

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

DESCRIPTION AND EVALUATION

An Examination of Julius Kovesi's
Philosophy of Language

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in philosophy
at Massey University

John Patterson
1975

Kovesi maintains (1) that the key to understanding a term is to be found not in empirical similarities among observable things and events but in the human needs and interests incorporated in what he calls the formal elements of our notions, (2) that these formal elements also provide, where appropriate, standards for evaluation, (3) that this is true of moral and non-moral notions alike, the differences between moral and other notions, between moral and other judgements and between practical and theoretical reasoning being differences in ingredients or subject matter rather than in logic, and (4) that the distinction between description and evaluation has, traditionally, been incorrectly drawn.

In this essay I examine these theses and the arguments used to support them, and conclude that, if extended more widely than Kovesi envisages and interpreted with care, they are inherently plausible and are more attractive than some obvious rivals.

The first chapter is devoted mainly to elucidating the technical terms 'form' and 'matter', comparing them with the more familiar 'necessary' and 'contingent', with Aristotle's 'form' and 'matter' and with Plato's 'form'. Chapter two concentrates on Kovesi's theses (1) and (2), with particular emphasis on the requirement that language be public and on the notion of following a rule, finding that (1) applies not only to terms but also to a variety of speech acts. In chapters three and four I examine thesis (3), finding it adequately supported, but disagreeing with two consequences Kovesi draws from his view of moral notions. I also consider whether he is committed to the view that we create the world through the notions

we form, arguing that despite appearances he is not committed to such a view, and that the question whether we do so create the world lacks sense. Chapter five is concerned primarily with theses (4) and (2), with particular attention to the question whether we must all have the same notions in order to understand each other, and to just how the differences in ingredients or subject matter mentioned in (3) are to be specified. I conclude that a public language is possible without our all having, in the appropriate sense, exactly the same notions, and suggest that the difference between moral and other notions lies not in some single moral point of view but in what is regarded as central to the notion of a person.

CONTENTS

1	FORM AND MATTER	1
	1.1 Introduction	1
	1.2 'Form' and 'matter'	3
	1.3 Relations between form and matter	22
	1.4 'Good' and 'yellow'	31
	1.5 'Form' and 'matter' in Aristotle and Plato	36
2	EMPIRICAL SIMILARITIES	45
	2.1 Recognitors	45
	2.2 Sensations	53
	2.3 Form and empirical similarities	61
	2.4 Speech acts	70
	2.5 Argument A	76
	2.6 Rules	87
3	MORAL AND OTHER NOTIONS	99
	3.1 Moral notions	99
	3.2 Moral notions and objectivity	101
	3.3 Moral notions and rules	106
	3.4 Moral notions and existence	111
	3.5 Language and existence	115
4	PRACTICAL REASONING	127
	4.1 Deduction	127
	4.2 Complete terms	131
	4.3 Imperatives	140
	4.4 Principles	149
	4.5 Decisions	159
	4.6 Facts and reasons	173
5	DESCRIBING THE WORLD OF EVALUATION	178
	5.1 Description and evaluation	178
	5.2 Complete terms and evaluation	189
	5.3 Evaluation and valuing	193
	5.4 The moral point of view	208
	WORKS CITED	216

Chapter One FORM AND MATTER

1.1 Introduction

Although Julius Kovesi's Moral Notions was published several years ago, and was described in its only major review as a 'strongly original' and 'thoroughly disturbing book' which 'decisively and permanently alters the balance of power' and 'should lead to some agonising reappraisals' (Mayo 1969, 285, 292),¹ it has attracted little attention in the literature. In this essay I try to afford this work the detailed examination it merits.

In one respect the compass of my essay will be narrow; a considerable part of it will be devoted to penetrating Kovesi's terse and often cryptic remarks, assessing them under various interpretations, reconstructing arguments by which his more paradoxical conclusions may have been reached, and speculating as to the antecedents of his views. But in another respect the essay will have a wide compass, for, although outwardly concerned with moral notions, Kovesi's book contains an apparently new account of what it is to understand and use a term of language in general. The account runs more or less as follows: it is not empirical similarities among observable
.....

¹ Essential references are incorporated thus into the text. For details see the list of works cited. Except where some other work is clearly indicated the references are to Moral Notions.

objects and happenings in the world around us that provide the key to understanding and using a term; rather, what we must attend to are the human needs and interests incorporated in what he calls the formal elements of our notions.

Being quite general, this account is meant to apply to moral as well as non-moral notions. Different sorts of notions are formed and used for different reasons; the difference between moral and other notions and that between moral and other judgements is a difference in subject matter or ingredients, the logical features, in particular the requirement of objectivity in a public language, being the same in all cases. And not only does the formal element of a notion, whether moral or not, provide the rules for understanding and using a term, but it also incorporates, where appropriate, the standards by which an instance is judged to be good, bad or indifferent. It is from these views that Kovesi arrives at his most paradoxical conclusion, that 'moral notions do not evaluate the world of description; we evaluate that world by the help of descriptive notions. Moral notions describe the world of evaluation' (161).

These are, as it were, the fruits of Kovesi's efforts. Although provocative and almost paradoxical, they can be stated in everyday English. This, it appears at first sight, is not so for much of what he says. His remarks about language in general and the differences between moral and other notions, and the arguments he uses to support the claims above, are expressed with the help of various technical terms. I turn, then, to two of these, with a view not only to explaining them in order to follow

Kovesi's arguments but also to see whether they are really necessary, whether his claims and arguments can be stated in more familiar terms.

1.2 'Form' and 'matter'

Kovesi introduces the technical terms 'form' and 'matter' by means of a disclaimer: 'By matter I do not mean simply the tangible material of the object, nor by form its shape or appearance', nor does he intend to introduce any metaphysical entities (3-4). What he does mean is explained first by an example, that of a table, although the terms are clearly intended to have quite general application. The form of a table is given by an answer to the question why we call some objects tables and refuse the term to other objects (4), and this answer is in terms of the point of or reason for bringing certain qualities, features or aspects of things, actions or situations together under the term (32). The term 'matter', as applied to tables, stands for 'not only the various materials out of which we may construct tables but any characteristic in which the object may vary without ceasing to be a table' (4). For example, whether a table is made of wood or steel, whether it has three or four legs, and whether it seats one or ten people, are all questions about the material elements of tables.

How then do we come to understand the notion of a table? According to Kovesi, we do not perceive the quality of being-a-table, nor do we construct the notion of a table out of empirically given qualities; there is

no strict rule as to what qualities something must have in order that we should be able to call it a table, although not just anything will count as one. We cannot understand the notion of a table without understanding the need for tables. It is our reasons for having tables which guide us in deciding what are tables (1-4). On the one hand, 'for us to judge something to be a table an unspecified group of properties and qualities have to be present, none of which is that property or quality that we have agreed to call "table"' (6), and on the other hand, 'When we are looking for a formal element we are looking for that which alone is common to a variety of things or actions' (114). It is illuminating to see why there is no contradiction here. What is it that is common to all tables? Kovesi would say that this need not be found in the field of empirical similarities, and in this case is not. What is common to them all is the purpose they are intended to serve. That is why we cannot understand the notion of a table without understanding the need for tables (this is very like the views found in Cohen 1962, section 8 and p. 87, Hampshire 1959, chapter 4, and Wittgenstein 1958, pgh 291). Kovesi's discussion of tables then tells us much about the intended meanings of his terms 'form' and 'matter'. To understand why some objects are called tables while others are not is to understand why it is that we need tables, why we need level surfaces at a convenient height, etc., and this is what it is to know the formal element of the notion of a table. Anything not concerned with our needs for tables, such as whether a piece of furniture has three or four legs, will be a material element, for in such respects it may vary without ceasing to be a table.

The terms 'form' and 'matter' are applied not only to our notions of objects but also to our notions of human actions. For example, it is a part of the formal element of the notion of murder that the life of some innocent person be intentionally taken with the aim of personal gain or satisfaction (4), and another part, shared with some other formal elements, is our need to blame and excuse people (21). Another of Kovesi's applications of 'form' and 'matter' to human actions is found in his discussion of the notion of an inadvertent act. The material elements are the various ways we can perform inadvertent acts, such as knocking over the teapot while reaching for the salt; the formal element, he says, is that same thing which all these amount to. We find new examples of inadvertent acts by recognizing the formal element, recognizing what it is that they all amount to, not by seeking empirical similarities amongst the instances, and here too the formal element involves our need to excuse or blame ourselves and others (15-17).

The claim that the formal element is that same thing to which the instances all amount might appear trivial, for of course they all amount to inadvertent acts. But they also amount to acts for which the agent is not morally responsible, however much they might look like cases of culpable clumsiness, inconsiderateness, lack of foresight, etc. To claim that an act was inadvertent is to deny responsibility, and if an act is inadvertent, then necessarily the agent cannot be held responsible. To settle a disagreement as to whether an act was inadvertent we must decide whether the agent was responsible for what happened. The formal element of the notion of inadvertency directs us away from the empirical

similarities between various acts and their outcomes, towards the agent's intentions, state of knowledge, degree of foresight and the like. If, under conditions where what we observe inclines us to hold the agent responsible for the outcome of his act, we come to decide that we are not entitled to do this, we can describe the act as inadvertent.

From these and other examples of Kovesi's a general thesis may be extracted, but it must be extracted with care. In particular, it is important to see that tables, being artefacts, are a special sort of case. The general thesis is that when, as is almost always the case, a notion has a formal element, that formal element will be concerned with whatever point there is in allowing certain objects, events or states of affairs as instances of the notion and disallowing others, and this point will in all cases be connected with certain human needs, interests, etc. In the case of artefacts, where the notion is of a type of object that has a given function or functions, the point in allowing some objects as instances and disallowing others will be intimately connected with that function. The relation here cannot be said to be that of identity, partly because we do not want to deny, for example, that a toy axe is an axe or that a punctured tyre is a tyre, but the relation is so close in the case of artefact words that it is easy to think that Kovesi holds that the formal element of a notion will always be concerned with the function of its instances. This would be a mistake. It is only in special cases that the instances of a notion have a function at all. The formal element is concerned, rather, with the function of the notion within a language.

It seems that Kovesi is repeating Wittgenstein's injunction to think of words as tools with various functions (Wittgenstein 1958, pgh 11). Perhaps, then, formal elements are related to forms of life. Of course it is too early yet to ask exactly how they might be related; far more needs to be said about formal elements, and there are difficulties in interpreting 'forms of life' (see Hunter 1968). But at least in general terms a relation can be suggested. Wittgenstein's forms of life are 'the given', they have to be accepted (Wittgenstein 1958, p. 226), they are 'something animal' that 'lies beyond being justified or unjustified' (Wittgenstein 1969, pgh 359). In much the same sense, the needs and interests which enter the formal element of a notion are given, have to be accepted, so far as understanding the notion is concerned. There is, then, at least a similarity in the roles played by formal elements and forms of life, but whether the players of these similar roles are themselves similar is quite another question, and one on which no clear answer is available, for 'form of life' is applied sometimes very widely, as for example to an activity that includes the speaking of a language (Wittgenstein 1958, pgh 23), and sometimes in a much narrower way, as for example to the 'comfortable' certainty expressed by some uses of 'I know' (Wittgenstein 1969, pghs 357-359).

Perhaps this points to an important difference between Kovesi and Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein says not only that individual notions are instruments but also that a language as a whole is one (Wittgenstein 1958, pgh 569). Kovesi says only the former, but forms of life go more happily with the latter (Wittgenstein 1958, pghs 23, 241,

p. 174). The needs and interests which enter the formal elements of our notions might be thought, individually, to be parts of rather restricted forms of life such as the one of which the language of calculation or of hope is a part (Wittgenstein 1958, pp. 174, 226), but insofar as a form of life is related to a whole language or at least a language game, while it is individual notions that have formal elements, the two will be rather different. They will not be entirely different, however, for to specify the formal element of a notion we must spell out the relations of that notion to others within a language.

I have supposed that it is notions that have formal and material elements. Kovesi is not quite clear on this. He gives the impression that it is classes, or perhaps even individuals, which have them when he talks about the form of a table (4), about defining a thing or act in terms of its material elements (8), about various movements being material elements of various acts of murder (21), and so on. On the other hand, he seems to be saying that it is notions that have formal and material elements when he speaks of excusing or blaming as being the formal element of various notions (21), of the material elements of the notion of vice (21), of the material and formal elements of a notion (23), and so on. Indeed, he sometimes seems to say that notions and classes of things are the same, as, for example, when he asks us to distinguish between the many particular instances of a thing when these instances are particulars in the world of space and time, and the many instances of higher order notions when these instances are other notions (156). Bearing in mind first that he talks of the formal elements of unformed

notions as if the formal elements were prior to the notions (32, 110), second that when he speaks of formal and material elements of things it is often clear from the context that it is not individuals but classes he has in mind, and third, the fact that we are inclined, when we speak of notions, to speak as if of classes of things, I shall continue to take it that 'formal element' and 'material element' apply to notions. Thus, when he talks about the material elements of tables, I shall take it that he means the material elements of the notion of a table, and likewise for the formal element.

Just what are material elements? Stated generally, Kovesi's claims are that the material elements of a notion, S, are: (a) the characteristics in which the instances of 'S' may vary without ceasing to be an S (4); (b) the conditions that must be fulfilled for the proper use of the term 'S' (7); and (c) the sorts of things that can constitute an S (8). The problem is to decide whether Kovesi thinks that these three classes are coextensive, and thus regards his three characterizations of 'material element' as equivalent, or whether he thinks that it is the union of the three classes that gives the reference of 'material element', perhaps with one of the three classes including the others as subclasses. No direct clue to his opinion is given. The latter, however, seems the more reasonable, at least so far as (a) and (c) are concerned. The class of the sorts of things that can constitute an S might be thought of as the class of characteristics which can be characteristics of an S, in which case it would include as a subclass the class of characteristics in which an object can vary without ceasing to be an S, and it seems that this would be a proper

subclass. But there are still two problems. It is not clear that the class of the sorts of things that can constitute an S will exclude the formal element of the notion of an S, which it must do if the distinction between formal and material elements is to be preserved. Nor is it at all clear how the class of conditions that must be fulfilled for the proper use of the term 'S' is to be fitted into this account, for this class does not seem to be a subclass of either of the others, nor they of it. Given this unclarity over the reference of the expression 'material element', I shall take it to refer to anything not referred to by the expression 'formal element'; or, more precisely, I shall regard the material elements of a notion as including everything that can be a characteristic of the instances of the notion but is not a part of the formal element.

In some respects, Kovesi's distinction between formal and material elements is like Von Wright's distinction between formal and material properties: formal properties are those which it is either logically necessary or logically impossible that a thing should possess, while material properties are those which it is never either logically necessary or logically impossible that a thing should possess (Von Wright 1951, 27). This is like Kovesi's distinction at least insofar as it is a material property of a table that it have three or four legs, and of a murder that it involve shooting or poisoning. That is not quite accurate, but what I want to follow up is the possibility that what Kovesi says with the aid of the technical terms 'form' and 'matter' can adequately be expressed in the more familiar but by no means unproblematical language of necessary and contingent

truth. Tentatively, I suggest that his talk of formal and material elements might amount to this: if being (a) P is part of the formal element of the notion of an S then 'S is (a) P' expresses a necessary truth, while if being (a) P is a material element then 'S is (a) P' expresses a contingent truth or falsehood. I speak of parts of a formal element because, for example, the sentences 'Bachelors are unmarried' and 'Bachelors are men' both express necessary truths; distinct parts of a formal element can be mentioned separately.

Does this accord with what Kovesi says about tables? The size, shape, number of legs, and so on, are material elements; what matters is that the formal element of our needing flat surfaces at a convenient height be met. Thus it should be a contingent matter whether a given table is rectangular, or has three legs, but necessarily true that tables are the sort of thing that meet our needs for flat surfaces when eating and writing. The first of these is all right, and the second is at least appealing, though it raises problems. The problems are these: first, we call some things tables which fail to meet these needs (broken tables, toy tables), and second, it is not obvious that it is necessarily true (compare 'Bachelors are unmarried'). Now for many subject terms it is very difficult to write down sentences which clearly express necessary truths, and no doubt the above attempt could be improved upon in order to meet the objections, but the suggested connection between formal and material elements and the necessary-contingent distinction is made rather more plausible by the observation that Kovesi admits that it is difficult to specify formal elements (5). Perhaps the difficulty in arriving at a sentence which is

quite specific and which does express a necessary truth about tables is exactly the same difficulty as that of saying precisely what is the formal element of the notion of a table.

It might be objected at this stage that the sentence I suggested does not specify a property of tables, being rather about people. There is a sense of 'property' in which to say that tables meet such and such of our needs, or that they are intended to serve such and such purposes, is not to give a property of tables; such talk is about ourselves rather than tables. Now although this objection could formally be met by specifying a wide sense of 'property', the distinction between this and a narrow sense is important for Kovesi. Without examining in detail the terms he actually employs, what he wants to say seems to be this: that it is a property (in the narrow sense) of the table in my dining room that it has a circular top of diameter three feet; that it is not (in this sense) a property of a certain item of furniture in my dining room that it is a table; similarly, that it is not (in this sense) a property of tables that they serve or are intended to serve such and such purposes. The main reason why Kovesi might be expected to say this is that the latter two claims are concerned with our needs, interests and purposes in a way in which the first is not, although, of course, these needs, interests and purposes would not be served by 'tables' of diameter three millimetres, and so even the size of an object is relevant to whether it can properly be called a table. As far as the objection is concerned, however, it is not at this stage necessary to settle the question of 'ownership' of properties, because in defining 'formal element' Kovesi

does not say that whatever is a part of the formal element must be a property of the thing concerned. Further, there seems to be no point in insisting that a sentence which expresses a necessary truth must, in any narrow sense, express a truth about the class denoted by its subject term.

There are problems also with the 'murder' and 'inadvertency' examples. It is necessarily true that murder is the intentional taking of innocent life with the aim of personal gain or satisfaction, but the other part of the formal element mentioned by Kovesi, our need to blame or excuse people, is not so clearly expressible in terms of necessity. It is never necessarily true that we need to excuse or blame a particular person, nor is it necessarily true that we need to excuse or blame certain individuals whatever description applies to them. Rather, as we need or wish to blame some killers and excuse others, when we form the notion of murder we lay it down that the description 'murder' is to be applied only to the killers we need or wish to blame; we make it necessarily true that the killers who come under the description 'murder' are among those we need or wish to blame. Much the same can be said about 'inadvertent', although this term is applied to those we wish or need to excuse.

I turn now to a cluster of general claims about formal and material elements, starting with the claim that the material elements of a notion are unspecified (4, 7), or form a nonenumerable list (8): that we cannot give a complete enumeration of the conditions that must be fulfilled for the proper use of a term (7). This is not, Kovesi says, because there is an indefinite number

of these conditions, but because they have open texture. It cannot even be stated how many of them may be absent, and so there can be no entailment relation between the material elements and what we say a thing or action is (8). It is the formal element which determines what a thing or action is; the nonenumerable list of material elements is just a list of the sorts of thing that can constitute it (8). Compare this with the claim that there is no limit to the number of contingent truths about a given type of thing. This is true, and depends for its truth upon the fact that there is no theoretical limit to the ways in which we may describe reality or any part thereof. It is contingently true of the pencil on my desk that it is eight inches long, is painted red, was made in Australia, and so on; these characteristics are material elements of the notion of a pencil, for something could be a pencil without any of these being true of it, and it does not follow from any list of such contingent truths that it is a pencil. All that is required for it to be a pencil is that it serve certain purposes; the formal element specifies this purpose, but the world and human inventiveness are such that there is no determinable limit to the number of ways in which it may be served. This is perhaps what Kovesi has in mind when he says that the material elements have open texture.

Both the formal and the material elements of a notion are said to be difficult to specify. In the case of the material elements, this is for the reason already mentioned, that we cannot give a complete enumeration of them. In the case of the formal element, Kovesi gives no general explanation, but refers to some of his examples: 'It is difficult to give precisely once and for all the

formal element not only in the case of notions like murder but also in cases like the table. With changes in our needs and social conventions our reasons for having tables might also change and consequently what will count as a table and what will not, will also change' (5). Perhaps it is misleading to say in one breath that both the formal element and the material elements are difficult to specify, as the reasons are so different. On the one hand, it is logically impossible to give a complete enumeration of the material elements, while on the other hand it is empirically difficult to give a precise specification of the formal element. Kovesi's use of the expression 'open texture' at least makes it clear that in the case of the material elements the difficulty is logical, and if it is insisted that it is notions and not their instances that have formal and material elements there is not only the logical impossibility of stating all the contingent truths about a particular thing but also that of specifying all of the characteristics which could be characteristics of a thing of a certain type.

In the case of the formal element, the reason given is not logical. It is likely, but by no means a matter of logical certainty, that with changes in our needs and social conventions our reasons for having tables might change, as might our reasons for applying or denying the term 'murder' to abortions. Now there is what might well be a corresponding difficulty, again not logical, in finding sentences which clearly express necessary truths. But whether these difficulties are related depends upon whether it is correct to say that, if and only if something (P) is part of the point of or reason for bringing together certain qualities etc. under a notion (S), then

it is necessarily true that S is P. If it were possible to write down a complete list of the sentences which clearly do express necessary truths, and if in each case it were possible to determine whether the appropriate P is part of the point of or reason for bringing together certain qualities etc. under the notion concerned, a decision could be reached as to the truth of this claim. But neither of the two required moves is easy to make. In many cases it is not easy to determine whether such and such is part of the point of or reason for bringing certain qualities under a notion, nor is it easy to reach agreement as to whether a certain sentence expresses a necessary truth.

This, however, is not unexpected. The difficulty, by no means unfamiliar, in reaching agreement as to whether a sentence expresses a necessary truth, has its parallel in the difficulty which Kovesi admits is found in specifying the formal element of a notion, and if formal elements and necessity are related as suggested, then these are precisely the same difficulty, brought about by the difficulty in agreeing as to the point of or reason for bringing together certain qualities etc. under the notion. Kovesi's attribution of this difficulty to our changing needs and social conventions has its parallel in the fact that sentences which at one time express necessary truths may come to express contingent truths or even falsehoods, and vice versa, but Kovesi tries to say not only that this is so but also why it is.

Further, it makes at least a little sense to speak of one truth as being more necessary than another with the same subject term, and what sense there is in this

carries over to formal elements as follows: the formal element of a notion can be thought of as consisting of several parts, some being more central than others. Now just as it is difficult to agree as to which sentences express necessary truths, and even more difficult to agree as to which of the more or less necessary truths expressed by sentences sharing a subject term is the most necessary, it will be difficult to agree as to which parts of the formal element of a notion are the most central. And even insofar as we do reach an agreed specification, this will be able to change as our needs and social conventions change, just as, for example, it is not as necessarily true as it used to be that ladies do not sweat or that acids turn blue litmus red.

When we are looking for a formal element, Kovesi says, we are looking for that which alone is common to a variety of things or actions, and this is what brings that variety together as instances of the same thing (114-115). This implies that the formal element of a notion is that which brings together a variety of things as examples of the same thing, the 'is' being that of identity. Further, the formal element of a notion is said to enable us to decide what should or should not be regarded as instances of the same (151). Closely related is the claim that in order to understand why the instances of a notion are such one must know the formal element of the notion. All of these may be combined, on the one hand, into the claim that it is the formal element of a notion which enables us both to decide what are its instances and to understand why they are, and on the other hand, into the claim that it is a knowledge of the necessary truths about a type of thing which enables us to decide what particulars are

instances and to understand why they are. This brings to mind the familiar view that necessary truths provide or record the rules for the use of words (see, for example, Ayer 1946, chapter 4), and also the less familiar but more interesting view that for something to count as a rule for the use of a word it must enable us not only to apply the word correctly but also to understand its application (see 2.6 below).

This can be related to Kovesi's claim that it is the formal element which gives the material elements their significance (60), for if formal and material elements are connected with necessary and contingent truths as suggested and if necessary truths are regarded as giving the rules for the use of a term, Kovesi can be taken as saying that necessary truths give not only rules for the use of terms but also rules of significance. It is not a great step from this to the view that to understand the significance of a term is to know the rules for its application. Kovesi seems to take this step, for he claims that to understand the significance of a term is to know the formal element (20-21). And, if it is true that the formal element of a notion is given by the set of necessary truths involving it and that these in some way provide or are the rules for the correct application of the term concerned, then he is claiming precisely that to understand the significance of a term is to know the rules for its application.

There is no entailment relation, Kovesi says, between material and formal elements. This forms part of a cluster of claims about the relations between formal and material elements which, along with his warnings against

substituting some of the material elements of a notion for its formal element (33) and against 'reducing' something to its material elements (129), could be summarised as follows: (i) the conditions that must be fulfilled for the proper use of a term have open texture (8); so, (ii) what a thing is cannot be deduced from or defined in terms of its material elements (8, 37); so, (iii) there is no entailment between material and formal elements (8, 11). Now the first step of this argument is superfluous, as the second follows directly from the meanings of 'formal element' and 'material element'. The other two steps correspond to these: (a) what a thing is cannot be deduced from or defined in terms of the contingent truths about it; and (b) the set of necessary truths about a thing is not entailed by any set of contingent truths about it. Both of these are true. In (a) of course we must not cheat; 'This is a table' can be deduced from 'This table has four legs', but not from 'This has four legs', and (b) follows from the meanings of 'necessary' and 'contingent', under any plausible characterization of the distinction.

Kovesi makes several related claims about the relation between formal elements and our judging particular things to come under a notion. First, having the formal element of a notion and being able to find new instances, or being able to find particulars which amount to the same thing as the other instances, are one and the same process (17, 37, 43-44, 114-115). Second, the formal element of a notion determines which features of a thing or act are relevant for judging it to be an instance (62, 154). And third, the formal element determines what a thing is (8), and makes it what it is (8, 118). It is as

well not to lose sight of the central claim about the formal element of a notion, that it is the point of or reason for bringing together certain things as instances of or amounting to the same. Using the last claim to eliminate 'formal element' from the first three: it is knowing the point of or reason for bringing certain things together which (1) enables us to find new instances, (2) tells us what features are relevant for judging something to be an instance, and (3) if it were not for this point or reason the instances would not be instances.

This is a central part of Kovesi's philosophy of language, and I am tempted to express it as follows: necessary truths, or rules for the use of words, must be related to the point of or reason for bringing certain particulars together as instances of the same thing. Whether this is correct is a difficult question. The relation is certainly not always obvious. For example, it is necessarily true that bachelors are unmarried, but their being unmarried does not itself seem to be an important part of the reason why we bring certain men together under the term 'bachelor'. On the other hand, part of this reason might be to assist women to make certain predictions, yet it is not necessarily true that bachelors are, for example, free to marry. They might be insane. Here, as in some previous contexts, the suggested connection between form and necessity does not seem to hold, and to that extent Kovesi's terminology can be seen as having a rather different purpose from that commonly assigned to talk of necessity.

I shall try to say roughly what this difference is. The necessary-contingent distinction has been used by

philosophers largely to identify and eliminate confusion as to whether a proposition contains a factual claim. For this use, propositions can be thought of as coming to us already meaningful, and all we have to do is sort out the necessary from the contingent. To say that a truth is necessary is to say something to the effect that it is about meanings of words rather than matters of fact, or that it expresses or reveals a rule of language. But Kovesi is more interested in why we have the rules we do. Of course he is as concerned to identify and eliminate confusion as any philosopher, but his aim in introducing formal and material elements is to give an account of meanings, not just a classification scheme for propositions, and an account of meanings must somehow encompass what might be called the creative aspect of our use of words, our ability to apply words to empirically dissimilar new instances. I am not arguing that traditional terminology is not adequate for this task, or that this has not been a concern of contemporary philosophers; the later Wittgenstein and the transformational grammarians are obvious examples; but even so, the emphasis would have to be on why we adopt one language game or set of recursive rules rather than another, if the intended functions of Kovesi's formal and material elements are to be fulfilled. This must be done, Kovesi says, in terms of the point of having one set of notions rather than another, and this point will in all cases be related to human needs and interests.

