FOREWORD

Most British philosophers would regard G. E. Moore's *Principia Ethica* as a turning-point in ethics, though they would now disagree about whether the turn was in a desirable direction. Firstly Moore's concentration on the meaning of 'good' initiated a long period of concentration on the meaning of ethical terms. Seemingly his exposure of the alleged naturalistic fallacy made it difficult for philosophers to outline moral systems in which close connections were made between human conduct and features of human nature or of the natural world.

The climate of opinion in philosophy, however, is now less restrictive. Queries are constantly raised not just about the activity of 'conceptual analysis' but also about its importance in philosophy. The possibility is challenged of strictly delimiting philosophical enquiries from other enquiries – e.g. in psychology or the social services. And in ethics itself many are bored with minute questions of meaning and wish to raise again larger issues which were considered by past philosophers such as Hume, Kant, Mill and Bradley. There is also a growing conviction, exemplified by the journal *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, that philosophy has an important contribution to make to the discussion of substantive issues such as euthanasia, abortion, the use of violence, academic freedom, and the pollution of the environment.

The time therefore seems opportune to raise again some of the general questions about the relationship between nature and conduct. And this is the theme of the series of lectures delivered at the Royal Institute of Philosophy in 1973–4. 'Nature' was not restricted to human nature and no particular pattern was laid down into which contributors to the series were asked to fit. The general theme of the series was explained to them and they were asked if they had some ideas which they wished to explore which were consonant with it.

In spite of this lack of plan the lectures which were given fall roughly into four groups. The first and largest group deals with the most general questions about the nature of man and the role of

empirical assumptions in morality. The second group is concerned with how more specific notions such as 'needs', 'happiness', 'conscience', and 'playing a role' enter into morality. In the third group wider questions are raised about man's relationship and attitudes to the natural and animal world. In the final and smallest group there are two papers which raise ethical issues about environmental planning and cost-benefit analysis.

THE ROLE OF EMPIRICAL ASSUMPTIONS IN MORALITY

In the first lecture, which was also the H. B. Acton Lecture, Renford Bambrough, Fellow of St John's College, Cambridge, uses the title 'Essay on Man' to ask whether the general question 'what is the nature of man?' can be legitimately raised. He distinguishes the logical constraints on what can count as a man from the causal constraints connected with human existence, and the moral constraints to which a being is subject if he is to be worthy of being called human. But, he argues, the question 'what is man?' is still one question in its own right. The unity of the question must not be forgotten in following up different aspects of the answer.

A more specific and historically hallowed version of this question is raised by Anthony Quinton, Fellow of New College, Oxford, in his paper on 'Has Man an Essence?' He has sympathy for the general move away from the formalism of recent moral philosophy and for a return to the attempt to base principles of right conduct on human nature. But he does not think that this return is helped by any attempt to revive doctrines about the essence of man. For, he argues, even if it can be shown that man has an essence, it cannot be shown that this has any ethical implications. He illustrates this theme by exploring the theories of Aristotle, Marx, and Sartre.

G. J. Warnock, Principal of Hertford College, Oxford, is interested in a looser connection between morality and human nature than that suggested by the doctrine of man's essence. He wants to know 'what, and how much empirical information is required for, or relevant to, moral philosophy?' His starting-point for this enquiry is Kant's work in 'practical anthropology'. So he calls his paper 'Kant and Anthropology'. He examines the situation of persons hypothetically placed behind 'the veil of ignorance' in John Rawls's treatment of the principle of justice, but objects that the liberal allowance of information granted to them is due to Rawls's assimilation of moral philosophy to legislation. On the other hand he argues that Kant's more stringent exclusion of the empirical is difficult to

defend because he does not consider carefully enough why principles are wanted, and what they are supposed to do for us.

It is the obverse of the type of question raised by Warnock that interests Ted Honderich, Reader in Philosophy at University College, University of London, namely, why certain facts are not taken notice of by philosophers, and why some sorts of palpable facts arouse a less ready response than others. In his paper 'On Inequality and Violence, and differences we make between them' he catalogues facts about inequality and violence. He then notes and tries to explain the difference in quietness which characterises our responses to these two types of facts. He discusses and rejects considerations which might justify the psychological supremacy of our responses to violence and argues for the relevance of facts about distress in interpreting the principle of equality.

