

## Philosophic Exchange

---

Volume 6  
Number 1 *Volume 6 (1975)*

Article 4

---

1975

# The Good Society and the Complexity of the Structure of Morality

Hector-Neri Castaneda  
*Indiana University*

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/phil\\_ex](http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/phil_ex)

 Part of the [Philosophy Commons](#)

---

### Repository Citation

Castaneda, Hector-Neri (1975) "The Good Society and the Complexity of the Structure of Morality," *Philosophic Exchange*: Vol. 6 : No. 1 , Article 4.

Available at: [http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/phil\\_ex/vol6/iss1/4](http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/phil_ex/vol6/iss1/4)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @Brockport. It has been accepted for inclusion in Philosophic Exchange by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @Brockport. For more information, please contact [kmyers@brockport.edu](mailto:kmyers@brockport.edu).



The College at  
**BROCKPORT**  
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK



**HECTOR-NERI CASTANEDA**  
*Professor of Philosophy*  
*Indiana University*

## THE GOOD SOCIETY AND THE COMPLEXITY OF THE STRUCTURE OF MORALITY

by

Hector-Neri Castaneda

### *Preface*

In this paper I have two main purposes: (i) to outline the most general structure of morality, which is the fundamental schema of a good society, and (ii) to indict most of the main stream views in the history of moral philosophy for their unchecked tendency to reductionism and oversimplification. The tendency to oversimplification appears both in the gathering of the data for philosophical theorizing and in the theorizing itself. I will also point out another major recurring error in moral philosophy. I envision the day when moral philosophers, after examining their ontological and their methodological assumptions, rally to the banner of anti-reductionism and complexification. Since reductionism and oversimplification are also widespread throughout the theory of the foundations of social sciences, this particular battle may, hopefully, provide also a worthwhile spectacle for the social scientists in this audience.

### 1. *The Good Society*

A good society is a moral society.

Obviously, a moral society is one that somehow and to some significant degree embodies the institution of morality. But what is morality? This is the crucial question. I will not deal here with the other two questions: "How does a society embody or adopt the institution of morality?" and "What degrees of embodiment are significant?" Clearly, the embodiment takes place through the morality of the individuals' actions and the fairness of their institutions. But to elucidate these we need the foundation provided by the answer to the first question. And this answer will by itself be too large for us here.

### 2. *A Classical Error in Moral Philosophy*

What exactly is morality? This is a difficult question. It is usually made more difficult by the natural assumption that an answer to it must yield an answer to the question "Why should one be moral?" This conflative assumption has been one of the major sources of error throughout the history of moral philosophy. It appears in Plato's idea that just action is profitable; in Kant's conception of respect for the moral law and his view of moral autonomy; in Prichard's concept of moral obligation as being itself a motive for action; in the views of contemporary philosophers who tend to identify a moral duty with an overriding or with an important duty; in those views that include the thesis that the principles of moral obligation or moral rightness must be self-justifying. Perhaps the most serious error that originates in that conflative assumption is the confusion of the nature of morality with the nature of practical thinking in general.

I do not propose to discuss this error here. I have discussed it to my satis-

## THE COMPLEXITY OF THE STRUCTURE OF MORALITY

faction in some other places.<sup>1</sup> And I have also provided a system of theories that both distinguishes from each other and relates to each other the structure of practical thinking in general and the structure of moral practical thinking.<sup>2</sup>

### 3. *Another Classical Error: Oversimplification and Reductionism*

Here I want to denounce another major error that also permeates the history of moral philosophy. This error has some contacts with the previous one, but it is an independent major error in its own right. It is the error of oversimplification and reductionism. Most moral philosophers have explicitly adopted the view that the whole of morality can be derived from, or reduced to, or somehow grounded sufficiently on, some simple or not very complex feature like the following:

- (i) overridingness—a moral principle being one that defeats any other principle of action with which it conflicts;
- (ii) importance—a moral problem being one which (a) the agent, or (b) a certain set of people, considers as of utmost importance, and moral rules being those that provide solutions to such problems;
- (iii) universalizability—a moral duty being one that the agent [or a critic?] recognizing it takes it to be an instance of a general principle in whose formulation there are no proper names or any other singular-referring expressions;
- (iv) lawlike universality—a moral duty is one which is determined by a general proposition that the agent can will to be a universal law of nature;
- (v) the greatest happiness of the greatest number—a moral duty being an action that would bring about the greatest happiness for the greatest number;
- (vi) the greatest (net) utility—a moral duty being an action that has the greatest product of moral or intrinsic value and probability of producing such value.

A symptom of the reductionistic assumption is the assumption that there is some non-disjunctive condition that is at once both necessary and sufficient for moral obligatoriness. On the reductionistic assumption, there is some non-disjunctive condition C such that the lone moral principle of duty is of the form: "Everybody ought morally to do an action A if and only if he/she is in condition C." A look at morality reveals that there is no such main principle of morality. At any rate, sound methodology requires that we start the investigation with an open mind to reality, not fettered by the idea that there is just one simple condition that is both necessary and sufficient for moral duties.

A historical note is fair at this point. Philosophers like H. A. Prichard, who have insisted that moral obligations differ *qua* their obligatoriness, and, like David Ross, who have held that there are many irreducible principles of *prima facie* moral duty, have been better observers of morality than most moral philosophers. As you may remember, Ross was severely criticized for the complexity of his view, indeed, for not having reduced his "heap of duties" to one principle!

Ross was of course right: morality is complex. In fact, morality is much more complex than Ross thought. As we shall see, all of the principles Ross

HECTOR-NERI CASTANEDA

mentions as formulating moral duties are only one segment of the total institution of morality. Morality is an extremely complex super-institution that both joins together the different members of, as well as the different institutions of, a community, and guides the development and the criticism of the community.

Let us take a proto-philosophical look at what morality as an ongoing institution does or is supposed to do for a community and for the whole of humanity, not to theorize yet, but only to fasten to some striking aspects of morality, however vague they may be at this stage. Such aspects must be used both as data for theorization and as criteria of adequacy for any proposed theory of the nature of morality.

Morality, or social morality, if you wish, thus avoiding a dilatory verbal dispute, is a system of values and of principles of action, valid for all human beings and all those beings who have the power to make plans and decisions, and involves all those entities that possess the capacity for suffering. Clearly morality has to include an array of very general and imposing assumptions about the nature of thinking agents, whether human or not. It starts with the idea of a domain of agents closed by causality, that is, a domain of agents linked by criss-crossing causal relationships such that each agent affects another agent and each one is affected by someone else in the domain. The ovule idea of morality is the ideal of all members of a causally closed domain of agents acting so as to attain a maximal happiness, or self-realization, consistent with a maximal happiness of each of the other agents of the domain. But this is only the ovule ideal. This ovule has to be fertilized by several crucial assumptions about natural agents in order to develop into the institution or morality as we know it. That ovule ideal does not, for one thing, include much of social organization. That undeveloped ideal could be satisfied by a society of angels living in an angelic environment. By an angel I mean here a being all of whose interests are, not only internally harmonious with each other, but are also totally harmonious with the interests of all of the other members of the society. An angelic environment is one that never frustrates the interests of any agent living, or existing, in it. But morality as we conceive it in our attribution of moral duties and moral problems, to ourselves and to others, is a more complex ideal that takes into account the threefold non-angelic nature of the natural societies that have developed on this planet: (i) our natural societies of human beings live in environments that are unfriendly or at least very cantankerous; (ii) all human beings have interests that conflict with the interests of many others; and (iii) many of the interests of every human being conflict with many other interests of his own. Furthermore, (iv) all human beings have a very limited capacity for benevolence and tolerance; (v) each one of them knows little about the consequences of his actions; and (vi) most of them are unable to engage in detailed or abstract thinking for very long periods. Thus, the institution of morality that can apply to natural societies of such creatures as us has to consist not only of the outline of an unreachable ideal of social organization, but also of a series of principles that can bring some part of the ideal down to earth—to be tried and trampled perhaps by us as we live our competitive lives full of