1.3 Relations between form and matter

How, exactly, are formal and material elements related? First, Kovesi says that they form a series of hierarchies; that a thing can be both a formal element of one notion and a material element of another. For example: 'As various movements are the material elements of various acts of murder, so murder itself, along with cruelty, robbery and so on, are material elements of vice. The number of ways in which we can be vicious is not limited. Some of the material elements of the notion of vice are already formed by us into notions consisting of formal and material elements, like murder' (21; see also 51, 116). Likewise, the notion of furniture has some of its material elements formed into notions consisting of formal and material elements, such as the notion of a table. Note that while, as Lloyd Thomas points out in her review, Kovesi sometimes seems to think of material elements as what is observable as compared with formal elements as what is rational, or as universals (Lloyd Thomas 1968, 376), this contrast is improper, for his talk of hierarchies of formal and material elements requires that such non-observables as the notion of a table be material elements.

The relation between successive steps of a hierarchy is not that of the observable to the rational or universal, but is far more like the relation Searle finds, when criticizing Austin's distinction between locutionary and illocutionary acts, between such general verb phrases as 'tell someone to do something' and more specific ones

such as 'order someone to', the relation being that of genus or determinable term to species or determinate term (Searle 1973, 150-153). If this is the proper analogy then the relations are logical. But is this so? The relation that Kovesi says holds between being a table and being an item of furniture is that the first is a material element of the second. On the one hand I want to say that if something is a table then it must be an item of furniture, which supports the view that the relation is logical, but on the other hand Kovesi says that what a thing is cannot be deduced from or defined in terms of its material elements, which seems to show that the relation is not logical. The way out of this is to realize that the members of hierarchies are notions, not things. Once we have the relevant notions and know their hierarchical relations, then, for example, if we know that a certain object is a table we can, using the formal element of the higher order notion of furniture, deduce that it is an item of furniture, although it could be, both also and instead, something else. Thus the relations in Kovesi's hierarchies, being relations between notions and not things or properties, can properly be said to be logical.

Kovesi cautions us against thinking that terms which are well up in a hierarchy of formal and material elements will be vaguer than those below: 'Precision of a term does not depend on the number of ways in which it can be exemplified for the convenience of our perception. We should look for precision in the formal element for the convenience of our rational discourse' (34). For example, although there are far more sorts of food than of steak in the perceptible world, to call something food is not to be vague. It may or may not matter what sort of food it is,

and if not it is better to call it food than to call it steak. I wish to add another caution, against unwittingly allowing proper names to enter hierarchies of formal and material elements. A hierarchy might contain the following: 'fauna', 'celestial fauna', 'mythological horses', and 'pegasus'. Now in poetry and heraldry 'pegasus' is used as a general term; here it makes sense to speak of the notion of a pegasus and its formal and material elements, and this use is acceptable in a hierarchy. But its mythological use as a proper name has neither formal nor material elements (118), and so of course cannot enter a hierarchy of formal and material elements. Now if the distinction between general terms and proper names is ignored, cases such as this where a word has both functions can give the mistaken impression that a hierarchy has terminated, for the only thing that 'comes under' the proper name 'Pegasus' is the beast which caused the fountain Hippocrene to well forth on Mount Helicon. And in cases where the bifunctional word names something observable we might draw the doubly mistaken conclusion that hierarchies lead down to, and must stop at, matters of 'brute fact' about the observable world.

Given that it is notions rather than types of thing that have formal and material elements, they clearly do form hierarchies. Less easy to follow, and not so clearly true, however, is the claim that the formal and material elements of a notion are inseparable. This claim is made several times, perhaps most clearly on pp. 58-60, where Kovesi is discussing the ways we can break the rules for the proper use of our terms. This, he says, can be done with regard to both their material and their formal elements. For example, if a person were to claim that he

had poisoned someone inadvertently when in fact he had carefully chosen and administered a poison, Kovesi would say that he had broken the rules for the proper use of the term 'inadvertent' with regard to its material elements. This is contrasted with the claim that someone was responsible for what he caused to happen while intending to do something else, which Kovesi regards as a case of breaking the rules for the use of the term 'inadvertent' with regard to its formal element. In the latter case, of course, it must be supposed that the situation was not one in which we would be entitled to accuse the person of carelessness.

Having contrasted the two cases, Kovesi then says that the two ways of breaking the rules for the proper use of our terms are intrinsically connected, and that to see this connection is to see the unity of material and formal elements. The connection is found in the way we try to correct those who break the rules. In both cases, Kovesi says, we appeal to the formal element, for the following reason: following a rule in using a word is nothing else than being able to see what are its instances, and we cannot see what are its instances unless we understand why they are instances; we cannot follow a rule in using a word on the basis of the empirical similarities in the material elements of the various instances, so we have to appeal to the significance of the material elements in order to claim that certain phenomena or happenings are or are not instances, and to appeal to their significance is to appeal to the formal element. This is why we appeal to the formal element even in those cases where the rules for the proper use of a term are broken with regard to the material elements.

Now Kovesi has quite a lot to say about following a rule for the proper use of a term, and his references to this will become clearer in chapter two. There is however one point in the above argument which calls for comment: that is, whether the cases he describes as cases of breaking the rules for the proper use of a term with regard to the material elements are correctly characterized. I am inclined to say, in the inadvertency example, that if his intention was to deceive his audience, the poisoner was not guilty of any verbal mistake. He wanted to lead them to believe that he had not poisoned his victim intentionally. One appropriate way of giving this impression is to describe the act as inadvertent. Of course, if the poisoner was not trying to deceive his audience he could be accused of breaking the rules for the proper use of the term 'inadvertent', but in this case it seems that the rules would be broken with regard not to the material but to the formal element.

Perhaps though, when he talks of breaking the rules for the proper use of a term with regard to the material elements rather than the formal element, the contrast Kovesi has in mind is between cases where a misunderstanding of the formal element results in an incorrect use of a term and those where the formal element is understood but a mistake is made in its application. For example, suppose that it is a part of the formal element of the notion of murder that the act be deliberate. If a person does not know this he could mistakenly judge an act which he knows not to be deliberate to be a murder. The other sort of mistake is to judge an act to be a murder because, among other things, it is deliberate, when in fact it is not deliberate. This second sort of

mistake could, in turn, be made in either of these ways: either by mistakenly believing that some part of the formal element of the notion of a deliberate act is not part of this formal element, or by mistakenly judging an action to satisfy that part of the formal element.

I am reluctant, however, to describe any of these mistakes as cases of breaking the rules for the use of the term 'murder' with regard to the material elements. The first is a clear case of getting the formal element wrong, and in the second, whatever the reason for mistakenly judging the act to be deliberate, the trouble is that murder is a material element of the notion of a deliberate act, not vice versa.

An earlier explanation of why the formal and material elements of a notion are supposed to be inseparable avoids this difficulty. On p. 24 Kovesi says that 'Without the formal element there is just no sense in selecting, out of many others, those features of a thing or an act that constitute it that thing or act', and some of these, some of the material elements, 'simply would not exist at all'; for example, the byproduct of an inadvertent act. Of course, were it not for the formal element of the notion of an inadvertent act it would not make sense to speak of the byproduct of an inadvertent act; the assumption seems to be that if it does not make sense to speak of something it does not exist. Certainly it cannot be said to exist, and this might be all that Kovesi intends to say: that without the formal element we could not say that there are byproducts of inadvertent acts, not that there would not be any.

Perhaps the closest Kovesi comes to an unexceptional way of expressing his claim is on p. 31, where he says, simply but rather cryptically, that there must be some differences in the field of material elements between two things if we want to judge them differently, but that we would not know what differences would entitle us to do so without the formal element. But he goes on immediately to say that when we select the material elements we do this because they constitute that thing or act, while on the other hand the various material elements of a thing or act are its material elements only because they constitute the thing or act, because they come to or amount to the same thing or act (31-32). This brings up the problem of what it means to say that a notion, as opposed to a particular thing, has constituents. I shall discuss this in chapter three. What I wish to do now is suggest that, in saying that the material and formal elements are inseparable in that there must be some differences in material elements if we want to judge two things differently, but that we would not know what differences would entitle us to do so without the formal element, Kovesi is coming very close to the familiar view that although necessary truths are devoid of factual content they provide us with the rules for the proper use of words.

Closely related to this is Kovesi's claim that to change something we must change its material elements in some way but that we must refer to the formal element to determine in what respect and to what extent we should make the changes (68). Now giving an account of change has troubled philosophers for some time; Kovesi's remarks are at least simple, but it is not quite clear what they mean. I shall try to make their meaning clear,

first by considering what appear to be some counter-examples. First, to use an example of Kovesi's (14), consider a piece of timber which is lying unused upon the ground. If someone picks it up and, employing some suitable object as a fulcrum, uses the piece of timber in order to gain a mechanical advantage in lifting a heavy body, he is using the piece of timber as a lever, and can correctly refer to it, at least at the time, as a lever. Without straining our language unduly, he can be said to have changed the piece of timber into a lever, and may later change it into, say, a prop, or let it revert to being 'merely' a piece of timber. Yet what material elements has he changed?

Before answering that, consider another example. Suppose that on first meeting one of those short-legged, drab-coloured, spiny, near-spherical creatures known as hedgehogs, we declare it to be ugly, but when we find out how well it is able to resist the attacks of cats and children, come to regard it as a thing of some beauty. Now it is odd to describe this as a case of changing a particular ugly object into a beautiful one, but this is only because we have not done anything to it such as lengthening its legs or dressing it in fur. It can be said, with no more oddity than is often involved in calling things ugly or beautiful, that, like Victorian furniture, it was ugly but is now beautiful. This then is an example of 'changing' something without, it seems, changing any of its material elements. We have, in a sense, done nothing either to the piece of timber itself or to the hedgehog itself. What we have done in 'changing' the piece of timber into a lever is to use it in a particular way, and in 'changing' the ugly hedgehog into a thing of

beauty we have come to regard it differently.

The reason why these appear to be counterexamples is connected with the reason why it is a little odd to talk of changing things without doing anything to them. On the one hand, whether an object is a piece of timber or a hedgehog depends upon whether certain predicates hold true of it, and in both cases the important ones are either one-place predicates or relations into which people do not enter. On the other hand, whether an object is a lever or is ugly or beautiful depends upon whether it enters into certain relations with people: in the case of the lever, between what we might call the object itself, another object which serves as fulcrum, the load, and a person using the object in one of a limited number of ways; in the case of a beautiful object, between the object itself and its beholders. Once it is realised that such relations can be material elements, these examples are no longer troublesome.

So much for the first part of Kovesi's claim that if we want to change something we must in some way change its material elements, but that we must refer to the formal element to determine in what respect and to what extent we should make the changes. The point of the second part of the claim is that if we want to change a thing of one type (S_1) into a thing of another type (S_2) we must refer to the formal element of the notion of an S_2 to determine in what respect and to what extent the S_1 must be changed in order that it qualify as an S_2 . When it is put like this, the previous problem of whether we must actually do anything to the object no longer arises, for it is possible that we should find that some S_1 already

qualifies as an S_2 . Thus one might find, for example, that his paperweight qualifies as or just is also a door-stop, or that his waste paper basket is also an ashtray.

1.4 'Good' and 'yellow'

The vast majority of our notions, Kovesi says, have both formal and material elements, but the prominence of the formal element varies, directly, with the number of ways we can exemplify a thing (35). At one extreme is the notion of yellow (and, presumably, other colours), for which he says we do not need a formal element (35). In the other direction, the notion of function is almost entirely a formal element (146), and the limit is reached with the notion of good, which can be exemplified 'in so many "empirical" ways' that Kovesi is inclined to say that it is entirely a formal element (35). But it is not at all clear how we are to find out the number of 'empirical' ways in which a notion can be exemplified, and even if this were clear, it is not clear why or even that this number should be a measure of the prominence of the formal element. Indeed, Kovesi is hardly consistent here, for he admits that vice also can be exemplified in a vast number and variety of 'empirical' ways and yet says that it has material elements, such as murder and cruelty (21).

If the question whether the notion of good is just a formal element is approached by way of the definition of 'material element', Kovesi's conclusion is not obtained. A material element of S is any characteristic in respect

of which a thing or act can vary without ceasing to be an S (4). Now since 'good' cannot be used on its own but always, implicitly or explicitly, modifies some noun, 'S' must be taken to be, for example, 'good knife' or 'good man'. There are many characteristics in respect of which something can vary without ceasing to be a good knife or a good man; hence these notions do have material elements and are not just formal elements. Of course Kovesi might reply that this does not refute the claim that the notion of good, as opposed to that of a good knife or a good man, is just a formal element. However, 'good' is not the only term which cannot be used on its own; 'small' and 'long', for example, share this feature, and exactly the same arguments apply to them. Something can be small in so many 'empirical' ways that here too we might be inclined to say that the notion is just a formal element, but on the other hand the notions of a small pebble and of a small star do have material elements. Thus, insofar as 'good' is an exception, it is not alone.

Kovesi does not actually say that the notion of yellow does not have a formal element, but this is clearly what he has in mind when he says that 'yellow' is unlike most other words in that for us to judge something to be yellow that very quality has to be present that we have agreed to call by the word 'yellow', and so we do not need a formal element here (6, 35). In her review of Moral Notions, Lloyd Thomas rightly objects that 'yellow' is not the name of a quality; 'it is not a name and yellow is not a single quality in the sense he needs, but a range, covered by a rule of usage' (Lloyd Thomas 1968, 375). But even if this were not so, it would not clearly be the case that the notion of yellow has no

formal element. Consider the relation between being coloured and being yellow. An object cannot vary with regard to being coloured without ceasing to be yellow. Thus, being coloured is not a material element of the notion of yellow. Whether something is coloured is highly relevant to whether it can be yellow, and as it is not a material element, it would seem that it has to be part of the formal element; it is a necessary truth that yellow is a colour.

Now this does not satisfy the characterization of 'formal element' given on p. 32: namely, that the formal element of a notion is the point or reason for bringing certain qualities, features or aspects of things, actions or situations together, for their being coloured is not even part of the reason why we bring certain things together under the notion of yellow. On the other hand, under Kovesi's earlier characterization, that the formal element is given by an answer to the question why we apply the term to some objects and refuse it to others, we are at least entitled to refuse the term 'yellow' to any object which is not coloured. And if this is objected to on the plausible grounds that it is artificial to try to separate the question why we apply a term to some things from why we refuse it to others, then the problem about yellow can be put this way: surely Kovesi does not want to say that there is no point in or reason for bringing together the instances of 'yellow' under the term; indeed, in another context, he admits this (6). Surely there must be some needs or interests which lie behind the ways in which we use colour words (see Cook 1972, 59-61), and if there are, then these notions must have formal elements.

One of Kovesi's central theses is that the reasons why we form and apply notions as we do are rarely solely in terms of perceptible similarities and differences among the properties of the things to which the notions are applied. What I am saying is that he could safely say that this is never so. This is because perceptible similarities and differences are never, in themselves, reasons for doing anything, and so cannot in themselves be reasons for forming and applying notions. For example, if our need to identify the things in the world around us could be met without attending to the perceptible difference between red and yellow we would not need so many colour words. Also, the reason why we call some things yellow and deny the term to others is connected with the point in having colour words at all, not just 'yellow', and so it is a mistake to try to give the formal element of the notion of yellow in isolation from that of a colour. Nevertheless, in spite of Kovesi's near denial, the notion of yellow does have a formal element.

Far more serious at this stage is the fact that when, having good grounds for supposing that a characteristic must be either part of the formal element of a notion or one of its material elements, we ask which it is, the answer varies, depending on whether the characterization of 'formal element' or that of 'material element' is used. Kovesi seems to intend these two terms to have meanings such that, if something which could be a characteristic of an S is a part of the formal element of the notion of S then it is not a material element, and vice versa. An argument to this effect might run as follows. We have certain reasons for bringing together groups of characteristics, inventing new terms, and

creating new notions. Call such a notion the notion of an S. The process of forming the notion in a sense creates the class of things which come under the notion. If something does not satisfy the reasons we had for initiating and carrying out this process, or the reasons which we would now have were we to do this, it would not be called an S. Thus, the reasons we have for bringing together the group of characteristics constitute a complex characteristic such that, if something varies in this respect it ceases to be an S. That is, the formal element of the notion of an S incorporates a, if not the, characteristic such that if something varies in this respect it ceases to be an S. Hence, the formal element of the notion of an S incorporates a characteristic in respect of which something may not vary without ceasing to be an S, and so, finally, as a material element is a characteristic in respect of which something can vary without ceasing to be an S, it is not part of the formal element.

Such an argument is not, however, very convincing. In particular, in describing as characteristics our reasons for bringing certain features of the world together under a notion, it is clear that the characteristic is not thought of as belonging to the things which come under the notion, and it is also clear that when Kovesi is speaking of characteristics in introducing the term 'material element' he has in mind only the characteristics of the things concerned. It is of course not surprising that an attempt to justify the assumption about his characterizations of 'formal element' and 'material element' should fail, in view of the apparent falsity of the assumption, but the exercise is not without

point, for it indicates that the source of trouble may once more lie in some lack of clarity concerning the 'ownership' of characteristics, in Kovesi's thought.

1.5 'Form' and 'matter' in Aristotle and Plato

In the third section of this chapter I made the understatement that philosophers have for some time been worried by change. Notably this exercised the Greeks, and in particular Aristotle, who also comes to mind as a source of the terms 'form' and 'matter'. I shall now attempt further elucidation of Kovesi's terminology and claims by comparing his use of these terms with that of Aristotle, with such accuracy as is compatible with a total ignorance of Greek.

'Form', for Aristotle, sometimes means shape (Physics, 209b; Parts of Animals, 640b) and sometimes essence (Physics, 194b, 198b). This is particularly confusing in such cases as geometric figures where a shape is part of an essence. 'Matter' is defined in an early work as 'the primary substratum of each thing, from which it comes to be without qualification, and which persists in the result' (Physics, 192a), and is seen as a relative term; 'to each form there corresponds a special matter' (Physics, 194b). These early uses of the term 'matter' differ from later ones, where 'matter' should often be read as 'prime matter' (to which I shall come soon), just as early uses of 'form' usually mean 'shape' while later ones are more likely to mean 'essence'. It is to these later ones that Kovesi's use

of 'form' corresponds; specifically he includes the shape of a table amongst the material elements and not as a part of the formal element. While Kovesi does not use the term 'essence', it is reasonably accurate to say that he too thinks of forms as essences, in the sense of defining characteristics (see Topics, 101b), and both philosophers at least sometimes observe the worthwhile convention of talking of essences of notions or terms rather than things (Metaphysics, 1036a).

In saying that he does not mean to introduce any metaphysical entities by using the terms 'form' and 'matter' (3), Kovesi is taking what is usually supposed to be Aristotle's rather than Plato's side on the question of the ontological status of forms, or, if you prefer, on the question of forms versus Forms. For Aristotle, both forms and matter are immanent (Physics, 209b; On Generation and Corruption, 329a); forms are much the same as universals (Metaphysics, 1036a), and do not exist independently of particulars (Posterior Analytics, 85a; Metaphysics, 1040b). But I think that Kovesi would have to differ from Aristotle's views that forms or essences are uncreated, indestructible, eternal, and properly laid out for us in nature, that in defining classes we must select the correct characteristics of the natural world which is already divided up into classes (Physics, 198b-199a). Kovesi characterizes 'form' in terms of human needs and interests, and, unless he holds that these are somehow set down once and for all, unless he has some unstated view of an unalterable 'human nature', he could not agree with Aristotle here.

There are some fairly standard objections to regarding forms or essences as immanent: intuition is required for the correct application of general terms; it is not at all clear what the instances of a term have in common; concepts are regarded as being 'razor edged' rather than standing for ranges; and adjectives are regarded as proper names. All of these might be levelled against Aristotle, though he was aware of at least the second (Metaphysics, 999; XIII, 10). Apart from his easily corrected account of colour words, Kovesi would have no difficulty with the third. The first he tries to meet with an argument against private language, and I shall discuss this in chapter two. In answer to the second he could say, on the one hand, that all they have in common is that they come under the same formal element or amount to instances of the same, but on the other hand it is we who form notions and thereby create these formal elements. That is, he could deny that, in the sense intended in the objection, they need to have anything at all in common. And in reply to the last objection he could say that, only in the very tenuous sense in which general terms name classes constituted in terms of human needs and interests could he be accused of regarding adjectives as proper names.

An interesting link between Aristotle and Kovesi concerns what the latter calls the unity of form and matter. For Aristotle's view, note first that he regards matter as being what has the potentiality of receiving form and form as what actualizes the potentiality (On The Soul, 414a). He goes on later to say that the potentiality, matter, and the actuality, form, are somehow one, in 'each thing which is a unity' (Metaphysics, 1045b).

Of course he has to say something like this; to say that the ordinary things around us consist of form and matter does not explain our entitlement to regard them as single things or unities, but all we are told is that they are unities, not how they are. Kovesi at least tries to give an explanation, and for him the 'glue' which holds things together is the man-made formal elements of our notions. We bring features of the world together under our notions. For Aristotle, the features and the classification are already there, and the problem is to account for their being as they are. For Kovesi we do the classifying and perhaps even 'invent' or 'create' the features, and the problem is to account for the fact that we can do this in non-idiosyncratic ways. Here Kovesi invokes arguments about the essentially public nature of language.

A much clearer connection between Kovesi and Aristotle is found in the claimed relations between forms and ends, purposes, functions and the like. Kovesi's view I have already mentioned; Aristotle's is similar, but takes a while to state. First, he distinguishes four types of cause: a material cause is either proximate or fundamental substratum or matter; an efficient cause (the usual sense of 'cause') is a power or agency which makes something out of material (e.g. a sculptor); a formal cause is an essence, in virtue of which a thing is what it is; a final cause is a plan, aim, end, or function, 'that for the sake of which'. The last two Aristotle regards as much the same (Generation of Animals, 715a), and the last, in particular, is the form (Physics, 198a, 199a). For both Aristotle and Kovesi, then, forms are connected with ends, purposes or

functions, and definitions are to be given in such terms (Topics, 101b; Nicomachean Ethics, 1115b). The difference is that Aristotle regards nature as purposive. For him, the ends, functions and purposes belong to things (Physics, 198b-199a), while for Kovesi these are matters of human need and interest, so here too Aristotle has an easy but implausible explanation while Kovesi takes a more roundabout route, involving arguments about the nature of language, in order to support his more attractive theory. And for both philosophers form is more important than matter: for Aristotle because form is cause in the sense of 'that for the sake of which' (Parts of Animals, 640b; Metaphysics, 1049b, 1055a); for Kovesi because what a thing is cannot be deduced from or defined in terms of the material elements.

Both Aristotle and Kovesi regard form and matter as being arranged hierarchically (Physics, 194b), but while Aristotle insists that a hierarchy should have an end-point, prime matter, the real element, which is devoid of characteristics and never exists by itself (On Generation and Corruption, 329a; Metaphysics, 1029a, 1050b), Kovesi does not make this move, except, perhaps, insofar as he sometimes talks of a world of 'raw data' (19). I shall say more about this in chapter three. Let it suffice for the moment to add to my earlier argument (see 1.2, above) a fairly standard reply to arguments which point towards a characterless substratum of 'matter', or 'bare' entities, namely, that although the term 'entity' and like terms are indeterminate in the sense that they can be used without implying what they designate, it does not follow that they designate something which is itself indeterminate or devoid of characteristics.

If hierarchies of form and matter are followed in the opposite or 'upwards' direction, again a limit, in this case form without matter, might be reached, and both Aristotle and Kovesi say that this happens. I have said enough about Kovesi's limit, good; Aristotle arrives at God. His route is as follows: a potentiality implies the possibility of change to the actuality, which is better (Metaphysics, 1051a); there can be no element of potentiality (matter) in a perfectly changeless being (Metaphysics, 1044b, 1045b, 1073a). I am tempted to ask whether perhaps Kovesi seeks the same absence of change in the good as Aristotle does in God, but instead I shall point out not a possible but unlikely connection but an important and clear difference. For Kovesi, it seems, every notion consists of formal and/or material elements, the vast majority having both. Aristotle, on the other hand, appears to allow that some may have neither; for example, points or places (Metaphysics, 1044b). Not that I can find anywhere where he specifically denies that these have forms, in the right sense (the essence-shape confusion runs riot here; see Physics, IV, 2), but equally I find no hint that he wishes to deify places, and the only way he can avoid this is by saying that while God has form but lacks matter, points lack both. Kovesi, I should think, has not even thought about the question, given his apparent lack of interest in mathematics, but he could easily and plausibly give an account of the formal element of the notion of a place in terms of our need to be able to tell people, for example, how to lay hands on the bottle opener.

These then are some of the similarities and differences between Kovesi and Aristotle. In brief, I feel

that the similarities, though numerous, are superficial. Both talk of hierarchies of immanent formal and material elements; both relate forms to ends or purposes and definition to forms; but while Aristotle allows to people only the role of arranging and dividing attributes which are in some way already 'given' in a purposive natural world, Kovesi gives to us the task of, as it were, creating the world we live in by forming notions which reflect and meet our needs, interests and purposes.

A similar comparison can be made between Plato and Kovesi, for Plato, too, seems to have a doctrine of natural kinds (e.g. see Cratylus, 386-387, 391). But it is more interesting in the present context to make a general comparison between Plato's ideas or forms and Kovesi's formal elements. In the Cratylus there is a discussion of how a carpenter should go about making a shuttle (389). To change Plato's story a little: if the carpenter is asked to make a replacement for a broken shuttle, it will be no use his simply copying the broken one. What is wanted is a whole shuttle, not two or more pieces. Likewise, in the story, if the shuttle breaks while he is making it, he should make another 'with his mind fixed' not 'on that which is broken' but 'on that form with reference to which he was making the one which he broke.' Now in this case little harm is done if we think of the form as a shape, but Plato hastens to point out, at least by implication, that a shuttle which is good for making heavy woollen garments will be no good for light linen. Still, the form can be thought of as a shape; only the size needs to vary.

Of course I am not saying that Plato thought of forms as a sort of picture. Neither am I saying that he thought they are 'located' in people's minds. For understanding, the mind has to 'fix' on them, but it does not follow that they are in the mind. All I am saying is that, in the case of some artefacts, it is attractive to think of the forms as some sort of shape or picture. This is plausible when, as a matter of fact, artefacts have to be much the same shape to fulfil the same function at all well. But this is not always the case. For example, anchors for permanent moorings can be almost any shape. In this case empirical similarities are still required, as they have to be dense, heavy and durable, but the point is that, even within the field of artefacts, it will not always do to think of forms as a sort of picture. What matters is knowing the function, knowing what it is for. This is an objection not to Plato but to a possible interpretation of some of his remarks, for of course the mind can fix on a functional specification as easily as on a picture.

But this account of forms cannot plausibly be generalized. Only artefacts are for anything. I am making this a matter of definition: using 'artefact' not in the dictionary sense of 'an artificial product' but so as to apply to anything which is made or used for, or regarded as having, a function. In this sense, Aristotle might be accused of regarding all general words as artefact-words, but if we are not prepared to regard all things as having functions, the next move is not at all obvious. Plato's approach was to postulate a strange species of object, independent of people, to which general terms in at least an ideal language stand as

proper names. This raises very serious difficulties in specifying a relation between these objects, the forms, and more mundane things. Kovesi's approach is quite different from either Aristotle's or Plato's. For him, forms are not transcendental entities, nor are they ever, strictly speaking, the functions which mundane things may have. The formal element of a notion is always concerned with the needs, interests, purposes, etc. that lead us to form and use the notion. If the notion is of some artefact, the formal element will be related to the function of the artefact, but Kovesi, like most of us, does not want to say that all general words are artefact-words. What he is telling us is that, even when we cannot bring ourselves to think of things in the world as having functions, we can always ask what is the function of a notion. To understand a notion is to understand its place in our life and language, to understand why we allow certain things to count as instances and disallow others.

Chapter Two EMPIRICAL SIMILARITIES

2.1 Recognitors

To know what count as correct and incorrect uses of a term, to know, where appropriate, what counts and what does not count as an instance, to know what features are relevant to judging something to be an instance, Kovesi says, is to know the formal element of the notion concerned, the point of or reason for bringing certain objects or happenings, however dissimilar their perceptible features may be, together as instances of the same. And to see the point of this will always involve attending first to human needs and interests rather than perceptible properties of things in the world around us. In this chapter I shall assess these claims by examining his supporting examples and arguments, applying his views to various speech acts which he does not discuss, and trying to specify the exact sense in which a formal element can be said to provide both a rule for the use of a term and a standard for judging, where appropriate, that an instance is good, bad, or indifferent. But first, I wish to consider in some detail whether Kovesi's account meets the requirement that language be public.

