

acts of kind K in circumstances C." This would not be a prescription unless the rule was stated under the four necessary conditions of prescribing and under the additional conditions that the addressee be in circumstances C either in the present or in the foreseeable future.

Thirdly, there are a variety of expressions that are milder in their feeling-tone than "ought" sentences, imperatives, and "necessity" sentences, and yet which may be used prescriptively. "I suggest that you do X." "My advice is, do X." "I recommend that you do X." "If I were you, I should do X." All these utterances are prescriptive whenever they are made under the four necessary conditions of prescribing, and they are always made in the context of advising, recommending, or guiding.

I conclude, then, that not all acts of prescribing are utterances of "ought" sentences. It should be noted that the nature of prescribing as I have tried to elucidate it in this chapter is common to all kinds of prescriptions. I wish to emphasize that *moral* prescriptions have no special status among prescriptions in general. The concept of prescribing does, of course, apply to moral prescriptions, such as "You ought to keep your promises." But it also applies in equal measure to all of the following nonmoral prescriptions. "You ought to change the frame on that picture" (aesthetic). "You ought to build the new factory in this city" (economic). "You ought to repeat the experiment under more careful controls" (intellectual). "You ought to kneel during prayer" (religious). "You ought to reinforce the steel on that bridge" (technological). "You ought to put the fork on the left side of the plate" (etiquette or custom). "You ought to throw a pass on the next play" (playing a game). The nature of prescribing does not change as the point of view from which a prescription is made changes. What makes the uttering of a sentence an act of prescribing is not the point of view taken by the speaker, but the kind of sentence it is and the conditions under which it is uttered. In this chapter I have tried to show what kinds of sentences are prescriptive and what conditions must be fulfilled if the uttering of such a sentence is to be an act of prescribing.

Prescribing and evaluating

8

A. Prescriptions and value judgments compared

The purpose of this chapter is twofold: to examine the similarities and differences between prescriptions and value judgments, and to understand how they are logically related to each other. My principal thesis will be that prescriptions are justified in the same way that value judgments are justified. I intend to show that the justification of a prescription is nothing but the justification of a set of value judgments.

What precisely is the difference between prescribing an act to someone and judging the value of something? There are three major points of difference: 1. An act of prescribing is a linguistic act, whereas a value judgment is a mental disposition. 2. All prescribing is done for the purpose of guiding conduct, but most evaluating is not done for this purpose. 3. Prescribing an act is not giving a reason for doing it, while on the contrary evaluating an act is giving a reason for (or against) doing it. I shall consider each point in turn.

1. To prescribe an act to someone is always to *tell* him that he ought to do the act, but we may judge something to have a certain value without telling anyone about it. When, as the result of a

process of evaluation, we make up our minds about an object's value, we acquire a disposition to answer in a certain way the question "What is the value of the object?" This disposition is a settled opinion, as distinct from the linguistic occurrences in which we express that opinion to others or to ourselves. Uttering an evaluative sentence is not itself an act of judging the value of something. It is the expression of a judgment already formed. Uttering a prescriptive sentence, on the other hand, is itself an act of prescribing (so long as it occurs under the four conditions necessary for prescribing). We cannot prescribe that someone do an act unless we utter a sentence in which we say that he ought to do it. And we must address our sentence to the person himself. Every prescription is a form of direct address. He to whom one prescribes must be in the position of an addressee and he who prescribes must be in the position of a speaker (or writer). A value judgment, on the contrary, need not be addressed to anyone, and the evaluator need not be in the position of a speaker (or writer).

Suppose we compare a prescription not with a value judgment itself, but with the *expression* of a value judgment. How would these two kinds of linguistic act differ? Their basic differences lie in points 2 and 3 already stated, and I shall consider these points in detail below. For the moment, let us see how close a parallel can be drawn between an act of prescribing and an act of uttering or expressing a value judgment.

