

# The Human Predicament

## Chapter 2 in *The Object of Morality*<sup>1</sup>

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Moral concepts come into a certain kind, or perhaps one should say certain kinds, of evaluation. By this I do not mean to say that there is any one thing which we use them in doing, but only that 'evaluation' is a good enough name for what, in one way or another, they have in general to do with. Moral discourse, in which moral concepts are employed, has to do, in one way or another, with issues about what is good or bad, right or wrong, to be commended or condemned. Obviously there is evaluation that is not moral. Good weather is not morally good; the wrong way to sew on a button is not morally wrong; commendation of your style as a golfer, or of you for your style as a golfer, would not be moral commendation. What morality has to do with is a kind of evaluation. The question, what kind, is, I suppose, just the question to which most of this book is intended to suggest an answer. Let us begin with a simpler question: evaluation of what?

There is perhaps no very useful short answer to this question; but if we had to give one, the best answer, though it immediately calls for some qualification, seems to be: the actions of rational beings. Why 'actions'? Well, it is clearly not only actions that are ever the topic of moral thought, or moral discussion or remark. Failures to act perhaps scarcely need separate mention. But also, people may be said to be morally good or bad; so may their characters, or their motives, or their feelings; so may practices and institutions; perhaps even objects sometimes, like books or pictures. But it seems reasonable to say that, even in these other cases, some more or less direct reference to actions is always present, and is fundamental. A person is morally good or bad primarily at least because of what he does or omits to do. A morally bad character is a disposition to act morally badly, or wrongly. Motives typically, and feelings often, tend to issue in actions. A morally objectionable institution, like slavery perhaps or an oppressive system of law or government, is morally objectionable in that it permits, or even requires, things to be done that morally ought not to be done, or prevents things being done that should be done. If a book could sensibly be said to be morally bad, that might be because writing or publishing it was taken to be a morally bad thing to do, or perhaps because reading it was thought liable to prompt people towards acting in morally exceptionable ways. So it seems that, when moral issues come up, there is always involved, more or less directly, some question of the doings or non-doings of rational beings.

Why 'rational beings'? Why not simply say 'people', or 'human beings'? The distinction is perhaps not a very important one, in practice at any rate; but still, it does seem to be the case that what makes 'people' eligible for consideration, and sometimes for judgement, as moral agents is that they are in a certain sense rational, and not that they constitute a particular biological species, that of humans. For one's doings to be a proper or possible object of moral evaluation whether by others or by oneself, it is a necessary condition that one should have at least some ability to perceive and consider alternative courses of action, to appreciate what is to be said for or against the alternatives, to make a choice or decision, and to act accordingly. But it is, one would think, a purely contingent matter that the only beings we know to exist who clearly satisfy this condition, or at any rate the only ones we commonly come across, are human beings, biped mammalian inhabitants of our particular planet. If there had been other sorts of animals on this planet, or

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<sup>1</sup>London: Methuen & CO LTD, 1971

if there were other beings elsewhere, who were rational in this somewhat minimal but essential sense, then they would have been, or would be, potential moral agents, notwithstanding the fact that they happened not to be human. One might even be inclined to regret that we come across no such beings. Our capacity to envisage a diversity of forms of life would surely be expanded by acquaintance with beings, able much as we are to choose within limits how to live their lives, but not constrained in doing so by specifically human needs, aims, and aspirations; it would be instructive to see, among other things, what morality would come down to in detail for them, and how relations between the species might be worked out (though of course they would be quite likely to work out very badly). It might have been good for humans to have had to take some non-humans more seriously than, as things are, they have occasion to do.

