

# NATURALISTIC FALLACY : A CRITICAL STUDY

By

**SABITA DAS**

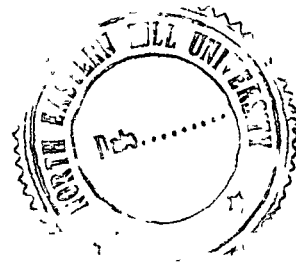
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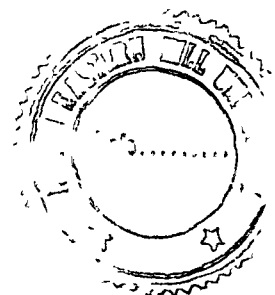
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Certified that the subject matter of this dissertation is the record of work done by Miss Sabita Das, that the contents of this dissertation did not form a basis of the award of any previous degree to her, or, to the best of my knowledge, to anybody else, and that the dissertation had not been submitted by her for any research degree in any other University.

In habit and character, Miss Sabita Das is a fit and proper person for the degree of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY (in philosophy).

Shillong,  
The 27<sup>th</sup> May, 1988.

  
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CHAPTER - I  
INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

G.E. Moore in his book Principia Ethica gave a significant orientation to ethics. He sets the pattern for the modern analytic movement. Instead of constructing normative system in the traditional way like hedonism and utilitarianism etc., Moore conducts his ethical enquiry into analysis of the fundamental philosophical questions. Such questions are, how is good to be defined? What is good? And, what things are good? Although the conclusion which Moore arrived at upon his analysis are not shared by all contemporary moral philosophers like A.J. Ayer, C.L. Stevenson, Patrick Nowell Smith, R.M. Hare and others but they acknowledge the importance of analyzing the basic questions prior to constructing any philosophical systems. Before constructing a philosophical system Moore analyses the question what is good? or How is good to be defined? At a greater length in order to distinguish it from the question, what things are good? He adopted analysis as the method of philosophizing. Since Moore believes that it is through analyses that philosophical problems and disagreements can be solved: He writes:

It appears to me that in Ethics, as in all other philosophical studies, the difficulties and disagreements, of which its history is full, are mainly due to a very simple

cause; namely to the attempt to answer questions, without first discovering precisely what question it is which you desire to answer. I do not know how far this source of error would be done away, if philosophers would try to discover what question they were asking, before they set about to answer it; for the work of analysis and distinction is often very difficult; we may often fail to make the necessary discovery, even though we make a definite attempt to do so. But I am inclined to think that in many cases a resolute attempt would be sufficient to ensure success; so that, if only this attempt were made, many of the most glaring difficulties and disagreements in philosophy would disappear.<sup>1</sup>

Moore charges against the traditional ethical theories that they do not analyse the basic question, "what is intrinsically good?" - that is, what is good unconditionally and invariably? As a result, the answer at which they arrived at turned out to be futile and obscure. They failed to distinguish between the questions, what is good? and How is good to be defined?

There is no doubt that the critical side of Moore's work in ethics has had the most lasting effect. Many contemporary moral philosophers have been convinced that in essence Moore's objection against naturalism and metaphysical theory are sound and valid. Moore's arguments against naturalistic and metaphysical moral theories provided the back ground for the contemporary analytical or meta-ethical moral philosophers to go in detail into the analysis

and function of moral language.

Moore, upon his analysis of 'good' found that the ethical theories (i.e. naturalism and metaphysical moral theory) which undertake to define ethical notions like the notion of 'good' in terms of 'the pleasant', 'the desirable', 'the rational', 'self realization', 'that which is approved', 'the object of favourable interest', etc. suffer from a fallacy which he calls as the naturalistic fallacy.

It is not wholly clear from his writing precisely what he means by naturalistic fallacy. A critical reflection shows that Moore is not consistent in formulation of naturalistic fallacy. He defines it in different ways at different places. Sometimes he defines naturalistic fallacy as the fallacy of defining indefinable notion of good.<sup>2</sup> Sometimes he goes one step ahead. He says that the naturalistic fallacy is not just a fallacy of defining goodness. It is the fallacy of defining goodness in terms of natural property.<sup>3</sup> Sometimes, Moore says that the naturalistic fallacy is not only committed in cases where a man confuses and identifies non-natural object with natural one but also in cases where a man confuses and identifies one natural object with another. To quote Moore:

If anybody tried to define pleasure for us as being any other natural object; if anybody were to say, for instance, that pleasure means the

sensation of red, and were to proceed to deduce from that pleasure is a colour, we should be entitled to laugh at him and to distrust his future statements about pleasure. Well, that would be the same fallacy which I have called the naturalistic fallacy.<sup>4</sup>

But when we proceed one step further we find in the same paragraph that Moore refuses to call such fallacy as the naturalistic fallacy. He argues that the naturalistic fallacy is committed only when a man confuses non-natural object with the natural object. To quote Moore:

When a man confuses two natural objects with one another, defining the one by the other, if for instance, he confuses himself, who is one natural object, with 'pleased' or with 'pleasure' which are others, then there is no reason to call the fallacy naturalistic.<sup>5</sup>

Although Moore from time to time gave different versions of the naturalistic fallacy as it is clear from the above quoted remarks, it has had a considerable currency in ethical literature. Its importance does not consist merely in the clarification of certain confusions arising out of the fallacy but also consists in the fact that it helps us to understand some of the other issues with which naturalistic fallacy has been connected such as bifurcation between the 'ought' and the 'is', between fact and value and between the descriptive and the normative.

In spite of its importance and repute, the naturalistic fallacy has never been discussed by the ethical theorists at length. Thus, there is need for further enquiry into the nature of naturalistic fallacy. The proposed dissertation aims at it.

In this present study, we have attempted to dig out the status of the naturalistic fallacy. There are several issues involved in it. For instance, what is a fallacy? Is the naturalistic fallacy a fallacy at all? If it is a fallacy, what is its status? Is it a logical fallacy? or quasi-logical one or none of them? Do naturalistic and metaphysical ethical theories suffer from this type of fallacy? These are some of the important issues involved in the notion of the naturalistic fallacy. The best way to dispose them off is to expose the true nature of naturalistic fallacy.

There is dispute regarding the exact nature of the naturalistic fallacy. Some Philosophers are of the opinion that the naturalistic fallacy is not a logical fallacy since it may be committed, even if when an argument is valid. I wish to point out that their argument is not sound for the simple reason that a fallacious premise of an argument cannot justify its conclusion. Moreover, those who share this idea that the naturalistic fallacy is not a logical

fallacy they forget that Moore never identifies the notion of naturalistic fallacy with the notion of invalidity of argument. For him, all the cases of the naturalistic fallacy are not the cases of invalid arguments and vice versa. This is true in the light of his different formulations of naturalistic fallacy. For instance, when a man seeks to define good which is indefinable in terms of some natural object, according to Moore, he commits the naturalistic fallacy. But the fallacy which he commits cannot be characterized as a fallacy in the sense of invalid argument. He commits no inferential fallacy because he infers nothing. He rather identifies two different objects. Hence, the fallacy which he commits does not arise because of violation of any rule of inference, but it arises, on Moore's view, due to violation of the rules of identity. Every term means what it means. It does not mean what is meant by any other term. This rule of identity is a logical rule. Hence its violation would not mean anything but commission of a logical fallacy. Prof. R. Prasad "rightly points out that to doubt the fallaciousness of the naturalistic fallacy means to doubt the rule of identity itself. And to doubt the rule of identity would mean that we are not ready to accept that if everything is what it is and not anything else other than itself which none of us would like to accept".<sup>6</sup> Apart from this, there are

certain passages in the Principia Ethica where we find that Moore clearly indicates that the naturalistic fallacy is a logical fallacy that arises when we attempt to deduce ethical conclusion from the non-ethical premises. To quote Moore:

To hold that from any proposition asserting 'Reality is of this nature' we can infer, or obtain confirmation for, any proposition asserting 'This is good in itself' is to commit the naturalistic fallacy.<sup>7</sup>

Sometimes, the naturalistic fallacy is treated as a definist fallacy. It arises due to the attempt to define the indefinable. But the treatment of the naturalistic fallacy as a definist fallacy does not rule out from its being a logical fallacy. The reason is simple. Definist fallacies arise due to violation of the rules of definition and the rules of definition are the rules of logic but different from the rules of inference and any violation of the rules of logic is to commit a logical fallacy. Those who share the view that the naturalistic fallacy is not a logical fallacy but a definist fallacy they commit mistake by identifying the naturalistic fallacy with the notion of invalid argument. And at the sametime they also forget that the definist fallacy is a kind of logical fallacy although it is a different kind of fallacy than the

inferential fallacies. Therefore, anyone who argues that the naturalistic fallacy is not a logical fallacy as it may be committed even when the argument is valid.