A person prescribes when he utters a prescriptive sentence in earnest and affirms what it says. A person expresses a value judgment when he utters an evaluative sentence in earnest and affirms what it says. Each act of uttering a sentence must have been preceded by an evaluation process. In the case of a prescriptive sentence, the evaluation process was a process of deliberation in which the alternatives open to the addressee in his situation of choice were evaluated and ranked in relation to one another. In the case of an evaluative sentence, the evaluation process was the process whereby the speaker arrived at the judgment he is expressing in the sentence. Common to both cases are the following five elements: (a) a *pro-attitude* or *con-attitude* on the part of the speaker toward what is being prescribed or judged; (b) a *point of view* from which the prescription or judgment is being made; (c) a

standard or *rule* according to which the prescribed act or judged object has been evaluated; (d) a set of *good-making* and *bad-making characteristics* possessed by the prescribed act or judged object; and (e) a *class of comparison* within which the prescribed act or judged object has been evaluated.

Just as uttering in earnest and affirming the sentence "X is good" contextually implies a pro-attitude on the part of the speaker toward object X, so prescribing by means of the sentence "You ought to do X" contextually implies a pro-attitude on the part of the speaker toward the addressee's doing act X. Similarly, negative evaluative sentences ("X is bad") and negative prescriptions ("You ought not to do X") contextually imply con-attitudes. The parallel between evaluative sentences and prescriptions also holds with regard to points of view. At the end of the last chapter I mentioned various kinds of prescriptions, classified according to the points of view from which they are made. Thus there is a moral "ought" and an aesthetic "ought," a religious "ought" and an intellectual "ought," an "ought" of etiquette and an "ought" of prudence, and so on. The distinction between these various "oughts" is based on the *different kinds of standards and rules used in the evaluation of the prescribed act*. A moral "ought" (or moral prescription) is a prescription in which the prescribed act has been evaluated (in the process of deliberation) according to moral standards or rules. An aesthetic "ought" is a prescription in which aesthetic standards or rules have been appealed to. And so on for the other kinds of "oughts." The distinction among different kinds of standards and rules is based on the concept of a point of view, as explained in Chapter 4. Consequently different "oughts" correspond to different points of view. The same is true of evaluative expressions. Whenever we express a value judgment, the value judgment is either a moral judgment, an aesthetic judgment, or a judgment of some other kind. Different kinds of judgments are distinguished according to the different kinds of standards and rules appealed to in the evaluation processes from which they arise, and different kinds of standards and rules are distinguished according to the points of view to which they belong. The fact that both prescriptions and expressions of value judgments presuppose an evaluation process entails that they both presuppose an appeal to standards or rules. It also entails that prescribed acts

as well as evaluated objects have good-making and bad-making characteristics. Finally, it entails that there is a class of comparison contextually implied by every prescription and by every expression of a value judgment. In the case of prescriptions, the class of comparison is always the class of alternative acts open to the addressee in his situation of choice. There is no parallel on this point in the case of expressions of value judgments. That is, while both prescriptions and expressions of value judgments presuppose classes of comparison, there is no single class of comparison for evaluative expressions comparable to the class of comparison of all prescriptions. The reason for this lies in one of the differences between prescribing an act and expressing a value judgment, to which I now turn.

2. An act of prescribing always takes place in the context of giving advice, making recommendations, or offering guidance, in which a person is told which act to do among the alternatives open to him. He may not be seeking advice or guidance, nor even be asking himself or someone else which one of the alternatives he should do. A child, for example, may be given moral instruction without his seeking it. But whenever prescribing occurs, it is done for the purpose of guiding conduct. Prescribing is *essentially* and not merely *incidentally* a way of exerting an influence on someone's behavior. Expressing a value judgment, on the other hand, only incidentally has this function in most cases. It was shown in Section B of Chapter 2 that those to whom we express our value judgments are not always confronted with a choice among alternative courses of action. Furthermore it was shown that the classes of comparison of value judgments may not be human acts at all. We may express value judgments of events, objects, and situations which have no connection with the addressee's conduct. (An example given in Chapter 2 was a historian's judgment that the Roman Empire was a corrupt society.) It is only in contexts of giving advice, making recommendations, or offering guidance that our evaluative utterances function as guides to conduct. But prescribing always occurs in a context of that sort. As a result, the class of comparison contextually implied by a prescription is always the class of alternative acts open to the addressee's choice. When a certain act is prescribed to the addressee, it is contextually implied that it is the *best* of the alterna-

tives confronting him. This claim is, of course, a value judgment, based on a ranking of all the alternatives in comparison with each other. The class of comparison of such a ranking is precisely the class of alternatives themselves.

