer the question is the state of having come to a verdict, of having made up one's mind. To be in that state is to have a mental disposition of settled opinion concerning the matter, so that if one were asked the question one would be disposed to give a certain answer. The process of evaluation is the process whereby one acquires such a mental disposition. To arrive at a decision concerning the value of something is to acquire the capacity to answer the question "What is its value?" We say then that we "judge" the thing as having a certain value. And this means either that we actually pronounce judgment upon the thing or that we *would* do so if we were asked what its value was.

A value judgment must be distinguished from the act of uttering it. It is perfectly correct to say of someone that he judges something to be good even though he is not actually engaged in stating that it is good. Indeed, in order to say that someone was actually pronouncing judgment on something we would use the present participle: "He is judging." To say "He judges" is normally to say that the person has a certain mental disposition, not that he is

performing a linguistic act. The past tense brings out the dispositional use of "judge" even more clearly. Take the sentence: "When he was an art student he judged this to be a good painting." We certainly do not mean by this that during the whole time the person was an art student he continually uttered the statement: "This is a good painting." We mean that he would utter such a statement if the appropriate occasion arose. The noun "judgment" as well as the verb "to judge" has a dispositional use. Thus we say "According to his judgment this is a good painting" or more simply "In his judgment this is a good painting." A bit more stiffly: "His judgment of this painting is that it is a good one." In none of these instances does "judgment" refer to a linguistic act. We specify the act of expressing a judgment by such statements as "He surprised us all by pronouncing the judgment that this is a good painting" or "Yesterday in my presence he expressed the judgment that it is a good painting."

Judging the value of something, then, is not the same as *telling* someone (others or ourselves) what its value is. It includes, however, being able to do so upon demand. A value judgment remains a value judgment even if it is not expressed or asserted, but it must be expressible or assertable. One cannot say "I have made up my mind about the value of this, but I cannot say what its value is." To have made up one's mind is to have the capacity to state how one judges something, and this means to have the capacity to answer the question "What is the value of this?" Judging is in this way like believing, having an opinion, supposing, affirming, and denying. It makes no sense to speak of a person as believing something and at the same time as not being able to say what it is he believes. Of course a person might believe something and not say what he believes. But he must be *able* to say what he believes. The same is true of having an opinion about something, or supposing that something were so, or affirming or denying that something is so. These are all dispositions of an intellectual sort and must therefore be understood in terms of the linguistic acts (as well as the behavioral acts) which give evidence for their existence.

### 4. THE LANGUAGE OF VALUE JUDGMENTS

Let us now turn to another question. When we pronounce or express a value judgment, is there a particular sort of statement

that we make? Are there special "value sentences" or "value expressions" which indicate that a value judgment is being uttered and not some other kind of judgment or belief? If we examine the language which we actually use in everyday circumstances to express value judgments, we find we must answer in the negative. The expression of value judgments cannot be limited to any particular set of words. What makes a statement the expression of a value judgment is not *which words* are used but the ways in which, and the purposes for which, they are used.

Perhaps the simplest way of expressing a (nonneutral) value judgment is by means of a declarative sentence of the form "This is good (bad)" or "This is right (wrong)." These sentences are not restricted in their meaning to one type of value judgment, such as moral judgment or aesthetic judgment. But there are many other typical ways of expressing value judgments in sentences which are not restricted in their meaning to any one type of judgment. A few may be listed: "This is desirable (undesirable)"; "This is valuable (valueless)"; "This is worthwhile, worthy (worthless, unworthy)"; "This is commendable, praiseworthy (reprehensible, blameworthy)"; "This is excellent, fine, splendid (poor, shoddy, shallow)"; "This is satisfactory, adequate (unsatisfactory, inadequate)"; "This is effective, successful (ineffective, unsuccessful)"; "This is helpful, useful (harmful, useless)"; "This is correct, proper (incorrect, improper)." Some of these expressions, of course, are more appropriately used for certain types of value judgments than for others, but they all cut across judgments of more than one type. Do the various predicates used in these sentences have something in common which would identify them as value predicates? The answer is no, for in certain contexts many of these words do not express value judgments at all, and it is perfectly possible to express value judgments without using these words. Let us see how this is so.