To be rational in this sense, then, rather than simply to be human, is a necessary condition for one's doings or non-doings to be a proper object of moral evaluation. Is it also a sufficient condition? Again the point is perhaps not very important; but for what it is worth, it seems reasonable to hold that it is not — at least in this sense, that it seems conceivable that, notwithstanding the rationality of some species of agents, questions of moral evaluation might not have arisen for them. For instance, there is the possibility, envisaged by Kant<sup>2</sup>, of rational beings who would not only always see straight off what action it was that in fact was morally right, or required, but would always be thereby led to do it, and would never have the least inclination towards doing anything else. For them, at least moral exhortation and persuasion would be simply unnecessary; *ex hypothesi* there would be nothing in their doings to be condemned, and perhaps, if it was simply natural to them to act in that way, moral commendation also would be out of place. A great deal, at least, that is familiar to us in moral thought and discourse would not come up in their case; for there would be no occasion for it. It is perhaps also conceivable that the circumstances of life of some species of rational beings might have been such that no moral issues ever arose for them. If, for instance, though rational, they were all completely impassive, completely invulnerable, completely self-sufficient, not significantly affected in any way by anything that went on around them, and having to do with no sentient beings of any other sort, then it is perhaps hard to see how any of their doings could be judged morally better or worse than any alternatives. It would seem to make no difference of any morally assessable sort. However, it is surely of no great importance to decide this question; for we know well enough that human beings, who are in fact the only sort of rational beings we commonly encounter, are not like this, either by nature or with respect to their circumstances. So we may leave these rather fanciful speculations on one side, and move on to what we all actually know something about, that is, what may conveniently, if portentously, be called the 'human predicament'.

I had better make clear at once why I want to bring in, and indeed to start from, this perhaps archaic-looking topic. My idea is this. In general we evaluate things, it is to be supposed, for certain purposes; whenever, in any field, we rank or grade, commend or condemn, and so forth, we have — or should have, if there is to be any sense, in what we are doing — some object in view, and quite possibly more than one. It is in fact risky to generalize about this, because particular cases differ so much among themselves. It might be objected, for instance, that while there will presumably be some pretty obvious 'object' in the evaluation of things that we use — for instance, to mark out the degree to which those things are good for what we propose to use them for — it is much less clear that we have any particular 'object' in evaluating, say, weather, or works of art.

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<sup>2</sup>*Grundlegung*, Second Section

Still, at least evaluation is surely never just pointless; at the very least, even if we may sometimes have no practical purpose in view, it will be because we have some *preference* as between one thing and another that we bother at all to evaluate items of that kind. Further, it seems to me that to understand some species of evaluation (as contrasted perhaps with mastering it as a mere drill) is essentially a matter of grasping what its object is, what it is done for; and indeed if — only if — one understands this, can one be in any position to assess the appropriateness, or even relevance, of the standards and criteria employed.

Consider, for instance, the ‘grading’ of candidates in a schoolleaving examination. Clearly, in considering how this is or should be done, it is essential to be clear as to what it is being done for. Is it the object, for instance, to determine and indicate how well candidates are judged to have done certain work at school? Or is it, differently, to indicate how well they are judged likely to do certain things in future, for instance in employment or at universities? Conceivably one might hold that these come to the same, on the ground that what a candidate has done is the only sound, or only assessable, indicator of what he may be expected to do; but if that is not so, clearly the two objects would make appropriate and relevant the employment of different criteria. Then again, it might be the object, or part of the object, to reward or reprove, encourage or stimulate, the examinees themselves; and this too would make ‘grading’ a different sort of exercise.

Now it is not impossible to raise the question: what is moral evaluation for? What is its point? Why do we distinguish between, say, actions as morally right or wrong, between people or qualities of character as good or bad? Why do we teach children to do this, by precept or example? Why do we think it worth doing? What are we trying to achieve, or bring about, by doing it? Well, it is by and large — with qualifications already noted — evaluation of the actions of rational beings. It does not seem plausible that in doing this we are simply, so to speak, disinterestedly awarding marks, for no particular reason or purpose, to ourselves or others. There is, it seems obvious here, some general practical end in view; and if so, it may seem manifest that the general object must be to bring it about, in some way or other, that rational beings act, in some respects or other, better than they would otherwise be liable to do. Put more pompously, the general object of moral evaluation must be to contribute in some respects, by way of the actions of rational beings, to the amelioration of the human predicament — that is, of the conditions in which these rational beings, humans, actually find themselves. Accordingly, I take it to be necessary to understanding in this case to consider, first, what it is in the human predicament that calls for amelioration, and second, what might reasonably be suggested (to put it guardedly) as the specific contribution of ‘morality’ to such amelioration. How are things liable to go wrong? And how exactly — or, perhaps, plausibly — can morality be understood as a contribution to their going better? These are the questions that I think worth asking. In thus talking, in archaic style, about the ‘human predicament’, I believe, and in a sense hope, that I shall have nothing to say the truth of which will not be immediately obvious to everyone. There are some things nevertheless that it seems relevant to say; and in a sense it would not even matter if they were not true. For the present question is really what ‘morality’ can be seen as pre-supposing; and the answer to that is presumably independent of the question whether all that is pre-supposed is true.