This difference between evaluative and prescriptive discourse may be brought out in another way. Suppose we attempt to construct a parallel, in the case of evaluative sentences, to the four aspects or elements of every prescriptive sentence which I distinguished in the last chapter. These were the speaker, the addressee, the agent, and the prescribed act. With regard to them, let us compare the evaluative sentence "Abraham Lincoln was a good man" with the prescriptive sentence "You ought to repay the debt." Corresponding to the speaker of the prescription would be the evaluator or judge (i.e., the one who utters the evaluative sentence in earnest and affirms what it says). Corresponding to the addressee of the prescription would be the addressee of the evaluative sentence (i.e., anyone to whom the sentence is addressed). Now what would correspond to the agent designated by "You" in the prescriptive sentence? Would it be the man, Abraham Lincoln? At first sight this might appear to be so, since the agent in the case of the prescription is the person referred to by the grammatical subject of the sentence, and Lincoln is that person in the case of the evaluative sentence. But on reflection we see that Lincoln corresponds to the fourth element of the prescription, namely the prescribed act, rather than the third element, the agent. Lincoln is the object being evaluated and hence corresponds to the act being prescribed. In one sentence we evaluate a man, in the other we prescribe an act. In applying the word "good" to the man we express our pro-attitude toward him; in applying the word "ought" to the act we likewise express our pro-attitude toward it. What we evaluate thus corresponds to what we prescribe. We must not be misled by the grammar of the two sentences. The things designated by the grammatical subjects of the two sentences have a different logical status. Lincoln the man has no correspondence with the person referred to by "You" in the prescriptive sentence. This becomes unmistakably clear when we notice that "You" refers not only to the agent but also to the addressee. (As in every case of a prescription, the addressee is identical with the agent.) But it hardly needs saying that Abraham Lincoln is not the addressee of

the sentence "Abraham Lincoln was a good man." So far, then, we have the following parallels.

For a prescriptive sentence:

1. The speaker (the one who prescribes the act)
2. The addressee (the one to whom the sentence is uttered)
3. The act (that which is prescribed)

For an evaluative sentence:

1. The speaker (the one who evaluates the evaluatum)
2. The addressee (the one to whom the sentence is uttered)
3. The evaluatum (that which is evaluated)

A complete parallel between the two kinds of sentences cannot be drawn, however. For the addressee of every prescriptive sentence is also an *agent* who has the choice of doing or not doing the act. But the addressee of every evaluative sentence is not an agent who has a choice with reference to the evaluatum. Only when an evaluative sentence is uttered as advice to a person in a situation of choice is there anyone in a role corresponding to the role of the agent of a prescription. But an evaluative sentence need not be uttered in such a context. Although there must always be an agent for a prescriptive sentence, this is not true for evaluative sentences. This follows from the fact that we always prescribe an act to someone who has the choice of doing or not doing the act, whereas we may express our value judgments to those who are not in a position to make a choice with regard to what we are evaluating.