There are at least two ways in which it is possible to use these words and not express value judgments by means of them. These uses may be called for convenience the "good-of-its-kind" use and the "conventional" use. The first use occurs when we say that something is a good (fine, excellent, satisfactory, perfect, adequate) example of a certain kind of thing. "I came down with a good cold last night"; "You need a good spanking"; "This is a good torture

machine" illustrate this use. In all such cases what is called good is being judged according to standards which the speaker has *not* adopted as standards of true value or worth. To say that something is good-of-its-kind is to say that it fulfills certain standards to a high degree. *But one does not have a pro-attitude toward the thing in consequence of this fact.* Indeed, one may have a con-attitude toward it. A good torture machine may be a bad thing (i.e., a thing toward which we take a con-attitude) *because* it is a good torture machine. To say that it is a good torture machine does not con-textually imply either a pro-attitude or a con-attitude toward it. As Professor Baylis has pointed out, to say that something is good-of-its-kind is to say that it is good in a certain respect, and this in no way implies that we consider that particular respect a reason for judging the thing good on the whole.

In labelling something good of its kind, we do not commit ourselves to the assertion that the kind of thing concerned is itself good. In labelling something good in one or more respects we do not thereby label it good on the whole. Consequently it does not follow from 'X is a good thing of kind Y' or 'X is good in respect Y' that 'X is a good thing.' (C. A. Baylis, *op. cit.*, p. 488.)

Professor Baylis proceeds to give two illuminating examples. One is that of a good lie, which for moral reasons might well be judged a worse deed than a bad lie. The other example is the assertion that a gun is a good gun. "Since the uses to which a gun may be put are so varied, some good, some bad, we hesitate to label an object of that kind as in general a good thing or a bad thing." (*Loc. cit.*) These examples help us to see the general rule which underlies good-of-its-kind judgments. Whenever we judge a means to an end purely in respect of its effectiveness as a means, without judging the value or disvalue of the end, we are making such a judgment. Professor C. I. Lewis's distinction between utility and instrumental value, discussed in Chapter I, can be elucidated by this. The utility of an object depends on how effective it is in bringing about some end, regardless of the value or disvalue of the end. The instrumental value of something, on the other hand, depends on its capacity to serve as a means to a valuable end. (Its instrumental disvalue would be its effectiveness as a means to a disvaluable end.)

Thus the judgment that something has utility is a good-of-its-kind judgment, while a judgment that something has instrumental value or disvalue is a value judgment.

The purely conventional use of so-called "value predicates" is also to be distinguished from the straightforward expression of value judgments. The conventional use, indeed, may become ironic or sarcastic, so that a sentence with a positive value predicate will express a negative value judgment. Mr. Hare calls the conventional use of value words the "inverted commas" use. Thus we might say "It was a very proper party attended by very proper people." The word "proper" is being used almost as if it were in quotation marks, to indicate that the party and the people are not being approved of as proper. In fact the statement expresses a con-attitude. The evaluative meaning of the word "proper," which was originally positive, has now become negative. Mr. Hare offers the following explanation of this linguistic phenomenon:

This procedure is for the word to be gradually emptied of its evaluative meaning through being used more and more in what I shall call a conventional or "inverted commas" way; when it has lost all its evaluative meaning it comes to be used as a purely descriptive word for designating certain characteristics of the object, and, when it is required to commend or condemn objects in this class, some quite different value-word is imported for the purpose. (R. M. Hare, *op. cit.*, p. 120.)

The example which Hare gives to illustrate this process is the word "eligible" as it occurs in the phrase "eligible bachelor."