The term naturalistic fallacy was coined by G.E. Moore as a weapon against naturalistic and metaphysical theorists in ethics. He accused them of committing a naturalistic fallacy. They identify according to him, ethical properties with non-ethical ones. But when we reflect on the nature of naturalistic fallacy we find that Moore himself did not prove its fallacious characteristics. He, without first showing that the naturalistic fallacy is a fallacy, used it as an instrument against the naturalistic and metaphysical interpretations of ethics which he should not have done. He should have first proved that the naturalistic fallacy is a fallacy before using it as an instrument against the naturalistic and metaphysical systems of ethics.

The scope of the present study is limited to the basic questions. What is the nature of naturalistic fallacy? What is its status? Is it a fallacy? If it is a fallacy what kind of fallacy is it? Is it a logical fallacy? These are some of the questions which we have attempted to answer in the present study.

We have avoided entering into historical controversies for our own convenience. Our method of analysis is purely conceptual. We have tried to analyse the nature of naturalistic fallacy in order to locate its status within Moore's framework of ethics. I wish to argue that the naturalistic fallacy is a kind of logical fallacy. This fallacy is committed, on Moore's view in different ways. We observe that it may arise either due to the attempt to define the indefinable or due to identification of two different objects with one another whether they belong to the same category or not, or due to violation of the inferential rules of logic. In both cases, fallacy remains as a logical fallacy. We commit mistakes when we attempt to understand naturalistic fallacy by emphasizing one of its aspects in lieu of the others. I also wish to argue that all the formulations of naturalistic fallacy are well connected in Moore's system of ethics in spite of his being inconsistent in regard to its application.

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CHAPTER - II

NATURALISM

## NATURALISM

G.E. Moore appropriated the term 'Naturalism' to characterise a particular theory in meta-ethics which attempts to interpret or define ethical properties like 'goodness' or 'rightness' in terms of some natural properties as that of 'pleasure' or 'conducive to harmonious happiness' or 'object of any interest' or 'more evolved'. He writes:

"Ethical theories which declare that no intrinsic value is to be found except in the possession of some one natural property, other than pleasure; and which declare this because it is supposed that to be 'good' means to possess the property in question. Such theories I call 'Naturalistic'. I have thus appropriated the name 'Naturalism' to a particular method of approaching Ethics - a method which, strictly understood, is inconsistent with the possibility of any Ethics whatsoever. This method consists in substituting for 'good' some one property of a natural object or of a collection of natural objects; and in thus replacing Ethics by some one of the natural sciences".<sup>1</sup>

Moral philosophers who undertake to interpret the ethical properties in terms of natural properties are on Moore's view Mill, Bentham, Perry, Spencer and John Dewey. Moore characterises all these philosophers as naturalists because on his view they have attempted to define ethical notions like the notion of 'good' in terms of natural ones, i.e., 'being conducive to harmonious happiness' or 'more evolved' or 'object of any interest' etc. Although, all

the naturalists share this common view that moral terms are definable in terms of non-moral ones; and moral judgements can be translated without loss of meaning into non-moral ones, yet they differ among themselves with regard to the nature of natural property. For instance, Mill and Bentham both define ethical concept 'good' in terms of 'conducive to general happiness'. Whereas, Spencer and Perry differ from them. Spencer defines 'good' in terms of 'more evolved'. And Perry, instead of defining 'good' in terms of 'being more evolved' identifies it with the 'object of any interest'. Thus, these philosophers by defining ethical notion in terms of natural ones, have, on Moore's view, interpreted ethical language in terms of a natural one.

When we reflect, we find that both Mill and Bentham hold the view that an action is right in proportion as it tends to promote happiness and wrong as it tends to promote reverse of happiness. They differ from one another in this respect that for Bentham all significant differences in pleasures are quantitative whereas for Mill all significant differences in pleasures are not only quantitative but also subject to significant qualitative differentiations. He maintains throughout his theory that mental pleasure is qualitatively different from the physical pleasure. Mental pleasure lasts longer than physical ones. But both the philosophers, on Moore's view, give naturalistic interpretation

of ethical language. Bentham interprets rightness of an action in terms of 'being conducive to the greatest happiness of the maximum number of member of the society'. For him to say that 'X is right' is to say that 'it is conducive to harmonious happiness'. And to say this is to hold that 'right' is definable in terms of 'being conducive to happiness'. Since 'conducive to harmonious happiness' is a natural property and it is related to the nature of human beings, so it is verifiable through observation. One can observe whether the so-called 'right action' really produces greatest happiness for greatest number of mankind or not. Empirical verification is possible because Bentham identifies ethical notion 'right' with 'conducive to harmonious happiness', which is a kind of natural property like other natural properties. Thus, we find that Bentham has attempted to define or reduce ethical term to an empirical one. Like Bentham, Mill also defines ethical notion 'good' in terms of 'pleasure', which is also a kind of natural notion. According to him, 'pleasure' is the only thing which we ought to aim at. It is good as an end and for its own sake. By 'pleasure' he means 'freedom from pain' pleasure is the only thing which is desirable as an end. Other things are desirable only as means to attain it. On his view, to think of an object as desirable and to think of it as pleasant are one and the same thing.<sup>2</sup> Mill, by

defining ethical notion 'good' in terms of 'pleasure' reduces ethical language to a factual one. For him, to say that 'pleasure is good' is to make a factual assertion as it is related to fact. Since factual statements are either true or false, so the statement 'pleasure alone is good', can also be true or false. All factual statements by their nature are subject to truth and falsity. Establishment of truth values is possible only through experience. (By observing natural facts to which moral judgements refer can ascertain their truth values. Thus, for Mill, the function of moral term 'good' is to refer to the word natural property i.e. 'being conducive to pleasure'. Since the statement 'pleasure alone is good' is a factual statement, it falls within the jurisdiction of verifiability. If there is a fact corresponding to it then the statement is true. And if there is no such fact as 'producing pleasure', then the statement is false. Thus on Mill's interpretation, moral judgements can be either true or false, as they are embedded in fact and involve objective claims referring to natural qualities or relations.

Mill in his book Utilitarianism argues:

"Questions of ultimate ends are not amenable to direct proof. Whatever can be proved to be good must be so by being shown to be a means to something admitted to be good without proof".<sup>3</sup>

From the above passage it follows that according to Mill there is no proof for the ultimate end. Pleasure or happiness is the ultimate end or good in itself. Being first principle or ultimate end it is incapable of any direct proof. He says:

"The only proof capable of being given that an object is visible is that people actually see it. The only proof that a sound is audible is that people actually hear it; and so of the other sources of our experience. In like manner, I apprehend, the sole evidence it is possible to produce that anything is desirable is that people do actually desire it. If the end which the utilitarian doctrine proposes to itself were not, in theory and in practice, acknowledged to be an end, nothing could ever convince any person that it was so. No reason can be given why the general happiness is desirable, except that each person, so far as he believes it to be attainable, desires his own happiness".<sup>4</sup>

Although Mill maintains that there is no proof for the ultimate end, yet as we find from the above quoted passage he attempts to provide a proof for the ultimate end by drawing the analogy between 'visible' and 'audible' and 'desirable'. The word 'visible' means 'able to be seen' and the word 'desirable' means 'ought to be desired'. But if we stress on this given analogy then for Mill, 'desirable' does not mean 'ought to be desired' rather it means 'able to be desired' or 'is actually desired'. Though Mill argues that it is impossible to prove the truth of the