There would be no chance of our confusing the person referred to by the subject of an evaluative sentence (the evaluatum) with the person referred to by the subject of a prescriptive sentence (the agent) if we took as our example not an evaluation of a person but an evaluation of some other kind of object. It would then be clear that the subject of the evaluative sentence referred to what is evaluated and hence corresponded to the grammatical object rather than the grammatical subject of the prescriptive sentence. If we say "That painting is an excellent abstraction," it is clear that the subject of the sentence does not correspond to the subject of the sentence "You ought to repay the debt." What we evaluate (the painting) corresponds to what we prescribe (repaying the debt); it does not correspond to the one to whom we prescribe (the person

referred to by "You"). In order to make a prescriptive sentence correspond *grammatically* to an evaluative sentence, we would have to change it from the active to the passive voice. Thus a sentence of the form "X is good" would correspond to a sentence of the form "Y ought to be done" (and "X is bad" to "Y ought not to be done"). Here the grammatical subject of one sentence refers to that which is evaluated and the grammatical subject of the other refers to that which is prescribed. It is still not possible to draw a complete parallel, however, since an agent is implicitly referred to in the prescriptive sentence but not in the evaluative sentence.

There is a sharp distinction, then, between prescribing and expressing a value judgment when the latter does not take place in the context of a person's making a choice with regard to the evaluatum. But what is the difference between them when this context does occur? In that case an evaluative sentence functions as a piece of advice or as a recommendation, which is the way a prescription always functions. Although value judgments are not always expressed in the context of an agent's situation of choice and are not always expressed for the purpose of guiding the agent's conduct, they sometimes are. On these occasions how are they to be differentiated from acts of prescribing? The answer to this question lies in the third major difference between prescribing and evaluating.

3. It may at first be thought that we can differentiate between the utterance of a prescriptive sentence and the utterance of an evaluative sentence (when the addressee of both sentences is an agent in a situation of choice and when the sentences are both uttered for the purpose of guiding the addressee's conduct) on the following basis. We might want to say that prescribing an act is a way of getting the addressee to do the act, whereas evaluating the act is not. In expressing a value judgment we remain somewhat aloof and detached, merely telling the addressee what we think of the alternatives confronting him without advocating that he choose one rather than another. In prescribing an act, on the other hand, we are actively engaged in the making of the choice. But this method of differentiating prescriptive and evaluative utterances will not do. For in the particular context in question, to express a value judgment about one of the alternatives confronting the addressee is to advocate that he choose (or not choose) it. In such a context our purpose as

evaluators is not merely to have the addressee give intellectual assent to our judgment. Our purpose is to have the addressee follow our judgment as a recommendation. Expressing the judgment to him in that context is giving him a piece of advice; the whole point of our utterance is to help him decide upon a course of action. When a person is trying to decide what make of car to buy, for example, and we say to him "N is a good car," we are guiding his choice. The parallel with prescribing is here very close. To express the value judgment "N is a good car" in such circumstances is not much different from uttering the prescription, "You ought to buy N." The purpose of either sentence (assuming it is uttered in earnest and is affirmed by the speaker) is to have the addressee give his sincere assent to what is being said. And this involves his setting himself to do certain acts and having a pro-attitude toward doing them. Both sentences are uttered in a context in which the addressee is seeking advice or guidance, and has placed himself in the position (or frame of mind) to allow the speaker's utterance to influence his conduct. Whether we address to him a value judgment of an object (the car) or prescribe to him the doing of certain acts (buying the car), the effect will be same. If he decides to follow our advice, he will buy the car. We simply give him the same advice in two different ways: by evaluating or by prescribing.

What, then, is the difference in this context between expressing a value judgment and prescribing? It may be made clear by seeing how each provides an answer to the question "What should I do?" When we express a value judgment of one of the alternatives confronting the questioner, we answer his question indirectly. When we prescribe one of the alternatives, we answer his question directly. In asking the question he wants to be told what he ought to do. He is not asking for *reasons* for doing one thing rather than another. When we prescribe to him, we simply tell him what he ought to do without giving him a reason for doing it. When we express a value judgment, on the other hand, we are giving him a reason for (or against) doing one thing rather than another. When we answer the question "What should I do?" by expressing the value judgment "X is the best thing to do," we are not saying that the person ought to do X. Rather, we are giving him a sufficient reason for his doing X. Of course a person ought to do something whenever he has a suffi-

cient reason for doing it. (Not to do it would be to do an unjustified act.) But prescribing to a person is not giving him a reason, sufficient or otherwise, for doing something. It is merely telling him that he ought to do it, as we saw in the last chapter. The prescription can only answer the question "What should I do?" and not the question "Why should I do it?" One can always answer the latter question by saying "Because it is the best thing to do." One cannot answer by saying "Because you ought to do it." For in asking "Why ought I to do this?" the questioner already knows what he has been told to do. He is now demanding a justification for his doing it.