Kovesi insists that it is formal elements, not empirical similarities, that enable us to understand and apply the terms in our language. The common element which brings a variety of things together as instances of the same is, except in special cases, not connected with sensible likenesses among the instances. To help make clear just what part such empirical similarities do

play, Kovesi coins the term 'recognitor'. The recognitors of a thing are the features of a thing that enable us to recognize it (40). This term is introduced to avoid what Kovesi regards as an unsatisfactory aspect of philosophers' use of the term 'criteria'. In philosophical language, he says, it is customary to call those features of a thing that enable us to recognize it the criteria for the proper use of the word that we use to refer to the thing in question, but these features are not criteria for the proper use of the word, for on the one hand, when we encounter these features we do not have to use the word, and on the other hand, we use words at times and for purposes other than to identify a thing when we are confronted with it. For example, comets and revolutions do not appear or occur as often as we have occasion to speak of them (40). As the features of a thing that enable us to recognize it do not provide us with the rules for the proper use of the word which we use to refer to the thing in question, it is misleading, Kovesi says, to think that they are the criteria for the proper use of the word. We must look elsewhere for the rules. It is to avoid this confusion that Kovesi calls these features not criteria but recognitors.

In a rather puzzling passage Kovesi says that, roughly speaking, recognitors are the defining characteristics of the material elements of a thing, act, situation or phenomenon (41). Why should the defining characteristics of the material elements be those features of a thing which enable us to recognize it? The percentage of imported leaf in a tin of tobacco is a material element of the brand of tobacco, yet one recognizes the brand by the writing on the tin or the aroma of its contents,

and these features cannot be used in defining the percentage of imported leaf. In his critical notice of Moral Notions Mayo suggests that Kovesi might mean the defining characteristics among, rather than of, the material elements (Mayo 1969, 288). This is a step towards clarifying what Kovesi is getting at, but as it stands it contradicts the earlier claim that a thing cannot be defined in terms of its material elements, for recognitors do not constitute the meaning of a term or the rules for its use. To avoid this, the passage should be read as having protest quotes around 'defining characteristics'. Kovesi is saying that recognitors are those of the material elements which have, mistakenly, been thought to be defining characteristics. The characteristics taken to be defining by those philosophers who concentrate on empirical similarities are material elements, and so cannot be defining characteristics. A proper definition must involve the formal element (8), and thus be in terms of the point of making the classification concerned, which will usually be connected only contingently if at all with empirical similarities.

Much of what Kovesi says about recognitors is in the context of examples, but can be stated in a general way quite clearly. A term is not merely shorthand for the recognitors of the thing or things which it denotes, nor is it shorthand for all the possible recognitors, for a disjunctive statement of them all. When we introduce a new word into our vocabulary, we do this not because we want to save time but because we want to say more than would be said by such a disjunctive statement, because we want to say that it does not matter which of the recognitors are present as long as one of them is, as they all

come or amount to the same. There is a point in selecting the recognitors, and from that point all the different instances are the same. This is not expressed even by stating all the possible recognitors (46).

In introducing the term 'recognitor' Kovesi switches our attention, perhaps deliberately, from terms to things. The philosophical use of the term 'criteria' focuses our attention on the terms we use, for it is only terms that can have criteria. Kovesi's complaint is that the features of a thing that enable us to recognize it are not the criteria for the proper use of the appropriate term. For these we must look elsewhere. Thus when we are speaking of the features of a thing that enable us to recognize it, the recognitors of the thing, we can be quite clear that it is the thing in question, not the term we use to refer to it, about which we are speaking.

The process by means of which recognitors and their significance are established must, Kovesi says, be public, for these reasons. First, other people have to be able to use our terms. Second, not even the inventor of a notion could use a word in a consistent way without sharing its use with others. Further, 'the possibility of anyone being able to use a term in the same way is the guarantee for the fact that the recognitors and their significance have been properly selected and established' (55). As a move towards clarifying the claim that the process must be public, but not disputing it, I wish to question the second of Kovesi's reasons. It seems quite possible that the inventor of a notion could use a word in a consistent way without sharing its use with others, however pointless such an activity might be. There is no

reason why one could not form a new notion (not a whole language), coin a new word, not share the use of the word with anyone else, and yet use the word in private, as it were, quite consistently, without in fact being understood by anyone else simply because no one else has been given the opportunity of understanding the word (see Ayer 1954; Hervey 1957; Garver 1959). If it is replied that, although the process described is in fact possible, it would not be correct to describe it as the invention of a notion unless the process were made public, then our attention might profitably shift to the notion of something's being public.

My claim is that there is no reason why the process should in fact be made public, in the sense that the new word is in fact used in the presence of other people. It need not be published. Insisting on this would involve the impossible task of deciding, for example, on a minimum number of people who must share the use of a word for its recognitors and their significance to be properly established. The type of universality required here is not numerical (56-57). On the other hand, unless the process of establishing the recognitors and their significance is the sort of process which is public in the sense that it is not as a matter of logic the work of one particular person, then the term in question cannot properly be said to stand for a notion. It is, as Kovesi says, the possibility of anyone being able to use a term in the same way which guarantees that the recognitors and their significance have been properly selected and established. Only the possibility need be insisted upon.

I am aware that what I have just said appears to conflict with the views of some of the commentators on the so-called private language argument in Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations (especially Rhees 1954). But the privacy in the case outlined above is not logical privacy. An often-made point bears repeating: insofar as Wittgenstein's argument is a response to scepticism as to the logical possibility of communication, it need only show that communication is logically possible, that our thoughts, notions etc. are logically or in principle public. Further, Kovesi is here talking about the recognitors of things and not the criteria for the use of words. Although it does not follow from the fact that 'recognitor' applies to things and 'criteria' to words that the two are not connected, there is at least one important difference: namely, that while as a matter of logic the correct application of a criterion cannot yield a wrong result, this is never so in the case of recognitors, which, after all, are only material elements.

Even when we go out of our way to make the instances look alike, this is so, as for example in the case of coins. The recognitors of a particular denomination of coin are deliberately made as uniform as possible, but although the presence of these recognitors entitles us to apply the appropriate term (e.g. 'New Zealand two cent piece'), it does not as a matter of logic or even in some cases of fact ensure that such an application will be correct. A counterfeiter too will take pains to get the recognitors right, but even if he outwits the experts his products were not struck in the mint. To call them genuine New Zealand two cent pieces may be warranted but is false.

Another important point is that Kovesi is not trying to establish that the criteria for the use of terms must be public. When he says that it is the possibility of anyone being able to use a term in the same way which guarantees that the recognitors and their significance have been properly selected and established, he is accepting that language must be public (58, 111), and trying to clarify what it means to say this. Here he is not entirely successful (57, 72). While it is enlightening to distinguish between anyone and everyone being able to use a term in the same way (56-57; cf. Ayer 1953), these expressions themselves have complex logical features (see Vendler 1967; Cresswell 1973, 217-224). Without attempting a formal analysis of these expressions, I shall point out some ambiguities that hinder clarity, but first I wish to suggest that there is a familiar sense of the word 'public' which corresponds almost exactly to that employed in any plausible claim that language must be public.

The sense of 'public' I have in mind is the one involved in saying, for example, that a court sitting is public. To say this does not imply that everyone can attend. If more people turn up than can be accommodated in the courtroom, if some are prevented from attending by illness, or even if nobody is interested enough to attend as a spectator, the court sitting can still be described as public. But if anyone is denied entry, or if some procedure is employed which is aimed at denying entry to some individual or to individuals under some description, even if without results, the sitting is not fully public. It could still be open to a section of the public (e.g. if children are not admitted), or it

might not be clearly either public or private (e.g. if only relatives of the parties are admitted), or it might be private (e.g. if invitations have to be produced). For it to be fully public it must be the case that anyone can attend.

Both 'anyone' and 'everyone' feature relevant ambiguities. 'Can anyone climb Mount Everest?' can be used to ask either whether there is at least one person who is a good enough mountaineer to reach the top or whether there are restrictions on who is allowed to try. 'Can everyone climb Mount Everest?' can be used to ask either the latter or whether there is room for all at the top. Of course part of the ambiguity here is in 'climb', but still it is not surprising that the sense in which language must be public is not precisely explained by distinguishing between 'anyone' and 'everyone'. Because of these ambiguities it is very difficult here to be both precise and idiomatic. Kovesi sometimes lacks precision (e.g., 52) and sometimes uses awkward expressions (e.g., 72), but he is by no means alone here (see, for example, Wittgenstein 1958, pgs 261, 277; Hampshire 1952, 10).

The choice of examples is important. Because it is hard to imagine a person who is fond of or indifferent to pain (not mere whippings but full-blooded pain) it is easy to confuse the contingent fact that everyone wants to avoid pain with the logical fact that, if the wish to avoid pain is to be included in the formal element of a notion then this must be anyone's wish. Although he makes this clear in the case of pain (58), Kovesi is confused when he talks of parricide: 'If I did not also disapprove of the child's murdering his father I would

not understand the notion of parricide' (72). Even if it is the case that everyone disapproves those actions which are called cases of parricide, it is a contingent and not a logical truth, compatible with the claim that anyone might approve or be indifferent. Of course if someone calls a particular action a case of parricide he is saying that it is wrong, but he does not have to believe that there is anything which counts as a case of parricide to understand the notion. Perhaps 'blasphemy' is a better example. Someone who holds nothing sacred would not admit that there are cases of blasphemy, but he could still know what would count as a case and so understand the notion. There is an important difference between believing that a notion has instances and knowing what it would be for it to have instances. Only the latter is relevant to understanding the notion, but in cases where as a matter of fact we all believe that there are instances, and particularly where we agree as to what are the instances, these are easily confused.

2.2 Sensations

Notwithstanding what I have just said, there seems to be something special about sensations. While it is easy and natural to think of tables and telephones as existing independently of oneself in a public world, one's sensations seem to be private possessions, even logically private possessions, for whereas I can sell or otherwise dispose of such possessions as the chair on which I am now seated, I cannot, as a matter of logic it seems, do anything analogous with my present headache. But perhaps

it is a mistake to think of sensations as possessions at all (see Cook 1965). Granted, we say 'I have a pain' just as we say 'I have a chair', but we never need to say the former. Instead, we can say 'I am in pain', and for clarity we should use this form of words. If pains are not possessions they cannot be private possessions. The relevant difference between my father's coat and my father's pain is not that the latter is some mysterious logically private object which he alone can possess but that it just is not a possession. Not even he can have his pain in the sense that he can have his coat. Small wonder then that nobody else can have his pain.

If this is so for all sensations then we should use sensation-words only as predicates. The only forms of speech which commit us to the existence of sensations are those which contain substantive sensation-words, such as 'I have a pain' and 'It is better now' (see Quine 1948; Cohen 1962, section 34). If these can be eliminated in favour of forms of speech which contain only predicative sensation-words, such as 'I am in pain' and 'I am less pained now' we never need commit ourselves to the existence of sensations.

But even if the moves offered in this argument are formally correct and open to us, the argument does not show that they should be made. Idiom aside, substantives can in any particular case be eliminated in favour of predicates. The argument, then, could be applied to any of the substantives we employ (though not of course to all of them at once). If logic allows us to avoid commitment to the existence of sensations, it does the same for telephones and tables. But even those who favour

an ontologically sparse landscape must, if they are to say anything, allow it some population, for no statement can be made without at least implicit use of a substantive. The argument, then, offers a choice but no guidance. If sensations can be explained away as being ontologically inferior to, say, the entities of modern physics, this choice could be made lightly, but a person who holds that sensations are at least as real as mesons will and need not be moved.

As the general argument will not show why we want to treat sensations as a special case, consider what is involved in ascribing a sensation to oneself or to another. It is easy to assume that such ascriptions are all much the same in that they are reports of something that is going on, but if we ask what is the point of ascribing a sensation to oneself or to another there is quite a variety of answers. For example, to say that a person has a headache might be a request for sympathy, an explanation of or excuse for his irritability; to say that a person feels nauseous might be a warning to stand clear, a request for a basin, an explanation of or excuse for his eructation; to say that a person feels hot might be an explanation of or excuse for his undressing, a suggestion that the heating be turned down, a request for a beer. Thus it would be a mistake to think that ascriptions of sensations are always mere reports of what is going on. Even when the sensation is present its ascription can be far more than a report. Much talk of sensations could not be understood without knowing that it is aimed at, or even is, a way of changing a person's sensations, and much of the behaviour associated with sensations too should be seen in this way; screwing up

the face is not just an expression or manifestation of a headache, but often helps to relieve it.

It does not of course follow that there can be no such thing as a mere sensation-report, but there are reasons for saying that this is so. The reasons are quite general: it always makes sense to ask why an assertion is made, a question asked, and so on, and the minimal comprehensible answer is 'I thought you would like to know, be able to tell me, etc.' Even in the case of assertions one is not merely reporting, for a mere report would have to be equally apt whatever the intended audience. This might be one person or it might be a group, whose membership may not even be known precisely except under a description such as 'friends' or 'psychologists', but even in the unlikely case in which the proffered description is 'mankind', what is said would be addressed not to all people but to anyone who might be interested. We address our remarks widely when we do not know exactly which individuals will be interested, but even here we are addressing them to those who are interested, not to everybody. Except in very special circumstances a reply by a child aged five to a paper in Mind would quite properly be ignored, and likewise its author would not be entitled to take unbrage at his paper's being ignored by a physicist. Now if what I have said is correct, sceptical arguments which take sensations as special cases lose much of their point, for what would matter in the case of sensations is not whether we can know just what other people's sensations are like but whether we can get done the things we want to get done when we talk of sensations, and there is nothing logically private about calling for silence or for a beer.

So far I have not asked whether there is any relevant difference between first and third person ascriptions of sensations. Is there any possible case in which one person, A, just could not do what another, B, does when B says, for example, 'I have a headache'? In all cases of course there is one thing which A cannot do; as a matter of logic he cannot ascribe B's sensation to himself. But this is not a relevant difference. The only sort of difference between first and third person ascriptions which would be relevant is one which is confined to what are supposed to be special cases in this context, and the one I have mentioned applies not only to the supposedly special case of sensations but to many other things as well. In a monogamous society A cannot have B's spouse, but the difference between A saying 'C is B's spouse' and B saying 'C is my spouse' does not incline us to think that different things are being said in these cases. At most, the statements involve different presuppositions.

I am not arguing that there is no difference between, say, pains and spouses, but merely that there is no logical difference relevant to the supposed problem of privacy. Kovesi's terminology can be used to clarify some of these questions. A person can tell that another is in pain, more or less accurately depending in part upon training, by observing his behaviour (including speech), and so we might say that certain sorts of behaviour are recognitors of pain. On the other hand a person does not need to observe his own behaviour to know that he is himself in pain; here the recognitors are different. Now while it may be unusual for there to be two sorts of recognitors, this does not constitute a special case, since, for example, a layman looks for the

letter 'H' on a weather map to find an anticyclone whereas the meteorologist uses different recognitors. Of course there are differences. We want to say that we cannot be mistaken about our own pains but can about anticyclones, but this difference is not relevant. The fact remains that, even if we cannot be mistaken about whether we are in pain, as opposed to the proper description of our own pains, having a pain is not a criterion for the proper use of 'pain'. As with Kovesi's comets and revolutions, we do not have to use the word 'pain' whenever we have a pain, nor are we barred from using it properly when we have no pain. My point is that if the two sorts of recognitors of pain are seen as recognitors, we will then know to look elsewhere for the formal element of the notion.

Insofar as the philosophical dispute about pain and other sensations has been whether they consist of having an experience or exhibiting (or being disposed to exhibit) certain behaviour it has been radically misguided, as would a dispute as to whether anticyclones consist of the letter 'H' on a weather map or certain readings of instruments. The formal element of the notion of an anticyclone is connected not with these, but with such things as our need to know whether to go on a picnic, when to plant our crops, and the like. Similarly the formal element of the notion of pain is concerned not with either behaviour or simply having certain experiences, but, as Kovesi says, with the need to avoid certain experiences (58). Of course the formal element is complicated. Sometimes we are more interested in who is in pain than in what sort of pain he has; from this point of view all of a person's pains are the same

in that they are his. At other times we are interested in certain sorts of pain rather than who is in pain; from this medical point of view all headaches, say, are the same whoever has them. But so far as scepticism is concerned the important question now seems to be whether it is a matter of contingent fact or of logic that we need two sorts of recognitors of pain, and either way, pain does not seem to be interestingly private. For if this is a matter of contingent fact, as some stories involving extra-sensory perception might persuade us, then the privacy is not logical, while if it is a matter of logic it differs little from the trivial claim that, as a matter of logic, laymen and experts must employ different recognitors for anticyclones.

Further, even if this 'little' difference turns out to be important, the fact that there are two sorts of recognitors does not entail that they have no conceptual connections. An argument of Hampshire's about communication in general can be rephrased so as to connect the two sorts of recognitors inseparably. Communication, Hampshire says, 'essentially involves the use of sentences to convey statements by an author to an actual or potential audience, in such a way that all users [*i.e.* any user] of the language, in denying and confirming, may change from the position of audience to author in respect of any statement made' (Hampshire 1952, 10). Although we do need two sorts of recognitors of pain, we could not know that either was a recognitor without knowing that the other was, for in ascriptions of pain we use one of them when a author and the other when an audience. The requirement of interchangeability then unites the two, and leaves no significant difference between first and third person ascriptions,

Sensations, then, are not a special case in any respect that is relevant to the public nature of language. Even first person ascriptions must and can comply with the general requirement of involving only notions whose recognitors and formal elements are public in the required sense, not of being shared by everyone but of being understandable by anyone. To understand someone else's sensation report one does not have to have his sensation. Of course, knowing whether another person's sensation reports are true is another matter. Here there can be two sorts of disagreement: we can agree that there is some sensation but disagree as to its proper description (is it an ache or a pain?), and we can agree that if there is a sensation at all it will come under a certain description, but disagree as to whether there is in fact a sensation at all (is he really in pain or is he pretending again?). But if the notion of truth is to do any work here there have to be tests, however complicated or difficult to apply. Relying on experts is not ruled out, as, in the appropriate sense, anyone could be an expert, although we would not be entitled to call something a test if, as a matter of logic, we had to rely on the word of a particular person. But to understand another person's sensation reports, as opposed to knowing whether they are true, all one has to do is know what would and what would not count as an instance of his having that sort of sensation, not whether there is in fact an instance. As far as this is concerned, the person who has the sensation is no better qualified than anyone else to say what would and what would not count.

2.3 Form and empirical similarities

Kovesi's claim that we need a formal element, not empirical similarities, to explain why we regard a variety of things as instances of the same thing is supported largely through examples. Some words, such as colour words and Plato's 'finger' give the impression that we can form and use a notion by following empirical similarities alone, without a formal element (38; see Republic, 523c-d), but whereas colours and fingers can be exemplified in only one empirically recognizable way this is not the case for the great majority of our notions. Thus the choice of examples is important. Plato was wrong, Kovesi says, about Parmenides' 'dirt' (Parmenides, 130c-d) not involving (in Kovesi's terms) a formal element. Not only does the notion of dirt imply standards, but we would not be able to continue a list of examples of dirt, to think of other examples of the same thing, unless we understood why we would include custard on a waistcoat and sand on a lens but not custard on a plate and sand on a beach. 'Unless we understand why the first two are examples of dirt', and here empirical similarities are no use, 'we do not understand what they are examples of, however much custard or sand we have the opportunity of observing' (38).

Another supporting example is drawn from what Kovesi terms an often used method of teaching how words acquire meaning (e.g. see Schlick 1938, 194; Russell 1940, 157). Suppose, he says, that a philosopher in a classroom coins a silly word, 'tak', and then draws on the blackboard various figures, some of which have a pointed projection, and teaches his students to apply the word

'tak' to and only to the figures with the pointed projection. Kovesi maintains that the students would not have learned the meaning of 'tak', even though they would be able to say whether a newly drawn figure is to be called a tak. His claim is that the students would not have any idea what to do if they met a tak outside the classroom; they would not know the point of the word 'tak'. Without the need for the word in a way of life, he says, we will not start forming the notion or using the word, and the word will not acquire meaning. The teacher gave the recognitors of taks but not the criteria for the use of the word, for when we encounter the recognitors we do not have to use the word, and we may use the word at times (such as this) when the recognitors are absent. Answering questions like 'Is this a tak?' is not the only activity involving words, is not the only language game. The rules for the proper use of a word are the rules of those activities in which the word is used. We do not form a notion by first inventing a word and specifying recognitors, and then finding a use for the word. The process is the reverse of this (39-42; cf. Wittgenstein 1958, pghs 257-260; Hare 1952, 100).

Kovesi says more about the 'tak' example, but the remaining points are more clearly and briefly presented in another example:

'We do not often have occasion to speak, as of an indivisible whole, of the group of phenomena involved or connected in the transit of a negro over a rail-fence with a melon under his arm while the moon is just passing behind a cloud. But if this collocation of phenomena were of frequent occurrence, and if we did have occasion to speak of it often, and if its happening were likely to affect the money market, we should have some name as a "wousin" to denote it by. People would in time be disputing

whether the existence of a wousin involved necessarily a rail-fence, and whether the term could be applied when a white man was similarly related to a stone wall.' (44)

The reason for such disputes, Kovesi says, is that the story does not tell us the point of having the word 'wousin'. The correct order in forming such notions is: first we notice some event (say, on the money market) which we want to promote or prevent or at least to understand; then we notice connections between this event and the phenomena described in the story; only when we think of these phenomena as reasons for the occurrence of the event on the money market would the term 'wousin' be coined; establishing the reasons for this event is precisely the same process as forming the rules for the proper use of 'wousin' (44-45). And the process must be public: 'The reasons for the occurrence of the event must be publicly testable and acceptable by anyone. Otherwise, people could not use the word in the same way, the word could not become part of our language. The way, then, in which the word becomes part of our language is at the same time the way in which we publicly check that we have correctly selected certain phenomena as the reasons for the occurrence of event x' (45-46).

The 'tak' and 'wousin' stories are examples of notions formed about the inanimate world. To approach more closely our moral notions, Kovesi produces an example in which a notion is formed about ourselves:

I expect the reader is familiar with those little machines which are used by bus conductors in some places for printing the tickets. Now suppose that a passenger asked for a fourpenny ticket and for some reason the conductor dialled five, thus producing the wrong ticket. He made another ticket but kept the fivepenny one as he had to account for

all the tickets printed. Some time later someone else asked for a fivepenny ticket and was given the one printed earlier. So far so good, but trouble arose when the inspector boarded the bus, for since the ticket had been printed some time before the passenger got on the bus it had by now expired, and the conductor had to be called on to explain. All this was rather a nuisance as it took up the conductor's time while other passengers were getting on and off; besides, he felt that the inspector must have thought him careless and inefficient. When he came off duty he stayed to have a cup of tea at the canteen where he told the story to a group of other conductors who replied with similar stories. (46-47)

Eventually, in the story, the conductors come to use the word 'misticket' to refer to these happenings:

Now if it is only the conductors who talk together over their cups of tea the word will become part only of their vocabulary, but if they share their discussions with the inspectors it will become part of their vocabulary as well. In the first case the word could only function as a 'nuisance-word', in the second, it could function as an 'excuse-word'. What I mean is that in the first case a conductor could not use the new word to the inspector when he wants a short-hand explanation to excuse a passenger and himself; he could only use it among the other conductors when he wants to say that this trouble has come up again. In the second case, however, he can tell the inspector: 'There is a misticket in the back', thus achieving what before the existence of this word needed a long explanation. (47-48)

Kovesi goes on to say that the new word refers to the experience of any conductor, incorporates those features of experience that any conductor may have, and, when functioning as an excuse-word, will excuse any conductor, however unskilled in argument or disliked by the inspector. The formation of the notion of a misticket, as opposed to a mistake, is intended to bypass a process of justification (cf. Austin's first method of defence: Austin 1956, 2).

At this stage in his story Kovesi assumes that it is agreed that mistickets be excused, and rightly insists that this is necessary for their excusability to be automatic. But later he says that if the conductors and inspectors did not come to an agreement 'there cannot be such a notion as misticket and the conductors cannot make mistickets, although they will continue to make mistakes in printing their tickets' (52). I am not sure what he means by 'agreement' here, but he should not insist on universal agreement as a condition for the formation and use of the notion. The presence of a single inspector who regards all such mistakes as cases of culpable inefficiency cannot prevent the formation of the notion, nor is he barred from understanding it. Although he will not agree that it has any instances, he can come to know what would count as an instance; he might, for example, allow a malfunction of the machine but not an error on the operator's part as an instance. Of course even if there is agreement someone could subsequently question whether mistickets should be excused; he may see a new point relevant to their excusability, or they may have become more frequent. These changes, Kovesi says, are connected with the formal element of the notion of a misticket, part of which is that mistickets are excusable. If other ways of producing mistickets were found, or if machines which operate differently were introduced, the material elements would change. And although it is built into the story that the number of ways in which one could make a misticket, as compared with the number of ways in which one could make a mistake, is limited, this does not, Kovesi says, make 'misticket' a descriptive term or more descriptive than 'mistake'. So far as the 'descriptive-evaluative' distinction is concerned it is the formal

element that matters, the point of selecting and grouping together some features of the world or of our behaviour (50).

To bring the discussion closer to Kovesi's claim that when we form a notion we do not look for empirical similarities among a variety of things but for that which brings a variety of things together as examples of the same thing, consider a final example:

Let us suppose that in hospital and medical circles the term 'tetprotect' is used to state that since noise is a mortal danger to tetanus patients appropriate measures should be taken when such a patient is in hospital. If the doctor uses this term to state what the nurse should do, then if the nurse understood the term she understood not only the 'what' but also why the request was made. We can also see a familiar feature of our moral notions in this example. 'Tetprotect' can be exemplified by putting sawdust on the road outside, by wearing soft shoes or by shutting the door. Not only should the nurse understand why she should do something if the doctor tells her to enforce or bring about tetprotection, unless she knew the reason she would not quite know what to do and she would not know that all these different activities are examples of the same thing. Without such a term the doctor would have to tell the nurse simply what to do. (39-90)

The claim that empirical similarities need not explain why various instances are instances of the same thing is not the same as Wittgenstein's 'family resemblance' account (Wittgenstein 1958, pghs 67-77). Kovesi takes Wittgenstein to be 'looking for empirical similarities between A and Z though it is not one thread that runs from A to Z. A, B and C are connected by one similarity, B, C and D by another and so A is linked to Z though they do not look alike at all. The similarities are connected like threads in a rope' (22). This account, Kovesi says,

is both too strong and too weak: too strong because under it we could connect any two things by finding a suitable chain of similarities, and too weak because it does not explain the connections, such as that between football and chess which makes both of them games. What we need in order to understand a notion is not a rope of empirical similarities but a formal element, that which enables us to follow a rule in using a term. Following a rule is a rational activity. We know what an object is only insofar as we know that it is the same as various other ones, and we cannot know this unless we know why they are all the same. Only then can we follow a rule in looking for new examples (22-24).

The claim that we need a formal element, not empirical similarities, to explain why we regard a variety of things as instances of the same thing, is supported not only by examples but also, and originally, by general arguments, which Kovesi brings together thus:

At the beginning of the first chapter we had to introduce what I call the 'formal element' because without it we cannot decide what are and what are not instances of a thing or action. This is so for several connected reasons: we cannot give a list of material elements that would entail what the thing or action is; various instances of things and actions do not resemble each other empirically except in cases where such similarity is required for fulfilling the same function; our terms must be open for hitherto unknown instances of the same thing, and there are always new ways of producing a thing or performing an act. Towards the end of the chapter the same claim was made by saying that, without the formal element, we cannot follow a rule in using a term. (37)

There are, of course, exceptions. First, as Kovesi notes, there are cases where empirical similarity is required for fulfilling the same function. Second, we sometimes

choose to simplify rule-following by following empirical similarities, as for example, when we make it a 'principle' never to eat sausages because they (sometimes) give us indigestion (101), or make our coins look alike. Very closely related are those cases where rules and regulations are deliberately formulated so that people can follow them on the basis of empirical similarities alone. There are logical and practical reasons for this: if someone does not know why he should do something he can only follow empirical similarities, and it is easier to enforce and observe rules and regulations which are formulated in terms of empirical similarities (34). The final class of exceptions Kovesi mentions is colour words; here we do not need a formal element, for we can follow a rule in using such words simply by observing empirical similarities (35).