Another kind of connection between human nature and morality is examined by Christopher Cherry, Senior Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Kent, in his paper on 'Agreement, Objectivity, and the Sentiment of Humanity in Morals'. He wishes to rebut the suggestion that human consciousness and moral consciousness are completely distinct – that the absence of the latter would only affect the former in minimal respects. His question, in other words, is about the relationship between being aware and being morally aware. He shows, first of all, that our concern about certain matters in human life, which is evidenced by the concepts which we have developed, cannot be separated from our adoption of a 'moral point of view'. He also indicates directions in which he would have to travel to sustain the stronger and more interesting thesis that conceptualising creatures must be creatures with moral interests.

In the last paper of the first group Ian Gregory, Lecturer in Philosophy and Education at the University of York, approaches the problem of the relationship between human nature and conduct by comparing and contrasting three theories of human nature within the psycho-analytic tradition, those of Freud, Klein, and the neo-Freudians. In his paper 'Psycho-analysis, Human Nature and Human Conduct' he argues that the differences between these theories are only in part rooted in empirical considerations. They also reflect deep-seated presuppositions that inform our conception of the kind of creature man is. These differing images of man affect fundamentally the conception – of man as a moral agent – that emerges from each of the theories.

MORALITY AND SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF HUMAN NATURE

With the second group of papers attention is directed away from general issues about the relationship of conduct to human nature towards more specific ways in which they might be related. The most obviously moral aspect of human nature is a man's conscience, which Justin Gosling, Fellow of St Edmund Hall, Oxford, interprets as being connected with what upon reflection a person thinks it right to do. In his paper on 'The Natural Supremacy of Conscience' he asks what importance in morality should be given to this type of reflection. His answer is that this emphasis goes easily only with certain moral positions. There are other moral views – e.g. Platonic, consequentialist, on which it becomes a puzzle why anyone should have any enthusiasm at all about the development or exercise of conscience.

Happiness, too, is a state of mind whose relationship to morality has been a matter of controversy amongst philosophers. Roger Scruton, Lecturer in Philosophy at Birkbeck College, University of London, is interested in happiness because he thinks that it affords some basis for the objectivity of moral judgements. In his paper 'Reason and Happiness' he explains, first of all, the 'path of truth' to the objectivity of moral judgements, by examining whether it makes sense to apply the concept of truth to them and whether their truth conditions can be described. This path peters out in a bewildering series of questions. So he turns to the 'path of reason', which construes the categorical imperative as an expression of attitude and looks for reasons acceptable to any man for acquiring moral attitudes, which are reasons independent of his particular desires. His case is that the appeal to happiness provides reasons which are not relative to desire, but which are practical and acceptable to any man. It is important, however, to realise that happiness does not provide a *further* end for action any more than friendship provides a further end for actions done out of friendship. Morality is a part of happiness, not a means to it. 'In happiness what one is, is what one thinks it a good thing to be.'

Another state of mind which has often been closely connected with morality is that of 'need'. Human needs have been cited to support demands for rights and as a relevant ground for applying the principle of distributive justice. It is not, however, this type of connection between human nature and morality that is the main focus of interest in the paper by Richard Wollheim, Grote Professor of Mind and Logic at University College, University of London, in his paper on 'Needs, Desires and Moral Turpitude'. He is worried

about the confusion between needs and desires both in philosophy and in life itself. This bears upon morality because 'moral turpitude' consists in representing to ourselves and to others our pressing desires in language appropriated from 'need'. To set the stage for the exposure of this strategy Wollheim examines the phenomenon of need in simple and complex forms and contrasts it with that of desire. He emphasises that 'need' involves a departure from a norm and that the object of need constitutes a remedy.