## THE COMPLEXITY OF THE STRUCTURE OF MORALITY

jealousies and petty goals; to be misunderstood by our ignorance, our inattention and our finite powers of thinking and of loving; but also to be enjoyed and approached asymptotically as we, or many among us, gain control of their powers of action and either come to believe that decency is to their advantage or grow in sympathy toward their fellow human beings. (I for the life of me cannot see how the complex structure of morality that involves at its very core not only the formulation of an unreachable ideal but also the unavoidable collision between that ideal and its application, can be reduced to some of the simple features I mentioned before).

Yet morality is more complex. Morality deals not only with the private or direct relationships between agents in a causally closed domain as above characterized. It recognizes the significance for the lives of the agents of a given closed domain, both of the general partition of the agents in societies or communities and of the many groupings of the agents within each society in institutions of different sorts. Morality, thus, is a super-institution that prescribes a series of duties in our direct, or private dealings with other agents, regardless of institutional or societal links, just by virtue of being members of the same closed causal domain, or by virtue of being within a certain causal vicinity of each other. But it also prescribes duties to comply with the rules of the institutions one belongs to. In this institutional dimension, morality deals with the possible conflicts between institutional duties among themselves. But morality also concerns itself with the possible conflicts between its own demands along its direct or private dimension and its demands along its institutional dimension. (Again, I ask you whether you can with a clear conscience assume without more ado that these two additional levels of complexity can be derived from, or reduced to, some such simple feature like universalizability, or importance for one agent or more, or expected utility.)

There is still more complexity to be reckoned with. Morality demands that the outline of the ideal be glimpsed steadily or often. Morality demands a steady watch on the degree of conformity of the social structure, the institutional setup, and the individual networks of private moral duties, to the envisagable outline of an ideal society. Morality demands not only the revamping of institutions and the reshaping of the individual motivational nature, but it also demands sometimes a revolution in the very conception of morality that has pervaded a certain society. Morality demands, sometimes, that some agents engage in attempting deep moral progress. This deep progress hits at the roots of the well established assumptions of a society that have been grounds for the establishment, and the criticism, of institutions and for the formulation of direct interpersonal obligations; it is a progress involving the alteration of the moral code itself, so as to bring the society in question one step closer to the unreachable ideal.

In short, morality is a super-institution that involves several layers of demands, and involves the possibility of conflicts even within its own layers, and involves the principles for the solution of such conflicts. Isn't it patent that no simple feature like universalizability, importance, overridingness, the greatest happiness for the greatest number, the greatest expected utility, or the greatest probability of this or that, can be assumed to be able to account for all those levels of complexity in the structure of morality?

#### 4. *Some Criteria of Adequacy for Any Theory of Morality*

The preceding observations on the multiple roles of morality and its many tiers makes it obvious (at least it has made it obvious to me since the fall of 1952) that the piecemeal technique of pure analytic philosophy cannot yield a view of the total complex structure of morality. I want to underscore that I value not only the detailed and slow-motion analysis of concepts, but I also value the descriptions of linguistic usage that ordinary language philosophy has produced. The former does provide philosophical illumination, and the latter constitute proto-philosophical data that must be taken into account. But the architecture of the moral edifice requires a synthetic contemplation, the putting together of the different elements of morality in their master design. The analysis of the different concepts that enter in the moral edifice are valuable, but they will be fully illuminating only when they are placed, not against each other in the spurious competition that the reductionistic views forces upon them, and that has dominated the dialectics of the last decades, but together in their proper positions in the total pattern.