To prescribe an act to someone, then, is not to give a reason for his doing it, whereas to express a positive value judgment about an alternative open to him is to give a reason for choosing it. Value judgments serve to justify acts, prescriptions do not. Value judgments may in fact serve to justify prescriptions themselves. We must now examine the logical relation between prescribing and evaluating in order to see why this is so.

B. The logical relation between prescribing and evaluating

We express a value judgment as the result of a disposition to give a certain answer to the question "What is the value of object X?" This disposition was formed or acquired when we came to a decision about the value of the object. The decision was a verdict reached in consequence of a process of evaluation. Now an act of prescribing what someone ought to do is an act of uttering a prescriptive sentence. Behind this act there must be a disposition to perform it, since it is not spontaneous, involuntary, or accidental. Just as a disposition to express a value judgment lies behind the uttering of an evaluative sentence, so a disposition to prescribe an act to someone lies behind uttering a prescriptive sentence. The former disposition is the outcome of a process of evaluation. I now intend to show that the latter disposition is likewise the outcome of a process of evaluation.

The disposition to prescribe an act to an agent is formed when the prescriber comes to a decision about which of the alternatives open to the agent ought to be chosen by him. The decision is arrived at through the process of deliberation. This, as we saw in Chapter I,

is a process of evaluating the various alternatives and ranking them in comparison with one another. As an outcome of this process, we are disposed to prescribe one alternative to the agent as that which he ought to choose. Thus both a value judgment and a disposition to prescribe result from processes of evaluation. The difference between the use of the evaluation process in these two situations is twofold. First, the class of comparison in the case of prescribing is always limited to the alternatives open to the agent's choice. And second, the decision to prescribe an act is always arrived at in the context of the agent's present or future situation of choice. Thus we may carry out a process of evaluation for either or both of two purposes—to arrive at a value judgment (i.e., to decide what the value of something is), or to prescribe an act to an agent.

Suppose we carry out an evaluation for the second purpose and arrive at the prescription "You ought to do X." Our prescription then contextually implies a value judgment, namely that act X is the best of the alternatives confronting the agent. Every prescription occurs in a context of deliberation in which the alternatives are evaluated, and the prescribed act is the alternative which has been ranked as better than any other alternative. Professor Baier has argued in *The Moral Point of View* (Chapter 3) that the question "What shall I do?" has the same meaning as "What is the best thing to do?" It would follow from this that the answer to the one question ("You ought to do X") means the same as the answer to the other question ("X is the best thing to do"). But these statements are not equivalent. One is a prescription and the other is the expression of a value judgment. The prescription *contextually implies* the value judgment, but it does not *mean the same thing as* the value judgment. The reason for this should be clear from my discussion of the differences between prescriptions and evaluative sentences in Section A of this chapter. When we say "You ought to do X," we are not giving a reason for doing X. But when we say "X is the best thing to do," we are giving a reason, and a sufficient one, for doing X. Although the act of prescribing contextually implies the value judgment, the two cannot be identified.

In order to justify doing an act, we must show that it is the best thing to do in a given situation of choice. We justify doing an act on the ground of an evaluation, not by prescribing it. Similarly, we

may give reasons against doing an act by evaluating the act (as wrong or bad, or simply as less-than-the-best of the alternatives confronting a person)—not by prescribing that one ought not to do it. It is my present task to show that such value judgments not only provide reasons for (or against) *doing* the act, but also provide reasons for (or against) *prescribing* it. In every prescription we find both the act of prescribing and the act prescribed. I shall try to establish two points: first, that *both* of these acts are justified on the basis of value judgments, and second, that the justification of the act prescribed is part of, but not the whole of, the justification of the act of prescribing.