Martin Hollis, Senior Lecturer in Philosophy in the University of East Anglia, tackles issues surrounding the long-standing assertion that man is a social animal. In his paper on 'My Role and its Duties', which is a modern variant of Bradley's famous essay on 'My Station & its Duties', he argues that, though the old doctrine that man has an essence may be rejected, presuppositions about human nature are still crucial to social theory and to the explanation of behaviour. He takes the modern explanatory notion of 'role-playing' as a case study and shows how this behaves differently in social theories depending on whether they work with a presupposition of man as plastic or as autonomous. He also sketches his own theory of the free social individual who creates his own social identity by acting rationally within a consistent role-set of his own choosing and who becomes what he has chosen by accepting his 'duties' as his duties.

MAN'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE NATURAL WORLD

The conviction that man is a free agent raises wider questions about the position of man within the natural world with which the third group of papers is concerned. John Watkins, Professor of Logic and Scientific Method at the London School of Economics and Political Science, in his paper on 'Three views concerning Human Freedom', addresses himself to these wider issues of free-will and determinism. He considers the empiricist view of Hobbes and Hume and the a priorist view of Spinoza and Kant and finds them both inadequate. The fact that both theories were developed within a deterministic framework gives a common explanation of some of their inadequacies. Watkins then proceeds to outline a third conception of autonomy which reflects the shift from Kantian determinism and a priorism to Popperian indeterminism and conjecturalism.

The question 'How is man related to the universe?' is regarded by Shirley Letwin as the ghost in modern philosophy. In her paper 'Nature, History and Morality' she sets out carefully the Greek view of this relationship as represented by Plato and Aristotle, who were

impressed by the fact that although everything changes, there appears to be a limit and order to these changes. To explain this they postulated an eternal ordering spiritual principle, which men are both subject to and incorporate. She then explains how man became a stranger in the universe once, with the rise of modern science, teleological explanations were abandoned. She examines evolutionary and structural patterns discerned in the human world by Popper and Lévi-Strauss which she regards as attempts to save eternal truth by dispensing with human freedom, and Sartre's existentialism which saves human freedom by eliminating any reason for exercising it.

In her view these attempts to deal with the void left by rejection of the Greek view are unsatisfactory because of their repudiation of historical orders which consist of contingent connections between contingent ideas made by man. She then explains how such historical orders can be objective by taking the example of language, and passes to a consideration of other historical objectivities such as science and art. She denies the superior objectivity often accorded to science. 'If there is no rational cosmic order, the variety cannot be arranged in a hierarchy.' She ends by examining the features of morality as one such historical objectivity.

The importance of the question 'How is man related to the universe?' which, in Shirley Letwin's view, most emancipated modern philosophers refuse to hear, is high-lighted by modern debates about conservation. For objections to the despoliation of the natural world are seldom based just on some view about the harm which it does to human beings. More deep-seated presuppositions about man's place in nature lurk beneath. It is these which John Passmore, Professor of Philosophy in the Australian National University, discusses in his paper on 'Attitudes to Nature'.

He deals, first of all, with the two leading traditions in modern Western thought, the Cartesian view that matter is inert and that man's relationship to it is that of a despot who can legitimately reshape it in accordance with his desires and the Hegelian view that 'nature exists only *in potentia*, as something which it is man's task to help to actualise through art, science, philosophy, technology, converting it into something human, something in which he can feel thoroughly "at home", in no sense alien or strange to him, a mirror in which he can see his own face'. He proceeds to ask what general conditions any philosophy of nature must fulfil if it is to do justice to the scientific themes of the ecological movement as distinct from its mystical overtones, without being tempted by forms of re-

ductionism that deny the important differences between natural and human dealings.

Passmore then examines the contention that the West now needs a new ethic, with responsibility for nature lying at its centre. He argues that, to a considerable degree, very familiar ethical principles are strong enough to deal with despoilers but that, in addition, the Augustinian doctrine has to be dropped that in his dealings with nature man is simply not subject to moral censure, except where specifically human interests arise. Cruelty to animals, for instance, is wrong, and vandalism is as applicable to those who damage or destroy the natural world as it is to those who damage or destroy artefacts. If we can bring ourselves to admit fully the independence of nature, the fact that things go on in their own complex ways, we are likely to feel more respect for the ways in which they go on. In brief the emergence of new moral attitudes to nature is bound up with the emergence of a more realistic philosophy of nature.