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ultimate end yet from his very concept 'is actually desired', it follows that he himself is giving a proof for the ultimate end. By offering the analogy of 'visible' and 'desirable', Mill attempts to establish the truth of the ultimate end. If we go by Mill's analogy of 'visible' and 'desirable', it follows that he does not claim that it is impossible to prove what is good as an end. Rather, he argues that if people already do not regard something as an end that which can be desired, then it will be impossible for them to realise that these things are really ends. Mill establishes the truth of the ultimate end through empirical method. He writes:

"No reason can be given why the general happiness is desirable, except that each person, so far as he believes it to be attainable, desires his own happiness. This, however, being a fact, we have not only all the proof which the case admits of, but all which it is possible to require, that happiness is a good; that each person's happiness is a good to that person and the general happiness, therefore, a good to the aggregate of all persons".<sup>5</sup>

This passage clearly shows that for Mill, general happiness is nothing but composition of individual happiness. One can come to the general happiness on the basis of the instances of each individual's happiness. If it is a fact that A's happiness is good to A, B's happiness is good to B, C's happiness is good to C, then from this, one

can come to the conclusion that general happiness is desirable and this is based on the scientific method of observation and experiment. Therefore, for Mill, the statement 'happiness is desirable', can be verified empirically.

Unlike Bentham and Mill, R.E. Perry identifies the property of 'goodness' with the property of 'being object of interest'. He writes:

"Any object, whatever it be, acquires value when any interest, whatever it be, is taken in it".<sup>6</sup>

According to Perry, 'goodness' is not a non-relational value. It is a relational value. Anything acquires value only when it becomes the object of interest for someone. Nothing has value of its own. A thing becomes valuable when it is qualified by an act of interest. Thus, according to Perry, to say that 'X is valuable' is to say that interest is taken in 'X'. The term 'interest' has been used by Perry in a very wide sense. Value is a specific relation into which things may enter as interested objects. It covers all pervasive characteristics of the motor affective life. It includes act, attitude or disposition of favour or disfavour. He writes:

"It is to this all - pervasive characteristic of the motor - affective life, this state, act, attitude or disposition of favor or disfavor, to which we propose to give the name of 'interest'."<sup>7</sup>

Perry makes a distinction between positive and negative value. By 'positive value' he means an object of a favorable interest. And by 'negative value' he means object of negative interest. Thus, Perry defines the ethical word 'good' in terms of 'being an object of interest'. Perry, in defining value as an 'object of interest' has treated it as a relation which exists between that which has value, i.e., an object and someone who takes interest in it. We can illustrate it through examples. A desert becomes valueless unless and until someone finds it lonely and terrifying. The product of manufactures becomes valueless unless it is used by someone. It follows that objects become valuable only when interest is taken in it by some subject. Perry maintains that a relational view of value does not involve the denial of intrinsic value. He says:

"The question turns upon the fact that any predicate may be judged synthetically or analytically. Suppose that 'good' were to be regarded as a simple quality like yellow. It would then be possible to judge either synthetically, that the primrose was fair and yellow; or, analytically, that the fair, yellow primrose was fair or yellow. Only the fair, yellow primrose would be fair and yellow even if nothing were to exist besides. But the logic of the situation is not in the least altered if a relational predicate is substituted for a simple quality; indeed it is quite possible to regard a quality as a **monadic** (single term) relation. Tangential, for example, is a relational predicate; since

a line is a tangent only by virtue of the peculiar relation of single-point contact with another line or surface. Let  $R^t$  represents this peculiar relation, and A, B, two lines. One can then judge either synthetically, that (A)  $R^t$  (B); or, analytically, that (A)  $R^t$  (B) is  $R^t$ . Similarly, let S represent an interested subject, O an object, and  $R^i$  the peculiar relation of interest, taken and received. We can then judge either synthetically, that (O)  $R^i$  (S); or analytically that (O)  $R^i$  (S) is  $R^i$ . In other words, one can say either that O is desired by S, or that O - desired-by-S is a case of the general character 'desired'.<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, for Perry an object does not have value in itself. It does have value only by virtue of its relation to the subject. No object has value by itself. Values are never owned. Objects acquire values from their relation of interests to other subjects. Since the property of 'being of object of any interest' is a natural property, therefore according to Perry, all judgements which involve reference to such natural property can be characterised either true or false on the empirical grounds. We can judge whether the so-called good object is really an object of someone's interest or not.

John Dewey attempts to apply the method of science to the problem of morality. He is a pragmatist. His ethical

theory is built upon the principle of pragmatism. According to him, moral judgements are statements of fact. Moral judgements can be justified by the scientific method like ordinary judgements of fact.

For him, to say that any object has value is another way of saying that someone acts in a certain way towards that object. Only through examining the consequences of likings and dislikings it can be decided whether or not it is to be sought. We can illustrate it by the help of the following example - Suppose, someone says, 'The concert is good'. In that case, his statement is a statement of fact. But how do we judge that the concert is good? Dewey argues that it can be judged by an observer on the basis of that person's behaviour or action towards that concert. We say that a concert is good only when we find that there are people who are moved by it. Dewey says:

"Such judgements are always propositions about matters-of-fact; they are valuation - propositions only in the sense in which propositions about potatoes are potato propositions".<sup>9</sup>

From the above quoted passage it follows that Dewey treats ethical statements on par with empirical statements. For him, to say that 'X is good' is to say that 'X satisfies or fulfills certain conditions in a certain way'. Spencer defines 'good' in terms of 'more evolved'. For him,

to say that 'X is good' is to say that 'it is more evolved'. The expression 'more evolved' is a natural expression. It stands for a natural property. Therefore, when Spencer identifies ethical concept 'good' with 'more evolved' he really gives a naturalistic definition of 'good'. For him, 'better' means nothing but 'more evolved'; or even that 'what is more evolved', is therefore 'better'.<sup>10</sup>

It would be wrong to say that only naturalists have attempted to translate ethical language into non-ethical one. The metaphysical moralists have also done the same thing. Although the metaphysical moralists do not translate ethical language into natural language as the naturalists do but they agree with them on this point that ethical language is translatable without loss of meaning into non-ethical one. The metaphysical moralists translate ethical language into metaphysical language. According to them, ethical terms are metaphysical properties. All ethical judgements in which such terms occur are nothing but disguised theological assertions of fact of some kind. For them, to say that 'X is right' is to say that 'God approves it' or 'commands it'. 'X is right' is not an empirical statement as the naturalists think but a theological statement because it involves reference to some metaphysical property beyond itself which is distinct and different from the natural properties. Therefore, according

to the metaphysical moralists, if someone says that 'X is right' but does not believe in the existence of God, his statement not only becomes false but self-contradictory because he would say that something is right, that is, 'God approves it' but God does not exist. But I wish to point out that this view is defective. It seeks to prove that the non-believers (the atheists) cannot judge what is good or bad. In fact atheism and morality can go together.

The non-believers surely can have their own views about 'right' and 'wrong'. But their concepts of 'right' and 'wrong' would be different on which the metaphysical moralists agree. Since for the metaphysical moralists, ethical properties are non-sensible properties and ethical judgements which involve reference to them are not justifiable on the empirical grounds as the naturalists do.

Nonetheless, from the foregoing discussions it clearly follows that for both naturalists and metaphysical moralists, ethical language is translatable into non-ethical one. The naturalist defines the ethical notion like the notion of 'good' in terms of 'pleasure', 'object of any interest', 'conducive to harmonious happiness'. And in doing so, they translate ethical language into empirical language. The metaphysical moralist identifies ethical properties with metaphysical or theological properties.

And in doing so, they reduce ethical language into theological or metaphysical language. Nonetheless, both the naturalists and metaphysical moralists by defining ethical concepts like 'good' and 'right' in terms of some natural or metaphysical properties maintain the entailment relationship between 'good' and 'good - making' characteristics like triangle and triangle-making characteristics. For the naturalists, there are characteristics or group of characteristics which together entail, that a thing is good. As in order to know the meaning of the term 'triangle' one has to know its defining characteristics, i.e., it is bounded by three straight lines, 'it has got three angles which are equal to two right angles i.e.  $180^{\circ}$ '. So in order to know what is good one has to know its defining characteristics. Moore rejects the naturalistic and the metaphysical interpretation of ethical language. According to him, it is fallacious to define 'good' in terms of certain natural or metaphysical characteristics. Any attempt to define 'good' in terms of natural or metaphysical language leads to a fallacy which he calls as the naturalistic fallacy.