From the preceding preliminary examination of morality, and further observations that anybody can make, we can distill the proto-philosophical criteria, listed below, of adequacy for any philosophical theory of morality—or social morality, if you wish. Naturally, the criteria of adequacy are vague. Their role is not to constitute an analysis or theory of morality—since the theory is precisely the outcome of the investigation. Their role is to demarcate some boundaries of the future theory. Several of the criteria allow, because of their vagueness, of different interpretations, and a few of them may appear at the proto-philosophical stage to be in conflict. The different interpretations and the different ways of solving the apparent conflicts is part and parcel of the problem of theorization. A theory has to organize and illuminate the data; it cannot be a logical consequence of the data. A theory is a posit, and several theories can be posited. The testing of a philosophical theory proceeds in two directions: on the one hand, it must illuminate, and account for, the initial data; on the other hand, it must be able to accommodate and illuminate additional data. Here is another juncture at which most of the moral philosophizing, of both old and recent past, has been dominated by the prejudice of oversimplification, namely, *oversimplification of the initial data*. This is indeed the third major error perennially committed throughout the history of moral philosophy.

Here is a moderately complex set of data that any theory of morality has to consider, illuminate, and conform with.

1. Morality is a huge system of propositions that includes: (a) the facts of a segment of the world inhabited by a causally closed domain of agents; (b) the laws of nature that apply to that segment of the world; (c) normative principles that prescribe courses of actions. That is, morality is a huge system of rules together with their empirical and nomological grounds.
2. Morality is, thus, universal in that it applies to all the agents of a causally closed domain.
3. Morality is pervasive in that it allows judgment upon all the actions of each agent of a closed domain.

## THE COMPLEXITY OF THE STRUCTURE OF MORALITY

4. A moral rule is a proposition built upon the propositional matrix "X ought to do A," or "X is required by morality to do A," where: (i) the deontic expressions 'ought' and 'is required' have the general normative meaning, and (ii) 'morally' and 'by morality' signal the special features or qualifications that make a moral rule moral.

5. Hence, a total theory of morality includes both a theory of the meaning of the adverb 'morally' and a theory of the meaning of the matrix "X ought-to do A." The special theory of morality is the theory of the contribution to the truth conditions of moral rules made by the qualification *morally*.

6. The moral rules are of several types: (a) some moral rules prescribe actions in private transactions between members of the same causally closed domain, regardless of their having (other) institutional relationships or not; (b) some moral rules sanction the (non-moral) obligations or duties determined by all other institutions; (c) some moral rules demand the changing of the personality of an agent; (d) others require the alteration or the destruction of the institutions of a given community; (e) others urge the modification of the moral outlook of a given community within a closed domain.

7. A moral system of rules has in some sense a higher character than that of any other normative system. In the first place, it is more comprehensive i.e., that the class of acts that fall under morality is larger than the class pertaining to any other normative system, including the total legal system of a community. In the second place, the other normative systems may be or are criticized from a moral or ethical point of view. A bill is declared just, or unjust; a practice is fair, or unfair; an institution can be immoral; the rules of a game may be said to be unfair, etc.

8. In some sense (to be elucidated by a theory) the higher character of morality is connected with a superiority of ends. Morality has something to do with the highest ends and basic needs of the agents of each closed domain.

9. Happiness is, or is connected with, the highest ends of men. But it is a part of morality that there is or may be a conflict between our personal happiness and our moral duties. Moreover, from the moral point of view, in this conflict duty is stronger; so that morality includes the demand of some measure of self-sacrifice.

10. Notwithstanding, there is a limit beyond which morality cannot require self-sacrifice..

11. In spite of the fact that morality is in some way concerned with men's ends, it is not the function of morality to prescribe the means that are adequate for the achievement of men's highest ends. Nor does morality prescribe ends. Rather, morality's subject matter is both the organization of an agent's ends and the harmonization of all agents' highest ends. Morality is concerned with some supreme limits of human freedom to take up ends.

