Duty and Inclination
The Fundamentals of Morality Discussed and Redefined with Special Regard to Kant and Schiller

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HANS REINER

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PREFACE BY PROFESSOR WILLIAM K. FRANKENA

Many British and American works in moral philosophy have been translated into German recently. Now, if I were asked to select one German moral philosopher of the last fifty years for translation into English, it would be Hans Reiner. His writings in ethics, both systematic and historical, strike me as the clearest, soundest, most careful, and most interesting of the German works written by people who were not influenced by English-speaking (or Austrian) analytical philosophy. For a long time he was almost the only German philosopher to take ethics or moral philosophy seriously as a relatively distinct branch of philosophy, in opposition to Heidegger and the existentialists. As a result, his work was undeservedly neglected; he was, actually, I would say, putting forward a new ethical system of roughly the same importance as that of W.D. Ross. I am therefore happy to promote the translation of some of Reiner's work and to help in getting it a hearing in the English-speaking world.

Reiner's systematic thinking in ethics belongs to the phenomenological movement of Husserl, Scheler, Hartmann, and von Hildebrand. While most specifically influenced by von Hildebrand, it represents a novel kind of phenomenological ethics. It is a "Wertethik" still but one of a different sort, with more affinity with the ethics of deontologists like Ross. It is also more analytical in the English-speaking sense, although the analysis continues to take a relatively phenomenological form. It also continues the more or less intuitionistic or non-naturalistic line of thought of Reiner's predecessors, though without the Platonism of some of them, and in a form that may be more acceptable than those of Moore, Prichard, Ross, or even Ewing.

Another characteristic of Reiner's work is his concern with the history of ethics. He has a very learned and perceptive grasp of ethics on the Continent of Europe, ancient, medieval, and modern, and what he says about it

is accurate, acute, and rewarding. Some of his writings are primarily historical, though even these tend to have a critical and constructive orientation, and even his more systematic works usually involve some reference to and discussion of classical writers. Especially interesting as a historical and critical review of previous ethical systems is *Die philosophische Ethik: ihre Fragen und Lehren in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (1964).

It would be remiss of me if I did not mention Reiner's little book *Die Ehre: Kritische Sichtung einer abendländischen Lebens- und Sittlichkeitsform* (1956). In it he gives us one of the best discussions of honor, at once critical and sympathetic, that we have had from any philosopher. Also well worth reading is another small work, *Der Sinn unseres Daseins* (1964).

It happens that Reiner has recently written an acute and helpful paper on the problems of translating the English terms "right" and "wrong" into German. This paper includes a four-paragraph summary of his ethical system, and I shall conclude by translating it.

"Morality rests on the givenness of *values* and *disvalues* and exists in our freedom and power to work for or against their realisation through what we do or not do. They are experienced as what is pleasing (*erfreulich*) or displeasing (*unerfreulich*) about actual or represented beings, and are of two kinds. The first are objects of a desire for their possession, use, or some similar real relation to them in which they come to benefit us and so, in a wide sense, to fulfill a need. These are *need-related values*, and include whatever is agreeable, and also esteem and glory, as well as necessities like food and drink. In the case of values of the second sort, their existence in actuality is as such experienced as pleasing (and that of disvalues as displeasing), regardless of where or by whom they are actualized. Such values are *absolute*, being experienced as having value in themselves. Of this sort are the values of a moral character of justice, and of life itself.

Need-related values may be realized either as satisfying one's own needs or as satisfying those of others. The latter are *objectively significant*, as are absolute values and need-related values that are necessary for one's own life. Need-related values that fulfill needs of one's own but are not necessary to one's life are merely *subjectively significant*. Objectively significant values present themselves to us as something that ought to be for its own sake; subjectively significant values present themselves simply as satisfying our desires or our need for recognition. Hence arises the consciousness that we ought to have a regard for the status of objectively significant values, and, if necessary, to set ourselves to actualize or maintain them. About subjectively significant values, on the other hand, we are conscious that we ought to give them up when their pursuit conflicts with

the demands of objectively significant values. One's act is morally good if one fulfills such demands; if one acts counter to them it is evil (*böse*). The decision here is a matter of the will; intelligence and experience are not needed.