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CHAPTER - III  
EXPOSITION OF FALLACY

## EXPOSITION OF FALLACY

In the second chapter, we said that both naturalistic and metaphysical theories of ethics translate ethical concepts and judgements into non-ethical ones. The naturalists translate ethical language into natural or empirical language. According to them, ethical language is one of the species of natural language. Ethical language has no different logic of its own over and above the logic of natural language. For them moral terms are natural property-denoting terms. Ethical judgements in which such terms occur ascribe or deny certain natural properties to things, persons or actions. Although the metaphysical moralists do not translate ethical language into natural language as the naturalists do yet they agree with them on this point that ethical language can be translated without loss of meaning into non-ethical ones. The metaphysical moralists translate ethical language into metaphysical language. According to them, ethical terms denote metaphysical properties. All ethical judgements in which ethical terms occur are disguised theological judgements. In spite of these differences, both naturalistic and metaphysical theories of ethics hold the view that ethical concepts and judgements do not constitute an autonomous class. Ethical language is translatable without loss of meaning into non-ethical ones.

Moore attempts to refute all naturalistic and metaphysical theories by introducing the notion of naturalistic fallacy. In fact, Moore is the first philosopher in the history of ethics who first coined the term 'naturalistic fallacy'. Before him, no one has used this term nor it was defined by anyone in the way Moore has defined. Though it is true that Moore is the first philosopher who coined the name 'naturalistic fallacy' in the history of moral philosophy, yet it is not true that he is the first philosopher who pointed out this type of fallacy. The researchers have pointed out that even before Moore, philosophers like Cudworth and others have talked about the similar type of fallacy without giving it any particular name. Although it is irrelevant in the present context to discuss whether any philosopher did talk about the similar kind of fallacy before Moore yet one important point is clear and we have to admit that Moore's objections against the naturalistic and the metaphysical theories are sound. The critical side of his work in ethics has made the most lasting effect. Only after Moore it became clear that the traditional philosophers committed a mistake by identifying ethical notions and judgements with non-ethical ones.<sup>1</sup>

Moore, found upon his analysis that both the naturalistic and the metaphysical theories commit a mistake which he calls as the naturalistic fallacy. But when we

reflect upon its nature we find that Moore has not offered one particular criterion for the identification of the naturalistic fallacy. He formulates the naturalistic fallacy in different ways. It is not wholly clear which formulation he takes as the exact one. Sometimes he defines the naturalistic fallacy as the fallacy of defining indefinable notion of 'good'.

"It may be true that all things which are good are also something else, just as it is true that all things which are yellow produce a certain kind of vibration in the light. And it is a fact, that Ethics aims at discovering what are those other properties belonging to all things which are good. But far too many philosophers have thought that when they named those other properties they were actually defining good; that these properties, in fact, were simply not 'other', but absolutely and entirely the same with goodness. This view I propose to call the 'naturalistic fallacy'".<sup>2</sup>

It is worth noting here that the naturalistic fallacy is not only committed when someone seeks to define the indefinable notion of 'good'. It is a fallacy which can be committed by anyone who attempts to define the indefinable notions of whatsoever kind. (It is unimportant whether the defined notion is natural or non-natural).

"If anybody tried to define pleasure for us as being any other natural object; if anybody were to say, for instance, that pleasure means the sensation of red, and

were to proceed to deduce from that that pleasure is a colour, we should be entitled to laugh at him and to distrust his future statements about pleasure. Well, that would be the same fallacy which I have called the naturalistic fallacy".<sup>3</sup>

But there are certain passages where we find that Moore seeks to characterise the naturalistic fallacy slightly in a different way than the mentioned one. Consider for example, the following passage:

"I have begun the criticism of certain ethical views, which seem to owe their influence mainly to the naturalistic fallacy - the fallacy which consists in identifying the simple notion which we mean by 'good' with some other notion".<sup>4</sup>

From the above quoted passage it is quite evident that the naturalistic fallacy is, on Moore's view, a fallacy of identification of one notion with some other notions which may be simple or complex, natural or non-natural. Moore's formulation of the naturalistic fallacy is different from the earlier one. Sometimes we find that Moore characterises the naturalistic fallacy not as a fallacy of defining the indefinable notion of 'good' but the fallacy of defining the indefinable 'good' in terms of some natural property.

"When a man confuses two natural objects with one another, defining the one by the other, if for instance, he confuses himself, who is one natural object, with 'pleased' or with 'pleasure' which are others, then

there is no reason to call the fallacy naturalistic. But if he confuses 'good', which is not in the same sense a natural object, with any natural object whatever, then there is a reason for calling that a naturalistic fallacy".<sup>5</sup>

Sometimes Moore characterises the naturalistic fallacy not as the fallacy of defining the indefinable notions or the identification of two different notions or objects with one another but in the sense of a invalid argument. For him, to infer ethical propositions from the non-ethical ones is to commit the naturalistic fallacy.

"To hold that from any proposition asserting 'Reality is of this nature' we can infer, or obtain confirmation for, any proposition asserting 'This is good in itself' is to commit the naturalistic fallacy".<sup>6</sup>

From this passage, it is quite clear that according to Moore the naturalistic fallacy is the fallacy of violating the inferential rules of logic. In this way, from the foregoing discussions it follows that Moore has offered different formulations of the naturalistic fallacy. It is not wholly clear which formulation has to be treated as the standard one. Sometimes he defines the naturalistic fallacy as the fallacy of defining indefinable notions. Sometimes, he defines the naturalistic fallacy as the fallacy of identification of two different objects with one another. Sometimes he defines the naturalistic fallacy in

the sense of invalid argument. That is to say that it arises due to the violation of the rules of logic. In fact, our observations will reveal that Moore has never been consistent in his application of the notion of the naturalistic fallacy. Sometimes he says that the naturalistic fallacy is committed when someone identifies one natural object (i.e. pleasure) with another natural object (i.e. sensation of red colour). Sometimes he says that the naturalistic fallacy is committed only when someone identifies non-natural object (i.e. good) with natural object (i.e. pleasure). It is not wholly clear why Moore names one fallacy as the naturalistic fallacy, but not the other when in both cases one commits the same type of mistake. It appears from his writings that Moore himself is confounding in selecting the term.

"I do not care about the name; What I do care about is the fallacy. It does not matter what we call it".<sup>7</sup>

Further,

"Even if it were a natural object, that would not alter the nature of the fallacy nor diminish its importance one whit. All that I have said about it would remain quite equally true; Only the name which I have called it would not be so appropriate as I think it is".<sup>8</sup>

What follows from the foregoing discussions is this: Moore's notion of the naturalistic fallacy consists either in defining the indefinable notion or identifying one no-

tion with another notion or deriving ethical judgements from non-ethical ones.