12. Thus, there is a sense in which the moral norms are, in Kant's term, not genuinely hypothetical imperatives prescribing the means to attain given ends. They do not, *pace* Socrates and Plato, prescribe the means for happiness. But moral rules are not categorical imperatives in Kant's sense—since they



HECTOR-NERI CASTANEDA

need not prescribe anything binding on a rational agent just because he is rational. This is a datum resulting from our keeping fast to the independence of the questions "What is morality?" and "Why should one be moral?"

13. Motives are related to ends. There is a sense in which morality requires the absence of desire or inclination in the doing of one's duty.

14. Morality is a social affair. Indeed, the self-sacrifice required by morality is always in reference to someone else's interest. The conflict between one's own happiness and one's duty is related to a conflict between one's own and someone else's interest or good.

15. Morality provides a general and neutral point of view from which all conflicts among agents can have a solution. This does not rule out the principle that in some cases an impartial lottery may be used to solve a given conflict.

16. The moral consideration of everybody's interest is such that in some sense, as Bentham put it, everybody is to count for one and nobody for more than one. And as Kant added: morality bestows upon each agent a *dignity*, rather than a price: the life and the highest ends of an agent are not morally substitutable by the life or the ends of another agent.

17. Morality provides a point of view from which issue solutions to all possible conflicts of (non-moral) duties an agent may encounter because of his membership in several institutions.

18. Morality provides also a perspective from which issue solutions to the possible conflicts between institutional duties morally sanctioned, and moral duties pertaining to private relationships.

19. Morality is at least partially within human reach. In some sense ought implies can; particularly, ought-morally implies can.

20. As a special case of the above, it is possible for the agent to know what his concrete duties are on many given occasions. Morality prescribes for all: for the super-intelligent and for the mediocre, for the knowledgeable about the ways of the world and for the not so well informed.

21. There can be such thing as moral progress.

22. Morality sometimes may demand the stimulation of moral progress.

##### 5. *Practical Thinking in General*

Criteria 4, 5, and 12 stand in diametric opposition to the views of many philosophers of the past, and of many of the present. I have no time to engage in detailed criticism of any philosopher, but I do hope that some of the young philosophers in the audience will be motivated enough to produce fully detailed conclusive and illuminating studies on what I earlier called the first major error in the history of moral philosophy. I want now to point out that the complexity I am defending, namely, that morality comes through the study of the adverb 'morally' in 'X ought morally to do A', is more serious than what it may appear at first sight. Evidently, adverbial entities are derivative, and the theories about these presuppose, so to speak, the theories of the verbal and substantival entities on which they depend. Thus, first, as against Prichard and Kant, for instance, morality is what the adverb 'morally' expresses, signals, denotes (I don't care which semantical terminology you want to use), and not a special meaning of the word 'ought.' (Isn't it obvious, really, that morality is what

## THE COMPLEXITY OF THE STRUCTURE OF MORALITY

'morally' expresses, not what 'ought' means?) Second, the sentential matrix 'X ought—to do A' within which our adverb belongs is a complex matrix. It has an auxiliary or modal verb, 'ought', which applies to the matrix 'X . . . — to do A.' What this matrix expresses is the atomic unit of content for practical thinking. What the matrix 'X—to do A' expresses I call a *practition*. First-person *practitions*, expressed by 'I—to do A' are intentions; second- and third-person *practitions* I call *prescriptions*. Thus *practitions* are the fundamental units of practical thinking, just as propositions are the fundamental units of contemplative thinking. I cannot go into a discussion of *practitions* here. Fortunately, I have done this elsewhere.<sup>3</sup>

My first point at this juncture is this. The separation of the special theory of morality from the general theory of practical thinking is absolutely required by the nature of the moral rules, as indicated in criteria 4 and 5. My next point is this. The theory of morality has simply to accept the complexity required by the previous separation of the two layers of theory. Thirdly, there are still other complexities. The general theory of the ought structure embedded in moral ought principles is itself complex. It includes the special theory of *ought* and the general theory of *practitions*. Since practical thinking, including moral thinking, involves the thinking of duties, permissions, rights, and wrongs in relation to circumstances, i.e., to what is actually true in this or that case, practical thinking includes or envelopes contemplative thinking. Thus, the theory of the ought structure, often called *deontic logic* or the *logic of norms*, in its more advanced stages the whole of the logic of propositions.