'Eligible' started off as a value-word, meaning 'such as should be chosen (sc. as a husband for one's daughters)'. Then, because the criteria of eligibility came to be fairly rigid, it acquired a descriptive meaning too. . . . In the twentieth century, partly as a reaction from the over-rigid standards of the nineteenth, which resulted in the word 'eligible' lapsing into a conventional use, the second method has been adopted. If now someone said 'He is an eligible bachelor', we could almost feel the inverted commas round the word, and even the irony; we should feel that if that was all that could be said for him, there must be something wrong with him. For commending bachelors, on the other hand, we now use quite different words; we say 'He is likely to make a very good husband for Jane'. . . . (*Ibid.*, pp. 120-121.)

The shift described here from a positive evaluative meaning to a primarily descriptive meaning, and from this to a negative evaluative meaning, can easily be interpreted in terms of my analysis of evaluation. When the word has what Mr. Hare calls "evaluative meaning," one normally infers a pro-attitude (if the evaluative meaning is positive) or a con-attitude (if it is negative) on the part of the speaker toward whatever the word is predicated of. This pro- or con-attitude is taken toward the object insofar as the object fulfills or fails to fulfill certain standards, that is, insofar as it has certain good-making or bad-making characteristics. What Mr. Hare calls the "descriptive meaning" of a value word is the set of characteristics which an object must have in order for the word to be applied correctly to it. In a value judgment these characteristics would be precisely the good-making and bad-making characteristics in virtue of which the speaker takes a pro-attitude or con-attitude toward the object. A primarily descriptive word is one whose criteria of application are not standards of evaluation; the characteristics which something must have for the word to be applied to it are not good-making or bad-making characteristics. They do not call forth definite pro-attitudes and con-attitudes on the part of the speaker.

I have been arguing that there is no set of words which provide the distinguishing mark of value judgments because many words that are ordinarily used in certain contexts to express value judgments may be used for other purposes in other contexts. A second reason, I submit, is that value judgments may be expressed in a variety of ways other than by means of declarative sentences using the typical "value predicates."

First, there are simple descriptive or matter-of-fact statements made in certain contexts. The reader's imagination can readily supply situations in which the following express value judgments:

- "This apple has a worm in it!"
- "It was a clear violation of the rules of the game."
- "They're not diamonds; they're rhinestones."
- "I get thirty miles to the gallon!"
- "People don't do that."
- "This is the second time he has been in trouble with the police."

In each of these sentences some good-making or bad-making characteristic is specified. In light of it, we know that the speaker has a pro- or con-attitude toward the object being described. In each case both the class of comparison and the standards (or rules) of evaluation, though implicit, can be inferred from the context (i.e., they are contextually implied). The evaluation process may not have taken place immediately prior to the utterance of the sentence, but this is not necessary for the sentence to express a value judgment. If the speaker were asked for a complete account of the reasons behind his statement and if he were to give such a complete account, he would carry out a process of evaluation leading to the value judgment which is expressed in the sentence (but which could also be expressed by using the typical "value predicates").

Second, there are reports of the speaker's own attitudes. In certain obvious kinds of contexts the following sentences express value judgments as well as propositions that are psychologically true or false:

"I admire that kind of man."

"I am strongly in favor of federal aid to education."

"We fell in love with the house the moment we looked at it."

"I loathe those cigarette ads."

Third, there are exclamations which, when uttered in a certain tone of voice in a certain kind of situation, give expression to value judgments:

"Superb!" "Wonderful!" "Bravo!"

"Thank goodness that's over!"

"He didn't!"

"How could you?"

Fourth, almost all expressions of wishes and hopes contextually imply value judgments:

"May your enterprise succeed."

"If only he would stop shouting for a moment."

"I hope they won't do that again."

Finally, I shall point out in Chapter 7 a number of uses of the word "ought" which are evaluative.