I have already tried to show that, if he means that colour notions do not have formal elements, he is wrong (see 1.4, above). Consider then his claim that what he says about colour words is not affected by what a follower of Wittgenstein might rightly say, 'that even the naming of a colour and the subsequent use of that colour-word involves the existence of a way of life where there is a need for talking about colours and a language in which there is a place for colour-words' (6; cf. Wittgenstein 1958, pgh 241). At first sight, this hardly accords with the claim in the 'tak' story, that the students in the classroom did not know the meaning of 'tak' because they did not know the point of the word, because they saw no need for it in a way of life (40). Surely the same is true of colour words. Although we can learn how to answer questions such as 'Is this yellow?' on the basis of empirical similarities alone, the term 'yellow' cannot

have meaning for us unless we know the point of using it, unless it plays some part in our way of life. And just as the point of the word 'tak' was not just that of classifying, not because in the story the word had some other point but because classifying alone is a pointless activity, the point of terms such as 'yellow' is not just that of enabling us to point at various objects and utter the appropriate colour words. Just as, as Kovesi says, we talk of revolutions not only during revolutions, so too do we talk of the colour yellow when we are not confronted with it. The rules for the use of a word are, as Kovesi says, the rules of all the activities in which the word is employed. Colour words are employed in activities other than classifying the objects around us.

Kovesi is, of course, correct in saying that we can apply colour words correctly on the basis of empirical similarities alone, but this is true of many types of word, such as shape words and even some furniture words. One need do no more than look at the object upon which one is about to sit to tell that it is a chair, just as one need do no more than look at the flowers outside the window to tell that they are yellow. Of course the terms must be understood, but once they are, many types of word, though not all words, can be applied correctly on the basis of empirical similarities alone. Thus Kovesi's claim that we need no formal element in the case of colour words is true, but uninteresting, when taken to mean that once we understand them we can apply them correctly on the basis of empirical similarities alone; it is false, however, when taken to mean that we can in the first place understand these words without seeing their point.

2.4 Speech acts

So far, in assessing Kovesi's views on language, I have followed his example in concentrating upon assertorial speech acts. What I now propose to do is outline a method for applying his views to all sorts of speech act. Start with terms; his claim is that to understand a term is to know what things or acts, however dissimilar empirically, would count as instances. This can be extended from terms to speech acts, the important task being to specify, for each sort of speech act, what corresponds to the speech act in the way an instance of a term corresponds to the term.

In the case of assertorial speech acts, what corresponds to an instance of a term is, I believe, the evidence for or against what is being asserted; to understand an assertorial speech act, whatever its subject matter, is to know what would count as evidence for or against what is being asserted. Now some who have accepted this have made the mistake of thinking that anything which appears to be an assertorial speech act but for or against which nothing counts as evidence, must be devoid of literal meaning. The proper approach is to regard this as a first step, and to extend it to other types of speech act. Before outlining how this might be done, though, I should remark that the distinction between evidence for or against what is said and reasons for or against saying it should be borne in mind. It is only the former which is relevant to the meaning of an assertion. Note also that, in different fields, the criteria

for what would count as evidence for or against what is asserted differ. The only overall requirement is that the criteria be public, in the sense outlined earlier in this chapter. They do not, for example, have as a matter of logic to be in terms of what we can perceive.

The proper analogy for extending this to non-assertorial speech acts is that used in extending Kovesi's account of understanding terms to cover assertions. In all cases the relevant question starts with the words 'what would count'; the differences are to be found in what follows these words. To take some examples from the countless types of speech act (see Wittgenstein 1958, pgh 23): in the case of a question, to know what it means is to know what would count and what would not count as an answer; in the case of a command, to know what it means is to know what would and what would not count as obeying it; in the case of advice, to know what it means is to know what would and what would not count as following it. In all cases the 'is' is that of identity. This is an account of what it is to know the meaning of a speech act, not merely a test for whether someone knows the meaning.

Rather than work out the detail required to turn what is as yet little more than a formula into a full account of what it is to understand a speech act, I shall consider an objection to the whole enterprise, hoping thereby to hint at some further steps. The objection is that such an account ignores the fact that a sentence can mean the same when used in various speech acts. 'The house is on fire' can be used to make an assertion, to issue a command, a warning, or perhaps even a

challenge, yet one does not have to know which of these is intended to know what it means. In the terms Austin uses, illocutionary forces are not meanings (see Cohen 1969, 440; Warnock 1973a, 76; Searle 1973). This is very plausible, but is it an objection? Here I do not share Austin's reported distaste for propositional abstractions (see Strawson 1973, 62). Without claiming that any one type of speech act is prior to the others, what I want to say is that if one understands any one of the speech acts which can be performed by using a given sentence then one understands the sentence, in the sense relevant to the apparent objection. In Kovesi's terms, what is common to all the uses of a sentence, call it a propositional abstraction or a factual content or what you will, has a formal element. To know why we need or wish to use the sentence now to make an assertion, now to issue advice, and so on, is to know this formal element, and someone who knows this formal element will be able to flesh out the 'and so on'. In fact this formal element will be of a notion, albeit a complicated one. In the example, the notion is that of the house being on fire.

Of course a speech act is not just a propositional abstraction. To understand a propositional abstraction is to know what would and what would not, whatever the point of its use and however empirically dissimilar they be, count as an instance of the same propositional abstraction. To understand a speech act is to know also what would and what would not count as an instance of the same act. Here, as in Kovesi's examples of buying flowers and leaning against a door frame (60; see 4.6, below), the appropriate question is what the speaker could

have done instead which would amount to the same thing, and it need not even involve speaking. As a very crude example, suppose that someone utters the single word 'fire'. If he could have done the same thing by handing someone a wet sack and pointing to the smouldering carpet he was asking or telling him to extinguish the fire; if he could have done the same thing by signalling with his right hand he was giving an order to shoot; if he could have done the same thing by making an unexpected loud noise he was trying to frighten someone. In each case, to know what would and would not count as instances of the same act is to know the formal element of that type of act. My point then is that it is wrong to concentrate solely either on propositional abstractions or illocutionary forces. Understanding a speech act involves both understanding the form of words used and understanding what it is used for. At least in a language as flexible as English, formal elements of the two sorts I have mentioned are required: that of the type of speech act concerned and that of the state of affairs, actual or not, which is the 'subject matter' of the speech act.

I shall examine these two kinds of formal element in a little more detail by means of examples. The first is this: without lying, I boast that I used to be able to run a hundred yards in ten seconds. To understand the speech act involves knowing what does and what does not count as running a hundred yards in ten seconds. This is the 'subject matter'. It also involves knowing what counts and what does not count as a boast. On the one hand, I could have performed the same type of speech act by mentioning my former prowess as a boxer. On the other

hand, mentioning my former sprinting ability might have amounted to a different type of speech act; I might have been encouraging a despondent sprinter rather than boasting.

Now change the example by supposing that in fact I never was able to run so well. The subject matter is, in a sense, unchanged. The difference is that the speech act is now about something that might have happened but did not. So long as I do not claim anything very unlikely there is a chance that the boast will succeed. Although to give a full description of the speech act involves saying that it is a boast, which is fleshed out by mentioning my desire for the esteem of my audience and my belief that it will be obtained this way, it is of course essential that the audience be unable to give the full description, for they will not think well of a boaster. That is why I said that I could run a hundred yards in ten seconds, not nine.

The point of boasting is to make others believe something which will make them think well of one. If no actual state of affairs or event will serve this purpose we can, within limits, indulge in a little inventiveness. The limits depend upon the supposed beliefs of the audience. I might succeed in boasting to a young child that I could run a hundred yards in nine seconds, but I know that no athlete would believe me and so there the boast would not achieve its purpose. But while boasting is limited in this way to what the audience is supposed to regard as being likely, not all speech acts are subject to such limitations. With questions, we can go further. Here we are not even limited to what we think to be

empirically possible let alone likely. Other speech acts can be unfettered even by logic. Much poetry, for example, would be not plain false but quite incoherent if taken as simply asserting that such and such is the case, for the combinations of words used just do not refer to anything which could or could not be the case. But the point here is not to make assertions. It is not that sort of speech act. Its purpose is different, and any combination of words which meet this purpose will do.

So far, in the examples, ordinary language adequately serves our purposes. But in some cases, as for example in pure mathematics, we can do what we want to do only by extending our language. The notion of a point in pure mathematics, for example, though based on or developed from notions which meet our everyday needs, has a different job to do. The universe of discourse here, the subject matter, need not be the world as it is or even as it might in fact be, but can be something we invent for a particular purpose. Likewise, the mathematical notion of a proof is developed from but not the same as our everyday, legal and scientific notions of proof. In daily life a proof is meant to convince someone of the truth of a proposition, whereas in pure mathematics we sometimes attempt to prove propositions which, like 'Two plus two equals four', are already accepted as true. Here the point is to find logical relations rather than to convince people. Much the same can be said of theological proof.

I do not claim to have established that Kovesi's account of what it is to understand a notion works for all subject matters and all sorts of speech act. That would require a detailed examination at least as long as

the present essay. All I have tried to do is show how such an examination could proceed. In brief, my belief is that not only such notions as those of being yellow and of a table, but also more complex ones such as that of a house being on fire and higher level ones such as that of a boast, have formal elements. In all cases, the formal element will incorporate human needs and interests. In all cases, the overall requirement of having public criteria must be met. But the specific needs and interests incorporated in the formal elements, and also the specific nature of the public criteria, can vary widely. In particular, we should not expect obvious perceptible similarities in the things around us to feature prominently either in formal elements or in public criteria. The great strength of Kovesi's approach is that, while allowing diversity in these matters, it nevertheless offers a unified account of what it is to understand a notion, however complex or abstract and whatever its subject matter.

2.5 Argument A

I turn now to another aspect of Kovesi's contrast between colour and other words: 'in order for us to judge something to be yellow, that very quality has to be present that we have agreed to call by the word "yellow"' (6); 'while it is possible for two objects to differ only in their colour, it is impossible to say that two objects are exactly the same in every respect, except in this, that one is good and the other is not' (6-7). Likewise: 'two acts cannot be the same in every

respect except in this, that one of them is right and the other is wrong; nor can we say that two situations are exactly the same except that in one I am under an obligation to do something, but not in the other' (28); 'It is equally impossible to say that two pieces of furniture are exactly the same in every respect except in this, that one is a table and the other is not' (7). This form of argument is referred to by Kovesi as 'argument A' (cf. Hume 1838, 575). A corollary is that when we judge an act to be sometimes right there must be a relevant difference between two instances if one is right and the other is not, and if these relevant facts are not specified we are not entitled to judge an instance either right or wrong (121; cf. Hughes 1958, 120).

So far as the furniture example is concerned, it would be unfair not to note that Kovesi's main claim is that 'over and above or beside the unspecified material elements that need to be present in order that an object may qualify as a table, there is no extra quality, being-a-table, which may be present in one object but not in the other' (7). This claim is not being challenged. However, the rather different claim that two pieces of furniture cannot properly be said to be the same in every respect except that one is a table and the other is not, is not obviously true. What is to count as a respect here? Suppose that it became common to use objects, made to the same plans and specifications as tables, not only as tables but also as beds. Although we might coin a compound word for such bifunctional pieces of furniture, we could continue to call them tables or beds, according to their location and use.

If told that the typewriter is under the bed we would know not to look in the dining room. Likewise, it is not absurd for a person to refer to a two-inch iron cube upon his desk as a paperweight and to the same thing when placed upon the floor as a doorstep. Are we then to count the uses to which objects are put as respects in which they may be said to differ? Kovesi gives little indication of his views on this matter. In a rather different context he says: 'It would be absurd to claim that the only difference between two otherwise identical objects or acts is that we like one but not the other, or that we make different decisions about them. The fact that we like or dislike, or make different decisions about, or express different sentiments towards otherwise identical objects or acts cannot constitute a difference between the objects or the acts' (27). It would be reasonable to suppose, although this does not follow from the above remarks, that he would also hold that the fact that we use otherwise identical objects for different purposes cannot constitute a difference between the objects. This would preclude his saying that table-like objects used as beds do differ from those used as tables, and in the absence of any relevant difference between them he would have to bring them all under one term.

Such a move is hardly defensible. Whether or not an object is called a table is usually decided on the basis of its shape, size and construction, but the reason for this is that there is a closely limited range of shapes, sizes and constructions which meet the particular purposes for which we make tables. The more specialized the use of an artefact, the closer such limits are. For example, it is highly unlikely that one should ever

simply come across an object that would serve as a fountain pen but was not made for the job, and adults at least find few uses for fountain pens other than writing. At the other end of the scale, it is highly unlikely that one should trouble to make or purchase a paperweight or a doorstop, unless one also wanted an ornament. Tables come between these extremes; usually we build or buy an object for this purpose, and use it for no other, but sometimes, as when on a picnic, we use any more or less conveniently shaped object as a table. The point is this: though it may not clearly be the case with tables, it frequently is the case that the use to which an object is put is relevant when deciding what predicates apply to it, and thus we should be prepared to count such uses as respects in which objects may be said to differ. Much the same point can be made in the terms used in chapter one where I talked about levers and hedgehogs. To use an object is to enter into a certain relation with it, and such relations can be admitted as respects in which objects may be said to differ.

So much for tables. Kovesi's views on colours are rather more complex than the simple claim, mentioned above, that it is possible for two objects to differ only in their colours.

An object may be yellow because we so painted it. We may scrape off this paint and put on another coat, say, a coat of red. In these cases there is no connection between the colour of an object and its other properties. One box may be painted red and another yellow, while all their other properties and features remain the same, and we might call both of them 'letter boxes'.

There are cases where there is a connection between the colour of a thing and its other properties. There is a connection between certain chemical

properties of a leaf and its colour, or between the physical properties of a prism and its colours. But these are contingent empirical connections. There is a connection that we do not find between the colour of an object and its other properties: we never call an object 'red' or 'blue' because of the presence of some other properties in that object. (5-6)

First, the letter box example must be dismissed. Granted that both are letter boxes, but one has the property, which the other has not, of having a pigment with a certain molecular structure on its surface, and so there is a connection between their colours and their other properties. We would always expect this to be the case, and physics strongly suggests that it is; when two objects differ in colour we expect at least to find differences in the behaviour of the electrons of their surface molecules. An object cannot simply change colour, in the absence of any other change, either in its surface or in the light by which it is illuminated.

It might be objected that these are hardly recognizable respects in which objects may differ, but we do have independent evidence for what we say about electrons and the like. If we do not regard these as recognizable respects, we would have to say, for example, that electrons and positrons do not differ in any recognizable respect, and for practical and theoretical reasons we do not want to say this. Of course there is at any time a practical limit to such procedures, as when the only respect in which an electron and a positron can be said to differ is that one has a negative charge while the other's is positive. But there is no logical reason why we must stop at any particular point. There is nothing absurd in looking for further differences between positive and negative charges.

All this, however, strays from what seems to be Kovesi's main point. Doubtless he would put the connections between electron behaviour and colours on a par with those between the chemical properties of a leaf and its colour, correctly classifying both as contingent and empirical. What, then, is Kovesi's main point? What other type of connection does he suppose may be found between one property of an object and another? Perhaps it would help to distinguish between predicates and properties. Kovesi's remarks about argument A, and my discussion so far, involve two rather different sorts of case: (1) cases where we call something an A because it is a B, and (2) cases where something is an A because it is a B. He seems to hold that the relation between A and B is logical in the first and contingent in the second. It is at least initially plausible, then, to say that A and B are predicates in (1) but properties in (2): plausible insofar as we are inclined to say that it is always a contingent matter which properties go together in the world, whereas relations between predicates, between the descriptions we apply to the world, are conceptual or logical.

This brings up several important and difficult questions (see Armstrong 1973, 123-130), but I shall discuss only those which clearly impinge on what Kovesi says. It seems to be his view that there are some predicates (colour words, at least) which can be applied because of the presence in an object of properties for which they stand directly, but that these are exceptional cases. We apply most of our predicates, such as 'good' and 'table', not because certain objects have single properties denoted by these terms but because certain of

their properties meet the needs etc. incorporated in the formal elements of the notions concerned. Whether he is right about colour words is not very important; what is important is to realize that there is no need to suppose that to every predicate there corresponds a distinct property. Further, even if it were the case that two objects could be exactly the same in every respect except that one had the property of being yellow while the other did not, this would be no more than a contingent matter, for the reason given before: that there is no logical reason why any property of an object should not depend, contingently, upon some other property.

The distinction between predicates and properties allows argument A to be stated quite generally: if and only if a predicate ('P') stands for a single property, we can say that two objects are exactly the same in every respect except that one of them is (a) P while the other is not. Now it always makes sense to ask why a predicate applies to one thing rather than another, and although it is admissible to answer this by saying that one has a property that the other lacks, this can never be logically true. Even if we are unable to specify any further difference, it is always possible that there be one. In this sense it can never be shown that a given predicate does stand for a single property. Within a conceptual scheme, we can postulate single properties for which certain predicates stand, but we cannot at the same time step outside of the scheme to make sure that we have as it were grasped the properties that are really out there in the world. In the light of this, argument A can be regarded as having two functions. Within a conceptual scheme, we can use it to find out which predicates are

taken as applying to single properties. But conceptual schemes can be changed. In this context it can have the status, sometimes attributed to the causal principle, of a heuristic maxim or leading principle of investigation (see Ayer 1961, section 20), reminding us that it is always possible that the properties we regard as fundamental in fact depend upon other ones, previously unthought of.

Kovesi's interest, however, is less in the argument itself than in what he calls its misuses. He says it is a misuse of the argument to suppose that it divorces evaluative judgements from factual considerations. There is a perceptible factual difference between a yellow and a brown object, but as we cannot point to goodness the way we point to colours we might say there is no factual difference between an object which is good and one which is not. But, 'to say this is just as strange as to say that while there is a factual difference between a yellow table and a brown table, there is no factual difference between a table and a chair, for while we can point to the presence and absence of the yellow colour in the respective tables we cannot point to the presence and absence of tableness and chairness in the respective objects' (29).

His positive claim is that argument A ties evaluative judgements to factual considerations: 'If we judge something, x, to be good then unless we can point to a relevant (and according to this argument observable) difference in another object, y, we must judge y to be good also. But not any difference would absolve us from judging y also good, it must be a relevant difference

that entitles us to say that y is not good' (29). This is more than a rule of consistency: 'Argument A is certainly based on our rationality. But rationality does not begin with our subsequent judgements after we have judged something good, it is even doubtful if we are rational in being consistent if our first judgement was not rational' (29). Argument A applies when we judge something to be good for the first time: 'if we do not claim that x is good then we must be able to point to a relevant difference in y if we want to claim that y on the other hand is good' (30).

The claim that argument A is more than a rule of consistency may be taken as an objection to the view that the factual differences between a good object and a bad one do no more than enable us to recognize what objects we have already judged to be good and to teach others how to judge accordingly (29-30). A more important objection to this view, according to Kovesi, is this:

Since in these cases one cannot follow a rule in using a term by observing empirical similarities, one cannot say: 'things that have such and such empirical similarities I resolve to judge vicious, do so as well'. ... So besides realizing that not just any factual difference will do for the requirements of argument A we must also understand that we do not select these factual differences from the factual point of view. This is how the material and formal elements are inseparable. There must be some differences in the field of material elements between x and y if we want to judge them differently, but we would not know what differences would entitle us to do so without the formal element. (31)

Much of this, as Kovesi admits, sounds cryptic at this point. On the one hand we select the material elements because they constitute such and such a thing or act; on the other hand, they are its material elements only because they constitute the thing or act. It is for the

latter reason that Kovesi introduces the formal element, the point or reason for bringing together the material elements of a thing or act (32).

The point that concerns us here is made more clear a little later when Kovesi revives argument A:

Let us consider someone explaining to us why a certain object is a kettle. He will point to certain features of an object that are reasons for calling it a kettle. After having done this he cannot point to another object and say that it has the same features but it is not a kettle. This would be saying at the same time that certain features are and are not reasons for calling something a kettle. Thus, this argument does not only call for consistency, and does not only tie our judgements that something is such and such to the material elements: it also shows us why we have to be consistent by showing how the material elements are tied to our judgements. We have to be consistent because of the way in which we give reasons for claiming that something is such and such. (61)

Note that the earlier claim that argument A ties evaluative judgements to factual considerations is but a special case of the more general claim that the argument ties any judgement that something is such and such to the material elements of such and such. The factual considerations which we give as reasons for saying that one act is good while another is not are material elements, as are those we give as reasons for saying that one object is a kettle while the other is not.

What precisely is the relation between argument A and the formal element? When talking about the misuses of the argument, and with particular reference to judging something good, Kovesi says that we need the formal element in order to know what differences in material

elements entitle us to apply a term to one thing and refuse it to another (29-31). This argument is quite general; reference to our not selecting factual differences from the factual point of view (31) relates to the particular example he is discussing. What he means, presumably, is that when we select certain factual considerations as being relevant to whether something is good and as entitling us to say so, we select them from the point of view of the goodness or otherwise of the thing in question and not, say, from that of its age, shape or colour, which may but need not be relevant to its goodness. Argument A, then, shows how the material elements of a type of thing or act are tied to our judgements, through the reasons we have for making the judgements, and whether a feature of a thing or act is a relevant reason for making a judgement is determined by the formal element of the notion in question. For example, in the case of kettles:

Obviously kettles can be made of several materials and they do not have to be round. But when it was explained to us why a certain object is a kettle, its round shape was not given as one of the reasons for calling it a kettle, and so we are not going to contradict ourselves if next time we point to a square object and call that a kettle too. Again, that it should be made of tin or steel is given only under the formal aspect of 'non-inflammable material' which allows for a certain variation of material elements. In turn, it is the formal element of our notion of a kettle which determines that a kettle should be made of non-inflammable material. We decide what are the relevant features of a kettle by referring to the point of having kettles. The features which we have to look for are those that constitute x's being the sort of thing which serves the purpose that kettles were invented to serve. So unless we can point to relevant differences between two objects, if one of them is to be called a kettle, so is the other. (62)

2.6 Rules

When Kovesi says that the formal element of the notion of a kettle determines that a kettle should be made of non-inflammable material, he seems to intend the expression 'should be' to have subjunctive force. That is, the formal element is a rule for the use of the term 'kettle', rather than a guide to the construction of kettles. Now suppose that someone makes a kettle-like object out of cardboard (it is, by the way, possible to boil water in such a vessel). If this interpretation of Kovesi is correct, he would have to say that its maker had failed utterly to make a kettle; that he had tried to make one but had failed, not that he had made a bad kettle. Of course we cannot say dogmatically that this is wrong, for there is in our language no clear boundary line between what may and what may not be called a kettle; the cardboard vessel, as opposed say to a kettle-shaped object made of butter, is neither clearly a kettle nor clearly not a kettle. But suppose now that the vessel were made not of cardboard but of magnesium, by someone who was not aware that this metal burns easily in air; surely in such a case it would be quite proper to say that he had made a kettle, albeit a dangerous one.

On the other hand, Kovesi's claim that we need the formal element in order to know what differences in material elements entitle us to apply a term to one thing and refuse it to another (31) supports the subjunctive interpretation. One of the reasons given for saying that without the formal element of a notion we cannot decide

what are and what are not instances of a thing or action is that no list of material elements entails what a thing or action is (37), and hence, 'there is a decision in claiming what a thing is even in the standard, let alone in the borderline cases. In all cases it is the formal element which enables us to follow a rule, enables us to decide what should or should not be regarded as instances of "the same"' (151). It is central to Kovesi that the formal element be connected with the point of having the notion. In some cases, especially those of artefact words, this is closely related to the point of having the sort of thing that comes under the notion. But while the formal element tells us the point of a notion, and sometimes also that of a sort of thing, it does not tell us whether a candidate instance measures up to this, and so we must make a decision.

There is an ambiguity in the expression 'enables us to follow a rule' akin to that in 'determines that a kettle should be made of non-inflammable material'. The most natural interpretation, particularly in view of the distinction between criteria and recognitors, is that the formal element is a sufficient condition for correctly following a rule for the use of a term. But if this is so there is no need for decisions; all we need do is use the formal element. Kovesi's claim that a decision must be made in standard as well as borderline cases, if taken seriously, entails that the formal element can be no more than a necessary condition for the correct use of a term. Of course it is a very important one, for our decisions are guided by the formal element. We encounter an object with certain properties in certain degrees, consider the extent to which these features are relevant to and will

meet the needs, interests etc. incorporated in the formal element, and on that basis decide whether the term applies. But how many decisions are involved? Suppose that the formal element concerned is that of a tree; the relevant properties would include having branches, leaves and roots. If a decision is required to determine whether an object with some of these properties is a tree, surely another decision is required to determine whether it has branches, leaves, or roots. Kovesi's insistence on a decision in standard as well as borderline cases thus appears to involve him in a regress, which will be infinite unless he can show that there are some terms which can be applied without the need for a decision.

Clearly he thinks that colour words are in this category, and the argument might persuade him to add others, such as some shape and number words, but I have already shown that what he says about colour words is at best difficult to reconcile with his other views. The best way out of this quandary is to follow Wittgenstein's advice and stop talking, seriously at least, about decisions:

It is no act of insight, intuition, which makes us use the rule as we do at the particular point of the series. It would be less confusing to call it an act of decision, though this too is misleading, for nothing like an act of decision must take place, but possibly just an act of writing or speaking. And the mistake which we here and in a thousand similar cases are inclined to make is labelled by the word 'to make' as we have used it in the sentence 'It is no act of insight which makes us use the rule as we do', because there is an idea that 'something must make us' do what we do. And this again joins on to the confusion between cause and reason. We need have no reason to follow the rule as we do. The chain of reasons has an end. (Wittgenstein 1960, 143)

To avoid the regress, and the confusion between cause and reason, Kovesi should not say that we must make a decision in standard as well as borderline cases, nor even that we must be able to give a reason. Of course, in a sense, to point out the formal elements of the notions concerned is to give a reason, as, for Wittgenstein, to describe a form of life is to give a reason for applying terms as we do (cf. 1.2, above). But within a language, or when engaged in a form of life, a chain of reasons has to come to an end. This is not to say that it does not make sense to ask for further reasons. Indeed, it always does. We must not think that what is 'given', the unquestioned foundations of our notions and forms of life, is unquestionable. There is nothing wrong with trying to dig deeper, with trying to change the foundations, and nothing could be shown to be a point beyond which, as a matter of logic, we cannot go.

In these terms, what Kovesi is seeking when he contrasts colour words with others can be made clearer. When asked why a certain action is called a murder we can point to certain features it has, but not to any property of being-a-murder, which, in terms of the formal element of the notion of murder, are reasons for calling it one, but when asked why an object is called yellow we cannot point to any other features. However, the fact that we cannot do this does not imply that it makes no sense to ask why certain things are called yellow while others are not. Although we do not often have to ponder over the question whether something is yellow in the way we frequently have to ponder whether some action is a murder, this is not the central point. If this sort of

decision making were relevant then 'murder' would be the unusual case, not 'yellow'. The point is that Kovesi believes that 'yellow' stands for a single property while most predicates do not. Now if it is accepted that a predicate does stand for a single property then the reason for applying that predicate can be just that the property is present. Kovesi's point is that few predicates are like this: 'yellow' is; 'table', 'good', and the majority of our terms, are not.

Although I have agreed with Lloyd Thomas that he is wrong about 'yellow' standing for a property (see 1.4, above), this does not matter very much. Indeed, whatever example he were to give, someone could dispute it, because for an example to be accepted it has to be agreed that the predicate does stand for a single property, and there is no language-independent means of demonstrating this. For example, the reason why 'good' does not stand for a single property is not that we cannot point to goodness. On the one hand, we can easily point to groups of properties such as are found in, say, any table, and on the other hand, we cannot point to such single properties as positive or negative electric charge. Indeed, it is things, actions, events and the like we can point to, not their properties. This does not mean that any agreement as to which predicates are taken as standing for single properties is irrational, though. The notion of a single property has a formal element. If it suits our needs and interests to regard yellow as a single property, then we need no further reason for calling something yellow. But if this is not enough, as, for example, it is in fact not enough for the pigment chemist, then we must seek further reasons; we

must try to find out what makes certain things yellow and others red.