Often, however, we must choose between two or more objectively significant values. In such cases the question which one to prefer is not a question of what is *good* or *evil* but of what is *morally right* (*sittlich richtig*). In '*Pflicht und Neigung*' eleven principles for dealing with such cases are formulated. Here the decision is primarily a matter of knowledge, though it cannot always be made with certainity. Everyone just does what appears as morally right (what is subjectively morally right) as long as no subjectively significant values play a role. To determine what is objectively morally right, however, often requires prudence and experience, or even scientific knowledge. Because of variations in historical and personal situations such determinations are valid only with corresponding qualifications.

Often in choices between two or more objectively significant values, one finds a merely subjectively significant value tied to one of them. Then one's decision in favor of that objectively significant value is morally *good* only if one chooses it for its own sake; the decision is without moral worth if one chooses the object only because of the subjectively significant value involved. If one chooses the lesser of two objectively significant values because of some merely subjectively significant value associated with it, then one's choice is both morally wrong (*sittlich falsch*) and evil (*böse*)".

1. "Was heisst und wie übersetzt man 'right' und 'wrong' als Grundbegriffe der Moral ins Deutsche?", *Archiv für Rechts- und Sozialphilosophie*, Bd. LXIV/2 (1978), 243 – 268. The summary occurs on pp. 258 – 260. There is a translation of a longer essay in which Reiner states his position in J.J. Kockelman's *Contemporary European Ethics*. Anchor Books. 1972, pp. 158 – 181.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

The preceding Preface, which Professor William Frankena had the great kindness to write as an introduction for the readers of the present English translation of my major work, still requires several supplementary comments on my part. Professor Frankena rightly considered it to be an advantage to introduce the English-speaking world to my moral philosophy through its presentation in this book. As an introduction to my moral philosophy, Professor Frankena provided a concise formulation of the fundamental ideas of my ethics by quoting from an article I had just recently published. Several points worth mentioning remain.

Firstly, it is necessary to distinguish the two editions of the text here translated. The first edition was published in 1951 by Anton Hain in Meisenheim am Glan, under the title *Pflicht und Neigung* (Duty and Inclination), with the subtitle *Die Grundlagen der Sittlichkeit, erörtert und neu bestimmt mit besonderem Bezug auf Kant und Schiller* (The Fundamentals of Morality, Discussed and Redefined with Special Regard to Kant and Schiller). In 1974, a revised and enlarged second edition was published by the same publisher and was entitled *Die Grundlagen der Sittlichkeit* (The Fundamentals of Morality). Of this second edition, the first four chapters have been translated in the present volume, along with four more recent essays.

Concerning the content of the four chapters presented in this translation, a further point should be stated. My system of "Wertethik" (value ethics) has been developed by me, as Professor Frankena observed, not only with reference to Scheler, N. Hartmann and D. von Hildebrand, on a purely theoretical and systematical method, but also in a dialogue with *Kant*. This dialogue had been elicited and was justified in view of the eminent role of Kant's moral philosophy in Germany since the publication of his fun-

damental work in ethics and also in view of their interpretation, which is still controversial, particularly in phenomenological philosophy. In the English-speaking world as well, where Kantian ethics has had less influence and has been given less consideration, this dialogue might be of interest and could offer new insights.

Furthermore, I would like to call the reader's attention to three of the smaller essays presented in this volume. In these I clarify and defend my position within the school of "Wertethik". The essays are: (a) "Die Ausbildung und Fortbildung der phänomenologischen Methode der Ethik" (On the Adaption of the Phenomenological Method to, and Its Refinement as a Method of, Ethics); published in *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung*, 29 (1975), pp. 108 – 117; (b) "Wertethik nicht mehr aktuell?" (Is Value Ethics Out of Date?), in *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung*, 30 (1976), pp. 93 – 98; (c) "Die Goldene Regel und das Naturrecht" (The Golden Rule and Natural Law) in *Studia Leibnitiana*, 8 (1977), pp. 231 – 254.

Finally the present volume ends with the essay "Good and Value. The Philosophical Relevance of the Concept of Value", which, in my view, comprises a completely new foundation of ethics as Wertethik with an emphasis on its relevance to the history of language.

I would like to thank Mr. Mark Santos, who has been working on this project for several years in continuous discussion with me, for his devoted labor.