All those complexities are purely formal. But there are yet other types of complexity. Practical thinking whether moral or not, is thinking that has a very special, internal causality. Now, the practicality of practical thinking must be differentiated from the practicality of moral thinking—and the latter must be further differentiated from the practicality of the institution of morality. These complexities must be accepted. The oversimplifying telescoping of the practicality (whatever that may be) of (the institution of) morality with the practicality of moral thinking is a serious error. A further egregious error is to confuse the practicality of practical thinking whatever its type with the practicality of moral thinking. These are the errors that lead to viewing overridingness as the characteristic trait of morality. This erroneous view is fostered further by the analytic habit, on the one hand, of paying attention to details and not considering the different systematic structures embedded in a simple moral judgment, and, on the other hand, of delaying indefinitely the moment of theorization.

Consider one example. Kant's brilliant discussion in the *Grundlegung* of what he calls *respect for the law* is one of the most insightful and penetrating passages in the whole history of practical philosophy. Every moral philosopher ought to know it by heart. Yet it has two crucial errors. First, it attributes the internal causality of respect for the law to the moral law. This is an instance of the error of confusing practical thinking with moral thinking. Second, the passage attributes the internal causality in question to a law, i.e., an ought-judgment. This is correct up to the point that an overriding first-person ought-judgment involves an intention, i.e., a first-person *practition*. But Kant errs by

HECTOR-NERI CASTANEDA

taking the practicality of *ought* itself, or of an ought-judgment, as primitive, without pushing further and seeing that the primal practicality belongs to practitions, especially intentions. This second error is perhaps not so much a consequence of Kant's oversimplifying assumptions; but it is the result of superficial theorization—or a result of both. Again, I cannot go into a detailed discussion of Kant's respect for the law or the practicality of practical thinking. But I have said something further about these topics elsewhere.<sup>4</sup>

Fortunately, here we only need the remark that the special theory of the qualification *morally* is to be embedded in the system of theories dealing with the ought framework, the practicality of practical thinking, the relationships between propositions and practitions, etc. In particular, we shall lay it down as a fundamental principle that each system of moral rules has the general structure studied by deontic logic—and I mean a complex deontic propositional-practitional structure.<sup>5</sup>

6. *The Theory of Morality: A System of Systems*

One of my oldest philosophical ideas is that the complexity of morality, just partially represented by the criteria listed above, can only be accounted for by a theory built upon the theoretical thesis that:

(M\*) Morality (or, if you wish, the institution of social morality) is a system of systems, some of which are themselves supersystems of norms, each of the systems being moral by some peculiar feature of its own.

(M\*) highlights the contrast between my non-reductionist respect for whatever complexity reality of a concept possess and the reductionistic assumption of simplicity characteristic of most moral philosophers. Some of the systems mentioned in (M\*) I already knew twenty-five years ago. The passing of time has not weakened my respect for complexity, but has in fact reinforced it. Reductionism of the mental to the physical is still running rampant, but, on the whole, in the last two decades we have seen the fall of many reductionisms. In the case of morality, we have seen the blind alleys into which some moral reductionisms have been withering.

The most important systems included in the supersystem of morality are these:

- (A) A system of principles of actions that govern (otherwise) non-institutional relationships between any two agents. I call it the *euergetical systems*, from the Greek word *euergeteo* meaning to show kindness, to do good. Here belong rules like, "It is wrong to kill a man, except in self-defense," practitions like "Don't cause pain for the sole purpose of enjoying the sight of pain behavior," and "Always treat others as ends in themselves." The euergetical principles are generally vague, since they are to fill in the private interstices between institutional relationships. Ross's principles of *prima facie* duty belong here.
- (B) A super-institutional system, which I call the *ethical system* and includes two components:
  - (1) A hierarchical arrangement of all non-moral normative systems that demand some actions from some agent in a given community.