Here we have to pay attention to Moore's use of the term 'definition'. There are three different kinds of definition which Moore considers in his analysis of good. (1) Definition by example or illustration: In this sense, we define a term by giving the examples or illustrations of those things to which the term is applied. Moore finds this technique of definition unsatisfactory for the purpose of defining 'good', because it deals with the things that are 'good' not with the meaning of the adjective 'good'. (2) Definition by synonyms: In this sense, we define word in terms of another word or we replace a word by another which are thought to be synonyms. Moore also finds this technique of definition unsatisfactory for the purpose of defining good. In this kind of definition, we substitute a set of words i.e., 'good' for another i.e., 'gut' without identifying the property to which they refer. (3) Definition of description or analysis: This definition Moore considers as the genuine definition. In this sense we define a notion in terms of its constituents. Moore finds this technique of definition unsatisfactory for the purpose of defining 'good', because good is not a complex notion. It is a simple notion. Being simple it has no parts. As a result, it is not possible to discover any collection of different

qualities and properties referred to by the word 'good'. Now, when Moore argues that good is indefinable he does not mean that it is indefinable in verbal sense or in the sense of illustrations. Good is indefinable, for him, in this sense of description or analysis.<sup>9</sup>

In order to show the indefinability of 'goodness', Moore gives the analogy of the colour 'yellow'. He says that 'good' cannot be defined because it is a simple notion. We cannot define 'yellow', because 'yellow' is a simple notion. Suppose, someone asks us what is the meaning of yellow?, to answer this question, we have to show him all yellow things, like yellow primrose, yellow cloth etc. So by showing yellow things we can make him understand that what yellow is or what yellow things are. But the colour 'yellow' itself remains indefinable. It cannot be defined by any manner of means, because it is a simple notion. In the same way, we can show to anyone what good things are, viz. pleasure, desire etc., but we cannot thereby define the notion 'good' because it is a simple and unanalysable notion. To quote Moore:

"If I am asked 'What is good?' my answer is that good is good, and that is the end of the matter. Or if I am asked 'How is good to be defined?' my answer is that it cannot be defined, and that is all I have to say about it".<sup>10</sup>

Moore says that the naturalists and the meta-  
moralists are the victims of the naturalistic fallacy. Mill  
as a naturalist tries to give a naturalistic definition of  
'good'. He says:

"'Good', means 'desirable', and you  
can only find out what is 'desira-  
ble' by seeking to find out what  
is actually desired."<sup>11</sup>

From this statement it follows that by 'good', Mill  
means 'desired'. This gives clue to Moore. The actual mean-  
ing of the word 'desirable' is 'ought to be desired' or  
'deserves to be desired'. Hence from the very meaning of  
'desirable', it follows that 'desirable' does not mean 'is  
actually desired', or 'able to be desired'. Moore argues  
that Mill fails to see this difference and establishes the  
identity of the word 'desirable' with 'desired', which is  
fallacious. He has confused the proper meaning of the word  
'desirable' which means 'ought to be desired', with one of  
its analogous word, i. e., 'visible', which means 'able to  
be seen'. If he had identified 'good' with 'desirable', then  
it would have put him in good stead. But instead, he has  
identified 'good' with 'desired', which is absurd. There-  
fore, Mill by identifying 'good' with 'desired' has com-  
mitted a naturalistic fallacy according to Moore.

It is also argued by Moore that the metaphysical mo-  
ralists have committed a naturalistic fallacy by defining

ethical term 'good' in metaphysical term i.e., 'commanded by God'.

"Here Moore should have added that, when one confuses 'good', which is not a metaphysical object or quality, with any metaphysical object or quality, as metaphysical moralists do, according to him, then the fallacy should be called the metaphysical fallacy. Instead he calls it a naturalistic fallacy in this case too".<sup>12</sup>

However, since Moore has charged the metaphysical moralists that they have committed the naturalistic fallacy by defining ethical notion in terms of metaphysical one, it follows that his notion of naturalistic fallacy is restricted only to the naturalistic interpretation of ethics. According to him, this fallacy may be committed even by those who are not naturalist but seek to define ethical notions, i.e., 'good' in terms of non-ethical ones. Here we must remember that nowhere Moore says that no ethical notion is definable. He holds the view that there are ethical notions like 'right' which are definable but of course, not in the natural or metaphysical terms.

In order to establish his point that 'good' is indefinable, Moore, goes on to consider the analogy between 'yellow' and 'good'. He argues that it is impossible to define a colour but it is possible to state certain physical concomitants of it. Colour can be perceived by our sensory

organs. When we perceive a colour certain light-vib<sup>l</sup> strike our eyes, and we happen to perceive colour. But according to Moore, this light-vibrations are not the same as the colour. Colour is the name of a property. It is the name of something which can be discovered by scientific measurement. Therefore, Moore says that we cannot know what good is simply by ↗

"Discovering what are those other properties belonging to all things which are good".<sup>13</sup>

But the naturalists by defining 'good' which is indefinable in terms of pleasure have committed a mistake. They have committed a naturalistic fallacy because, "when they named those others properties they were actually defining good".<sup>14</sup>

Moore, further points out that 'good' is indefinable by making a distinction between analytic and synthetic propositions. Analytic proposition is one in which, we get the meaning of the predicate by analysis of the meaning of its subject. But a synthetic proposition is just the opposite of the analytic proposition. So far as the nature of ethical proposition is concerned Moore holds the view that they are not analytic but synthetic in nature.

"Propositions about the good are all of them synthetic and never analytic".<sup>15</sup>

The introduction of 'the good' brings out another distinction between 'the good' and 'good'. Moore argues that 'the good' stands for things which are good and 'good' is an adjective. He argues that 'the good' is not on par with the adjective 'good'. The naturalists define 'good' in terms of 'pleasure'. By offering this definition, they are identifying the adjective 'good' with 'the good'. We can enumerate the things which produce pleasure and say that pleasure is good. But Moore's crucial point is that by enumerating things, that which produce pleasure, we can only define 'the good', but not the adjective 'good'. Moore argues:

"'Good', then, if we mean by it that quality which we assert to belong to a thing, when we say that the thing is good, is incapable of any definition, in the most important sense of that word. The most important sense of 'definition' is that in which a definition states what are the parts which invariably compose a certain whole; and in this sense 'good' has no definition because it is simple and has no parts". 16

From the above passage, it is clear that 'good' cannot be defined. Therefore, 'good' is indefinable and it is incapable of any definition. Anyone who attempts to define it commit the naturalistic fallacy. Moore points out that if someone does not accept the indefinability of 'good' then there are only two alternatives left for him. He must regard it either as a complex notion or as having no meaning

whatsoever. But Moore finds that neither of these alternatives fits the fact. Regardless of whatever definition we offer as the meaning of an ethical notion, on Moore's view, we are always open to the following objections: Someone can always ask with significance something defined as good is really so. For instance, if someone defines 'good' as pleasure it is still meaningful to ask whether pleasure is good. Since this is significant, therefore it cannot be the same as asking whether pleasure is good. One cannot doubt whether pleasure is pleasure. Any definition if it is correct is bound to be analytic and analytic statement leaves no room for doubt. But since one can doubt whether pleasure is good in itself proves, on Moore's view, that 'good' and 'pleasure' are two different notions. The same considerations Moore argues also prove that 'good' is not meaningless. When I say pleasure is good I am not merely stating the fact that pleasure is pleasure or good is good. The proposition pleasure is good is meaningful. In this way, Moore rules out both the possibilities and comes to the conclusion that good is indefinable. Those who engage (for example, the naturalists and the metaphysical moralists) in definitional polemics, Moore charges, are dealing in irrelevancies.

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CHAPTER - IV  
A CRITICAL EVALUATION

## A CRITICAL EVALUATION

We discussed in the third chapter Moore's formulation of naturalistic fallacy. But, when we reflect on his notion of the naturalistic fallacy we find that without discussing its fallacious characteristic he has used it as a weapon to attack the naturalistic and metaphysical views of morality. In the present chapter, I wish to raise the following issues; Is the naturalistic fallacy a fallacy? If it is a fallacy, what is its status? Is it a logical fallacy? or quasi-logical one or none of them? Do naturalistic and metaphysical ethical theories suffer from naturalistic fallacy?

But in order to dig out the status of the 'naturalistic fallacy' first we have to show what is a fallacy, and then alone we can decide whether the naturalistic fallacy is a logical fallacy or not. The word 'fallacy' comes from the Latin word 'fallacia'. The literal meaning of the word 'fallacy' is 'error', 'confusion' and 'deception'. Fallacy literally pertains to the use of languages, words, concepts and arguments. There are certain rules and principles in logic. The violation of these rules and principles lead to a fallacy. There are different ways of committing a fallacy. Sometimes a fallacy may arise when the conclusion does not logically follow from the premises. Sometimes, when the premises are not formally correct, a fallacy may arise.