Formal elements are meant to provide not only the rules for the use of words but also the standards against which particulars are to be evaluated: 'We can evaluate something as an x only when x tells us what the thing is supposed to be, and this can be done only by a description' (156). For example, the formal element of the notion of a kettle determines that kettles should, but will not always, be made of non-inflammable material. A good kettle will not burst into flames when it boils dry, but others, unfortunately, might. There is point in saying that a person who does not know that a magnesium kettle is not, for this reason, a good kettle, but who does know that magnesium burns easily in air, does not understand at all well the notion of a kettle. There is also point in saying that it is wrong to insist that a vessel made of magnesium just is not a kettle, for this rules out a perfectly acceptable use of the expression 'dangerous kettle'. Formal elements, then, have at least two jobs to do, providing both a rule for the use of a term and a standard to which a thing must approximate for the term to be applied at all and which it must meet in order to be called a good instance. As Kovesi nowhere shows how it is that a formal element can do both of these, I shall try to do this for him.

This question can perhaps be clarified by first reviving the comparison between the form-matter distinction and the necessary-contingent distinction. Does the set of necessary truths expressed by sentences with a common subject term provide, on the one hand, rules for the use

of that term, or, on the other hand, a standard to which all instances approximate and which good instances meet?

Examples supporting the first view spring readily to mind: the sentence 'Bachelors are unmarried' expresses a necessary truth and provides a clear rule for the use of the term 'bachelor'. It is not very difficult to find other necessary truths about bachelors which will complete a set of necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for the use of the term. Of course this ignores the type of remark that Kovesi would rightly make, that we have occasion to use (not just mention) the term 'bachelor' not only to refer to our fellows in the world. But my present point is simply that it is implausible to say that the necessary truth that bachelors are unmarried provides or helps to provide a standard to which all bachelors approximate but which only the good examples meet.

Other examples support the second view. It is necessarily true that man is rational, and this provides a standard rather than a rule for the use of the term 'man', for although rationality is exhibited by men in widely differing degrees, there are creatures which exhibit no rationality but to which we would not wish to deny the term 'man'. One thing that this shows is not that I have just contradicted myself in saying that it is necessarily true that man is rational although not all men are rational, but rather that this is not a very important or central necessary truth about man. Now it would be pointless to try to complete a list of necessary truths about man, for various reasons, but the logical point here is that were we to agree upon a certain set of

such necessary truths, then a man would be said to be good as a man, a good example of a man, to the extent to which he exhibited the properties in question. The set of necessary truths would provide the standard to which all men approximate and which good men meet.

The difference between these examples is, of course, that whereas 'good' can be used to modify 'man', there is no straightforward corresponding use of 'good' to modify 'bachelor'. As Katz says, English nouns divide into two exclusive categories: those which can and those which cannot except in specially concocted circumstances be modified by 'good' (Katz 1966, 292-293). Kovesi could restate his views on formal elements providing standards to allow for this. He does not have to say that, for each and every substantive, the formal element provides both a rule of application and a standard for evaluation, but only that in those cases where there is a need for a standard as well as a rule of application the standard is incorporated into the formal element. We must not think, as Plato has been accused of thinking, that a standard is a paradigm particular, like the instances only better than them all (but see Crombie 1963, 262-271). When we need standards we do not make them out of platinum and keep them in Paris; we incorporate the rules for the use of 'good' etc. as applied to the term concerned, along with the rules for the use of the unmodified term, into the formal element.

I conclude this chapter with some further remarks on what Kovesi has to say about following a rule. To understand the significance or the meaning of a term in our language, he says 'we have to be able to follow a

rule in using that term, not to be able to perceive an entity of which our term is a name' (20). It is the formal element which enables us to follow a rule, and this is a rational activity:

What should be said is that we know what this object is only in so far as we know that **this** is the same as that, and that and that. If I could not follow a rule I would not know what 'it' was, though in suitable conditions I might be able to perceive 'it', or I might be acquainted with 'it'. Now, unless I understood that the two instances I cited as examples of murder are examples of the same thing, I would not know that they were murders however long I stared at each of them. Nor could I understand that they were examples of the same thing unless I could understand why they were, and only when I could understand why they were could I follow a rule in looking for new examples. (23)

Following a rule in using a word 'x' is nothing else than being able to see what are instances of x, and we cannot see what are instances of x unless we understand why they are such. (60)

For this we need the formal element of the notion of an x. Or, more precisely, understanding why the instances are instances and having the formal element are one and the same thing. Thus, to know how to follow a rule in using a term is the same as knowing the appropriate formal element.

However puzzling some of Kovesi's remarks about following a rule might seem, then, they can be seen as giving an expansion of his claim that the formal element of a notion is the key to understanding the significance of a term. The stages are as follows: to understand the significance of a term one must be able to follow a rule in using the term; this is the same as being able to tell what are and what are not its instances; in order to tell what are the instances one must understand why they are

instances; in order to understand why they are instances one must know the formal element. The second step suggests that all reference to the following of rules could be deleted. Now, while it is easy to speak as if one were making reference to an activity called following a rule, it is often very difficult to say precisely what are the rules which are supposedly being followed. For example, when Kovesi says that to be able to understand the significance of a term we have to be able to follow a rule in using the term, one tends to respond by thinking of a term which one frequently uses and whose significance one takes to be understood, and to ask precisely what are the rules for the use of the term. If, as is common, one is at a loss to answer this question, then if Kovesi's claim is taken seriously, one begins to doubt that one does understand the significance of the term (cf. Wittgenstein 1958, p. 53).

Wittgenstein and his commentators, transformational grammarians, and philosophers of law, have generated a substantial literature on the topic of following a rule. On one reading, Kovesi is merely adding to this literature and to the mystery. Even if it is a coherent and logically sufficient comment on the situation described in the last paragraph to say that one can follow a rule without being able to state it, so long as rules are thought of as being the sort of thing that could be written down, the mystery remains. But there is another reading of Kovesi. He can be taken as saying that following a rule in applying a term is not connected with the sort of rules that can be written down, but is nothing over and above the ability to tell what are and what are not the instances of the term. Now he does not try to

rule

justify this claim, to weigh it against other contenders such as the rules of transformational grammar, but he can at least be regarded as trying to reduce the mystery involved in much talk of rules rather than adding to it. If following a rule simply is telling what are and what are not instances, and if an adequate account of what are and what are not instances is provided in Kovesi's talk of formal and material elements, then an adequate account has been given of the concept of following a rule. And if, as Candlish argues, sections 185 to 242 of Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations are intended to show that language is rule-governed in the sense that it is possible to make and correct mistakes but not necessarily to formulate any rules (Candlish 1971, 2), then Kovesi's claims about rules are almost exactly the same as those of Wittgenstein.

Of course, much philosophical talk of rules of language is a reaction to the supposition that, to have significance, words must name. But an over-reaction must be avoided. The underlying argument is, in brief: a language must be either naming-based or rule-based; ours is not naming-based; therefore it is rule-based. The reasons for accepting the second premiss are largely ontological, but there seem at first sight to be similar reasons for rejecting the conclusion if, as appears to be the case, the rules of our language cannot explicitly be formulated. Unformulatable rules might seem as obnoxious, ontologically, as Platonic forms. The way out of this quandary is to realize that, on the one hand, in the sense of 'rule' brought to mind say by algebraic formulae, the first premiss is false, the disjunction is not exhaustive, while on the other hand, in the

sense of 'rule' outlined in the previous paragraph, the conclusion is harmless. Understanding the rules for the use of a term does not involve being able to write down a formula; it involves knowing what count as correct and incorrect uses of the term, knowing, where appropriate, what counts and what does not count as an instance, knowing what features are relevant for judging something to be an instance. Kovesi's thesis, which I have tried to assess by applying it more widely than he does, is that to do these things is to know the formal elements of our notions, the point of or reason for bringing certain things, acts or situations, however dissimilar their perceptible features may be, together as examples of the same, and to see the point of this will always involve attending first to human needs and interests rather than perceptible properties of things in the world around us. Although not universally established, such an approach works well for a wide variety of speech acts and of subject matters.

Chapter Three MORAL AND OTHER NOTIONS

3.1 Moral notions

Kovesi's account of language is meant to apply to all notions. The difference between moral and other notions is to be found, he says, not in their logical features, as has so often been supposed, but in the needs, interests etc. which are incorporated into their formal elements (53). Between the limiting cases, 'good' which is just a formal element and 'yellow' which has no formal element (my previous objections are beside the present point), we find, among others, our moral notions. The notion of murder, like that of a table, has both formal and material elements. The simple comparison which philosophers have made between the logical behaviours of the notions of good and yellow (e.g. Hare 1952, 130f) has obscured the fact that our moral notions are, on the one hand, different in their logic from each of these extremes, and on the other hand, the same in their logical behaviour as the vast majority of our notions (36). The formal element of a notion has two roles: it determines what qualities are relevant to the applicability of a term (and where appropriate to its modification by such terms as 'good'), and it tells us what sort of notion it is (154). In the case of non-moral notions the formal element, the point or reason for bringing together certain qualities, features and aspects of things, actions and situations under the notion, includes our wants to identify, buy and sell things, while in the case of moral notions it includes our wants to avoid or promote, to excuse or blame people (13-15).

Some detailed comparisons are given to make clear the differences between moral and other notions. First, a comparison of moral with scientific notions:

With scientific notions, our interests--such as the desire to understand, predict, manipulate things or happenings--initiate and guide the selection of the recognitors, but the recognitors are of the inanimate world, or of human beings only in so far as we are also part of the inanimate world. Our interests, wants and needs enter our social and moral notions twice. As in the case of scientific notions, they initiate and guide the selection of the recognitors--though these interests are not that of wanting to predict or manipulate but of wanting to promote or avoid certain things--and secondly, the recognitors themselves are selected from our wants, needs, likes and dislikes. (53-54)

A minor point: if we are prepared to admit, for example, that psychology is a science, and can be distinguished from the other biological sciences, this is not quite right, for then it would not be the case that the recognitors of scientific notions can be of humans only insofar as we are also part of the inanimate world. The important distinction for Kovesi is not that between the animate and the inanimate but that between the human and the non-human.

At this stage, though, the central point is Kovesi's claim that moral and other notions are distinguished not by their logics but by the ingredients of their formal elements. This is open to more than one interpretation. In particular, it need not involve the view that the ingredients of the two sorts of formal element have to be totally distinct, and it would be a mistake to insist on this. For example, the formal element of the moral notion of murder and that of the non-moral notion of marmalade-making overlap at least insofar as both include

the idea of a deliberate activity. But if no limit is placed on such overlapping, what Kovesi says does not provide sufficient grounds for distinguishing moral notions from others.

Although he does not say so, I believe his view is that it is possible to give a set or range of ingredients whose incorporation in the formal element of a notion makes it a moral notion, whatever else might be incorporated. However, unless this set or range of ingredients is specified, this claim is trivial, for according to his account of formal elements, the formal elements of any two notions must differ. Of course he is concerned as much to argue against the view that the difference between moral and other notions is logical as to give a detailed account of what he claims the difference is. And even when he does try to outline the detail, saying that moral notions include in their formal elements our wants to avoid, promote, excuse or blame, that they are about ourselves insofar as we are rule-following rational beings, he admits that this is not enough, for this class also includes such notions as 'clever', 'consistent' and 'learned', which he regards as non-moral (13-15, 147).

3.2 Moral notions and objectivity

Even if not fully specified, the difference between moral and other notions has, Kovesi says, three important consequences:

- (a) moral notions have to be public twice over: they not only have to be formed from the point of view of anyone, but they also have to be about those features

of our lives that can be the feature of anyone's life; (b) they provide not only the rules for our thinking about the world but also the rules for our behaviour, while other notions are not at the same time rules for the behaviour of their subject matter; (c) partly as a consequence of (b), if other notions did not exist those events that are their subject matter would still go on happening, but without moral notions there would be nothing left of their subject matter. (147-148)

The first of these is perhaps best approached by way of Kovesi's criticisms of the view, which he hesitatingly attributes to Hume, that in the world there are hard facts recognizable by reason, but that our reason cannot justify us in making moral judgements or forming moral notions; we just have a feeling towards some facts and not towards others, the facts remaining the same (69-71; cf. Hume 1888, 468-469; see also 3.5, below). His first criticism is to claim that not only non-moral but also moral notions are formed by reason, that the rule-following activity **which** is essential for the formation of any notion is the same type of rational activity in both cases (71-72). It would be clearer here if he were to speak of making rules rather than following them, but this is not very important, for his point is that for all notions, the activity, whether that of forming or applying notions, making or following rules, is subject to the same criteria of rationality.

The general claim that without the formal element of a notion there is no point in selecting the material elements, some of which would not even exist, is said to be especially important in the case of moral notions: 'While in using descriptive terms we have to follow interpersonal rules in a public language to talk about

aspects or relationships of the inanimate world--or if we talk about men and animals we do that in so far as they are part of the rest of the world--in using a moral term we have to follow interpersonal rules in a public language to talk about some aspects or relationships of those very beings whose lives are regulated by interpersonal rules' (25). But this is too neat. Although he does not here say so, Kovesi plainly supposes that the interpersonal rules we have to follow in using a moral term in a public language are the same as the interpersonal rules that regulate our lives. In the next section of this chapter I shall argue against this supposition. It is perhaps worth-while here to recall the legal distinction between enabling and prohibiting rules. Both sorts of rule can be said to regulate our lives, though the term 'regulate' applies more happily to the latter. But the sort of rule we follow in a public language is more like an enabling rule than a prohibiting one. In their very different ways, Rawls' 'practice' rules (Rawls 1955), the transformational grammarians' recursive rules (e.g. Katz 1966, 122-123) and Wittgenstein's forms of life (Wittgenstein 1958, pgh 241, p. 174), fit the model of enabling rules.

But Kovesi's main point is that moral notions need not be less objective than others. Whether we are objective or subjective depends, he says, not upon whether we talk about objects or subjects (people) but upon 'whether we form and use our terms according to interpersonal rules' (54). If anything, the fact that only those features of our lives that can be features of anyone's life and are recognizable by anyone can be incorporated into our moral notions, and the fact that the notions must be formed from the point of view of anyone should,

he says, make our moral notions more objective (55).

My remarks in chapter two about the public nature of language and the distinction between 'anyone' and 'everyone' should not be forgotten here. To be objective is to form and use our terms according to interpersonal rules, but this does not mean that everyone has to be involved in forming or using the term. All that is required is that anyone might be involved, in the sense that there is nothing in the manner in which the rules for the use of a term are formulated which, as a matter of logic, prevents anyone from following them. Someone might not have one of the needs etc. incorporated in the formal element and hence will not have occasion to use the term, at least in the first person, but this is a contingent matter. Anyone who has the appropriate needs can use the term. The notion is formed from the point of view of anyone; that is, from the point of view of no one in particular. This does not rule out the possibility of a notion which, as a matter of fact, is confined to one person because, as a matter of fact, he is the only one who is, say, sufficiently intelligent to understand it. Some of the notions of relativity theory approach this extreme and are not, thereby, suspect. Hence Monro is wrong in claiming that Kovesi's account excludes egocentric terms, that it implies that sensations must be the same for everyone (see Stace 1932, 31; Wittgenstein 1958, pgh 273 et seq.), and that it implies that we all approve and condemn the same things (Monro 1969, 290). At least at this stage Kovesi imposes no such limitations.

Kovesi's claim is that for a term to be used objectively there must be a public test for the presence of the

features of our lives incorporated in the notion, that only those features of our lives for whose presence there are public tests may be incorporated in the notion. When discussing some of the traditionally difficult notions, he claims that for intentions to feature as relevant facts of a situation they must be publicly knowable (132), and when criticizing Hume, says that although feeling is an additional element in moral notions, it is not my feeling expressed towards a happening. This feeling is irrelevant because 'The moral agent is not a lonely observer contemplating an inanimate world, not even a lonely observer contemplating other human beings. The relevant sense of feelings, etc., is the one in which these are anyone's feelings, including [in Hume's story of the patricidal acorns] those of the murderer, the murdered and the observer' (72).

All this is intended to ensure that our moral notions are objective and were Kovesi to say no more than that for us to form a notion objectively we need agreed publicly accessible criteria for the use of the term, then his argument would succeed. But this shows only that our moral notions must be formed objectively, not that they must be so employed, or even that they always can be. He allows, for example, that an agent's avowals of feeling and intention as well as his behaviour can be counted as recognitors, but of course these can be inconsistent with one another and with other recognitors, from the point of view of a given notion. For example, when we suspect a person of having committed a murder, we rarely find that his avowals about his past intentions accord with other evidence, and this can lead to cases where we cannot honestly decide whether the term 'murder' should be

applied. Of course in the law it is highly desirable to reach a decision, and partly because of this the legal and moral notions of murder do not quite coincide, but even in a non-legal context, where the evidence is conflicting and the rules for the use of the term do not determine whether it should be used, we can use the term. To do so is, in Kovesi's terms, not to be objective, but it is a plain matter of fact that even in cases where we have considered all the relevant evidence it is possible for us to form a subjective impression, say of the honesty of a witness, and apply the term. Now the important point is that this does not show that the notion is not formed objectively. Few terms have application rules that decide all cases. To apply a term correctly according to the rules in cases which they do decide and when there is some point in using the term, is to be objective; to apply the term incorrectly, breaking the rules, is to be stupid, deceitful, ironical or irrational; in cases which the rules do not decide one must choose between applying the term on the basis of a subjective judgement or refraining from uttering, and the latter course is by no means always the more rational.

3.3 Moral notions and rules

The second alleged consequence of Kovesi's views on the difference between moral and other notions is that while other notions are not at the same time rules for the behaviour of their subject matter, moral notions provide not only rules for our thinking about the world, but also the rules for our behaviour (148). The claimed

connection between moral notions and rules is of course one of logic, and so any causal overtones of 'provide' should be ignored. The same applies to 'affect' in an earlier passage where a similar claim is made:

Another difference between our moral notions and those about the physical world which follows from this is that the latter do not affect the world which they are about. The rules for their proper use are at the same time rules for our thoughts about, or activities in, that world but they are not rules for the behaviour of the objects. The rules for the proper use of our moral notions, however, are at the same time rules for what those notions are about: they are rules for our behaviour. If Hume's oak trees had formed the notions of parricide and murder their lives would be governed by rules as well as by the 'laws of nature'. (56)

Although Kovesi says that one view is a consequence of another, he does not make it clear precisely what is the antecedent. The most likely contender, of the various aspects of his account of the differences between moral and other notions, is the claim that moral notions, unlike others, are not only formed by ourselves but are also about ourselves. But does it follow from this that moral notions, unlike others, are the rules for the behaviour of their subject matter? Certainly, if Hume's oak trees (Hume 1888, 467) had formed the notions of parricide and murder their lives would be governed by rules as well as by the 'laws of nature', but would this be because they had formed these notions about themselves?

To answer this question, consider what Kovesi says about murder: that even if we did not have the term 'murder' in our language we should need to discriminate against some types of killing as wrong, and to do this is to be 'well on the way toward the formation of the

notion of murder' (27). If he is being cautious here, and holds that we should then in fact have the notion of murder, then all is well, and it is quite plausible to maintain that whether we have the notion of murder does not depend on whether our language contains the term 'murder'. But if, on the other hand, the remark is to be taken literally, as saying that although we should be well on the way towards the formation of the notion of murder we still would not quite have formed the notion, then he would be claiming that even if we had not formed the notion of murder we should need to discriminate against some types of killing as being wrong. This could be done by having rules against some types of killing. Of course, without the notion of murder these could not be described as murders, the rule could not be expressed by such a sentence as 'Do no murder', but precisely those types of killing could be prohibited as are by the rule expressed by this sentence. That is, the rule could be the same in both cases. Thus we could have the same rule against certain types of killing without having formed the notion of murder.

This objection depends upon the identification of the antecedent of Kovesi's argument, and this cannot be done with any certainty, so the objection should not be given much weight. The conclusion is that moral notions unlike others are rules for the behaviour or their subject matter, rules for our behaviour. To avoid going back over the previous objection, suppose that we have in fact formed all the moral notions which we require. Then we will have a host of rules such as those expressed by 'Do no murder', 'Do not exact revenge', and 'Do not blame people for inadvertent acts'; indeed, all of our moral

rules would be expressible in terms of moral notions, and in this sense moral notions would be rules for our behaviour, for to understand such notions involves understanding that murder and revenge are wrong, that those who act inadvertently should not be blamed, and the like.

But what Kovesi says is that moral notions are the rules for our behaviour, not just some of them. This does not seem to be the case. For example, the British Army once had, and still may have, a rule that only officers of field rank may wear beards. This rule is not connected with any of our moral notions, but affected the lives of many people, such as junior members of the British Army, who had to shave. Another rule which governs our lives and is not connected with any of our moral notions, though when it was made it might have been, is the rule, reputedly to be found in New Zealand law, against suffering (or whatever it is that one does) a stallion to serve a mare in the sight of the public on a Sunday. If it be objected that these two rules govern the lives of but a few people, whereas moral rules govern the lives of all, it must be replied that the two rules govern the lives of anyone in precisely the same sense as do moral rules. An orphan cannot commit parricide, but it is wrong for anyone who has a father to kill him, and prohibited for anyone who is in the British Army and not of field rank to wear a beard. Thus, while moral notions are some of the rules for our behaviour, there are others.

Perhaps, though, Kovesi does not literally mean that all of the rules for our behaviour are to be found in moral notions. On p. 56 he says that moral notions are

rules for the behaviour of the world which they are about. The next move, to saying that they are the rules for our behaviour, while not correct if taken literally, could quite plausibly be taken as meaning that moral notions are the rules for those aspects of our behaviour that are relevant from the moral point of view. My beards and stallion examples work only if the rules involved are not regarded as moral rules. We inherit a host of rules in which, as perhaps in the stallion example, we now see no moral point, but do not always therefore abandon them. Also, we make rules for a host of purposes, and some of them, as perhaps in the beards example, involve no moral considerations.

A final comment which is a little more constructive, on the claim that while moral notions are rules for our behaviour, other notions are not at the same time rules for the behaviour of their subject matter: in the sense in which the first part of this claim is true, the second is false. For example, consider the notion of a table. If we take the subject matter of the notion of a table to cover not only certain physical objects but also such human activities as manufacturing, buying, selling, eating off and making inventories of such objects (13-14; see 3.4, below), then clearly the notion does involve some of the rules for some of these activities. One just could not make inventories of tables without understanding the notion of a table, because unless someone who did understand the notion had carefully sorted out the objects one was listing so that they could be distinguished on the basis of simple empirical similarities, say by painting all the tables green and everything else yellow, one would make mistakes which one could not correct.

Another counterexample to the claim that our notions about the physical world do not affect that world is found in the notion of a weed. We eliminate lupins from the rose garden and clover from the lawn but not lupins from the herbaceous border or clover from the cow paddock. Partly as a result of our having this notion, although not, alas, without our assistance, the physical world is affected, in a manner and to an extent which depends in part upon the nature of the notion. Some of the happiest men are those who do not understand the notion of a weed, and in their 'gardens' the 'natural' world goes its own way. Of course it requires more than the notion of a weed to eliminate clover from the lawn, but likewise it requires more than the notion of a vendetta, a moral notion, to put the Mafia out of business.

The reason why this criticism may be called constructive is that it reminds us of how Kovesi explains our understanding of all notions, in terms of the formal element, the point or reason for bringing together various things, acts or situations under the notion. This point or reason is to be found not in the world of sensible qualities but in the realm of our wants, needs and interests. To this extent, all notions are not only formed by ourselves but are also about ourselves, and we should therefore expect this parallel between our moral and our non-moral notions.

3.4 Moral notions and existence

The third alleged consequence of the difference between moral and other notions is related to the claim that **without** the formal element of the notion of an

inadvertent act some features of an inadvertent act, such as its byproduct, would not exist (see 1.3, above). But the present claim is stronger, for while in the case of inadvertency, which Kovesi regards as a moral notion (13), he says that some of the features of the thing or act that constitute it that thing or act simply would not exist at all (24), he now says that without moral notions there would be nothing left of their subject matter. Here the terminology poses problems. What is meant by 'the subject matter of moral notions'? Elsewhere Kovesi says that the subject matter of morals is the human beings who live that moral life (119), but is this the same as the subject matter of moral notions? The expression 'subject matter' is imprecise, but not sufficiently so to make it at all plausible to claim that the subject matter of morality and that of an individual moral notion are the same. The subject matter of morality is, indeed, people, but that of the notion of inadvertency is more restricted. One is tempted to suppose that Kovesi intends his expressions 'the features of a thing or act that constitute it that thing or act' and 'the subject matter of a notion' to be co-extensive. If this is so, and if his claim about the disappearance of subject matter is meant to apply to moral notions individually and not just jointly, then his present claim is far stronger than the earlier one. Not merely some but all of the subject matter of a moral notion would not exist in the absence of the notion.

My present task is to understand Kovesi's position, to observe his performance on the ontological tightrope, rather than to embark thereon myself. But some hazards should be noted. In contrast with the case of moral notions, he says, if non-moral notions did not exist

those events that are their subject matter would still go on happening. This claim is clearly intended to be more general than stated, applying to whatever may count as part of the subject matter of a non-moral notion, be it an event, an object or whatever. Also, the claim seems to be meant to apply to each individual non-moral notion, not to all of them collectively. Taking once more some risks with the expression 'subject matter', it seems that Kovesi is committed to the view that if, for example, the notion of a table did not exist, not only could those physical objects that we now describe as tables exist, but also such events as those which we describe as building, buying, eating off and making inventories of tables could still occur. To take another example, this time avoiding artefact words: in the absence of the notion of an anticyclone not only certain atmospheric patterns but also those events which we describe as predicting that an anticyclone will soon move onto the centre of New Zealand, could continue to occur.

If it be objected that the events mentioned fall outside of the subject matter of the notions concerned, we must turn to the sort of account Kovesi would give of these notions. The formal element of the notion of a table, he says, is given by an answer to the question why we call a large variety of objects tables and refuse the word to other objects (4), and the answer is in terms of our needs not only to have level surfaces at a height convenient for eating, writing and the like, but also to manufacture, buy, sell and make inventories of the objects which serve these purposes (13-14). A Kovesian account of the formal element of the notion of an anticyclone would mention among other things our need, fulfilled alas too

rarely, to predict the weather.

But why include in the subject matter of a notion its formal element rather than its material elements? Kovesi elsewhere talks of 'ingredients' of notions, and is clearly referring to parts of the formal elements; the difference between moral and other notions is to be found in their ingredients, the constituents of their formal elements (cf. 13, 53). By contrast it might be thought that 'subject matter' is intended to refer to the material elements of a notion. But Kovesi says that without moral notions there would be nothing left of their subject matter. In the case of an inadvertent act, what would be lost if we did not have the notion? Surely one could still knock over teapots while reaching for the salt; such events could still occur, but their consequences, soaked tablecloths, scalded laps and the like, would not be byproducts of inadvertent acts. Now, elbows coming in contact with teapots, soaked tablecloths, scalded laps and the like are among the material elements of inadvertency, while calling them byproducts is connected with the formal element, for part of the point of having the notion is that there are some events, some cases of soaked tablecloths and scalded laps, for which we do not want to hold anyone responsible, or at least feel that we are not entitled to do so. Under this interpretation, 'subject matter' seems to refer to the formal rather than the material elements of a notion.

My argument, then, is this. If the subject matter of a notion is its formal element, Kovesi is correct in saying that without moral notions there would be nothing

left of their subject matter, but he could have said exactly the same of non-moral notions. Without the notion of a table or of an anticyclone there would be no such events as eating off a table or predicting that an anticyclone will soon move onto the centre of New Zealand, although one might still place one's breakfast on a convenient level surface or hope that the sun will shine tomorrow.

3.5 Language and existence

So far I have given little attention to the metaphysical questions which have seemed to arise out of Kovesi's work (e.g., see 1.3 and 1.5, above), but it would be a mistake to ignore them entirely. Despite his disclaimer that by introducing 'form' and 'matter' he is not introducing any metaphysical entities (3), at least one apparently serious metaphysical question underlies much of what he says, and surfaces with his remarks about the existence of the subject matter of moral notions: the question whether the world exists and has its nature independently of thought and language. I wish to argue that, despite appearances, Kovesi is not committed to denying any metaphysically serious version of this question, and that this is just as well, for the question itself is devoid of sense.