John Benson, Professor of Philosophy in the University of Lancaster, has a very different kind of interest in the natural world. In his paper 'Hog in Sloth, Fox in Stealth: Man and Beast in Moral Thinking' he examines the ways in which other species enter our moral thinking. An obvious way is in the use of animal personages in children's stories, which permits some undidactic pointing of morals. Then there is the way in which species of animals have entered our moral vocabulary as a shorthand way of referring to human character-types, e.g. the wolf, worm, and lamb. They help understanding as well as evaluation. Indeed Benson is particularly interested in this aspect of our reference to animals; for he thinks that they provide overtly observable paradigms for understanding certain explanatory notions such as greed, for which we cannot give a list of characteristic types of behaviour. The behaviour of the fox, for instance, provides a simple paradigm on which we can build our understanding of 'cunning'. There is, however, a danger in pushing surface similarities too far and taking metaphors too literally as, for instance, when the behaviour of people in libraries is explained in terms of the territory-defending behaviour of some species of animals.

ETHICAL ASPECTS OF ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING

The last two papers in the series deal with the ethical aspects of environmental planning. In the first paper on 'Contrasting Methods of Environmental Planning' Richard Hare, White's Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Oxford, discusses two methods

of approach to problems of planning. In the first, which he calls the means-end model, goals have to be decided upon first and then means looked for to attain them. In the second, the trial design model, the designer produces more or less detailed particular designs and the client chooses which he prefers. An illustration of the former method is given by Roger Creighton's book *Urban Transportation Planning* and of the second by Sir Colin Buchanan's books *Alternatives for Edinburgh* and *Edinburgh: the Recommended Plan.* One of the deficiencies of the former method is shown to be the tendency to omit goals that are not measurable in terms of money, as was seen in the majority report on the third London airport. This vitiates attempts to 'prove' that one plan is better than another. In the latter method, however, there is no attempt to 'prove' an evaluative conclusion – only to make as well-informed a choice as is possible in the circumstances. Hare then discusses different ways of ensuring that the interests of all are taken into account and sets out the case for his own approach in which 'ought to be adopted' goes along with 'prepared to prescribe' for 'universal adoption in cases just like this' as against that of the 'ideal observer' or 'rational contractor' theories.

In the final paper Peter Self, Professor of Public Administration at the London School of Economics and Political Science, in his paper 'Techniques and Values in Policy Decisions' deals with difficulties in the fashionable technique of cost-benefit analysis. He explains it first as a form of economic populism, as an attempt to apply the concept of consumer choice to a much broader range of political decisions and compares it with political methods of assessing interests. He thinks that the best case for cost-benefit analysis is as a check upon interest group claims within a general policy framework. He then demonstrates the intractability for the cost-benefit analysis approach of claims based on respect for rights and 'basic needs'. There is also the problem of 'welfare', the most neglected subject of welfare economics, and the difficulties of quantifying any assessment of it. Considerations such as these justify scepticism about the possibility of translating political issues into the more precise language of economics; for it is based on the mistaken assumption that economics possesses a single normative yardstick (such as consumers' welfare) which is lacking in politics.

Self ends by comparing the cost-benefit analysis approach with that of 'consensus planning', which works through goals by political leaders and other spokesmen for interest groups, and which is guided by a large number of social norms and beliefs about 'the common good'. An example of this was the classic Ebenezer Howard case for new towns. He points out that these two approaches pre-

suppose different views of man in society, the 'consensus-planning' approach tending to see the needs of man and society in much more integrated terms. His conclusion is that, at best, a modified version of cost-benefit analysis can be used as an instrument of policy criticism, not as a positive instrument for decision or arbitration.

R. S. PETERS

Acting Honorary Director
The Royal Institute of Philosophy

Professor of the Philosophy of Education
University of London Institute of Education