These examples indicate that there is no clearly demarcated class

of words or sentences which is appropriate exclusively for the expression of value judgments. Uttering a value judgment is not uttering a sentence of a special kind. Rather, it is using language in a certain way. It is not *which* words are used, but *how* they are used, which is distinctive of the expression of value judgments. Words are used to express a value judgment when we formulate to others or to ourselves a decision we have arrived at by a process of evaluation. Our utterance is then an act of expressing our settled opinion about the value of something. Only then does our use of language constitute the pronouncing of a value judgment.

### B. Value judgments and imperatives

Any account of evaluative language should include consideration not only of how words are used to express value judgments, but also of the effect of evaluative language upon the hearer. Some emotivists have distinguished between the "expressive" function of language and the "quasi-imperative" or "dynamic" function of language. The expressive function of language is its capacity to evince or display the psychological state of the speaker. The dynamic function is its capacity as a stimulus to evoke a response in the hearer. As we shall see in Chapter 10, the functions of language are much more complex and multifarious than the foregoing distinction would seem to indicate. Nevertheless, there is a difference between considering language from the point of view of the speaker (or writer) and considering it from that of the hearer (or reader). Since we have been approaching value language primarily from the former point of view, let us now proceed to look at it from the latter.

Here the main issue, it seems to me, is whether the expression of value judgments has the same effect as *imperatives*. Is the purpose of value judgments to guide people's choices? Is uttering a value judgment a way of getting the hearer to do something? In order to answer these questions I shall make a comparison between value judgments on the one hand and orders, commands, and directives on the other. (I am putting aside until Part II a discussion of prescriptions, which might seem at first to be a kind of intermediary

between value judgments and imperatives. I shall argue in Chapter 7 that this is not the case.)

There are three basic respects in which value judgments differ from orders, commands, and directives. (1) We can order, command, or direct someone to do something only if it is in his power to do it. If he cannot possibly do the act (or on the other hand if he cannot help but do it) there is no point in ordering, commanding, or directing him to do it. But we do make value judgments of things which people can do nothing about. (2) The very point of imperatives is to get the hearer to do something. This is not the normal purpose of uttering value judgments, although a given judgment may be uttered for this purpose in certain circumstances. (3) It is not legitimate or proper, in the context of receiving orders, commands, or directives, for the hearer to ask "Why should I do what you say?" But it is always legitimate and proper for the hearer of a value judgment to demand reasons for accepting the judgment. Asking for a justification is always out of place in the former case and never out of place in the latter case.

#### 1. IMPERATIVES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To utter an imperative is simply to tell someone to do something. The purpose of uttering it is to have him do what he is told, and its usual effect is that he does it. To utter a value judgment is to tell someone what the value of something is. There is no distinctive purpose for uttering the judgment, and only in special circumstances is its purpose that of having someone do something. Whether it does have such an effect depends on a number of factors. These include the hearer's respect for the evaluator and the hearer's being in a position of being able to do something about the evaluation. Perhaps the closest parallel between imperatives and value judgments occurs in the following kind of situation. Someone is trying to decide which among several objects to choose or which among several courses of action to take. That is, he is engaged in a process of deliberation. Unable to make up his mind, he asks someone else "What shall I choose (do)?" The person asked then carries out an evaluation of the various alternatives (that is, he also engages in the process of deliberation). As a result of that evaluation, he utters a value judgment to the effect that one of the alternatives is the

best one. The person who raised the question then chooses (does) that alternative.

Now this is an analysis of the situation in which one person *gives advice, offers guidance, or makes recommendations* to another, who then follows the advice by doing what is recommended. In this way a value judgment made by one person can directly guide another's choices and acts. We become confused when we think that this situation is the same as that in which one person gives orders, commands, or directives to another, who then obeys by doing what he is commanded to do. We are led into this confusion because it is possible to make recommendations or give advice by means of *imperatives* instead of value statements. When the person who seeks advice asks "What shall I choose (do)?" one might answer him by saying "Choose this" (or "Do this"). By uttering such imperatives, however, one is not ordering, commanding, or giving a directive. One is instead making a recommendation. Whether an imperative expresses a recommendation or a command depends entirely on the circumstances in which it is uttered.