Without claiming that any philosopher has held it, I shall start by outlining in a crude form the view which Kovesi appears to deny, and which I wish to argue lacks sense. It is this: language and the world are at least

conceptually separable: what is left when this is done is a world of hard facts, or brute facts, or atomic facts, or raw data; language is or should be about such a world. According to this view the world as it really is exists and has its nature independently of our thought and language, and if we wish to describe the world correctly we must not impose on it any extraneous language-dependent patterns. Clearly Kovesi is opposed to at least some aspects of this picture of words and the world (20, 146, 149), and here he could well have been influenced by Austin's rejection of a logically perfect language (see Berlin 1973, 14-15). But Kovesi's argument would simply be that we want to use our language for purposes other than giving neutral descriptions of some language-independent world (19-20), and although correct, this places no restrictions on those who are so inclined from pursuing such an aim.

A completely different sort of argument would be needed to show whether this quest could succeed, to show whether such neutral descriptions are possible. Of course this is by no means a new question (e.g., see Wittgenstein 1961, 6.341), but Kovesi's views on language suggest a new answer. First, distinguish two senses of 'neutral': a neutral description could be thought of as one which uses only notions which involve no human needs or interests, or as one using only notions which involve anyone's needs or interests. In the first sense, if all notions must incorporate some human needs or interests, there can be no neutral descriptions, and Kovesi is by no means alone in believing this to be the case (e.g., see Wittgenstein 1958, pghs 149, 257). But in the second sense there can be neutral descriptions.

Indeed, in this sense all descriptions must be neutral; for example, something which purports to refer to an entity which can, as a matter of logic, be known only by acquaintance and only by one particular person, just cannot be used in a description.

But even if this argument is correct, despite its brevity, it would be a mistake to infer that the existence or nature of the world depends upon human thought, perception or language. Certainly it looks as if an account of what it is to understand a notion which, like Kovesi's, emphasizes the part played in our language by human needs and interests, including only where appropriate our interest in 'given' empirical similarities, somehow divorces language from the world. Even if on the roundabouts we have gained an account of what it is to understand a term or grasp a notion, on the swings we seem to have lost our grip on just what it is that our notions are about. Such appearances, however, are deceptive, and the trouble springs from an attempt to answer the question what is the relation between words and the world, without knowing precisely what is being asked. I wish to argue that in fact nothing is asked.

As I have worded it the question contains two occurrences of the definite article, each of which hides a presupposition which either is unacceptable, or at least in need of support, or renders the question meaningless. The first of these is that there is precisely one relation between words and the world. If this is accepted without question, a natural next move is to enquire as to the nature of that relation, and an answer which was once common is that the relation is

that of naming. Such an answer would now be regarded as naive. Accounts of how words relate to the world should not involve only a single relation, as it just is not plausible to say that to each word or sentence there corresponds a unique item in the world, in any usual sense of 'world'. Of course 'world' can be used in a special way in order to preserve a single relation between words and the world, but that either changes the question or offends common sense. On the one hand, the question was not originally, at least only, about a world of Platonic forms or universals or propositions or ideas in the minds of men or gods; if the world contains any of these then of course the answer to the question must be true of them, but on the other hand it must also be true of whatever else the world contains, and there clearly are more mundane things. My objection is not just to theories which say that all words name things in some world or other, but to any theory which supposes that there is a single relation between words and things.

Although the first occurrence of the definite article in the question now causes little trouble, the same cannot be said of the second. There is still a strong temptation to think that there is a single, language-independent world 'out there', and that one of the uses of language, if not the only proper use, is to talk about that world. We are still inclined to believe that language and the world are at least conceptually separable, that language can, to use Austin's phrase, be prised off the world (Austin 1950, 118), isolating the two and enabling us to see them and their relations as they really are (a correspondence theory of truth goes happily with this). All this I believe to be quite

wrong. We can, and I believe Kovesi does, avoid this mistake by refusing to draw a sharp distinction between objects and the way we react to them.

The important point is that such a refusal need not be accompanied by either of the apparent alternative views about the relations between words and the world, even if at first sight it appears to imply that in some sense we create the world or worlds in which we live by forming notions which suit our needs and interests. To understand what is said about the world we live in we must know what these needs and interests are. Thus, for example, to understand what it means to call something a byproduct of an inadvertent act, we have to know about certain of our needs to blame and excuse people, and to understand talk about tables we have to know about needs such as that for flat surfaces at a height convenient for dining and philately. But for all of this we must appeal to what look like simple matters of fact about the natural world, mainly from the fields of sociology and psychology in the case of inadvertent acts and from anatomy and physiology in that of tables, and always with some history thrown in. Thus, when spelled out in any detail, this version of the view that we create the world we live in leans heavily on support which is incompatible with it, upon evidence which can be stated only by viewing people and their languages as belonging to, rather than creating, the natural world.

My claim then is that no ultimate or metaphysically serious distinction can be drawn between what goes on in our thought and language and what goes on in some independent world of fact, and thus that it makes no sense

to ask how the two are related. Kovesi is not tempted to make such a distinction in the case of what he calls the world we live in, but he does at times appear to talk of an independent world of hard facts (24-25, 62, 70). Here however he is using others' terminology to help break down the distinction between description and evaluation as commonly drawn. In these passages the only philosopher openly criticised for his views on facts is Hume, but rather than repeat the criticism (see 3.2, above) I shall examine two recent attempts, or at least apparent ones, to make such a distinction, and then try to state a general argument against any such attempt.

The first example comes from Austin. A little, reluctantly he distinguishes hard facts from conventional facts; a hard fact is one that is 'natural and unalterable, or anyhow not alterable at will', while a conventional fact is 'one which "thinking makes so"' (Austin 1950, 122). The trouble with this is that, on the one hand, many of the facts which Austin would want to count as hard facts (such as the fact that contemporary English speakers use the word 'elephant' in such and such a way), are quite alterable, so the 'at will' condition really matters, but on the other hand, even in the case of facts which Austin would count as conventional (such as the fact that the English word 'elephant' means such and such), the will alone is never enough to bring about an alteration. Not only do Christian earthmoving contractors have to use machinery to move mountains, but even linguistic conventions cannot be changed solely at will. Of course Austin might reply that the expression needed here is 'by will', not 'at will', but this does not help, for, in precisely the sense in which linguistic

conventions can be altered at (as opposed to by) will, so too can 'hard' facts be altered. In both cases we can always opt for change ('at will'), but in both cases we have to do more than thinking to make it so; we have to employ more than our wills to implement the change ('by will'), and the conservatism which can thwart attempts to change linguistic conventions may be just as fittingly called a hard fact as may the quicksand which can thwart our attempts to build a highway.

Another attempt to distinguish between what goes on in our thought and language and what goes on in some independent world of fact can at least be read into the work of Searle. In support of his claim that a full description of, in the case of his example, a game of football, cannot be given in terms of 'brute' mathematico-physical facts, he claims quite properly that such a description would have to leave out 'all those concepts which are backed by constitutive rules, such as touchdown': that is, all of the 'institutional' facts about the game (Searle 1969, 52). But even if all of these facts are incorporated in the description, we have still not said what is going on until we have said that it is a game, rather than, say, a religious festival or a battle (cf. Schwyzer 1969). A full description must say what it is all about, what it is for, what is the point of it (cf. Wittgenstein 1958, pgh 564). To do this, to flesh out what it is to be a game, would involve talking about certain human needs and interests, needs which are in fact shared by many people, not only the players, and which could be anyone's.

If this is done, if the description is completed,

the distinction breaks down, for the supposedly institutional aspects of the description must be flashed out in terms of facts which, under the distinction, look as brute as any. That certain people have the relevant needs and interests, and that certain constitutive rules and concepts suffice to form a structure within which these needs and interests can be met, can just as properly be called brute facts as can the fact that certain geometrical configurations of yellow and green objects appear on the field at such and such a time. Roughly, to give a full description of the game requires not a combination of institutional and brute facts, but rather, facts of psychology as well as physics. Of course to do this is not to give a full explanation of the game, for no doubt other sets of rules and concepts would equally well meet the needs and interests concerned. An explanation would have to show why one set of rules has been adopted rather than another, for which history in addition would have to be consulted. But a description need not be an explanation; it need not rule out other possibilities.

I mention the distinctions made by Austin and Searle only as possible examples of a once widespread and not quite extinct set of beliefs amongst philosophers: the beliefs that we can prise language off the world, that we can detach the sense of the world from the world, that there must be some world which is independent of language even if we cannot say anything about such a world. I do not of course claim that the distinctions Austin and Searle try to draw are not illuminating when used for other purposes, but simply that any metaphysical use of a distinction between facts about people and their

language and facts about some language-independent world will fail.

My claim is not that the beliefs I mentioned are false but that they lack sense. The general argument in support of this is as follows. First, even if there were such a world, nothing could be said about it. This is of course stronger than a claim Kovesi would make, that as a matter of fact our language is not about such a world because we are not interested, only, in it (19-20). What I am saying is that no language could be about such a world, that there can be no genuine synthetic statements here. The reason for this is familiar; nothing could count as evidence for or against a statement about a world which is quite independent of language, because evidence itself has to be statable in a public language. Hence it makes no sense to say that a statement conveys any information about such a world; there can be no way of showing that a claim is being made about that world as opposed to any other. It might be thought, though, that it can at least be said that there is an independent world, even if what its nature is cannot be said. But even this lacks sense, for, ex hypothesi, nothing could count as evidence for or against the existence of a world which is genuinely independent of language, nor could anything count as evidence for or against the claim that there is one such world rather than two. Thereof, indeed, one must be silent, even to the extent of not saying whether or not it exists.

Not only, then, can we not say what a world of 'brute' facts would be like, but we cannot even say that there is such a world. The first would require a

language which could be shown to picture or reflect exactly the structure of that world, and this cannot be shown as nothing would count as evidence for or against it; likewise nothing would count as evidence for or against the existence of such a world. This, in brief, is why it is a mistake to think that a distinction can be drawn, for metaphysical purposes at least, between facts about language and facts about 'the world', and what it shows is not that the world is in some way dependent for its existence and nature upon our thought and language but that the question whether this is so lacks sense. The same goes for the distinction between knowledge by acquaintance and by description insofar as the former is thought of as being language-independent and the latter not, for nothing could count as evidence for or against the claim that an item of knowledge is language-independent. Of necessity, the identity and individuation criteria for items of knowledge involve language, just as do those for 'worlds' and their inhabitants.

This argument assumes that for meaningful discourse to be possible there must be individuation and identity criteria for the members of the universe of discourse. Quine and others have persuaded me that this is so (e.g., see Quine 1948; Hampshire 1959; Cohen 1962, section 34), and although it does not come easily to me to use the sort of terminology favoured by Quine, a compromise in this direction might help. Early in this section I outlined a three part picture of language and the world: language can be 'prised off' the world; what is left is a language-independent world of fact; language is or should be about that world. Substituting 'universe of

discourse' for 'world', what I believe is wrong with this picture is that it supposes that languages can always be individuated and identified without mentioning a universe of discourse.

Certainly, we can try to abstract off on the one hand a set of rules and on the other hand a universe of discourse, and sometimes we succeed. But even when we do, I see no point in saying that what we arrive at is in all cases the language proper plus a universe of discourse, rather than that we abstract the rules and the universe of discourse off the language. This is not just a verbal issue. The point in calling something language A rather than language B may be in part related to the sort of rules involved, but even in cases of isomorphism there still can be point in saying that there are two distinct languages. For example, one language might be used to formalize some ideas about spatial relations while the other is concerned with numbers. If they turn out to be isomorphic, that in itself is interesting, and we can talk about such connections in a language whose rules govern such relational words as 'isomorphic' and whose universe of discourse is the rules of various languages. This is related to what I said about Searle's football game; to give a full description of a language we have to say what is its point, and this can and often does require reference to a universe of discourse. In this sense, words cannot always be prised off the world, leaving a language-independent world which is the 'subject matter' of language. Rather, it is often the case that both rules and universes of discourse are involved in the criteria for identifying and individuating a language.

At the level of a world of 'brute facts', I have argued that it lacks sense either to affirm or to deny that the world depends for its nature and existence upon the notions we form. At the level of the world we can and do describe, the important point to realize is that we and our language form part of that world, and our language is at least in part about those parts of the world in which it is found. Because this is so, because linguistic behaviour and thought form part of the subject matter of language, it is a mistake to think that, by prising language off the world, we will obtain a more true picture of the world.

Chapter Four PRACTICAL REASONING

4.1 Deduction

I accept Kovesi's claim that there is no logical difference between moral and other notions. My criticism could be summed up by saying that the non-logical differences which he thinks can be found between them are not there. The objectivity required is the same for all notions, and in the sense in which it is true that moral notions provide rules for the behaviour of their subject matter and the ground of its existence, this holds for all notions. In this chapter I turn to two very general claims of Kovesi's: the claims that, contrary to what for example Hume and Hare say, facts in the world can be reasons for doing one thing rather than another (73, 81; Hume 1888, 468-469; Hare 1952, 46), and that practical reasoning is not deductive but is analogical (114).

There is, Kovesi says, no 'gap' between something being yellow and the judgement 'This is yellow', or between certain angle measurements and rectangularity, but these are exceptional cases. There is a gap (that is, we do not move with such ease) between something having four legs and a flat surface on it and the judgement 'This is a table', and between someone being pierced by a knife and the judgement 'This is murder'. For material objects, he says, this 'gap' has been treated as a problem in the theory of knowledge, and philosophers have talked of constructions rather than inferences, while for actions the 'gap' has been treated as a problem about inference. But the problem of the 'gap', he says, is the problem of connecting what is given to the senses

with what we judge a thing or act to be. It is the same for both descriptive and evaluative terms, and it is pointless to try to create an entailment relation between material and formal elements by creating a major premiss (cf. Waismann 1946, 218-219). Some moral philosophers have tried to do this, thinking that the gap they were trying to bridge is that between description and evaluation (10-12).

The reason why it is pointless to try to create an entailment relation between material and formal elements by creating a major premiss is that what a thing is cannot be deduced from or defined in terms of its material elements (8), and the reason for this, Kovesi says, is that the conditions that must be fulfilled for the proper use of a term have open texture, with occasional exceptions as in the cases of colour words and geometric terms (7-8). Colour words are exceptions as they are said to have no formal elements, and geometric terms are exceptions because, Kovesi maintains, in geometry there are no open textures (9).

Waismann, who coined the expression, says that a concept whose rules do not cover every possibility by blocking every nook and cranny against entry of doubt, has open texture (Waismann 1946, 215), and Kovesi could mean much the same by the expression when he says that the concept of a table has open texture not because tables can shade in other pieces of furniture (that is vagueness) but because even the unmistakable tables can be made in a variety of ways and manners (10). He also takes over part of Waismann's claim that mathematical concepts do not have open texture (9; Waismann 1946, 215),

but here some clarification is required. While it is, hopefully, true to say that a geometric term such as 'triangular' will not have open texture within a formal system of geometry, mathematicians have no copyright over all geometric terms. When used outside of a formal system they are just as prone to open texture as any of the other terms we use to describe the world around us.

As it is the latter sort of use of geometric terms which concerns Kovesi he should drop his claim that they do not have open texture. This would not affect his argument. Indeed, he does not have to talk of open texture at all, as I said earlier (see 1.2, above), for his claim that what a thing is cannot be deduced from or defined in terms of its material elements follows from the meaning of the expression 'material element'. Any characteristic in respect of which something may vary without ceasing to be an S is a material element of the notion of an S. Although a list of certain of these characteristics may give a rough and ready guide to deciding whether something is an S, or even quite a reliable guide if it includes the recognitors, such a list will not provide a definition of what it is to be an S, for something could be an S without having the listed characteristics.

It might be argued that the usual state of affairs is this: of all the material elements a few will be central to whether something is an S; anything which has most of these central ones will be an S, anything which has few of them will not be an S, and there will be borderline cases, for most terms. However, so long as the talk is in terms of material elements, the previous

argument holds, and the best that the procedure just mentioned can do is provide us with a means of deciding, usually but not always correctly, whether something is an S. It will not tell us what it is for something to be an S. This can be done only by the formal element of the notion. Of course it is possible that the formal element of a notion should be concerned with a list of 'central' material elements, particularly when part of the point of the notion is that of sorting objects into convenient groups in terms of observable characteristics (31, 84; cf. Urmson 1950, and 2.1, above), but this is certainly not often the case, and any attempt to use such a procedure to arrive at a definition must be independently justified, with reference to the formal element of the notion concerned. What a thing is, then, cannot be deduced from or defined in terms of its material elements, and so it is pointless to try to create an entailment relation between material and formal elements by creating a major premiss. Talk of open texture is relevant not to this argument but only to reminding us that except in exceptional cases where the point of having a notion includes that we be able to sort objects into groups in terms of observable characteristics, we must attend to the point of the notion rather than empirical similarities when giving an account of what it is to be a such and such.

So much for Kovesi's remarks about deduction itself. His thesis, so far as practical reasoning is concerned, is that practical reasoning is not deductive but is analogical. This is claimed to be generally true, but not universally; exceptions are found in the case of obeying commands, rules and regulations (81, 97-98), and

in one case of behaving according to principles (97-98, 100). The important thing is, he says, to realize that these are exceptions. Philosophers have taken them to be typical examples, thereby giving what Kovesi regards as an incorrect account of practical reasoning. To appreciate his criticisms of these accounts, however, it is necessary first to examine at some length two related pairs of technical terms: 'discriminator' and 'reminder', and 'complete' and 'incomplete'.

4.2 Complete terms

Except in special circumstances, Kovesi says, there is no need to re-emphasize that murder, say, or stealing is wrong. If someone understands the notions, to say that murder and stealing are wrong does not give him any more information. Kovesi expresses this by saying that in the sentence 'Murder (or stealing) is wrong' the term 'wrong' functions as a reminder. This is contrasted with the sentence 'Killing is wrong', where 'wrong' functions as a discriminator. Terms such as 'wrong' function as reminders only when applied to what he calls 'fully developed' or 'complete' moral notions; otherwise they function as discriminators (26-27). Another example is provided on p. 103, where he says that when we justify not doing something by reference to such a judgement as 'Lying is wrong', 'wrong' functions as a reminder; it is enough to say 'But this is a lie'.

Although Kovesi applies his distinction between discriminators and reminders only to sentences with moral

predicate terms, it seems quite natural to extend its use. Just as in the sentences 'Killing is wrong' and 'Murder is wrong', Kovesi says that 'wrong' functions as a discriminator in the first and as a reminder in the second, it could be said that in the sentence 'Priests are unmarried' the term 'unmarried' functions as a discriminator, while in 'Bachelors are unmarried' it functions as a reminder. When thus extended, the force of the discriminator-reminder distinction seems to be much the same as that of the familiar distinction between contingent and necessary truths. Certainly, whether priests are unmarried is a contingent matter, while it is necessarily true that bachelors are, and there is some point in saying that, likewise, it is a contingent matter whether killing is wrong but necessarily true that murder is.

When a term functions as a reminder, Kovesi says, it is not thereby superfluous: 'When we say "murder is wrong" it does not merely remind us that murder is murder, but of the reason why such otherwise dissimilar activities as murdering, stealing, lying get into the same class insofar as they are all wrong or vicious.' On the one hand, there is nothing common to them all except that they are wrong, and on the other hand, 'To understand what we mean by saying that they are wrong is to understand what it is which alone is common to all these acts, and the test of whether we understand its meaning is whether we are able to recognize that an empirically different new act also amounts to the same, i.e. that it is also wrong' (32).

The extension of the distinction helps to make clear

what Kovesi is getting at when he says that reminders are not superfluous. The knowledge that 'wrong' functions as a reminder in 'murder is wrong' does not tell us, for the first time, why lying, for example, as well as murder, is included in the class of otherwise dissimilar activities which are the same insofar as they are all wrong or vicious, for we cannot be reminded of something we have never known. To change the example: when we say 'Squares are four-sided' the term 'four-sided' reminds us, provided that we have at some time known this, why it is that squares, rhombi, rectangles, etc. get into the same class insofar as they are all four-sided, but it does not tell us this for the first time. Likewise, I am sure Kovesi would say, if one understands the terms of a sentence which expresses a necessary truth one will understand not only that the predicate necessarily applies to the subject but also why it does. To learn, parrot-fashion, that a bachelor is an unmarried man, is not to learn the meaning of 'bachelor'.

Terms such as 'right' and 'wrong' are used as reminders, Kovesi says, when predicated of a term which stands for a type of act selected completely from the moral point of view. The corresponding notions he calls 'complete'. 'Incomplete' moral notions are not formed completely from the moral point of view, and so 'right' and 'wrong' are applied to them as discriminators, 'selecting from a mixed class the types of acts that are different from the moral point of view' (109). The terms 'fully developed' and 'open' are used as synonyms for 'complete' and 'incomplete' respectively (26-27, 51). The relations between complete terms and the distinction between discriminators and reminders, then, are as

follows. A term is complete if and only if there is a sentence in which it occurs as subject term and whose predicate term functions as a reminder, while a term is incomplete if and only if there is no such sentence. Of course there need be only one such sentence for each complete term, and it would be reasonable to expect that sentence to express a necessary truth. Thus in the case of the complete term 'murder', 'wrong' functions as a reminder in the sentence 'Murder is wrong', and this sentence expresses a necessary truth, and, using the extended discriminator-reminder distinction, the expression 'common in Australia' functions as a discriminator in the sentence 'Murder is common in Australia', and this expresses a contingent truth.

If the application of the terms 'discriminator' and 'reminder' is extended as suggested, then it is natural to do the same with the related terms 'complete' and 'incomplete', for not only moral terms such as 'murder' satisfy the characterization just given. For example, the term 'bachelor' is the subject term of the sentence 'Bachelors are unmarried', whose predicate term functions, in the extended sense, as a reminder. Now Kovesi calls 'murder' a complete moral term because it is applied to a type of act selected completely from the moral point of view, from the point of view of the rightness or wrongness of the act. Clearly 'bachelor' is not a complete moral term, but although Kovesi does not speak of complete terms which are not moral terms, it seems legitimate to extend the use of 'complete' so that it applies to all terms allocated to types of act or thing which are selected completely from any particular point of view. Thus, if it is reasonable to say that the term

'murder' is applied to a type of act selected completely from the point of view of the rightness or wrongness of the act, and thus that 'murder' is a complete term, it is equally reasonable to say that the term 'bachelor' is applied to a type of person selected completely from the point of view of his marital state, and thus that 'bachelor' is a complete term. And while it would be tiresome to allocate names to all of the points of view we do or might adopt when classifying things and acts, one could call 'bachelor' a complete marital term, just as Kovesi calls 'murder' a complete moral term. The central point is that when one has to decide whether some predicate term applies in order to be entitled to apply a certain subject term, then that subject term is complete and the predicate does not discriminate between the various instances of the subject term; it functions only as a reminder.

Kovesi at least hints that he would accept this extension when he remarks that all terms, not only moral ones, function logically like bags we might use to hold marbles of different colours, and that when they do the connection between the 'bag' and its contents is conceptual. In the passage concerned (123-124; see also 26-27, 109), he goes straight on to talk about complete terms and reminders, which is also about the nearest he comes to using the standard 'necessary-contingent' terminology. But whether he would take these liberties or not, it should be noted that even if, as he says in the same passage, for appropriate substitutions for 'S' ('sharp knives' would not do), the judgement 'S is always good', if true, tells us that 'S' is a complete moral term, it is not the case that if the judgement 'S is always F' is

true then 'S' is a complete term. It is true that all bachelors are unmarried and that they are all under the age of two hundred years, but the latter tells us nothing about the logic of 'bachelor', even though 'bachelor' is a complete (marital) term.

Kovesi's statement that a term is incomplete if further specifications are needed to enable us to make a judgement, while a term is complete if these further specifications have been included in the term (51), resembles the view that contingent judgements have factual content while necessary truths do not. To make a contingent judgement is, in Kovesi's terms, to make a judgement which tells us more than that the subject term applies, to provide further specifications about the item denoted by the subject term. Of course we can assert contingent judgements by means of sentences with complete subject terms, such as 'Murder is common in Australia', but only if the term is not complete in respect of the type of characteristic denoted by the predicate term. So perhaps, in the light of the extended complete-incomplete distinction, Kovesi's claim should be expressed thus: a term 'S' is incomplete in respect of P if further specifications are needed to enable us to judge whether an S is P, while a term is complete in that respect if these further specifications have been included in the meaning of the term. Much the same is said, though in rather a different way, by some of the transformational grammarians (e.g. Katz 1966, 301-302).

Closely related to this is Kovesi's claim that incomplete terms say nothing about the relevant facts in certain fields. For example, the term 'lying', which he

regards as morally complete, says nothing about the purpose of the deception involved. In the case of complete terms, the only relevant facts are those that will affect the proper use of the term. If an act is specified by an incomplete moral notion, he says, we have to bring additional facts which are relevant to its rightness or wrongness if we want to justify the act, while if it is specified by a complete moral notion we have to bring such additional facts if we want to show that the term is inapplicable (127). Now in the last case Kovesi of course cannot insist that the act be correctly specified by the complete notion, for he allows the possibility that, by bringing additional facts, we can show that the term does not apply, that the original specification was incorrect.

What happens, then, if we fail to agree as to whether certain facts are morally relevant? How are we to resolve a dispute in which one person says that a certain fact is morally relevant and thus that a certain complete moral term applies to an act or situation, while another says that the fact is not morally relevant and thus that the term does not apply? There is no indication of what Kovesi would say of such a dispute. Telfer, in her review of Moral Notions, asks whether, if one man calls a particular abortion a murder while another does not, one is right and the other wrong, and if so, whether they have grasped the notion of murder to different degrees. These questions, and others such as who is to decide whether a notion is complete, are not answered by Kovesi, she says (Telfer 1968, 11-13). Of course one might simply say that such disputes cannot be settled, but this would be distasteful to Kovesi, who, I am sure, thinks

that his remarks about the public nature of language provide the answers to all such questions, not only moral ones, including, for example, disputes as to whether having drawers is relevant to whether an item of furniture is a desk or just another table. I shall outline a way of answering such questions in the last chapter, when I discuss the question whether we must all have the same notions.

In a way the expression 'fully developed' is preferable to 'complete', for when he calls a term complete Kovesi does not mean that it is formed entirely from one point of view to the exclusion of all others, but that it is completely-formed, or fully developed, from at least one point of view. To take an example which is rather unusual in this respect, the term 'murder' is completely formed from two points of view, the moral and the legal. The claim that reminders, in the extended sense, are not superfluous, is enlightening here; not only does the presence of a word functioning as a reminder in a sentence indicate that the subject term is complete, but also it indicates in what respect it is complete. Compare 'Murder is wrong' and 'Murder is unlawful'. For moral terms there are few such respects, but under the extended use of the complete-incomplete distinction the number of such respects will equal the number of points of view from which we can form notions, and this should equal the number of types of sharable human interests, needs and purposes, or perhaps, in Wittgenstein's terms, the number of forms of life (Wittgenstein 1958, pgh 241, p. 226).

I am tempted at this stage to ask whether we can say

that every term must be complete from some point of view or other. It is reasonable to suppose that each noun can feature as the subject term of at least one sentence which expresses a necessary truth. It is also reasonable to suppose that all other words correspond to some actual or possible noun or noun phrase, in the way that 'slow', 'slowly', etc. correspond to 'slowness', 'and' to 'conjunction', and even 'the' to 'the definite article'. That is, we seem to be able, with some inventiveness if necessary, to make any word the subject of some sentence. Now if these suppositions are universally true, and if we were to maintain not only that a sentence with a complete subject term and a remainder as predicate expresses a necessary truth but also the converse, and we have not done the latter, then it would clearly be the case that all terms are complete from some point of view or other.

One of the claimed differences between complete and incomplete terms is that the former do and the latter do not specify something about the relevant facts in all possible fields, and so in the case of complete terms the only relevant facts are those that will affect the proper use of the term (127). I think that by 'possible fields' he means those that are relevant from the point of view from which the notion is formed. As regards the type of example Kovesi has in mind: if 'S' is a complete moral term then it will be necessarily true either that it is right or that it is wrong, that it is good or evil, whereas if 'S' is an incomplete moral term this will not be so. Thus in the case of complete moral terms but not otherwise, all of the facts which are relevant to the rightness or wrongness of a thing or act are relevant to whether the term applies. To ignore any such fact is to

run the risk of misapplying the term. What Kovesi is not saying, despite occasional appearances, is that knowledge that a moral term is complete, knowledge of the appropriate necessary truths, will in itself enable us to decide which particular acts are right and which are wrong. A necessary truth tells us only that if one term applies then so does another, and further, the problem of how we are to resolve a dispute as to whether certain facts are relevant to a term's applicability is mirrored in the problem of how to resolve a dispute as to whether a certain truth is necessary.