## THE COMPLEXITY OF THE STRUCTURE OF MORALITY

This arrangement I call an *ethos*. An *ethos* ranks *all* (non-moral) institutions of the community in question including all the contracts, agreements, and promises made by each agent. An institution at a given time *t* is a normative system together with an assignment of roles to individuals and objects at time *t*. Promises and agreements are mini-institutions. Each promise is by itself a complete normative system. (Here is another juncture where the great errors I have been pointing out have consequences: the nature of promises has been commonly misunderstood and philosophers have spoken of a very mysterious, actually non-existing, alleged moral duty to keep promises.)<sup>6</sup>

- (2) A norm establishing the solution of conflicts of duties based on institutions by prescribing the ethical obligatoriness of the action prescribed by the norm in conflict that comes higher in the *ethos*.
- (C) A schema of the ideal of morality, which includes several departments:
  - (1) The system of the general assumptions about moral agency, that is, the minimal characterization of an agent i.e., a being capable of practical thinking, (whether human or not), for whom morality prescribes duties.
  - (2) The theory of happiness, that is, the characterization of the most formal conditions determining the self-realization value of actions.
  - (3) The principles of the moral ordering of actions, classes of actions, and normative systems.
- (D) The system of the most general guidelines for the creation of moral codes, i.e., the most general principles determining, on the adoption of certain general assumptions both about the nature of the agents composing the community and about the environment of the community, including technological circumstances, the moral outlook of the community.
- (E) The formal *metathetical* system. This is a schema of a normative system whose norms prescribe the alteration of the moral outlook of the community, thus, guiding the moral progress of both the community and its members. The change of moral outlook consists primarily of a change of the *ethos*, or of the relationship between the ethical and the euergetical systems.

The preceding outline of the structure of morality is undoubtedly complex. But it cannot be faulted for this—or not any more, I hope. Clearly, it conforms to the criteria of adequacy gathered above. Hence, if this outline is at all faulty—it can only be because it is *not* complex enough! Naturally, further errors may creep in in the development of each of the five systems (A)-(E) composing morality.

The five systems of assumptions and principles of action composing the institution of (social) morality must be developed. These five subtheories of morality are complex, and I will not go into them here. Fortunately, I can

## HECTOR-NERI CASTANEDA

refer the audience to a detailed discussion of them *The Structure of Morality*, Chapter 8.

Here I can discuss only the theory in general terms, hoping that the preceding discussion suffices to establish my contention that moral philosophy has really too long been suffering under oversimplifying reductionistic prejudices. Now, several things must be mentioned about our theory of the nature of morality. *First*, the philosophical theory about the structure of morality can be sufficiently finished even if the full details of some segments, e.g., the system of general assumptions about moral agency, or the assumptions about human nature or the environment, cannot ever be formulated in full. *Second*, the philosophical theory of the structure of morality allows that there be different assumptions about the natures of the agents of a certain community or about the environment of a community. Thus, the philosophical theory about the institution of morality is compatible with there being different moralities, each containing its own moral outlook, *all* being moralities because they conform to the same structure. *Third*, the philosophical theory of morality is normative in the sense that it provides the schemata of normative principles, and also in the sense that it formulates precisely the norms constituting the ethical obligation referred to in (B) (2). This obligation is, of course, formal, since the philosophical discussion cannot specify any *ethos*. The theory is also normative in that it mentions some euergetical principles.