Since not all imperatives are expressions of orders, commands, or directives, a further question arises. In what circumstances *do* they express these things? One person can issue an order, command, or directive to another only if he has authority over the other. Such a practice is understandable only in a social context of authority and subordination. A policeman can give orders to a citizen; a parent can tell a child what he must do; an army officer can command his soldiers; a business executive can issue directives to his subordinates. But we do not say that a person commands, gives orders, or issues directives to his friends, and only a very domineering host can be said to command his guests. (We say that he acts *as if* he had authority over them.) When the relations among people are governed by rules that give one of them authority over the other, the rules define the right of that person to command the others. The others are required by the rules to obey him. If this relationship does not hold among people, some of them can still use language to try to get the others to do certain acts. They can *make a request*: "Would you please close the window?" They can *make a suggestion or propose an action*: "Shall we close the window?" "Let's close the window. It's getting cold in here." They can *express a wish*: "I wish



someone would close the window." A rather aggressive person could even use an *imperative*: "Close the window, please. It's getting cold in here." But this imperative would not express a command, order, or directive. The person who uttered it would not be in a position of authority; he would not be able to *require* that someone do as he says.

Advising and recommending are distinguished from commanding, ordering, and issuing directives by the fact that a person has a free choice to accept or reject advice, to follow or to decline to follow recommendations, but he does not have a free choice to obey or disobey a command. It makes no sense to say "I command you to do this but you are perfectly free to disobey my command." The person who is commanded must be *capable* of obeying or disobeying, since commanding a person who has no choice at all would be pointless. A person is never commanded to do something which lies beyond his power, or which he has a compulsion to do whether he is commanded to do it or not. In spite of all this, a person is not *free* to choose whether or not to obey. The command comes from an authority having the right to command, as defined by established rules, and these rules can be applied to enforce obedience. No such element of enforcement occurs in giving or receiving advice.

## 2. VALUE JUDGMENTS AND THE GUIDANCE OF CONDUCT

In discussing the way value judgments can function as advice or recommendations, I have considered only situations in which a person who is deliberating asks for guidance or seeks advice and receives a value judgment in reply. There are many sorts of situation in which it is a mistake to think of value judgments as guiding choice or conduct, or to think that uttering a value judgment is an act of making a recommendation. This holds true for both moral and nonmoral judgments, and for judgments according to both standards and rules. That moral judgments are not always stated for the purpose of guiding choice or conduct can be seen by considering judgments of past events and historical figures. To judge that it was wrong of President Truman to order the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima is not to make a recommendation to anyone, since it is about a past event. Can we say that it is an *indirect* recommendation, designed to guide the decisions of future presidents in similar

circumstances? Well, it *could* have this function, even though the intention of the person making the judgment was simply to let it be known how he felt about that particular past decision. The *effect* of his utterance may or may not in fact be to guide the decisions of future presidents. Suppose, however, that all nuclear weapons were destroyed by international agreement. Would this mean that there would then be no point in making a moral judgment of President Truman's decision? On the contrary, there would be a number of purposes for uttering such a judgment—to give an example of a decision where moral factors were involved, to have people reflect about crucial decisions in human history, to enlighten people about the responsibilities of leadership, or simply to condemn war. Thus a value judgment does not become pointless when it does not serve directly to guide conduct. Let us take another example. Suppose an historian writes in a history of Western civilization that the Roman Empire at a certain period was a corrupt and degenerate society. Does it make any sense to say that the historian is giving advice or making a recommendation? It makes sense to say this only if the persons to whom the judgment is addressed have a choice about the matter. Is the historian, then, guiding his readers' choices? He might be. Although his readers are not in a position of choosing among alternative kinds of societies (unless they happen to be dictators), they are in a position of being able to exert at least some influence on the moral direction of their own society. The historian, in other words, might be a moralist with a message, offering advice to his readers. But then again he might not. His purpose in making the judgment might simply be to set forth where he stands on the matter. Or he might make the judgment in the context of a certain interpretation of history, without implying that this interpretation is to be used as a guide to the future.