4.3 Imperatives

One of Kovesi's most effective uses of the distinction between discriminators and reminders and that between complete and incomplete terms is in his criticism of deductive accounts of practical reasoning. Consider first his remarks about Hare. They start with a disclaimer. The aim, he says, is elucidatory rather than polemical; he claims only to be criticizing a possible interpretation of what one of Hare's examples could be said to exemplify, without committing Hare to that interpretation (73). The example is that of smoking in a railway compartment (Hare 1952, 176-177), and Kovesi's interpretation is as follows: an active principle, a command or imperative, should in practical reasoning be provided to bridge the gap between a factual minor premiss and a moral judgement; the difference between imperatives and moral judgements is simply that while the former at least implicitly refer to individuals, the latter are universal;

if an imperative or command is made universal it thereby becomes equivalent to a value judgement. Roughly, then, according to this interpretation, moral judgements are universally addressed imperatives (72-74).

This, Kovesi claims, is not a correct account of moral judgements. Before I discuss his criticism, I should mention some remarks he makes about the relation between moral judgements and moral notions. At one point he says that moral judgements may but need not involve moral notions; 'Lying is wrong' and 'Promises ought to be kept' involve moral notions but 'It is you who should stay with your mother and your brother should join the resistance movement' does not (92). Presumably he is referring to the subject expressions of the sentences; 'lying' and 'promises' are moral terms while that of the third sentence is not; for all three of his examples involve moral notions, the higher order moral notions of wrongness and obligation. Kovesi's point then must be that to make a moral judgement one need not be able to bring the act or situation under a moral subject term, let alone a complete one. And when, later in the book, he says that moral judgements are those judgements which are made by the use of moral notions (148), he can be taken not as contradicting his earlier claim, but as pointing out that a sentence used to make a moral judgement must contain a moral term somewhere, although not necessarily as its subject term.

For Kovesi, then, the distinguishing mark of a moral judgement is what it contains, a moral term, not its mood or its range of application. As with moral notions, the difference is not one of logic. His most general

criticism of the view he opposes is this: to say that 'a moral judgement must express a genuine want in the agent (or whatever else a first-person command addressed to oneself means) and at the same time it must be addressed to the whole world' involves the false supposition that each of us speaks a private language (57-58). Kovesi admits that our wants and needs enter into the formation of our notions, but not as your wants or my wants, nor as everyone's wants, but only as anyone's wants (56-57).

Quite independently of this, however, Kovesi has important detailed criticisms of his interpretation of Hare. This view, he says, fails to **recognize** that there are two ways in which imperatives may be particular: they may apply only to certain people (as in military law), or they may apply only to certain places (as in local body bylaws). Either of these ranges may be extended (73f), but such extensions do not yield moral judgements: 'When a dictator aspires to address his commands to all men over the whole world, he is not aspiring to turn his commands into moral judgements' (83). Kovesi maintains that in Hare's example of smoking in railway compartments, it is not because of some universal principle, some universally addressed imperative, that one should not smoke in the next compartment either, but because, in the example, the presence of a child or a sign in a compartment has already been accepted as a reason for not smoking (75-76; Hare 1952, 176-177). Now this is a crucial step in Kovesi's argument. One of his major theses is that facts in the world can be reasons for doing one thing rather than another. Hare denies this (Hare 1952, 46), and yet, as Kovesi points out, in his railway example facts in the world are accepted as reasons

for doing one thing rather than another. The story presupposes that the presence of a child or a sign in a compartment is a reason for refraining from smoking.

The presence of a child and of a sign are, Kovesi says, different sorts of reason for not smoking: 'The sign, unlike the child, is a reason for not smoking only if we refer to a general principle like "No one is to smoke in a compartment where there is a sign like this put up by a competent authority". But the sign by itself is not, as the presence of a child is, a reason for not smoking' (77). In the sign case an imperative (which here is a regulation, not a command) does provide a major premiss in a deductive argument concluding in an injunction not to do something. But the presence of a child is a different sort of reason. In Hare's story, 'If we read the example carefully, we see that the person addressed looked round, noticed the child and so understood the reason. We remarked already that the reason why he then could not say that he will smoke in the next compartment where there is also a child is not because there is a further general principle beyond what he already understood, but because if he accepted the reason he could not at the same time reject it' (77-78).

At this stage I am tempted either to say just the same about accepting the presence of a sign as a reason for not smoking, or to claim that in the case of the child reference is made to some general principle. The first requires saying that a person who was told he should not smoke in a compartment should look around, notice a 'No smoking' sign, understand why he should not smoke, and understand that he should not smoke in the

next compartment where there is also a sign, not because there is some general principle beyond what he already understands but because having accepted the presence of a sign as a reason he cannot at the same time reject it. This seems just as plausible as what Kovesi says about the child case. An important point to note is that this does not rule out the person's acceptance of general principles. It is quite consistent with his referring to the regulations made by the competent authorities in first accepting the presence of a sign as a reason for not smoking. What is denied is that he need refer to some general principle beyond what he already understands when he first accepts the presence of a sign as a reason for not smoking.

So far what I have said hardly affects Kovesi's argument, but what is there in it that rules out the accepting of general principles in the case of the child? The cases are less dissimilar than Kovesi supposes. In both cases all that is ruled out is reference to any new general principle when talking about what should be done in the next compartment. Once a child or a sign has been accepted as a reason for not smoking one cannot consistently reject either as a reason. But while Kovesi is right in saying that the sign itself is not a reason (here reference to the regulations is required), his argument does not show that this is not so also in the child case. This is important, for he wishes to establish that facts in the world, such as the presence of a child in a railway compartment, can be reasons for doing one thing rather than another. Hare could thus defend himself by claiming that reference to some general principle, 'Never smoke in the presence of a child', is

required also in the child case.

Of course this only shows that Kovesi has not yet established his view that, contrary to what such philosophers as Hume and Hare say, facts in the world rather than, say, general principles or feelings or imperatives, can be reasons for doing one thing rather than another (73, 81). It does not contradict his claim that a moral judgement is not obtained by extending the range of application of an imperative:

With moral judgements the question of universality does not arise. They are not commands that can be addressed to some or all people, they are claims about situations in which something should or should not be done. The validity of these claims can be impugned only by reference to the relevant facts of the situation. So unless a person by being in the situation makes a relevant difference to the situation, the claim applies to him. They are not addressed to everybody, they apply to anybody. If the same situation is present again we have to make the same judgement. This is not universality but rationality. (83)

The latter argument contains an ambiguous claim, that unless a person's presence in a situation makes a relevant difference to the situation the claim applies to him. As far as the argument is concerned, this follows from the previous move only if we take it as involving what is claimed as opposed to what is true of the person, and similarly later when Kovesi talks about moral judgements applying to anybody. But I suspect that Kovesi has in mind also to say that unless a person by being in a situation makes a relevant difference to the situation then the claim may also be truly made of him, and that moral judgements apply truly to anybody.

To sort this matter out, consider the difference between moral judgements which involve a moral subject term and those that do not. In the case of a complete term the judgement applies truly to anyone to whom the subject term applies (assuming that is, that the judgement is logically respectable: for example 'Murder is wrong' rather than 'Murder is right'). In the case of an incomplete moral term, provided that the judgement cannot be overruled on other grounds, the same is so; if one has told a lie then one has acted wrongly unless for example the likely good consequences of one's lie are considerable. This cannot be said in the case of complete moral terms, where such considerations affect only the term's applicability. Making a moral judgement without employing a moral subject term is very like simply applying a moral term to an act or situation. For example, to judge that, in picking up and retaining some money which did not belong to him, someone acted wrongly, is to judge that he stole the money, that what he did is a case of stealing.

Thus, talk of to whom or what moral judgements apply contains a further ambiguity. Moral judgements with complete moral terms as subject terms are necessary truths (or falsehoods), and those with incomplete moral terms as subject terms are taken as being true unless there is evidence to the contrary, and so it is a little odd in either case to speak of the judgements as applying to individual people; they are true, unconditionally or conditionally, of anyone. It is the moral terms, not the judgements, which may or may not apply to people or their acts, and here the parallel is with the application to people or their acts of moral judgements whose subject

terms are not moral terms. An examination of what Kovesi says about complete moral notions (127-128) will bear out these remarks, and show that the first interpretation of the expression 'applies to' is the more consistent with the rest of what he says.

It is important to distinguish, as Kovesi does, between complete and incomplete moral notions, but I wish to quibble with one of his examples. When talking about prejudice, he says 'the only possible relevant fact that one could bring up in order to justify one's conduct would be good grounds for treating people differently in a certain case, but then we can no longer call this a case of prejudice. This is why it is possible' to say "this is an act of lying but go ahead and do it", but one cannot say "this is prejudice but go ahead and maintain it" (127). Exactly what is wrong with saying this? Accepting for the sake of the argument that 'prejudice' is a complete moral term, then moral considerations are relevant only to its applicability, but Kovesi does not make it clear that 'relevant' here refers to facts or considerations relevant to the rightness or wrongness of holding certain beliefs and performing certain acts, and not, say, to the ease with which and comfort in which one can go about one's social life. From this point of view 'prejudice' is not a complete term. Because Kovesi talks only of complete moral terms he does not bring out clearly that the sense in which one cannot say 'This is prejudice but go ahead and maintain it' is that in which telling someone to go ahead is to declare it to be morally acceptable. But the remark need not have been made from the moral point of view; it could mean, for example, that although someone is prejudiced

he will find his social life more bearable if he maintains his prejudice. It is a plain matter of fact, however unfortunate, that expressions such as 'go ahead' are used for many purposes, not just for moral exhortation.

The view that facts in the world cannot be reasons for doing one thing rather than another might in part be a result of concentrating on the wrong sort of fact, upon what it is that we do, shutting the door for example, rather than why we do it, because there is a tetanus patient who must be protected from noise (87). In the case of commands, rules and regulations, where we are told to do something, the reason for doing as we are told need not be in the situation about which the command, rule or regulation is made: 'Thus, for instance, we do not find the reason for the presence of the "No Smoking" sign in the compartment where it is placed. Similarly, although there are reasons for issuing commands, they are not necessarily in the situation about which the command is made. An officer in the army could command one morning "Use the starting handle" and next morning command "Run around the block". The reason for the command was to make the recruits fit or to make them obedient' (79-80). These cases are contrasted, respectively, with giving a warning not to smoke, because of the presence of inflammable material, and giving advice on how to start a car. In these cases the reason for what is said must be in the situation about which the warning or advice is given. The same, Kovesi says, is true of moral judgements:

Moral judgements are like pieces of advice in that they are made on the basis of the relevant facts of the situation. The reasons for doing what a piece of advice or a moral judgement tell us to do are the same relevant facts of the situation and not some logical features of the speech act, that is,

not that the advice or the moral judgement is an imperative or command. We need to give advice or make a moral judgement if the person addressed does not know the relevant facts and/or their significance. Otherwise the justification for giving advice and for doing what is advised is the same. It is not the case then that we need a reference to a command or to an imperative in explaining why we do something. Far from commands being the reason for even doing anything, issuing commands is just one of the things that we do. ... If we consider that even to make a descriptive statement is to do something, we realize the fundamental inadequacy of explaining why we do something in terms of commands and imperatives. (82)

This is Kovesi's reply to Hare's possible defence of his railway compartment example. Reference to an imperative does not help in the case of the child: indeed it is not a 'final' reason even for obeying the railway regulations, for an imperative in itself is never a reason for doing anything.

4.4 Principles

Sharing and perhaps inheriting Austin's reported distaste for Hare's attachment to 'principles' (Warnock 1973, 40), Kovesi seeks further support for his claim that practical reasoning is in general analogical rather than deductive by examining the part played by principles in our lives, arguing that while some patterns of reasoning behind acting on principle lend themselves to being represented in deductive arguments (97), and so might seem to support the claim that practical reasoning is deductive, reference to a principle does not make an act a moral act (98). These are the bones of the argument. The details are worthy of attention.

We are first warned to take care when using the term 'principle' in moral philosophy. The term has a long and rich history, shaped by science and mathematics as well as our moral life: 'The use of a single umbrella term to cover a wide variety of judgements and other performances can be convenient if it is a neutral technical term which, however, the term "moral principle" is not. Its use could commit us to a particular view of our moral life and language' (93). In mathematics and science and even for example in cookery the term is applied to propositions and practices which are, as it were, very deeply embedded in the subject, propositions and practices which constitute its foundations, from which all else follows. In the moral field, though, Kovesi aims 'to show that being a principle is not a property of certain judgements; it is people who regard certain things as matters of principle, who adopt certain principles or behave according to principles. Consequently the term "moral principle" should be used with caution as a term in philosophical analysis' (102).

The main distinction Kovesi draws amongst the various uses of 'principle' is between the sense in which judgements like 'Lying is wrong' can be called principles and the various patterns of acting on principle. In the latter type of use, 'We can decide to make a principle about almost anything. We can decide to get up every morning at the crack of dawn, or not to eat tomatoes, or never to leave kerosene heaters alight in an empty house, on principle' (94). Such acts may or may not be done on principle, and the appropriate ways of questioning their wisdom differ:

Whenever reference is made to a principle the argument is shifted away from the merits or

demerits of the action in question to a different field.

A person may think that tomatoes are both delicious and health-giving, but since he disapproves of the activities of the Tomato Marketing Board, he refrains from buying and eating tomatoes on principle. It would be out of place to tell him about the merits of eating tomatoes because he knows that tomatoes are good and even likes them. The only point on which we can argue with him is his disapproval of the Marketing Board, but then we would shift the argument from the merits of eating tomatoes to the merits of the Marketing Board. (94-95)

To test whether it is on principle that someone is not eating tomatoes, we should ask what alternatives are open to him that would amount to the same act. If he is obliged to eat tomatoes, and, for example, pours seasoning onto them to counteract their taste, his refraining from eating tomatoes was not done on principle, but it was so done if he pickets the offices of the Marketing Board in order to try to change its policy (96).

Kovesi singles out for particular attention three patterns of acting on principle. Two are illustrated by means of the tomato example, and the third by means of the kerosene heater example. The first pattern is exemplified where the person refraining from eating tomatoes 'does not mind if his acts do not affect the Marketing Board: his not eating tomatoes is the expression of the genuineness and sincerity of his disapproval' (95). In the second, more likely pattern, 'the person who disapproves of the Marketing Board would like to effect changes in the Board. If his acts are to have any significance they must take on the pattern conforming to the pattern of water restrictions and clean air regulations in so far as his act must be part of a corporate act. He must make the principle universal: "nobody should eat tomatoes"'

(95). The function of universalization here is not that he wants everyone to perform the same act but that he needs most people's cooperation to perform an act at all (97). The third pattern is exemplified by someone's adopting the principle of not leaving a kerosene heater alight in an empty house 'because one does not want to rely on the actual reasons for putting the heater out each time. We might not be able to ascertain all the facts, some unknown contingency could arise, we might be careless or complacent, so it is better to lay down a firm rule and on principle never leave heaters on in an empty house' (99-100). In this pattern rule following is simplified by following empirical similarities (100).

One of Kovesi's theses, already mentioned, is that reference to a principle does not make an act a moral act (98). This is borne out by the part played by universalization. In the first pattern of acting on principle, universality is not required. It might occur, but any attempt to achieve it would shift a case into the second pattern. In the second pattern universalization is required in order for the act to have any significance, while in the third pattern the sense of universality is that of always doing something (102). Neither of these is the type of universality required of moral judgements, despite what some utilitarians have said. Kovesi criticizes Moore for attributing to moral judgements the type of universality appropriate to the second pattern of acting on principle (84-85; Moore 1903, 156-157); the fact that the general insecurity which would ensue if murder were a general practice is not the reason for refraining from murder is shown by constructing a parallel argument, for example, about studying music to the exclusion of medicine.

Kovesi compares his second and third patterns with patterns of behaviour involved with rules, regulations and commands. There are reasons for making things matters of principle just as there are reasons for issuing rules, regulations and commands (94). Although, as he says, the commanding authority is absent in the case of principles, it is rather surprising that someone so concerned with our corporate life should fail to observe the part played by its parallel in the second pattern of acting on principle. Reference to a commanding authority is necessary but not sufficient in explaining why we obey commands. The parallel to the authority in explaining why we join in corporate acts of doing certain things on principle, in the second pattern, is the person who persuades us to take part in the act, to act on principle, and in both cases it is open to us to go our own way, to disobey the command or to refuse to take part in the corporate act. The third pattern of acting on principle, Kovesi says, is similar to the patterns of behaviour involved in obeying rules and regulations rather than commands, and, as is the case with rules and regulations, discrepancies between acting on principle and following our moral judgements are possible (102).

When we act on principle, Kovesi argues, we regard our act as amounting to a different act. In the first pattern this is straightforward; the refusal to eat tomatoes cannot be understood as being done on principle unless it is seen as a sincere expression of disapproval. The second pattern is a little more complex, for here disapproval is coupled with a wish to effect changes. The same act could be performed not by pouring seasonings on tomatoes to counteract their taste but by picketing

the offices of the Marketing Board, and to persuade others to join in the act one would talk about the Board and not tomatoes. Even in the third pattern of acting on principle, 'One could argue that here again we are performing a different act if we do what we do on principle. As in the previous case the movements of consuming the vegetable came under the formal element of disapproval of certain policies and not under the formal element of eating, so now the movements of putting out the flames come under the formal element of cautiousness and not under that of fire prevention' (100). Rather than ascertain and act on the likelihood of fire each time one leaves the house, one is cautious and always turns off the heater.

Now the point of this is that, although the reasoning behind acting on principle lends itself to being represented in a deductive argument, this is a red herring:

What we are asked to do when we are asked to do these things on principle is not to take note of a major premiss from which certain obligations may follow but to regard our act as amounting to a different act ... An appeal to a principle functions like a lever that shifts the reason for one's acts to a different ground. (97-98)

In the third pattern, however, 'the reference to a principle does not shift the reasons so far away from the actual reasons for not leaving heaters on in empty houses' (99). Although the reasoning behind the third pattern can be represented in a deductive argument, if we conduct our lives according to principles of this type the reasons for our acts and decisions are not the relevant facts of the situations; these only enable us to recognize the cases which fall under our principles (cf. Urmson 1950). And if this is taken as the typical

way of following a rule, argument A appears to be a guide for those who do not know the reasons for doing something (101).

Kovesi's point here is that, although this pattern of behaviour is sometimes called for, it is irrational to govern the whole of one's life by such principles; further, there may be discrepancies between such principles and one's moral judgements (102). Thus, although the patterns of reasoning involved in acting on principle lend themselves to being represented in deductive arguments and so might seem to support the view that practical reasoning is deductive rather than analogical, reference to a principle does not make an act a moral act: 'Whether the act is moral or not cuts across the distinction between doing something on principle or not on principle: it depends on the sort of reason we have for doing something either way' (98-99).

So far I have examined only one sense of 'principle'; there remains that sense in which judgements such as 'Lying is wrong' can be called principles. Does what Kovesi says apply here too? First, although there is a sense in which one can be said to act on such principles as 'Lying is wrong', Kovesi never means this by the expression 'acting on principle'. Indeed, he sometimes uses 'principle' so as to exclude the sense in which 'Lying is wrong' is a principle, as when he claims that being a principle is not a property of certain judgements (102). Here he has in mind only the sense of 'principle' in which people are said to act on principle, but elsewhere he applies the term 'principle' to such judgements as 'Lying is wrong', albeit reluctantly.

Why this reluctance? It is because Kovesi regards the distinction between moral judgements and moral principles as being far less important than that between both of these, on the one hand, and acting on principle, on the other. The distinction between 'Lying is wrong' as a moral principle and 'Killing is wrong' as a moral judgement hinges only on their subject terms: 'The difference between moral judgements and "moral principles" is that in the latter we have complete moral notions. Moral judgements ex hypothesi do not contain complete moral notions. This is why we have to make judgements by using the words "right" or "wrong" as discriminators and not as reminders' (109). This is very like saying that moral judgements are contingent while moral principles are necessary, and here the analogy with scientific and mathematical principles can properly be drawn, for these are so deeply embedded in their systems that they can be regarded as necessary truths. The formal element of a complete moral notion then enables us to follow a rule from the moral point of view, and in this sense provides us with a principle, but a person who refers to this sort of principle is not acting on principle (109-110).

Presumably this can be generalized: the formal element of any complete notion will enable us to follow a rule from the appropriate point of view, the point of view from which the notion is complete. But all notions are supposed to enable us to follow a rule; what then is special about complete notions? Here I should like to revive the question whether all terms are complete (see 4.2, above). If it always makes sense to ask from what point of view a rule is followed, and if formal elements

all enable us to follow a rule, then complete notions are not a special case. All terms would then be complete from some or other point of view.

There are, Kovesi says, few moral principles, few judgements of the form 'S is right (or wrong)' or 'S ought (or ought not) to be done'. Their number is restricted by the number of terms which may be substituted for 'S' (104), and only complete moral terms qualify. Thus even 'Lying is wrong' might be challenged, but that would be a purely verbal quibble, for Kovesi clearly wants us to understand 'lying' in the light of his 'savingdeceit' example (107f), to take 'lying' as a complete moral term. This done, 'We would also now have a new "principle": "savingdeceit is right (or good)", and in situations where we would perform an act of savingdeceit we would no longer be confronted by a "conflict of principles"' (108).

Is Kovesi saying that conflicts of principle can be resolved linguistically? Consider some detail of the 'savingdeceit' story. 'Lying' is a moral notion, but not, at present, a complete one. Most acts of lying are wrong, but some, such as giving false information to a homicidal maniac in order to save someone's life, are right. If we coin a new term, 'savingdeceit', to cover the right cases, Kovesi says, 'lying' becomes a complete term and then lying is always wrong. Thus we now have two complete terms: 'savingdeceit', all of whose instances are right, and 'lying', all of whose instances are wrong, whereas before we had no complete terms in this field. Before 'savingdeceit' was coined, when confronted with the need for a decision whether to tell the maniac the

truth and thus endanger someone's life, or tell a falsehood and thus tell a lie (old sense), we could not simply infer from the relevant descriptions which of these is the right thing to do. This, it seems, is what Kovesi would regard as a case of conflicting principles, although strictly speaking, in his terms, there are no principles here, as neither 'saving life' nor 'lying' (old sense) is a complete term. But more importantly, how are we to pick out the 'situations where we would perform an act of savingdeceit'? We know what to do in clear cases, but what if the victim is a cat? My point is that in such cases we must judge whether it is worse to lie (old sense) than to endanger someone's or something's life. Indeed, this goes on even in the clear cases; even here the question needs answering, however obvious the answer might be. It is the results of such judgements, over a wide variety of situations, that clarify the boundary between lying (new sense) and savingdeceit. Merely coining the terms does not tell us where the boundary lies.

I think that Kovesi would agree with this. The important issue, however, is whether he has succeeded in showing that practical reasoning is not in general deductive. I believe that he has. His argument, in brief, is that it is futile to try to construct a deductive argument by bridging the gap between a factual minor premiss and a moral judgement with a rule, regulation or command as major premiss, and the same applies to principles. On the one hand, acting on principle does not exhibit the type of universality required for a moral judgement to be deduced, and on the other hand, he says, a judgement with a complete moral term as subject term

'cannot be used as a major premise in a deductive argument. Without this "principle" we would not be able to recognize what the act is which should be stated in the "minor premise". But once we know what is the morally relevant description of our act we do not need a major premise to come to a conclusion' (110-111). The important part of practical reasoning is deciding upon the morally relevant description of an act, and no deductive argument can make this decision for us. The type of reasoning required here, Kovesi says, is not deductive but is analogical.

4.5 Decisions

Kovesi's claims that practical reasoning is in general analogical and that facts in the world can be reasons for doing one thing rather than another (73, 81, 114) can also be approached through what he says about the role of the individual with respect to practical reasoning. In chapter three I said that to say that a notion is objective, meaning that it is formed objectively, with interpersonal rules for its application, based on publicly recognizable features of the world and our lives, is not to say that it always can, let alone will, be applied objectively. But while people can be unobjective, our notions must be objective. What place does this leave for personal decisions in our lives? Kovesi claims that the fact that moral notions like all notions must be objective does not eliminate personal decisions from our lives: indeed, 'without a personal decision one's act is not a moral act'. But on the other

hand, 'our moral life cannot be based on decisions, nor our moral philosophy on the concept of decision. Without our moral notions there would be nothing to make decisions about; there would not even be a need to make decisions' (111).

It is of course the existentialists he has in mind here, and nowhere is his aim of elucidatory rather than polemical use of others' views (66) so clearly evident. While in the case of intuitionists, positivists and others he does briefly refer to the works of philosophers to whom these titles have been appended, not once does he refer to a particular existentialist philosopher or work. His claims about existentialism, then, are very general, and may be summarized as follows. It is because language is public that moral notions reflect the needs, wants, aspirations or ideals of anyone. This does not eliminate personal decisions from our moral life, but without moral notions there would be nothing to make decisions about, we would not even be in situations. All that the existentialists' examples show is that we do not have single terms to sum up some situations; they are only a more complex version of the 'savingdeceit' story, and there is no reason why the relevant facts of such complex situations should not be grouped together into one notion (111-112).

Thus the existentialist-type situations cannot be logically unique, as alleged, for they are describable by the help of terms, new if necessary, consisting of formal and material elements, and so it must be possible that there be other instances of the same situation (155). The new fact that is relevant to the rightness or

wrongness of what one of the characters in the situation is about to do, the fact which we might say makes the situation unique in fact but not logically, enables us, along with some higher order formal element, to look for other examples of the same situation (116-117). The existentialist, then, can claim that 'principles' are of no help in one's moral decisions only if the situation is such that it cannot be described by a complete moral term (142). But nothing prevents us from creating a complete moral term to describe the situation. Then it will be necessarily true that that type of action for that type of participant in that type of situation is right, or that it is wrong. In this sense 'principles' are of help in one's moral decisions.

The details of Kovesi's attack on existentialism merit attention. He starts with a simple example:

When we have to decide whether we should tell a lie in order to save someone's life, we would not be confronted by a need for a decision unless we knew that lying was wrong and that we have to save peoples' lives. Without these principles ... there would be nothing to make a decision about, there would not be a need for a decision, we would not even be in a situation. It is only by the help of moral principles or other moral judgements, or at least by the help of complete or incomplete moral notions that an existentialist can produce his examples of extraordinary situations where no principle can help the moral agent to make his decision. What these extraordinary examples show is only that we have not got a single term to sum up the whole situation in which one ought to do one thing rather than another. We need a whole novel to state all the relevant facts. (111-112)

In his working example, Kovesi spares us the novel. The plot is as follows: 'Georges is condemned to death by due process of law, and Philippe, the executioner,

alone knows that Georges is innocent. But Philippe also knows that Georges works for the Gestapo and is very near to discovering who are the leaders of the local resistance' (112). The existentialist would say that Philippe would have to make his own decision, as there is no principle on which he could act. Kovesi says that he would not have to make a decision at all were he not convinced that to execute Georges would be murder and therefore wrong:

Without accepting the validity of moral principles or the force of moral notions he would not be in a complex situation. One could say that he would not be in a situation at all. He would merely be in an excellent position to dispose of a Gestapo agent.

One of the relevant facts incorporated in the notion of murder is that the murderer has no legal right to take life. Our executioner has such a legal right technically. But is he murdering all the same if he knows that the person so condemned is innocent? His problem and decision is meaningful only within our conceptual framework, which framework is not the result of his decision. Again, when he knows the man to be innocent of one crime but not of another he not only makes his decision by the help of our moral notions such as 'innocence', but he has to make a decision because of the force of these notions. Without the appropriateness of one or another description providing him with reasons for doing one thing rather than another he would not have to make a decision. (112-113)

It is important not to read too much into these claims, for they need apply only to what, for the want of a better term, might be called moral acts. It is not universally true that when a person is in a position to do something but not in a situation he does not need to make a decision. Indeed, if he is in a position to do something then, provided he knows that he is in such a position, he must decide at least whether to take advantage of his position. Now the expression 'take

advantage' has different connotations in different contexts. Were we to say that Philippe must decide whether to take advantage of being in a position to dispose of a Gestapo agent, Kovesi could rightly point out that to say this presupposes moral notions. But such is not so, for example, in the case of being in a position to go away on vacation; to talk of taking advantage of such a position is morally neutral.