Besides, there are different types of fallacies, viz., formal or purely logical fallacies, semi-logical or verbal fallacies and material or extra-logical fallacies. A formal fallacy is a fallacy which arises out of the violation of the rules of Syllogism. A semi-logical fallacy is a fallacy which arises due to wrong use of words. In other words, it is concerned not with the structure or form but with the content. Extra-logical or material fallacies arise due to use of wrong data. In other words, it arises due to the misconception about the relation between the content of the premises and that of the conclusion.

We have already pointed out in the third chapter that the term 'Naturalistic fallacy' was first coined by Moore. He coined this term to attack naturalistic and metaphysical theories. Many philosophers call this fallacy by different names, for instance, Taylor calls this fallacy as 'Vulgar mistake', Wheelwright describes it as the 'Factualist fallacy' and Wood identified it with the 'Valuational fallacy'. These are some of the different names of the 'Naturalistic fallacy', given by different philosophers.

In order to know whether naturalistic fallacy is a fallacy or not we have to pay attention to Moore's three different statements.

- (a). Ethical propositions are not deducible from non-ethical ones.
- (b). Ethical terms are not definable in terms of non-ethical ones.
- (c). Ethical characteristics are different in kind from non-ethical ones.

All these three statements are related to each other. The truth of (a) and (b) depends on the statement (c), i.e., "Ethical characteristics are different in kind from non-ethical ones". Moore maintains throughout his writings that ethical qualities are different types of qualities. They are completely different from non-ethical ones, i.e., 'natural' and metaphysical qualities. That is why he argues that if anybody identifies ethical qualities with non-ethical ones, he commits a mistake. The naturalists, he argues, have committed this fallacy by identifying these two different properties. The naturalists have defined the moral notion 'good' in terms of natural one i.e., 'Pleasure', which is defective. For Moore, the moral term 'good' denotes a different kind of property. Pleasure stands for a natural property. It denotes a natural property. These two terms do not come under the same category. That is why on his view if anybody infers 'X is good' from 'X is pleasant', he commits the 'Naturalistic Fallacy' no valid inference can be drawn from non-ethical judgement to an ethical one. Thus,

for Moore, it is a mistake. If anyone does this it leads to a fallacy and that to a logical fallacy, because it arises due to violation of the rules of logic. For example, the identification of two different notions or properties leads to violation of the rules of identity. The rule of identity asserts that every word means what it means or everything is what it is. It does not mean what is meant by another term. That is why the violation of this rule leads to a logical fallacy. Since the naturalists have violated this rule of logic they committed a logical fallacy.

Moore levels the same charge against the metaphysical theorists too. He argues that the metaphysical theories suffer from the naturalistic fallacy since they identify ethical properties with metaphysical ones. Though Moore has accepted that naturalistic fallacy is a logical fallacy, yet we find that there is dispute regarding the nature of the naturalistic fallacy. Some philosophers hold the view that 'naturalistic fallacy' is not at all a fallacy if we depend on induction and intuition. Some philosophers are of the opinion that even if we accept 'naturalistic fallacy' as a fallacy, yet it cannot be treated as a logical fallacy since it may be involved even when the argument is valid. Let us consider first the view that claims that naturalistic fallacy is not a fallacy at all if we depend on induction. It is argued that if we depend on the method of induc-

tion then we find that induction provides some base for defining good in terms of natural properties and the so called naturalistic fallacy remains no more a fallacy at all. For example, if pleasure is really desired by all men, and it is good to them, then it provides some base to come to the conclusion that 'pleasure is good'. This sort of argument involves no fallacy at all what to speak of a naturalistic one. Let us consider again those philosophers, who are of the opinion that the naturalistic fallacy does not arise at all if we depend on intuition. Those who hold the view that naturalistic fallacy does not arise if we depend on the intuition, they put forward the argument that through intuition every one can know whether pleasure is desired by them or not and whether it is good to them or not. If it is so, then we can argue that pleasure is good. In fact, Moore never bases ethical judgement on induction. His view is that we can never arrive at ethical judgements through induction because induction deals with the things which are good not with good as such. According to his theory, things which are good cannot provide the ground for the ethical judgements. Moore argues that if we consider the statement "what is desired by all men is good" as a definitional statement it involves a fallacy. It is a naturalistic fallacy. To say that 'what is desired by all men is good', is to give a definition of 'good'. Good cannot be defined by

any manner of means. An attempt to define it, would be a case of naturalistic fallacy. The naturalists have committed this mistake. Moore would argue that those who think that naturalistic fallacy is not a fallacy at all, they themselves commit a mistake by overlooking the definitional statement, 'what is desired by all men is good'. For Moore, it is a mistake to define a term with the help of another. The rules of definition are the rules of logic. Any violation of the rules will lead to a fallacy and it is a case of logical fallacy.

To those who hold the view that naturalistic fallacy is not a logical fallacy on the ground that it may be involved even when the argument is valid. We can point out that their argument is not sound. Consider, for example, the following argument:

- (1). What is desired by all men is good (by definition).
- (2). Pleasure is desired by all men.
- (3). Pleasure is good.

According to them, the above mentioned argument is valid, because it follows all the rules of logic, but involves a fallacy due to the first premise, 'what is desired by all men is good'. The first premise is a case of definition. As a result it is fallacious. It defines the ethical notion in terms of non-ethical ones. But the argument is valid.

Therefore, the naturalistic fallacy is not a logical fallacy since it can arise even when the argument is formally valid.

Moore can very well maintain that we cannot justify a conclusion on the basis of fallacious premise. Moreover, the upholders of the view that naturalistic fallacy is not a logical fallacy, forget that Moore nowhere has identified the naturalistic fallacy with the notion of invalid argument. According to Moore all the cases of naturalistic fallacy are not the cases of invalid arguments and vice versa. This is quite clear from his various formulations of the naturalistic fallacy. Consider, for example, two of his formulations,

- (1) Naturalistic fallacy is a fallacy of identifying ethical notion of goodness with natural one.
- (2) The naturalistic fallacy is the fallacy of defining good which is indefinable.

From these formulations it follows that Moore does not treat 'naturalistic fallacy' on par with the notion of invalidity. The fallacy which is committed when two different objects are identified with one another, cannot be characterised as a fallacy in the sense of invalid argument. The question of invalidity does not arise in the case of identification of different objects, i.e., 'good' and

'pleasure'. Therefore, the confusion arising out of identities cannot be characterised as the fallacy in inferential sense since it does not arise due to violation of any rules of inference. Yet it is a logical fallacy since it arises, according to Moore, due to the violation of the rule of identity, which is a rule of Logic. Prof. Prasad has rightly pointed out that the naturalistic fallacy is a logical fallacy. We cannot doubt about its fallaciousness. Because to doubt the fallaciousness of the naturalistic fallacy means to doubt the rules of identity itself. And to doubt the rules of identity means that we are not ready to accept that every term means what it means and not any other term or everything is what it is and not any other thing.<sup>1</sup>

Some philosophers treat the 'naturalistic fallacy' as a 'definist fallacy'. By 'definist fallacy' they mean that it is the process of identifying or confusing two properties with one another. For them, the 'naturalistic fallacy' is one of the species of definist fallacy. In other words, naturalistic fallacy is a species of definist fallacy.

That is why it is argued that Perry's identification of ethical term 'good' with non-ethical term, i.e., 'object of any interest', is not necessarily the identification of ethical terms with non-ethical ones. It is further maintained that Perry is not at all identifying the ethical terms with non-ethical ones. He is just identi-

fyng two properties. The properties may be ethical or non-ethical. That is to say, both can be ethical or both can be non-ethical. The only thing is that we should take note of the fact if two properties are being identified. In that case it can be noted that the supporters of the definist fallacy do not violate the rule that ethical properties should not be defined in terms of non-ethical ones which has been formulated by the intuitionist. Anyone can commit the definist fallacy without mixing up the ethical with the non-ethical. Therefore, when anyone identifies 'goodness' with 'rightness' and 'pleasantness' with 'redness' he is not committing<sup>a</sup> naturalistic fallacy, rather he is committing a definist fallacy. If anyone identifies 'goodness' which is an ethical word with 'pleasure' which refers to natural properties, it will no longer be a 'naturalistic fallacy'. But the point is that the supporters of the definist fallacy hold that it is not only a fallacy but a definist fallacy. What they deny is that the naturalistic fallacy is a logical fallacy. No doubt, the definists are right when they say that the naturalistic fallacy is a kind of definist fallacy. But they have gone wrong in saying that the definist fallacy is not a logical fallacy. In our understanding, the definist fallacy is a kind of logical fallacy. Because definist fallacies arise due to violation of the rules of Logic. So, the violation of the rules of logic lead to a logical fallacy. Those who share the view

that the naturalistic fallacy is not a logical fallacy but a definist fallacy, commit a mistake by identifying the notion of naturalistic fallacy with the notion of invalid argument. Besides, they also do not notice properly the fact that the definist fallacy is a logical fallacy although it is a different kind of fallacy than the inferential fallacies. Therefore, anyone who argues that the naturalistic fallacy is not a logical fallacy as it may be involved even when the argument is valid, we find in our analysis that he himself commits the mistake.