It seems reasonable, and in the present context is highly relevant, to say, without necessarily going quite so far as Hobbes did<sup>3</sup>, that the human predicament is inherently such that things are

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<sup>3</sup>*Leviathan*, I, c. 13

liable to go badly. This seems to be inherently so, but not completely hopelessly so; that is, there are circumstances, not in the least likely to change significantly or to be changed by our own efforts, which cannot but tend to make things go badly, but also something at least can be done, many different things in fact, to make them go at least somewhat better than they would do, if no such things were done at all.

In the first place, a human being as a certain kind of animal has what may be called biological needs. The life-span of humans is in any case limited; but if a person is to survive at all he must have air and water, usually shelter, and appropriate food, and he must not be subjected to gross physical damage. Apart from this there are countless other things which, while not absolute needs for every member of the species, can reasonably be regarded as indispensable enough, and indispensable for enough humans, to be called needs also. Then, in addition to and overlapping with the things that people need, there are the things that they want. (A man may not want something that he needs, if he does not know that he needs it, or even if he does know; and of course many things that we want are not things that we need.) Although there may be some things that almost every human being wants (but does not absolutely need), there is obviously also almost endless personal diversity in wants, attributable to differences of circumstances, information, and individual character and aims, or to pure vagaries of taste and fancy. Furthermore, while it seems to be a necessary truth that, if one needs something, one is at least *prima facie* and in that respect better off if one has it than if one does not, it is clear that people may want things which it would not be for their good to have, or indeed in any sense good that they should have; and sometimes they may know quite clearly that that is so. If we take a person's 'interests' to comprise those things which it is or would be actually for his good that he should have, it is evident that not only may he not know what his interests are, but he may not want to satisfy or pursue them even if he does know; and he may want to do or have things that it would not, and sometimes to his own knowledge would not, be in his interest to do or have. Attempts have sometimes been made to deny that a man may be a poor judge of his own interests, but surely wrongly. The motive, I think, has been apprehension of the practical consequences of allowing that a man might be a better judge of another's interests than that other person is of his own. It has been felt, understandably, that this, if admitted, might be taken as a pretext for a kind of paternalistic interference which, even if wholly well-intentioned, might be undesirable. But this, though understandable, is confused. If we wish to argue against the idea that a man may, quite in general, be properly compelled to act in a way which someone else thinks, but he does not, to be in his interest, we need not do so by trying to maintain that no one could be a better judge of his interests than he is himself. It is quite possible to maintain that, even if I do assess your interests better than you do, I am not necessarily entitled thereby to make you follow my judgement rather than your own.

Now some human needs, wants, and interests are, special and exceptional circumstances apart, just naturally satisfied by the human environment and situation, and others frustrated. For instance, there is naturally available in the atmosphere of the planet, without any intervention of ours, enough air for everybody to breathe (not always clean air, but that is another matter); and there are doubtless some things that people want to do, or perhaps would like to do, or wish that they could do, which are simply physically impossible — either completely so, for everybody, or impossible in certain conditions, or for certain people. But, uncontroversially, over an enormous range of needs, wants, and interests, these are neither just naturally satisfied, nor naturally, ineluctably frustrated. In an enormous range of cases, something both needs to be done, and also at least in principle could be done. And of course this is where practical problems arise. Clearly, within the general

area of theoretical possibility, what anyone can do, or could arrange that others should do, is limited by the availability of information, and also, no doubt one should add, of intelligence. Both in large matters of, for instance, national policy, and in small matters of purely private and personal concern, what can actually be done (except by accident) is not what could in technical theory be done, but only what is known, effectively realized, to be possible. At least as serious is the fact that the resources needed for doing things, again both in large matters and small, are practically always limited; not everything that is needed, or wanted, or would be advantageous can be done at the same time, or even could ever be done at all. This means, of course, that some 'satisfactions' must be postponed to others, with consequent problems about priorities; and some, no doubt, cannot possibly be secured at all.