If the doing of an act is to be justified to a person in a situation of choice, the act must be shown to be the best alternative open to him. This is because in such a context "the best act" simply means "the most justified act." Assuming that the value judgments according to which the different alternatives are ranked are themselves justified, to claim that alternative X is better than alternative Y means that a person is more justified in choosing X than in choosing Y. To say in this context "X is the best thing to do," then, is to justify the agent's *doing* X. Is it also to justify the *prescribing* of act X to the agent? My answer is that it is to justify it in part, but not wholly.

We must distinguish two questions here. 1. Is it better to prescribe act X than to prescribe any other act open to the agent? 2. Is it better to prescribe act X at this time, in this place, in this manner, under these conditions, than at any other time, in any other place, in any other manner, under any other conditions? Question 1 concerns the content of the prescription, question 2 concerns the manner and circumstances of the act of prescribing. If we are to justify the act of prescribing completely, we must answer both questions in the affirmative. The first question is answered in the affirmative when the act prescribed is shown to be the best of the alternatives open to the agent. To do this is partly to justify the act of prescribing it. Prescribing any other act than the best would amount to prescribing an act which the agent was less justified in doing, *and such a prescription would not be the best possible prescription open to the prescriber*. The purpose of prescribing is to have the addressee give his sincere assent to the prescription and accordingly set himself to do the act prescribed, or at least have a pro-attitude

toward doing it. Corresponding to each of the alternative acts open to the addressee there is an alternative prescription open to the prescriber. If the alternative acts are X, Y, and Z, the alternative prescriptions are "You ought to do X," "You ought to do Y," and "You ought to do Z." Now the best prescription will be the prescribing of the best act. Otherwise the prescriber would be justified in prescribing an act—and so influencing an agent to do an act—which the agent was not justified in doing. If an act of prescribing is to be fully justified, it must be shown that the prescribed act is the best of the alternatives confronting the agent.

The alternative acts of prescribing open to a prescriber may vary in other respects than in their content (i.e., in respect of the acts prescribed in them). The alternatives concern not only what is prescribed but also the time, the place, the manner (including the linguistic form of a prescription), and the surrounding conditions of the act of prescribing. The complete justification of an act of prescribing must include reasons that show it to be the best alternative open to the prescriber in all these respects. To determine the best time, place, manner, and circumstance for prescribing requires an evaluation of the alternative times, places, manners, and circumstances open to the prescriber. Even when he has decided upon what act to prescribe to the agent, the prescriber must then come to a decision about these other matters in order to arrive at the best prescription available to him. And it is only if his prescription is the best available to him that it is justified (both to himself and to the agent).

The logical connection between prescribing and evaluating should now be clear. An act of prescribing is justified on the basis of a set of value judgments, according to which the act prescribed is the best of the alternatives open to the agent, and the time, place, manner, and circumstance of prescribing is the best time, the best place, the best manner, and the best circumstance open to the prescriber. All of these value judgments are in turn justified by the fourfold method of verification, validation, vindication, and rational choice. Whatever is true of justifying value judgments is also true of justifying prescriptions, since justifying prescriptions consists in justifying a set of value judgments. Nothing in principle differentiates the evaluation of the act prescribed from the evaluation of the

time, place, manner, and circumstance of the act of prescribing. Both evaluations presuppose a set of standards or rules being appealed to. Both are made within a given class of comparison (in the one case, the class of acts open to the agent; in the other, the class of acts of prescribing open to the prescriber). Both consist in the ranking of alternatives in an order of desirability. And in both cases, the desirability or undesirability of each alternative is determined by its good-making or bad-making characteristics.