That nonmoral judgments may also be made without serving as advice or recommendations can be seen from the following examples. An art critic might judge a painting to be good even though he knows that his readers or hearers will have no opportunity to see it; it may be in a private collection whose owner will not lend it to galleries or museums for public display. In no sense is the critic trying to guide anyone's choice. Professor Sidney Zink has suggested another case of a value judgment which is certainly not



uttered to guide anyone's choice: "During the conversation of a party of elderly persons one of them happens to say that the best time of all was when they were young, and the others meditatively agree." (S. Zink, "Objectivism and Mr. Hare's *Language of Morals*," *Mind*, LXVI, 261; 1957, p. 82.)

Similar considerations hold for value judgments that are made by appeal to rules rather than standards. It is true that we often judge acts to be right or wrong when we are deliberating about what we (or someone else) should do. To utter the judgment that one of the acts open to a person's choice is right is to recommend that the act be done, assuming that no other act is judged to be better. And to say that one of the acts is wrong is to recommend that it not be done, assuming that some acts are not wrong. But it is not necessary that judgments of right and wrong be uttered in the context of guiding a person's conduct. There may be no headhunters left in the world and yet it makes perfectly good sense to say "It is wrong to keep the shrunken heads of people as trophies." The objection might be raised that, granted such a judgment has no direct application in the world today (assuming that no one is a headhunter or is seriously thinking of becoming one), it nevertheless appeals to a rule (such as a rule against taking pride in the killing of other human beings) which might well cover the conduct of some people in the world today. In reply to this objection I would not deny that all moral *rules* have the function of guiding (more accurately, regulating) the conduct of living human beings. But this does not imply that all moral *judgments* are uttered as recommendations, since we can only recommend acts that are open to the choice of living human beings and we might judge an act to be right or wrong which is no longer open to such choice. Some day, one hopes, there will be no occasion when uttering the judgment "It is wrong to own slaves" will function as practical advice to a person who is deliberating about what he should do. One might still utter the judgment, however, in reflecting about the past, or in teaching moral principles, or in coming to understand the concept of human rights.

My conclusion is that value judgments, whether they are moral or nonmoral and whether they appeal to standards or to rules, are not uttered for one distinctive or primary purpose. Evaluative

language has many functions in everyday use, not only from the speaker's point of view but also from the hearer's point of view.

### 3. VALUE JUDGMENTS AND JUSTIFICATION

I shall now consider, as a way of introducing the problem to be discussed in the next four chapters, the third point of difference between value judgments and commands. When a person is in the position of receiving a command he cannot rightly demand a justification for his obeying it, whereas one can always rightly demand a justification for a value judgment. It is not legitimate or proper for a soldier, when ordered to stand at attention, to ask "Why?" Nor is it legitimate or proper for him *in that situation* to ask why he should be required to obey anyone else's orders. When he joined the army he committed himself to following certain rules, among which are those giving officers the authority to command him to do certain things. As an active member of an army it is out of place for him to question those rules or to question any particular command given under those rules. As an individual reflecting about the army, however, or as a person deliberating whether or not to join, it is legitimate and proper for him to raise this sort of question. He is then demanding that a certain social institution governed by a whole system of rules be justified. He is, as it were, outside the practice of army life, not engaged in it. This difference need not be temporal. It is a difference of social role, and one who is employed as a soldier can play both roles. But he cannot play both roles *as* soldier. As a soldier he is subject to the rules which define the practice in which he is engaged. As a thinking man he may demand reasons for there being such rules, even though at the time of his thinking he is (employed as) a soldier. The same considerations apply to anyone engaged in a social practice. The employee of a company may not properly demand justification for a policy laid down by the management, in so far as he is functioning as an employee (i.e., doing his job according to the company's rules and regulations). But as an individual human being he can properly demand this, and he can properly demand it as a member of *another* organization, such as a labor union. As a member of a union he can be critical of the rules of the company. But then he cannot, in that role, be critical of the rules of the union. It is only outside a practice that we can criticize