This is the case, as one may put it, of attainable satisfactions competing for priority; but notoriously there are even less tractable forms of competition than this. In the first place, there is absolutely no reason to assume that the needs, wants, and interests of any one individual will just naturally form what might be called a consistent set, or coherent programme. We have noted already that a man may not want what he needs, often does not need what he wants, and may not want to get what it is in his interest that he should have; but of course it is also true that he may want things, not all of which it is practically, or even logically, possible that he should ever have. If so, there will be absolutely no reason to believe that his total satisfaction, meaning thereby satisfaction of all his needs, wants, and interests, is, in any order of priority, even logically possible, let alone practically. Then secondly, and even more notoriously, in practice people cannot but be often in competition with other people; practically at any rate, even if not in Utopian theory, it is often the case that the full or even partial satisfaction of one, or some, is attainable only at the expense of others — that is, by bringing about a situation which in some degree frustrates or does not wholly satisfy them. Nor, it seems, is this simply a practical difficulty of limited resources; for just as the wants, etc., of a single individual do not necessarily form a set such that satisfaction of all of them is possible even logically, the same may be true of the wants, etc., of pairs or of any larger groups of people. If, for instance, you want to exert absolute domination over me, and I over you, it is not logically possible that both these wants should be fully satisfied; and similarly if, say, you want exclusive possession of some particular thing that I possess, and want too.

What emerges so far, then, from even the sketchiest survey of the human predicament is perhaps depressing enough. Though perhaps not many of the things people need, or want, or would be the better for having are just naturally, ineluctably, and absolutely unobtainable (I do not say that none are), it is also true that not many such things are just naturally available anyway, without anything in particular being done. Human knowledge and intelligence set limits of one sort to what can be done; and limits of another sort are set by limited resources. Given these limitations, there is no practical possibility of everyone's having everything that he wants, or would be the better for having, or even perhaps everything that he needs. But further, there is not merely a practical difficulty here, however insuperable; for, whether for an individual or for a group (or, for that matter, for groups of groups), there is no reason to believe that total satisfaction is even a logical possibility. People may have, both as individuals and as members of groups, wants and even interests the joint satisfaction of which is not logically possible.

But of course that is not all that may reasonably depress us. Even if what we have vaguely called total satisfaction is not a practical or even a logical possibility, there is reason to think that there is a practical possibility of a good deal of satisfaction — practical, that is, from the point of view of available resources and known technical feasibility. We have been assured by a variety of

prophets, in the H. G. Wells or (in some moods) Bertrand Russell manner, that, notwithstanding the perplexing diversity of people's interests and wants, and the doubtless lesser variety of their actual needs, there exist both the resources and the technical capacity to go at least a very considerable way towards the general satisfaction of the inhabitants of our planet, and not only in grossly material respects; and, discounting a little the blue-skies fervor characteristic of such prophets, there is no reason wholly to disbelieve what they say. But of course there are snags; and these have to do with certain further facts about human beings.

We have already mentioned, as limiting factors, **limited resources, limited information, limited intelligence**. What we need now to bring in might be called **limited rationality**, and **limited sympathies**. In the first place it may be said — certainly with extreme vagueness, but still with pretty evident truth — that human beings in general are not just naturally disposed always to do what it would be best that they should do, even if they see, or are perfectly in a position to see, what that is. Even if they are not positively neurotic or otherwise maladjusted, **people are naturally somewhat prone to be moved by short-run rather than longrun considerations**, and often by the pursuit of more blatant, intense, and obtrusive satisfactions rather than of those cooler ones that on balance would really be better. While mostly 'rational' in the minimal sense mentioned above — that is, able in at least some degree to envisage practical alternatives, to deliberate, and to decide — they are not all just naturally, or indeed in any other way, rational in the more exacting sense of being regularly disposed to deliberate well and to act accordingly. And this is so, of course, even where a person has to consider no interests, wants, or needs but his own.