In order to justify a prescription, then, we must justify not only *what* to prescribe but also *when* to prescribe, *where* to prescribe, *how* to prescribe, and *in what circumstances* to prescribe. We accomplish this multiple task when we justify a set of value judgments in which alternative acts of prescribing are ranked in these various respects. It is to be noted that the evaluation of the act prescribed and the evaluation of the time, place, manner, and circumstance of the act of prescribing together form the *sufficient conditions* for a complete justification of an act of prescribing. All the possible ways in which acts of prescribing can differ are covered by these evaluations. They consequently exhaust all the possible alternatives open to a prescriber's choice. Since the most justified prescription is the best alternative in all these respects, no further justification need be given once these evaluations are themselves justified. Indeed, no further justification would be possible.

C. Hypothetical and categorical prescriptions

Since the logic of prescribing and evaluating is the same, it is clear that we may prescribe according to standards or according to rules. There is nothing in the prescriptive use of "ought" that limits it to the latter. We prescribe an act according to a standard when the value judgment, which justifies the act as the best alternative open to the agent, is itself justified by appeal to a standard. When it is justified by appeal to a rule, the act is prescribed according to that rule. This helps to clarify the distinction between hypothetical and categorical prescriptions.

When we justify a prescribed act by appeal to a standard, the standard may be one of inherent value, of instrumental value, or of contributive value. (A combination of such standards may also be

appealed to.) Standards of intrinsic value are excluded because the evaluatum is an act, not an immediately felt quality of experience. The prescribed act is judged in comparison with all the alternative acts in the agent's situation of choice. The verification of the prescription is the process of determining whether the prescribed act is in fact the best thing for the agent to do, according to the given standard or set of standards. The prescription is verified when it is ascertained that the prescribed act fulfills the given standards more completely than any other act in the class of comparison.

We may say that the difference between categorical and hypothetical prescriptions lies in the fact that we sometimes prescribe an act because we think it ought to be done "for its own sake," and other times we prescribe an act because we think it ought to be done "for the sake of something else." In that case, the kind of standard we appeal to in justifying (verifying) our prescription determines whether it is categorical or hypothetical. When the standard is one of inherent value only, the prescription is, in this sense, categorical. To say that the agent ought to do the act is to claim that *in doing it* the agent will have more satisfying or enjoyable experiences than he will have in doing any of the alternative acts open to him. A hypothetical prescription is one which is verified by appeal either to standards of instrumental value or to standards of contributive value. If we prescribe an act because it will have better consequences than any alternative act, or because the whole of which it is a part is more valuable than any whole of which an alternative act is a part, then the prescription is hypothetical. We think the agent ought to do the prescribed act as a means to certain ends or as a part of a certain whole, not because he will enjoy doing the act itself.

This way of distinguishing categorical and hypothetical prescriptions allows for the possibility of a prescription's being both categorical and hypothetical at the same time. This would occur when the standards appealed to included standards of inherent value as well as standards of instrumental or contributive value. Such a prescription would state that an act ought to be done both for its own sake and for the sake of something else. Suppose the prescription "You ought to do X" is of this kind. When reasons are demanded for accepting this prescription, the speaker would reply,

"Not only will you find more enjoyment in doing X than in doing any alternative act, but doing X will also bring about more good things (or is a part of a better whole) than any alternative act."

There are, then, three possibilities according to this way of understanding the terms. A given prescription may be categorical only, hypothetical only, or both categorical and hypothetical. This classification applies to prescriptions made according to standards rather than rules. In order to justify such prescriptions, we must verify the value judgment that the prescribed act is better than any alternative by appealing to the given standards. A *complete* justification of a hypothetical or categorical prescription would require the validation of the standards appealed to, the vindication of a value system which contains those standards, and a rational choice of a way of life of which that value system is a part.