We have seen that the 'naturalistic fallacy' has been coined by Moore. He used it as a weapon against the naturalistic and metaphysical theories of ethics. He argues that the naturalists and the metaphysical theorists are guilty of committing the naturalistic fallacy. They have identified the ethical properties with non-ethical ones. But when we reflect on the nature of naturalistic fallacy, we find that Moore himself did not explicate and prove its fallacious nature. Instead of proving the fallacious characteristic of the naturalistic fallacy, he used it as an instrument to attack the naturalistic and metaphysical theories of ethics which he should not have done. But this does not mean that the naturalistic and metaphysical theories of ethics do not suffer from the naturalistic fallacy. We do agree with Moore that both the naturalists and the meta-

physical theorists are guilty of committing the naturalistic fallacy, but on different grounds. Moral terms are not property - designating terms as the naturalists and non-naturalists thought. It is a mistake to treat moral terms as property - denoting terms either natural or non-natural. Moral terms have entirely a different kind of logic. They are used to serve different functions in different contexts. Sometimes, they are used to guide our actions directly or indirectly. Sometimes, moral terms are used to express or arouse emotions towards certain things and actions. Sometimes we used them to characterise things or persons. This happens in the context of evaluation. Moral terms are not only used to guide choices and actions, but also to evaluate conduct or character of person. Therefore, it would not be proper to identify or confuse moral terms and concepts with terms designating natural or metaphysical properties. If it is done, moral terms and concepts lose their significance. The meaning and significance of moral terms and concepts lie in their function or use. Since both the naturalists and metaphysical theorists identify moral terms and concepts with terms referring to natural and metaphysical properties, they can be said to be guilty of committing the 'naturalistic fallacy'.

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CHAPTER - V

CONCLUSION

## CONCLUSION

From the foregoing discussions in preceeding chapters, we may conclude the following points:

Moore formulates the concept of naturalistic fallacy in three different ways:

- (i) Naturalistic fallacy is the fallacy of defining indefinable notions, i.e., the notion of good.

It is worth noting that this kind of formulation does not state that naturalistic fallacy is committed only when someone attempts to define the indefinable non-natural properties. It merely states that the naturalistic fallacy is committed if one attempts to define indefinable notions of any type. The indefinable notions may refer either to natural or non-natural properties. But in either case the fallacy is committed. Therefore, it would be a mistake to think that naturalistic fallacy is committed. It is rather based on its simplicity. Further, Moore never identifies the notion of indefinability with the notion of non-naturality. Non-natural notions or objects may be definable or indefinable. It wholly depends on the very nature of notion itself. In fact, Moore himself defines one notion referring to non-natural property (i.e., right) in terms of another notion of the same type (i.e., good). What we wish to suggest here is this: Moore's notion of naturalistic fallacy has

nothing to do with the notion of non-naturality. Its applicability is not only restricted to the indefinability of the notion of 'good'. A person may commit this fallacy even by defining indefinable notions standing for natural properties (pleasure).

(ii) Naturalistic fallacy is the fallacy of identifying or confusing two different notions or objects with one another.

This formulation of Moore's naturalistic fallacy (as mentioned above) is quite different from his formulation (i). According to the second formulation naturalistic fallacy arises not due to the attempt to define the indefinable notion whatsoever but due to identification or confusion of one notion or object with another notion or object. In this sense, it is quite possible for someone to commit naturalistic fallacy by identifying two different notions or notions of the same type with one another. The second formulation does not state that naturalistic fallacy is committed only when anyone identifies non-natural property (i.e., the property of goodness) with natural property (i.e., the property of pleasure). This is such kind of fallacy which can be committed, on Moore's view, in any context.

(iii) Naturalistic fallacy is a fallacy of inferring or obtaining a proposition of the type 'this is good in itself' from a proposition of the type 'Reality is of this nature'. In other words, the naturalistic fallacy is a fallacy of deducing or inferring ethical propositions from non-ethical, i.e., metaphysical ones.

According to Moore, ethical characteristics are different in kind from non-ethical ones, i.e., natural and metaphysical characteristics. Since Moore treats ethical characteristics or properties as different in kind from non-ethical ones, value judgements in which ethical predicate occur fall into different category altogether. Their status (the value judgements) is, on his view, autonomous. As a result, no ethical judgement can validly be drawn from non-ethical ones. Ethical judgements are neither reducible to non-ethical ones nor justifiable by them. If someone does so, he, on Moore's view, commits a fallacy which he characterises as the naturalistic fallacy. In this sense, naturalistic fallacy arises when an argument, chiefly in moral philosophy violates the rules of logic. It arises due to violation of the rules of logic. Since the inferential rules are different from the rules of definition and identity, the third formulation of naturalistic fallacy is different from the first and the second formulations of it. To infer is not to define nor to equate one term with another.

They are two different types of activities altogether. The first formulation of naturalistic fallacy is based on the dictum that the indefinable can't be defined. If a notion is unique and indefinable, definitely it would be a mistake if attempts are made to define it. In any logical system, certain notions are bound to be indefinable, in order to avoid the fallacy of circularity and infinite regress. Moore's second formulation of naturalistic fallacy is based on the principle of identity. If two notions are different in kind, surely their equation would be fallacious. The third formulation of naturalistic fallacy is based on the rule of value-inference. If ethical judgements are autonomous judgements; they are different in kind from the non-ethical ones. It would be fallacious if someone attempts to derive ethical judgements from non-ethical ones. Since all the formulations are grounded on different rules; they are different from one another.

Even if Moore offers various formulations of naturalistic fallacy yet it does not mean that they are unrelated to Moore's broad framework of ethics. In Moore's framework of ethics they are well connected. If certain notions are unique and indefinable surely it implies that any proposition in which such notions occur are not deducible from another proposition nor identifiable with them. In Moore's system of ethics, all formulations of naturalistic fallacy hold good with regard to his notion of good. He formulated

naturalistic fallacy in different ways because he wanted to reject the naturalistic and the metaphysical interpretation of moral language, and maintain its autonomous character. For him, the notion good is an indefinable notion (of course in a specific sense). Its indefinability does not lie in its non-natural characteristic. It is grounded on its simple nature.