Next, limited sympathies. This may even be too mild a term for some of the things that I have in mind. One may say for a start, mildly, that most human beings have some **natural tendency to be more concerned about the satisfaction of their own wants, etc., than those of others**. A man who does not like being hungry, and who is naturally inclined to take such steps as he can to satisfy his hunger, may very well care less, even not at all, about the hunger of others, and may not care at all whether anything is done to satisfy them. Even if he does care to some extent about others, it is quite likely to be only about some others — family, friends, class, tribe, country, or 'race'. There is also, besides complete or comparative indifference, such a thing as active malevolence, perhaps even purely disinterested malevolence; a man will sometimes be not only unconcerned about, but actively malevolent towards, others whom he may see as somehow in competition with himself, and sometimes perhaps even towards some whose frustrations or sufferings are not even supposed to be for the advancement of any interest of his own. There are two obvious ways in which, consequentially, things in the human predicament are liable to go badly. For people are not simply confronted, whether as individuals or groups, with the problems of getting along satisfactorily in material conditions that may, in varying degrees, be ungenial or hostile. They are also highly vulnerable to other people; and they often need the help of other people. But, given 'limited sympathies', it cannot be assumed that needed help will naturally be forthcoming; and it cannot even be assumed that active malevolence will not be forthcoming. And perhaps above all, there may be the impossibility of trust. Whether, in pursuit of some end of my own, I need your help, or merely your non-interference, I may well be unable to trust you either to co-operate or to keep out of it, if I think that you are not only much less concerned about my ends and interests than your own, but possibly even actively hostile to my attainment of my ends. If so, then it may be impossible for either of us to do, either separately or together, things that would be advantageous to us both, and which perhaps we both clearly see would be advantageous to us both; and it may be necessary for us individually to do things, for instance in self-protection, the doing of which

may be exceedingly laborious, wasteful, and disagreeable. It will be obvious that all this applies as fully to relations between groups as between individuals; and indeed that distrust and active hostility between groups has been, in the human predicament, as frequent and constant as between individuals, and vastly more damaging.

So far we have not, I think, said anything seriously disputable, or at all unfamiliar. It is obvious that human beings have, in general, an interest in the course of events in which they are involved: for, though they may indeed want some things which they would not be at all the better for having, they do have many entirely harmless and proper and reasonable wants; and they also have interests and actual needs, satisfaction of which may be absolutely necessary for their well-being. But the course of events is not at all likely, without their intervention, to go in a way at all satisfactory to them; and even with intervention, there is still so much that may go wrong. Resources are limited; knowledge, skills, information, and intelligence are limited; people are often not rational, either in the management of their own affairs or in the adjustment of their own affairs in relation to others. Then, finally, they are vulnerable to others, and dependent on others, and yet inevitably often in competition with others; and, human sympathies being limited, they may often neither get nor give help that is needed, may not manage to co-operate for common ends, and may be constantly liable to frustration or positive injury from directly hostile interference by other persons. Thus it comes about that — as Hobbes of course most memorably insisted — there is in what may be called the human predicament a certain ‘natural’ tendency for things to go very badly; meaning thereby not, of course, in this connection, morally badly, but badly merely in the sense that, given the abovementioned wholly indisputable facts about people and the circumstances in which they exist, there is the very evident possibility of very great difficulty in securing, for all or possibly even any of them, much that they want, much that it would be in their interest to have, even much that they need. And the facts that make this so are facts about the human predicament; there is probably no great interest in speculating about possible circumstances of other conceivable species of rational beings, but still it is worth bearing in mind that the facts we have so summarily surveyed are contingent facts. It is easy enough to see in general terms how very different the situation would be if the beings concerned were less vulnerable, less aggressive, less egotistical, less irrational, more intelligent, more self-sufficient, and more favoured by material circumstances.

With respect to the very general limitations we have mentioned, as making it the case that things are inherently liable to go badly for people, one might raise the question whether they can be ranked in any order of relative importance. It seems to me that they can be, though probably not quite uncontroversially.

Their relative prominence, of course, will vary to some extent from case to case. Sometimes poverty of resources will be most immediately conspicuous. If things go rather badly for the inhabitants of ice-fields, or deserts, or tropical jungles, it may be unnecessary to look any further for at any rate most of the explanation than to the extreme ungeniality of those physical environments. Sometimes lack of skills and knowledge will catch the eye, as in the case of people placed in intrinsically quite favorable circumstances which they lack the technical ability to make much use of. But in general it seems to me to be true, in two different ways, that more significant limits are set by other factors. It is only, after all, in comparatively unusual cases that the means of reasonable human existence are just ineluctably, physically unavailable (though it should not be forgotten that this may not always be the case); nor, one may well think (though possibly future generations will think differently), are many of the major ills of the human predicament more than partially

attributable to sheer lack of knowledge and technical skills. One may well think that by far the most important matter is the poor use, or positive misuse, of resources and skills that for the most part are quite readily available; and it seems that this must be laid, in one way or another, at the door of limited rationality and limited sympathies. And in a sense these must always be the most important factors. For they determine what, of the things that can be done, are done; resources and skills constitute power, but power to do damage as well as to do good. Whether resources and skills are ample or very limited, it must in any case be a crucial question whether or not the use that is made of them is reasonable and humane.