the rules by which it is defined. This is part of the logic of having a social role (i.e., of engaging in a social practice). To be engaged in a practice *means* to be in a position where one's behavior is governed by the rules which define the practice. If the rules do not govern one's behavior then *by definition* one is outside the practice. (A more detailed analysis of a social practice and its defining rules will be given in the next chapter.)

In circumstances of receiving advice or recommendations, on the other hand, it is always proper and legitimate for the person being advised to demand reasons for following the advice. By demanding them he is not removing himself from his role as an advisee; it is part of his role to be able to make this demand. (In this respect the role of being an advisee is like that of the student in a college classroom. It is legitimate and proper for the student to ask his teacher to give reasons in support of his statements.) What the advisee, as an advisee, cannot challenge is the rules governing the practice of giving and receiving advice. If he does this, he is by that fact no longer engaged in the practice and hence no longer an advisee.

The right to demand of the adviser a justification for any piece of advice is one of the rules defining the conditions of advice (i.e., defining the social practice of giving and receiving advice.) If the advisee were not granted this right, it would not be the case that he was being advised, but rather that he was being coerced, goaded, he was being persuaded, or commanded (ordered, directed). To be advised is to be guided, not goaded. (This distinction will be explored at greater length in Chapter 7.) In short, all advice must be rational, in the sense that it is never out of place for the advisee to demand that reasons be given to justify it. There is something radically wrong with the following two conversations:

- (1) "I recommend that you do X."  
"Why?"  
"Oh I don't know. I have no particular reasons."
- (2) "I recommend that you do X."  
"Why?"  
"Don't be impertinent. Just do as I say."

Clearly a person is not making a recommendation if he tells someone to do something out of mere whim or caprice, or if he tells

someone that he must do something just because he is told to do it. To make recommendations is to engage in a rational practice, that is, it presupposes the justifiability of what is being recommended.

It should be made clear, however, that this condition does not require either that the adviser actually give reasons whenever he gives advice, or that he be able to give *good* reasons for his advice. It requires only that he recognize the right of the advisee to ask for reasons, and that he be able and willing to reply to the demand. He might not be able to *satisfy* the demand, since the advisee might not consider the reasons which he offers good reasons. Should the advisee not make the demand, the adviser is not under obligation to supply reasons along with his advice. But he must always *have* reasons and must always be able to supply them on demand.

When a recommendation is made by means of expressing a value judgment, the presupposition is that the judge can justify his judgment (at least in his own mind). Indeed, in *any* situation in which a value judgment is uttered, it is always legitimate and proper for the hearer to ask "Why should I accept your judgment?" This does not mean that the judge will be able to give a satisfactory answer, but he must acknowledge the legitimacy of the question. Whether it is done as part of the practice of giving advice or not, uttering a value judgment is always a rational act. It presupposes its own justifiability. The reason for this is that a value judgment contextually implies a reasoning process in which something has been evaluated. To judge the value of something is not merely to have a pro-attitude or con-attitude toward it, nor is it merely a method of getting others to do something. It is an assertion, a claim that something is the case (namely, that an object has a certain value or disvalue). Such an assertion is the outcome of a process of evaluation and may always be challenged. A person who pronounces judgment upon something must have reasons for saying what he does. His position as a judge or evaluator is such that he must try to justify his statement whenever that is demanded. Supposing that he could successfully justify his statement, what would the justification consist in? This is an extremely difficult and complex question. It will be my central concern for the next four chapters.