A definition is generally viewed as a logical device which enables us to conceptually distinguish objects from one another. Besides, definition is also looked upon as a logical device to make the meaning of a term more precise particularly when a term is newly introduced. Logicians often speak of definitions of concepts instead of definitions of objects or things. Generally, definitions are classified into nominal and real. The nominal definitions depend on the meanings and senses of the terms. The real definitions depend on the essential nature of object. Some philosophers like Kant hold the view that definition reveals the content or meaning of the concept. According to these philosophers, when we define a concept we always define the meaning of the corresponding term. Some philosophers like Plato and Aristotle are of the opinion that when we define a concept we define the object referred to by the concept in question. Plato treats all definitions as real. In his Theaetetus he states that logos is used to denote a feature that may serve

to distinguish the thing in questions from others.<sup>1</sup> Aristotle views definitions as real. In his Topica and Analytica, he states that definition concerns with essential nature.<sup>2</sup> According to him, definitions cannot consist of a single word. An individual cannot be defined. Only that general feature which exists in the individual objects is definable. But we find that sometimes Aristotle treats definitions as components of mathematical theories and hence argues that definitions deal with the meaning of words, i.e., he regards it as nominal. But when we turn to Moore, we find that he does not hold nominal view of definition when he deals with the notion of 'good'. He treats definitions as real. For him, real definitions are the only genuine definitions. But his view of definition is slightly different from the views of Plato and Aristotle. He treats definitions as cases of analysis. For him, to define a notion means to analyse the object denoted by the term or concept. He writes:

"Definitions of the kind that I was asking for, definitions which describe the real nature of the object or notion denoted by a word, and which do not merely tell us what the word is used to mean...."<sup>3</sup>

"The most important sense of 'definition' is that in which a definition states what are the parts which invariably compose a certain whole; and in this sense 'good' has no definition because it is simple and has no parts. It is one of those innumerable objects of thought which are themselves incapable of definition, because they are the ultimate terms by reference to which whatever is capable of

definition must be defined. That there must be an indefinite number of such terms is obvious, on reflections; since we cannot define anything except by an analysis ...."4

Now when we reflect on the passages quoted above we find that Moore identifies definition with analysis. For him, to define an object means to analyse it into its constituent parts. Definitions operate at the level of reality and not at the level of words. He does not consider word-to-word definitions as genuine definition because it deals with words not the objects denoted by them. According to him, real definitions are genuine definitions. Such definitions consist in the analysis of the objects denoted by the words in questions, into their component parts. Thus, Moore's views of definition are quite different from Platonic and Aristotlean views. Moore treats definition as analysis; Plato and Aristotle do not treat definitions as analysis. They base definitions on the essential characteristics of objects. According to them, definitions reveal the essential characteristics of the individual objects. Moore, in fact, is guilty of committing a mistake. He identifies definitions with analysis. Definition and analysis are two different kinds of notions. To define is not to analyse. Defining activity is different from the activity of analysis.

Moore makes a distinction between meaning and definition. His view goes against our general notion of definition.

We normally think that definition reveals the meaning of the concept. Moore writes:

"That which is meant by 'good' is, in fact, except its converse 'bad', the only simple object of thought which is peculiar to Ethics".<sup>5</sup>

"'Good', then, if we mean by it that quality which we assert to belong to a thing, when we say that the thing is good, is incapable of any definition, in the most important sense of that word".<sup>6</sup>

"Whenever he thinks of 'intrinsic value', or 'intrinsic worth', or says that a thing 'ought to exist', he has before his mind the unique object - the unique property of things - which I mean by 'good'".<sup>7</sup>

Moore commits mistakes when he prescribes what sort of 'things ought to exist'. How can he prescribe what ought to exist and what not to exist? He can describe a fact or he can prescribe certain actions. But it makes no sense when he prescribes certain things to exist. It follows from the passages quoted above that Moore maintains a distinction between meaning and definition. He treats the notion 'good' as a meaningful notion yet he says that it is indefinable. According to his view, 'good' is meaningful because it denotes simple unanalysable and non-natural quality. Its meaning consists in its referent or the object denoted by it. Yet, 'good' is indefinable. It is indefinable since it

has got no parts. The genuine definition consists in the analysis of object denoted by the word in question into its constituents. To know the meaning of a word means to know the object denoted by it. But to define a word means to break the object denoted by the word in questions into its parts and this is possible only when the given object is complex but not simple. What we wish to suggest here is this: For Moore, to say that a word is meaningful is not to say that it is definable. According to Moore, a word can be meaningful yet it may not be defined at all. This clearly shows that Moore's view of definition is quite different from our ordinary notion of definition. Generally we think that the meaning of a word consists of its defining characteristic. But on Moore's view, the meaning of a word does not consist in its defining characteristic. According to him, meaning is a kind of relation which exists between a word and its referent. A word is meaningful if it denotes or stands for something. To determine the meaning of a word is to find out what is referred to by the word. It follows that Moore holds the referential or name-theory of meaning. Since 'good' is meaningful; it is simple and indefinable. This sort of argument is based on the supposition of the name theory of meaning. There are many words which clearly do not refer to any object in any way at all; for example oh, aha, hurrah and so on. These words do have meaning of some sort in the context in which they are used yet they do not

refer to any thing at all. Such words are generally used to express or evoke feelings and attitudes in others. Likewise there are many connecting words such as and, but, or and if-this and so on which are used to connect two simple sentences but they do not refer to anything at all. Yet, they do have meanings in the sentences in which they occur. Thus, it follows from the above examples that Moore's assumption that a word does not have meaning if it does not refer to something is false. A word can be meaningful without referring to anything at all. Moore wrongly thinks that the word 'good' will lose its meaning if it does not refer to something simple. He arrived at this conclusion because of his misconceived notion of meaning.

Suppose, we accept Moore's thesis that the function of 'good' is to name or to refer to something. What does follow from this? One thing which appears to follow from this assertion is this: 'Good' has no descriptive force. Its logical function is to refer or to name, and referring is different from description. To refer to a thing is not in any way to characterize or describe it. Moore cannot maintain that ethical judgements are descriptions of non-natural properties. But, as a matter of fact, he argues that ethical judgements are descriptions of non-natural properties with regard to certain things, persons and actions. I wish to argue that his theory of good becomes untenable on

this count. How can we apply the adjective 'good' to characterise certain things, objects, if its logical function is of referring to a non-natural property different altogether from the properties of things or of objects in question. The very application of the word 'good' to certain thing implies that that thing has some good-making characteristics which provides a basis for the application of the word good.

Moore was misled by his assumption that the word 'good' will have no meaning unless and until it refers to or stands for something. He wrongly thought that to determine what the word 'good' means, is to find out what things are referred to it. Meaning is not referrent. The word 'good' is a generic word. There is no fixed meaning of good. It functions in different ways in different context. Sometimes in the same context it carries more than one meaning. In the context of action, it is used in a commendatory sense. It guides actions directly or indirectly. When we use it we are commending the action in question. But the thing which we commend also has certain descriptive properties in virtue of which we commend it. The descriptive properties of the thing constitute the basis for the descriptive meaning of 'good'. 'Good' has not only prescriptive meaning in the context of actions but also has descriptive meaning. But all these do not exhaust the whole meaning of 'good'.

'Good' has also emotive meaning. When we use it we not only commend the thing we call good but also we express our liking and favourable attitudes towards the object in question. In this regard, Hare was mistaken. He wrongly thought that 'good' has only descriptive and prescriptive meaning. What we wish to suggest here is this: Moore wrongly thought that 'good' is a predicate term. 'Good' is not a predicate quality term. Its function is not to refer to things or objects. Yet it is meaningful. The logical function and status of value words are quite different from those of the descriptive words. 'Good' is a generic word. It functions in more than one way. As a result, it carries more than one meaning. The meaning of 'good' depends on its use.

Moore took for granted that good is a simple property and so is indefinable. In other words, the indefinability of good is derived from its simple nature. I wish to point out that Moore should have established the simple nature of good. Instead, he took it for granted. On the other hand, I wish to argue that simple and complex are relative notions. A thing which is treated as simple in one context may be complex in another context and vice versa. Moore treated simple and complex as absolute categories. The philosophical search for the 'simple' in British Philosophy goes back to John Locke and Moore is held captive by it.

Further, I wish to point out that Moore seems deliberate on the nature of good in abstraction. Morality is a fact of life. People are said to be living either a moral or an immoral life. Commending, praising and prescribing are facts of life. It is only looking to the concrete situations that we can come to know the meaning of 'good'. The 'ordinary use' of good reveals one important dimension. It is this: In a very fundamental sense, the word good (in evaluative or moral sense) does not stand for any mundane or economic gains, either at private or collective level. This shows that an element of self-sacrifice and self-renunciation is built into the very fabric of good. When Moore argues that good cannot be defined he can be interpreted as emphasizing this aspect of good. Neither metaphysics nor science can provide solutions to moral conflicts and puzzlements. In other words, fundamental moral notions cannot be explicated with the help of any other notions. It is because of this reason Moore argues that good is indefinable. To overlook it is surely to commit a fallacy. It is a logical fallacy. Using Ryle's term we can say that the naturalistic fallacy arises when we confuse between conceptual or logical categories.

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