There is a second way of distinguishing between hypothetical and categorical prescriptions. It applies to prescriptions verified by appeal to rules rather than standards. To verify a prescription by appeal to a rule is to show that the act prescribed falls under the rule and is in accordance with it. When this is done we might say that a particular prescription has been shown to be an instance of a universal prescription. In Section B of the last chapter, the following argument was analyzed: "You ought to do X because anyone in circumstances C ought to do acts of kind K, you are in circumstances C, and act X is an act of kind K." This is a case of justifying the prescription of a particular act by appeal to a general rule of conduct which covers the act in its range of application. The particular prescription "You ought to do X" is justified as an instance of the universal prescription "One ought to do acts of kind K in circumstances C." If the speaker were then to be asked to justify the universal prescription or rule, he could give any of three replies. 1. He could validate the rule in terms of some higher or more general rule. 2. He could validate the rule in terms of a standard. The standard appealed to might be a standard of inherent value, of instrumental value, or of contributive value. (The standard would be used to judge the goodness or badness of the consequences of acting in accordance with the rule in question.) 3. He could accept the rule as a supreme norm of a value system he has adopted.

A hypothetical prescription may now be distinguished from a

categorical prescription as follows. If a particular prescription is justified by appeal to a rule (or general prescription) and if the rule is validated by either method 1 or method 2 above, both the particular prescription and the general prescription (or rule) are hypothetical. If a particular prescription is justified by appeal to a rule and if the rule is accepted according to method 3 as part of the decision to adopt a certain value system, then the particular prescription and the rule (or general prescription) are categorical.

When Kant spoke of the "categorical imperative," he meant among other things that all moral justification consists in the appeal to *one rule* and that the decision to adopt that rule as the test of the rightness or wrongness of any act is the decision to adopt the only value system that can properly be called "moral." If a person does not appeal to that rule in judging acts, he is not looking at his own or others' conduct from the moral point of view. When a person takes the moral point of view he appeals to the one "imperative" of morality in prescribing or evaluating any act. This "imperative" is "categorical" in the sense that its justification requires no reference to any standard or rule beyond itself. We must simply adopt the "imperative" as the sole guide to our conduct. This is what it means to take the moral point of view, according to Kant. To act morally is to act in accordance with a rule or universal prescription (the categorical imperative) to which we are committed by our "practical reason." The decision to follow such a rule is an act of our rational (and hence autonomous) will. We take the moral point of view in the very act of deciding to follow the rule. Kant thought that the justification for taking the moral point of view lay in the concept of rationality itself. To be rational in our conduct is to take the moral point of view. This is not the conception of justifying (vindicating) a moral value system which I have set forth in Chapter 5. But the point of agreement with Kant to be noticed here is the identification of a categorical "ought" with a rule or rule-justified prescription that is accepted as an integral part of the decision to adopt a whole value system.

A prescription is categorical, then, in virtue of the fact that it is justified by appeal to a rule which is not itself validated by reference to any higher standard or rule. We accept the rule unconditionally (categorically) because it is a supreme norm of a value system we

have adopted. The rule underlying a categorical prescription can only be vindicated (as part of a whole value system); it cannot be validated. A hypothetical prescription, on the other hand, is justified by appeal to a rule that can be validated. There are always higher standards or rules to appeal to, and these provide reasons for deciding to follow the given rule or for accepting the hypothetical prescription itself. The prescription is "hypothetical" in the sense that our acceptance of it is conditional upon our acceptance of the higher standards or rules.

I conclude that hypothetical and categorical prescriptions may be distinguished in two ways, depending on whether they are verified by appeal to standards or to rules. In either case their justification consists in the justification of a value judgment, namely the judgment that the prescribed act is the best of the alternatives confronting an agent. This value judgment must be verified by appeal to a standard or rule which in turn must be justified either by validation or by vindication. The conclusion I wish to emphasize in this chapter is that no new factors are introduced when we turn from the justification of value judgments to the justification of prescriptions. To justify an act of prescribing is to justify a set of value judgments. Most important is to show that the act prescribed is the best act for the agent to do in his situation of choice. This is necessary whether the prescription is hypothetical or categorical. Other value judgments concerning the best time, the best place, the best manner, and the best circumstance in which to do the act of prescribing must also be justified, and this is accomplished by the same fourfold method that is used for any value judgment, namely verification, validation, vindication, and rational choice.