But now, if limited rationality and limited sympathies are crucial, which is one to regard as the more important of the two? Perhaps it is not very sensible to attempt a definite answer to this question, if only because in practice these two factors are extraordinarily difficult to disentangle from one another. One might be inclined, pursuing much the same train of thought as in the last paragraph, to see limited sympathies as fundamental; for a man may be wholly rational, clear-headed, sane, and still, if he is not to act destructively towards others, it is essential that he should not simply see, but care, what becomes of them. Or again, if one society or group is not to oppress another, it is surely fundamental that it should not be either hostile or indifferent to that other's interests. Thus one may feel some sympathy with the common run of uplifting — if unpractical — discourses about the fundamental necessity for improvement of a 'change of heart'. But one may also feel, rightly, for two reasons, that such discourses over-simplify. In the first place, **much that is most damagingly done seems really attributable, not to the malevolence of men, but to sheer folly and confusion of mind**; some wars, for example, though not indeed all wars, may well seem not so much wicked as nearly insane, owing far more to short-sightedness, thoughtlessness, and muddle than to actual ill-will. So one may sometimes feel that there is plenty of good-will about, plenty of humane intentions, if only men were saner in seeing how to bring them to bear. But secondly, is it not the case that much failure of human sympathy is itself the direct offspring of un-reason? Racial hostility, for instance, is not merely — though of course it is — a gross defect of human sympathy; it is also — in common no doubt with many other hatreds, hostilities, and fears — a gross deformation of rationality. If people were saner, their sympathies also would be less stunted and deformed; hearts would be in much better shape if heads were less tangled, and haunted, and befogged. Surely it has been a very common failing of moralists, professionally pre-occupied with the weakness of good-will in human affairs, enormously to under-rate the strength in that connection, not simply of ill-will, but of sheer un-reason. It is possible conceptually to distinguish one from the other, and in practice sometimes to recognize one in the other's absence. But so often they go together, each playing into the other's hand, and perhaps not realistically to be ranked in any order of precedence.

Precedence, though, in what respect? It may well be the case that, as things are, rationality may be in shorter world supply than human sympathy, so that what we need more of at the moment is rationality. Nevertheless, there still seems to be a good case for the contention that something like (not, I hasten to say, exactly like) Kant's 'goodwill' is more fundamental still. If, for instance, I believe that you are both ready and able at any time to sacrifice me and my interests to the pursuit of your own, I shall not be reassured by any decrease in your muddle-headedness — unless, indeed, as might very well not be the case, in an unmuddled perspective the sacrifice of me would be seen to be irrational from your point of view. Rationality in fact seems, like intelligence and skill and resources, to be something that can be used to do harm (at least to some) as well as good; what is ultimately crucial is how it is to be used. Nothing in the end, then, seems to be more important, in

the inherent liability to badness of the human predicament, than that limitation which I have called, vaguely enough, ‘limited sympathies’<sup>4</sup>.

Now, the general suggestion that (guardedly) I wish to put up for consideration is this: that the ‘general object’ of morality, appreciation of which may enable us to understand the basis of moral evaluation, is to contribute to betterment — or non-deterioration — of the human predicament, primarily and essentially by seeking to countervail ‘limited sympathies’ and their potentially most damaging effects. It is the proper business of morality, and the general object of moral evaluation, not of course to add to our available resources, nor — directly anyway — to our knowledge of how to make advantageous use of them, nor — again, not directly — to make us more rational in the judicious pursuit of our interests and ends; its proper business is to expand our sympathies, or, better, to reduce the liability to damage inherent in their natural tendency to be narrowly restricted. We may note at once that, if this is, as I think, in a sense the most important of the built-in tendencies of things to go wrong, the present suggestion fits well with the common idea that there is something peculiarly important about morality. But that is too vague to be much use. The only way, I suppose, to see whether there is anything much in this suggestion — to see whether it illuminates the nature of ‘the moral point of view’ — is to see what follows from this general supposition, how it works out, and whether what it would imply is closely consonant enough with what we already think we know about moral judgement. It must be remembered, of course, that quite different ways of looking at the matter might quite well issue in just the same implications, so that argument of this pattern is certainly not demonstrative. But we may give it a try, and see how persuasive we can make it look.

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<sup>4</sup>Some more extended remarks on this topic, though not, I fear, much clearer ones, are offered in Chapter 9 below.