

University of Groningen

Norms and logic. An investigation of the links between normontology and deontic logic, especially in the work of G.H. von Wright.

Huisjes, Cornelis Hermen

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:

1981

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Huisjes, C. H. (1981). *Norms and logic. An investigation of the links between normontology and deontic logic, especially in the work of G.H. von Wright.* s.n.

Copyright

Other than for strictly personal use, it is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

The publication may also be distributed here under the terms of Article 25fa of the Dutch Copyright Act, indicated by the "Taverne" license. More information can be found on the University of Groningen website: <https://www.rug.nl/library/open-access/self-archiving-pure/taverne-amendment>.

Take-down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Downloaded from the University of Groningen/UMCG research database (Pure): <http://www.rug.nl/research/portal>. For technical reasons the number of authors shown on this cover page is limited to 10 maximum.

SUMMARY

In a short introduction I set out the reasons for my research and advance the essential argument. The chief aim is to show in what manner exact schemes of thought like D.L. are connected with one's general normontology.

The first part of this work consists of a historical introduction to the main subject of discussion, von Wright's theory of a logic of norms. First the difficulties and limitations of a historical survey of the subject are explained and a few remarks are made on the methodical principles that such a survey might follow, viz. the 'objective', i.e. less subjective recording of ideas, the confinement in principle to individual writings, and the intention that not the historical but rather the systematic element of anticipating part II should predominate.

I have divided the history of D.L. into three periods: the 'prehistory' (Mimansa, Mahayana Buddhism, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Rossetus, Leibniz, Bentham), the period of integration with a logic of the will and a logic of imperatives (Lapie, Tarde, Mally, Husserl, Höfler, Menger, Dubislav, Jørgensen, Hofstädter & McKinsey, Bohnert, Ross, Hare), and the period of modern D.L., which might be roughly characterized as the *Auseinandersetzung* with alethic modal logic (von Wright, Anderson). Such new elements as quantification in D.L. and the use of semantic tools are also discussed in brief.

The systematic part takes as its point of departure von Wright's views on a number of normontological questions. It opens with a general impression of von Wright's philosophy and its background. Following some bibliographical remarks I outline the intellectual atmosphere in which von Wright developed the ideas for his further philosophical work. I demonstrate that, while his starting-point had been in the philosophers of the Vienna circle, he afterwards (after the publication of his thesis in 1941) turned towards the thinking of his teacher and friend Ludwig Wittgenstein, whom he also succeeded in Cambridge. The outline is concluded with an account of the most important of von Wright's philosophical works, e.g. *The Varieties of Goodness*, *Norm and Action*, and *Explanation and Understanding*.

After this introduction to von Wright's philosophy, his ideas about the relationship between D.L. and normontology are illustrated from five points of view:

- Are truth and falsehood properties of what is expressed by deontic sentences? If not, is this an argument in favour of rejecting the idea of a logic of norms, as philosophers of a positivist colouring like Ross are inclined to do?

In looking for an answer to this question we arrive at a set of constituent facts that can make norms exist and norm-propositions be true, or in other words constitute a truth-ground for normative statements (successful commanding, a normative relationship, promulgation, the ought-can principle and the real threat of sanctions).

However, it is prescriptively interpreted expressions (norm-formulations) to which D.L. applies. Together with the *truthground* for normative statements, these expressions form by their mutual *logical relationships* the ingredients constituting the basis of D.L., and the answer to Ross's objection has to be that logical relations also exist between non-theoretical entities like norms.

The truthground behind deontic expressions, viz. the existence of a norm, is then shown to be fundamental to them in another way besides its *validity*, *wellgroundedness* and *justification*.

- What is the relationship between D.L. and our linguistic intuitions of daily life? Does not a certain element of what could be called 'rationalisation' sometimes have a rather Procrustean effect on the way one normally thinks about normative matters?

This question becomes especially relevant when the reduction proposed by Anderson is discussed; other examples of the discrepancy to which I refer are the role played in D.L. by material implication, the atomistic interpretation of variable-operator complexes, the interpretation of the concept of absolute predicament as a logical impossibility, the dyadic concepts of permission or the interrelation of doing and forbearing in terms of formal logic.

Do we normally use the concepts of daily life (borrowed from daily language) in the manner suggested by their formalisation? In order to find this out one has to compare

the symbolic formulation of a concept with its intuitive meaning and to see whether the concept behaves differently in normal language than it does in the calculus.

Such a procedure has been followed for concepts like 'possible world', 'acting' and 'forbearing', 'ability', tautologous norms, hypothetical norms and norms in the reductionist sense, 'Necessary condition', 'sufficient condition' and 'strongly permitted'.

- The concept of permission is then compared with Leibniz's theory of deontic possibility.

Some conclusions arrived at are that to Leibniz there is no such thing as a deontic life-tree because, strictly speaking, he says that there are no deontic alternatives and this conflicts with von Wright's view.

Moreover, personal responsibility is stressed more by von Wright than by Leibniz and there is also a difference with respect to the definition of the ends which norms may have.

A comparison like the foregoing is also made between von Wright's own conceptions of deontic possibility of E.D.L. and N.A. respectively. Issues here are the notion of 'strength' in 'strong permission', the possibility of reducing P tot -O-, the nature of the principle *Nullum crimen sine lege* and the difference between 'not permitted' and 'not permitted'.

(or: 'not permitted' (= nowhere expressly permitted) and 'not permitted' (= prohibited).)

The aspect of reduction in D.L. has been dealt with through the discussion of questions like the immunity concept and the relation between reductionist 'strong permission' and the intuitive notion of permission.

- After the elaboration of the first two chapters in chapter three (on the concept of permission), another question related to those chapters is discussed, viz. whether the 'ought' (or 'may') can be deduced from the 'is'. Attempts at such a deduction have often been characterized as the naturalistic fallacy.

This quarrel, of which it is shown that it has an impact on formal standpoints too, is relativized to a certain degree by the distinction between Sein-sollen and Tun-sollen.

In von Wright's work there are at least three items which give rise to a comparison with the 'naturalistic fallacy': the transposition of the may-can principle, the inference from 'want' to 'ought' as a 'practical inference' and the deduction of the principle of justice from the rationality of man by means of a 'social mechanism'.

- Suppose one is agreed with regard to a foundation of norms which makes them suitable for being treated like propositions in a logical calculus, what then might be the role played by this logic of norms in giving a complementary foundation to a particular norm? (1) To what extent is the proof of a theorem of D.L. (and logic in general) purely logical? (2) Is it a consequence of the normative character of logical laws that those norms, i.e. norms for thinking, have a logic which could also be called D.L.? In other words, what are the foundations of D.L. itself? (3) Key notions in answering the first of these three questions appear to be consistency of norms and rationality of the norm-creating will, the criterion of entailment, which requires the notions of internal negation of norm-contents and negation-norm.

In the same context the difference between a D.L. reasoning in the strict sense and justification by means of the practical syllogism is then made clear, and so is the distinction between explanation and justification.

The second of our questions is answered negatively by pointing to certain elements of friction between the language of the calculus and intuitive thinking and to a degree of subjectivity which the axioms of D.L. may have.

The treatment of the final question is introduced by mentioning two basic conditions for the possibility of D.L.: they appear to be different ones from the conditions of truth and falsehood which gave rise to the objection discussed in chapter one.

After mentioning these conditions, viz. the possibility of inconsistency and the existence of linguistic concept relations, the logic of logical norms is briefly compared with Gödel's formula G.