There is always somebody in every audience listening to a paper in moral philosophy who remembers his naturalistic fallacy: that values or rights or oughts cannot be derived from facts. The one here today will ask whether I am committing the naturalistic fallacy. Well, perhaps. But the naturalistic fallacy, like all so-called fallacies, whether formal or informal, is only a principle warning to the effect that *not* all arguments of a certain form are valid. Elsewhere I have argued that the naturalistic fallacy was born as the marriage of the correct idea that deontic logic is not reducible to non-deontic logic, to an erroneous oversimplification assumption. I have contended that the unity of experience requires in general that there be bridging implications connecting the different realms of experience. Thus, there must be bridging implications connecting oughts with facts. It is really as simply as that.<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, the analysis of normative concepts often involves norms or norm schemata. Consider the concept *chess*. Its analysis included the listing of the rules of initial position of the chessmen as well as the rules of their movement. Likewise, the analysis of the concept *morally*, which is much more complex and more normative than the concept *chess*, clearly has to include some norms and norm schemata.

“But,” the questioner may reply, “the rules of chess are not binding on anyone who does not play, or want to play, chess. Thus, the chess philosopher can mention the rules of chess without being bound by them. On the other hand, morality is different. Moral rules are binding on everyone. So, you are not keeping your philosophical neutrality if you analyze morality in a normative way.” This is a useful reply, including its questionable part, the one about the universal bindingness of morality. Here we find the insinuation that morality is

## THE COMPLEXITY OF THE STRUCTURE OF MORALITY

inescapable for a man, for a thinking being. Here we find lurking the first great error in the history of philosophy I have been trying to exercise. We simply must learn to separate practical thinking and rational practical thinking from moral thinking. One verbal warning! One can always define 'rational' so that moral thinking is implied by rational thinking. But this verbal trick does not solve any problems. We must recognize that a being can be rational in the original sense of the word: he can think, make good deductions and inductions. He can be endowed with the capacity for practical thinking besides, and then he can be capable of knowing himself well, knowing his environment just as well, making decisions and adopting plans, reasoning flawlessly about means and ends, and about all other matters. In short, he can be a skillful mathematician, physicist, chemist, and always succeed in the realization of his predictions and the fulfillment of his plans—without adopting morality. Don't call him rational, if you don't want to. But at least remember that the structure of morality can be understood fully and masterfully described by some such non-rational, or irrational, creature. "What is morality?" is an entirely different question from "Why should one be moral, i.e., why should one adopt the institution of morality?"

### 7. Conclusion

The structure of the institution of (social) morality is very complex. Consequently, the structure of a good natural society, a non-angelic society, of imperfect and finite thinking beings, is very complex. Such society must have most of its members concerned both with their own moral development and the moral development of their institutions. A good society requires political leaders and administrators capable of improving both the lot of the unprivileged and the morality of the existing institutions. Doubtlessly, a good society must have scientists learning about humankind and about the world, so as to provide both better grounds for, and revisions of, the fundamental assumptions of the institution of morality. But it must have also leaders capable of understanding when and how a moral code ought to be changed, as well as some members capable of teaching the needed moral changes to the rest of society.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>See especially, H. N. Castaneda, "Imperatives, Oughts, and Moral Oughts," *The Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 44 (1966): 277-300, reprinted as Ch. 7 in H. N. Castaneda, *The Structure of Morality*, (Springfield, Illinois: Charles Thomas Pub., 1974).

<sup>2</sup>For the theory of practical thinking in general see *The Structure of Morality*, Chs. 2-6, and for the special theory of morality see Ch. 8.

<sup>3</sup>See *The Structure of Morality*, Chs. 2, 3, and 5, where there are references to other papers.

<sup>4</sup>See H. N. Castaneda, "Purpose, Action and Ought: An Integrated Theory of Action" and *Thinking and Doing: The Philosophical Foundations of Institutions* (Dordrecht: Reidel Publishing Co., 1975).

<sup>5</sup>See *The Structure of Morality*, Chs. 2-5, and the beginning and the end of Ch. 8.

<sup>6</sup>On promises see *The Structure of Morality*, p. 8.

<sup>7</sup>H. N. Castaneda, "On the Conceptual Autonomy of Morality," *Nous* VII (1973): 67-77.