Bearing in mind, then, that Kovesi is concerned only with moral decisions, and not with run-of-the-mill decisions such as whether to have jam or honey on one's toast, we can proceed with the argument:

Our aim was to show that examples of extraordinary situations can be produced only by the help of moral notions and both the predicament and the decision are intelligible only in terms of these notions. The validity of our moral principles and other moral judgements cannot be denied in these extraordinary situations because without their validity the situations would not be extraordinary. These examples are only more complex versions of the sort of problem we considered when we coined the term 'savage-deceit'. What these examples show is only what we have seen already, that there can be complex situations the relevant facts of which are not grouped together into one notion. But there is no logical reason why this could not happen. (113-114)

Even without a term corresponding to such a notion, we could think of another example of the same situation. For example: 'A civil servant's task happens to be to send out notices to people who have been selected for an extended overseas service. He observes that someone's name was selected by mistake. He knows however that this person is engaged in an elaborate scheme to wreck someone's marriage and nothing but his removal from the country could save that marriage' (114). The reasoning

here is analogical. In looking for a formal element we are looking for other instances of the same situation; the processes are identical (114-115).

Although the situation does not come straightforwardly under any of our lower order moral notions, the search for a formal element is guided, as is Philippe's decision, by a higher order moral notion, that of right (or wrong); 'Without that it would not be an extraordinary moral situation. From other points of view, other than the moral point of view, our situation may be the same as straightforward moral situations, or two situations that are the same from the moral point of view may not be the same from other points of view. We are in an extraordinary moral situation precisely because we have found a new fact which is relevant to the rightness or wrongness of what we are about to do. This, along with the higher formal element enables us to look for other instances of the same situation' (116-117). The higher order moral notion, Kovesi says, makes the situation different from others, makes it extraordinary; therefore, 'We must be in possession of two sets of relevant facts, the facts that make a situation different, and those that would make it standard, from the moral point of view' (117), and if we find that none of the available descriptions are appropriate, and this is precisely what we are said to find in the existentialists' examples, 'it is only because we have found some new relevant facts that would make all available descriptions inappropriate. But these new facts must be the sort or type that would be relevant for deciding between possible alternative descriptions. So the facts that would make a situation allegedly "unique" are the sort of facts that are relevant for

deciding whether a situation should or should not come under a certain description, that is, they do not make a situation logically unique' (117). Whatever term we use to refer to the situation will function as a descriptive expression, not as a proper name; 'By being able to think of another Munich we are able to recognize what made Munich what it was, but in this case "Munich" is not the name of a city or even the name of a situation. What in fact happened at Munich was but one example of a "Munich". In time it may turn out to be not even the best example. ... There is a difference between introducing another Herr Quisling at a party and thinking of another Quisling' (118).

Kovesi says that to ask a moral agent who has made a decision in a complex situation whether he thinks that anyone else ought to do the same, is to ask him not the empirical question whether such a situation will occur again but a logical question: whether his decision was made because of his being what he is or because of the relevant facts of the situation. If the latter, he would say that anyone else should do the same (118-119). It is not quite clear why Kovesi talks of moral agents here. Clearly he does not imagine that the sorts of agents of whom we can request explanations of decisions divide into two types, moral and non-moral. Perhaps he is trying to emphasize that it is moral decisions he is discussing, but his remarks apply quite generally, and the question whether anyone else ought to do the same need not be confined to moral matters. It applies equally, for example, to methods of building a house, which can be decided on not only on the basis of the relevant facts of the situation, climate, earthquake risk and the like,

but also, within limits, in terms of the personal whim or even prejudice of the owner, architect or builder. If the decision is made on these grounds, the appropriate answer to the question whether anyone else should do the same is negative; the decision is made not on the basis of the relevant facts of the situation but because of the owner, architect or builder being what he is, a person with certain fancies or prejudices.

However, some features or aspects of a person's being what he is can be relevant facts of the situation. In the case of building houses, the owner's fancies and prejudices, but not those of the architect or builder, are to be taken into account. Kovesi puts the general point thus: 'Another person, however, by his presence could make a difference to the situation itself. Situations are not out there in the world, existing independently of us, so that human beings could just step in and out of them. Situations are not like puddles that we can step in and out of; to be in a situation is to be related to other human beings in a certain way' (119). There are, as it were, no situations vacant.

Kovesi claims that 'situation' is to some extent a moral notion (119). This claim is not explained, let alone defended, but what he has in mind is what he says about, for example, commands and moral judgements; the reasons for issuing a command need not be in the situation about which the command is made (79-80), while the validity of moral judgements can be impugned only by reference to the relevant facts of the situation (83). Later on he says that only a description of a situation can result in one's being under an obligation (160). The claims

about moral judgements and obligations lend some weight to the view that 'situation' is a moral notion, while the claim about commands, in admitting that we can talk of situations independently of moral questions, prevents him from saying that 'situation' is entirely a moral notion. However, he sometimes talks as if this were so, as when he says that without accepting the validity of moral principles or the force of moral notions, Philippe, in the existentialist story, would not be in a situation at all (112), and when he says that terms such as 'situation' and 'predicament' carve out some of the human relationships relevant for our moral notions (119-120).

Kovesi should at least have distinguished between those situations about which moral questions can be asked and in which decisions with moral implications are made, and the numerous situations which are of no moral import. There is a world of difference between saying that when one is under an obligation the obligation depends on the relevant facts of the situation, and saying that when one is in a situation what one ought to do can depend on the relevant facts of the situation. Kovesi makes the first of these claims, and would certainly agree with the second, so long as 'what one ought to do' is **not** confined to the moral 'ought'. The danger lies in not seeing that this term is used in a wide variety of contexts; there are situations where a builder ought to make floors of wood and those in which he ought to use concrete, just as there are situations in which one ought to tell the truth and those in which one ought at least to hold one's tongue. In saying that 'situation' carves out some of the human relationships relevant for our moral notions Kovesi comes close to overlooking this.

His treatment of intentions is very like that of decisions. The subject is broached through a possible objection: 'It may be assumed that according to my views we can simply redescribe our acts according to our inclinations. Furthermore, since the proper analysis of an act implies the notion of intentionality and since the agent himself can claim to know his intention in a way that nobody else can, the agent can be the final arbiter as to what he is doing' (129-130). To counter this objection Kovesi maintains that, as is the case with decisions, the intentionality which is and must be built into our moral notions is not the intention of any one person performing an act. We can intend only within a conceptual framework; 'When we intend to do something, or mean to do something, we can intend to do only what is describable by terms that embody references to intentionality, or, if there is no available term, we can intend to do something only if we know how our act would significantly differ from an act which is describable by our available terms' (130-131). And since a conceptual framework must be governed by interpersonal rules, the appropriateness of different descriptions cannot depend upon the agent's personal intention (131).

Now Kovesi puts this rather unfortunately, for of course he does not want to say that whether, for example, 'murder' or 'manslaughter' is the appropriate description of an act does not depend upon what the agent in fact intended. The agent's intentions, as he says, can feature among the relevant facts of a situation, but can do so only insofar as they are publicly accessible through the agent's behaviour or his avowals. Further, 'For the agent himself, his intention must become the

object of his reflection to form part of his assessment of what he is doing. When an appeal to a personal intention does succeed in changing the proper description of an act it succeeds by virtue of inter-personal rules that govern these procedures, and not by virtue of the fact that the agent knows what he intends to do in a way that nobody else can know it. Even if we could never be mistaken as to our own intentions, we can be mistaken as to the proper description of our act' (131-132; cf. 2.2, above, and Hampshire 1952, 10).

The point of the last remark is, presumably, that in making his intention the object of his reflection in order to arrive at the proper description of his act, the agent can make mistakes in his application of the interpersonal rules which govern the notions he employs. Hence his position with regard to his intentions, while different from that of anyone else, is not impregnable. The difference is that the agent can deliberately mislead others through his avowals or his behaviour, whereas although he can be mistaken as to the proper description of his act he cannot be said to mislead himself deliberately, at least in the way he can do this to others. All this is of course quite compatible with Kovesi's position. The proper description of an act depends on the relevant facts, not fictions, of the situation, including the agent's intentions. If an agent falsely declares that he did not intend to kill someone, for example, it is not a fact of the situation that he did not intend to kill, although his saying that he did not intend to kill is a fact of the situation in which he made his declaration, and is relevant to the proper description of that situation.

The question just discussed, Kovesi says, must be distinguished from the case of the well-meaning person with good intentions; 'Sometimes someone may be so radically unsuccessful in doing what he ought to have done that the only thing left for us to say is that his intentions were sincere or that he had good intentions. This seems to me to be quite a different sense of "intention" from those we were considering. Intending to do what is good is very different from having good intentions. We cannot intend to do what is good without intending to consider all the relevant facts, but we can have good intentions and be quite irresponsible' (132-133).

Kovesi's remarks about decisions arise out of his criticism of the existentialists, insofar as they claim that there can be complex situations in which an agent must simply decide to do one thing or another, unguided by moral 'principles'. The existentialists' chief mistake, he says, is to suppose that the material elements of their complex situations cannot be brought under an existing or new complete moral notion. The remarks about intentions lead to criticisms of some other theories of ethics:

Some theories of ethics claim that we justify our acts by reference to intentions, while others claim that we justify them by reference to consequences. In assessing the conflicting claims of these theories it is important to remember that different terms specify relevant facts in different fields and leave facts in other fields unspecified. If a term leaves the field of consequences unspecified, then what would make the act referred to by that term right or wrong could be the consequences of that act. But this is so only because the intention has already been specified by the term. If the intention is unspecified by a term, then an act referred to by such term could seem to serve as an example supporting a theory according to which

we justify our acts by reference to intentions.
(133)

The parallel to Kovesi's treatment of the existentialists would be to take examples of each type of term and form for each case a new complete moral notion. As, in each case, the act was justified by reference to either consequences or intentions, and referred to by a term specifying relevant facts from the other one of these fields, facts from both fields must in both cases be relevant to whether the act is right. Thus, the complete moral notions formed would have to specify the relevant facts from both fields, and so the original examples would no longer even appear to support the intention-based and consequence-based theories. Likewise for intuitionism, which gains apparent support from complete terms (133), one merely has to suppose our language to be devoid of complete terms, which would be an inconvenience but not an impossibility. In a language which does not contain such terms as 'murder' and 'steal' an intuitionist theory is most implausible.

It should be noted, however, that some intuitionists have been aware of the distinction between complete and incomplete terms. Ross questions Ayer's use of what he calls the question-begging term 'stealing', pointing out that whereas to say 'You acted wrongly in stealing that money' is to say no more than that you stole the money, as the term 'steal' already connotes wrongful action; to say 'In saying that which you did not believe you acted wrongly' is to say more than that you said something you did not believe (Ayer 1946, 107; Ross 1939, 34). Although in the introduction to the second edition of Language, Truth and Logic Ayer refers to the section of Foundations of Ethics in which this criticism is made, he appears to

miss the point, commenting merely that criticism has been directed more often against the positivistic principles on which the emotive theory of ethics has been assumed to depend than against the theory itself (Ayer 1946, 20).

Certainly Ross does make the former type of criticism too, but not exclusively. Further, Ross' first criticism I mentioned is precisely the one Kovesi levels against the positivists: that a positivist can claim that words like 'wrong' add nothing significant to our judgements only if (Kovesi says 'if' but must mean 'only if') what we judge to be wrong is described by a complete moral term (142). 'Stealing' is a complete moral term; 'saying that which you did not believe' is not. It is necessarily true that stealing is wrong, and to say that something, which has already been judged to be stealing, is wrong, adds nothing significant to the judgement, nor does Ayer's 'tone of horror' (26; Ayer 1946, 107). On the other hand it is not a necessary truth that saying that which you do not believe is wrong, and to say that something which has already been judged to be a case of saying that which you do not believe is wrong does add something significant to the judgement, and a tone of horror in the voice does not do justice to what is added. In Kovesi's terms, which accord well with what Ross says, in the former case 'wrong' functions as a reminder and in the latter case as a discriminator. (An equally brief but very different refutation of emotivist and command versions of positivist theories of ethics is contained in Hughes 1958, section I; see also Searle 1969, 139).

4.6 Facts and reasons

At the beginning of the chapter I mentioned two very general claims made by Kovesi: the claim that, contrary to what for example Hume and Hare say, facts in the world can be reasons for doing one thing rather than another (73, 81), and the claim that moral reasoning is not deductive but is analogical (114). Having examined Kovesi's treatment of theories which deny them, I shall now attend to the part which these two claims play in his own account of practical reasoning.

Facts in the world are frequently mentioned as being reasons for doing something, as for example when Kovesi says that the presence of a child or a 'No smoking' sign in a railway compartment is a reason for not smoking (76); and several of Kovesi's general theses involve the claim, as for example when he says that the reasons for following advice and moral judgements must be the relevant facts of the situation in which the act is performed while those for following rules, regulations and commands and for acting on principle need not be (79-82, 88, 94), and in the case of moral judgements these same facts are also the reasons for what is said (82, 90). Other examples are found in his reference to one's disapproval of something, and to one's desire to effect changes or one's wish not to rely each time on the actual reasons for doing something, as reasons for doing something on principle (94, 99).

However, not all of Kovesi's references to reasons

for doing something clearly involve facts in the world: for example, he talks of referring to a general principle as a reason for not smoking in compartments with a 'No smoking' sign (77); he says that a moral judgement containing a moral notion gives the reason for doing what we are told to do (88-89); he says we may call certain judgements principles because they give the point, rationale or reason for what we do (108-109); and in the kerosene heater example one might say that the reason for adopting the principle is not a fact but is a probability. Now it should first be noted that Kovesi does not claim that the reasons for doing what we do must always be facts; he only denies that they never are, and so he can allow other sorts of reasons. The most likely candidates are probabilities, as in the kerosene heater example, and judgements, as in the case of 'Lying is wrong' which, containing a moral notion, is said to give us the reason for not lying (89). Some simplification appears possible. There is no good ground for distinguishing between facts and probabilities as reasons for acting, as on the one hand matters of empirical fact are never logically certain, and on the other hand it would be irrational to accept as a reason for acting anything but the most likely of a set of relevant possible states of affairs. As to judgements, these provide a reason for acting only if their subject terms apply to the situation, and thus insofar as it is a question of fact whether a term does provide the correct relevant description of a situation, in the end the reason for acting is given by facts. Of course, to support the stronger claim, which Kovesi does not explicitly make, that the reasons for doing one thing rather than another are always, as opposed to sometimes, facts in the world, would require a far more thorough

examination of what can be cited as reasons for doing one thing rather than another.

What is central to Kovesi's argument is the question of how it is that we apply general terms, the subject terms of the judgements just mentioned, to various particular things, acts and situations. It is here that his two theses connect, for this is the move that is made analogically:

By analogical reasoning I do not mean that we have certain paradigm cases that we know to be good or right, and then by analogy we work out what to do in similar cases. ... When we are looking for a formal element we are looking for that which alone is common to a variety of things or actions. This common element we are looking for is not one of the empirical similarities but that which brings a variety of things together as examples of the same thing. Things, happenings and situations differ from and resemble each other in many ways; what we regard as the same depends on the formal element of our notions. But sometimes the appropriate formal element is precisely what we are looking for. We can direct our attention to the appropriate formal element by trying to consider what we would or would not regard as instances of the same something. By trying to think of another instance of a situation that would be the same we are trying to think what makes the situation to be what it is. (114-115)

This passage immediately follows a discussion of existentialist-type situations, and refers explicitly to the formation of notions rather than their application, but it applies also to the latter. In particular, the type of analogical reasoning Kovesi has in mind, where we 'direct our attention to the appropriate formal element by trying to consider what we would or would not regard as instances of the same something' is, in Kovesi's view, precisely the sort of reasoning we employ when trying to

decide whether one of our existing vocabulary of notions, not ignoring those well up in a hierarchy, should be applied to a thing, act or situation. 'Suppose someone is trying to buy flowers, but cannot find any. If he then buys a packet of paper streamers we can say that he was trying to buy decorations, but if he comes home with a box of chocolates, we can say that he was looking for a present. If we want to find out what someone is doing who is, say, leaning against a door frame, we need to find out what he would do instead which would amount to the same thing. If he sits down, then we can say that he was resting; if he stands a beam against the frame then we can say that he was supporting it' (60). It is because Kovesi's claim applies to the application of notions as well as their formation that his two theses, that facts in the world can be reasons for doing something and that moral or practical reasoning is not deductive but is analogical, are closely connected.

Note also that Kovesi's claim about analogical reasoning should apply to all our notions, not just to moral notions. It is central to his whole account of language that when we decide what is the correct description of a thing, act or situation we should ask what we would or would not regard as instances of the same. He states explicitly that practical reasoning is not a special case: 'In order to arrive at this practical conclusion about anyone as against a theoretical conclusion about any thing, we do not need to turn to additional rules of rationality but to a different field of the application of the same rules of rationality (159-160). Just as we are told to seek the difference between moral and other notions not in their logic but in their

contents, so we are told to seek the differences between practical and other reasoning not in their rules but in their fields of application.

Of course, Kovesi does not say that all reasoning is analogical. The term 'reasoning' applies to a wide range of activities. For the present it is sufficient to distinguish between two types of application: on one hand, the term is applied to the activity of judging one thing to be the same as another in a certain respect, and on another it is applied to the activity of argumentation. It is only to the former type of activity that Kovesi's claim applies. If, unlike Kovesi, I were to attempt to state the argument in very general terms, it would run as follows: arguments are used to move from one proposition to another; here it can be proper to speak of deduction; but arguments cannot provide their own premisses; to assert a premiss involves judging that a certain predicate in fact applies to some thing, and the appropriate type of reasoning for making such judgments is, ultimately, not deductive but is analogical.

Chapter Five DESCRIBING THE WORLD OF EVALUATION

5.1 Description and evaluation

So far I have concentrated on one of the two major themes in Kovesi's moral philosophy, that the differences between moral and other notions, between moral and other judgements, and between practical and theoretical reasoning, are differences not of logic but of subject matter. I turn now to the other major theme, his criticism of the traditional distinction between description and evaluation.

In the preface to Moral Notions Kovesi says that he studied in Oxford (vii); apart from his interest in and often opposition to Hare, a major influence seems to have been Austin. Kovesi has inherited Austin's distaste for clear-cut dichotomies (Austin 1962a, 3-4), and in particular that between description and evaluation (Austin 1962, 148). In neither case however is the distinction simply rejected. Austin's work can be regarded as depicting the intertwining of fact and value or of description and evaluation, rather than discrediting the distinction (see Cohen 1969, 441-444; Quine 1969, 90; Strawson 1973, 66-68). Likewise, Kovesi says not that there is no distinction between description and evaluation but that the distinction has traditionally been incorrectly drawn.

Before attending to the detail I shall summarize Kovesi's position. Early in the book he says that the difference between 'good' and terms like 'yellow' and

'rectangular' is not the same as that between description and evaluation, for on the one hand 'good' is not a typical evaluative term and on the other hand colour words and geometric terms are not typical descriptive terms (1-2, 9). Evaluation, he says, 'is not an icing on a cake of hard facts' (25); it is not the case that so-called 'descriptive' statements state how things are in the world while moral judgements express our attitudes to that world, for moral judgements are not about that world; neither is it the case that moral judgements express our attitudes, evaluations or whatever to or of another world, the world of our interpersonal life (148-149). The proper field of the activity of evaluation is not that of our moral life (149), for in it we are not evaluating: 'When one makes a moral decision one does not choose the good instance of an act that falls under a certain description but works out the proper description of the situation on the basis of the relevant facts, and understands the significance of the description' (157); if the description involves moral notions then evaluation is redundant, while if it does not involve them then evaluation is irrelevant (157-158). The activity of moral evaluation, as opposed to typical evaluation where we pick out the good or bad instances of what comes under a certain description, is carried out when we consider and decide what is relevant to making a particular act right or wrong (122). What Kovesi tries to show is that 'moral notions do not evaluate the world of description; we evaluate that world by the help of descriptive notions. Moral notions describe the world of evaluation' (161).

A crude example: suppose that we suspect that an act was an act of murder. What we must do is decide, on the

basis of the evidence, whether certain descriptions such as 'killing', 'sane' and 'intentional' apply and whether certain others such as 'provocation' and 'duress' do not. On the basis of this we evaluate the act, decide whether it is right, wrong or indifferent, and if wrong, whether it is very wrong or just a little. We can then describe our evaluation of the act with a moral term such as 'murder', 'killing' or 'tyrannicide'. This seems to be about what Kovesi has in mind when he says that our moral notions do not evaluate the world of description but describe the world of evaluation. Now some detail.

If the proper field of the activity of evaluation is not that of our moral life, what is it? Two activities which might appear to be evaluation are dismissed by Kovesi. The first of these is exemplified as follows: if, in response to a claim like 'This is murder' we ask for a description of what has happened, we are not contrasting description with evaluation; we are asking for the relevant facts, asking whether the material elements which entitle us to use the term 'murder' are present, asking for a substantiation of the original description (149-151). Second, and similarly, it is not the case that when we say 'This is a table' we are describing while when we deliberate whether a particular object is a table we are evaluating; again we are concerned only with the question of the proper description, for which we have to be in possession of the relevant facts and of the appropriate formal element, and a decision is called for, Kovesi says, in standard as well as borderline cases, for a statement of the material elements never entails a statement of what a thing is (150-151; but see 2.6, above).

Kovesi makes a related point earlier. There is, and indeed must be, a common descriptive element, 'your shutting the door soon', in the speech acts in which I command you to shut the door, or advise you to, or say that you ought to, or predict that you will shut the door (his example is the same as that in Pitcher 1964, 5-6):

We may call this the 'what' of these speech acts, since it tells us what it is that we should or shall do. The 'what' in our examples so far does not tell us why we should do what we are told to do. When we are interested in the connection between 'description' and 'evaluation', we are interested precisely in this question, namely whether we can give reasons for saying that you must or ought to do something by reference to some facts that can be stated in 'descriptive statements'. Since as we have seen in our examples, the 'what'--the supposed 'descriptive element'--does not tell us why we should do what we should do we may come to the wrong conclusion that no description can be given as the reason for doing something. But the 'descriptive element' does not give us the reason why we should do what we are told to do--not because it is a 'descriptive element', but because it is not the relevant description we are interested in. The 'what' tells us only what we should do, and the set of facts we should be interested in is the set that gives us the reasons for doing what we are told to do. Examples of this other set of facts could be in this case that there is a draught and I have a cold or that there is noise and we want to discuss something, or in the case of a moral judgement, the fact that there is a tetanus patient in a hospital room who should be protected from noise. But in none of these cases does the 'what' tell us why we should do or say something, not even in the case of predictions, unless we are clairvoyant. (87)

This is very like what Strawson calls Austin's 'viewing with a fairly cold eye the notion of the propositional abstraction' (Strawson 1973, 62), but Kovesi's reason is not like the relevant one given by Strawson,

'that just as the facts of the case bear on the truth or falsity of a constative, so the facts of the case bear on the warrantedness or unwarrantedness of an imperative' (Strawson 1973, 65; see Austin 1962, 141, 144); Kovesi's point is that the facts which are relevant to the truth of a constative are not the same as those relevant to the warrantedness of an imperative or other performative speech act with the same 'descriptive content' (86-87). In terms of the current 'is-ought' controversy, then, Kovesi is in a way on the side of those who say that we can move from an 'is' to an 'ought', but, and the proviso is important, he accuses them of concentrating on the wrong facts; of course we cannot move from 'The cat is on the mat' to 'The cat ought to be on the mat', but this is 'not because one is a "descriptive statement" and the other is an "ought judgement", but because the fact that the cat is on the mat is not a reason for saying that the cat ought to be on the mat. If there are reasons for saying that the cat ought to be on the mat they are a different set of facts' (88).

So much for unsuccessful candidates for the activity of evaluation: 'The proper field of the activity of evaluation is not ... when we have to decide about alternative descriptions but when we have to decide about the qualities of particulars falling under one and the same description. We always evaluate under a certain description. We judge something to be a good such and such' (151). In this connection we are told to 'distinguish between the many particular instances of a thing when these instances are particulars in the world of space and time, and the many instances of higher order notions when these instances are other notions. The

proper field of evaluation is the field of particulars in the world of space and time, and only in very theoretical discussions do we occasionally evaluate notions as instances of higher order notions. ... Only in theoretical discussions would we say that tables and chairs are good instances or examples of furniture' (156-157). Also, for evaluation to be possible, it must at least be possible that there be more than one instance of a thing. This is not because we need several instances for comparison, but because 'We can evaluate something as an x only when x tells us what the thing is supposed to be, and this can be done only by a description. Descriptions, unlike proper names, can provide standards. It is significant the philosophers who claim that in the world there is no value attempt to "describe" that world by a process more akin to naming than describing. The dichotomy between description and evaluation should be called the dichotomy between naming and evaluation' (156).

These are the conditions under which evaluation is possible. But if the so-called 'dichotomy between description and evaluation' as traditionally drawn is a philosophers' myth, what is the connection between these two activities? Kovesi's answer is that 'there is a close logical connection between description and the evaluation of particulars falling under the description. The formal element of a notion determines what are the relevant qualities falling under a description, and we judge particulars to be good or bad by reference to their qualities relevant to the description, so it follows that the formal element of a notion is logically connected to the evaluation of particulars' (154; see 2.6, above). The same point is made earlier, when Kovesi says that

argument A ties evaluative judgements to factual considerations, because if we judge one thing to be good then unless we can point to a relevant difference which entitles us to judge another object differently we must judge the other to be good also (29). Of course it is the formal element that tells us which differences are relevant and entitle us to say that the other object is not good.

It might at this stage be thought that if what Kovesi says is correct we should be able to list such relevant facts, to give a list of 'good-making' characteristics for each formal element, or, rather, for the formal element of each notion which can be modified by 'good'. The formal element of 'table', for example, should tell us what characteristics are relevant to something's goodness as a table, and so we should be able to agree upon and list these. Likewise not only for knives, chairs and so on but also for theatrical performances and beverages. Yet it is true to say that we do not always agree, even when we can think of candidates. Were I to reply on Kovesi's behalf, an obvious first move would be to recall that the formal element of a notion is difficult to specify. Thus one reason why we might fail to agree to a list of 'good-making' characteristics could be that we had failed to find even a list of candidates.

This would not cover the frequent cases where we have candidates all right, but each of us has his own. For one of us a painting should be representational, for another abstract, for one it should be vividly coloured, for another subdued, and so on. Of what help is attending to the formal element of the notion of a painting in

resolving such disputes? The obvious move open to Kovesi here is to say that in such cases there is not just one formal element, that different people have rather different notions of a painting, theatrical performance or beverage, or at least regard different parts of the formal element as being central. This does not endanger the public nature of language. People do not need to have the same notions, in the appropriate sense of 'have', to understand each other. It is not a condition of putting yourself in someone else's shoes that the feet be the same size (see 5.2, below). Note too that disagreements as to what is a good instance need not be accompanied by disagreements as to what is an instance at all. In those cases where 'good' can properly modify a term, the formal element's function of providing a standard can be thought of this way: of all the considerations which are relevant to whether the term applies, some are regarded as being more central or important than others (see 1.2, above; cf. Wittgenstein 1964, pgh 74). If all of the important ones are met by something it will be a superlative instance, if most of them are, a good instance, and so on. But disagreement as to which considerations are most important can be quite independent of disagreement as to which are relevant at all.

As I have said, Kovesi maintains that the proper field of evaluation is that of particulars in space and time, that we always evaluate these under a certain description, judging them to be a good such and such, and that in this we are assisted by the formal element of the notion of a such and such. The last point is put differently when he says:

The evaluation of particulars is possible not because we value something in so far as it falls under a description but because the description functions like a standard to which particulars approximate. We saw in the first chapter that no term can be reduced to a statement of, or an enumeration of, its material elements. This also means that we can never equate or identify what we say a thing is with any of its instances or examples, and that all observable particulars are instances or examples of what they are. I am claiming that apart from such exceptional cases like the standard metre in Paris, there are no paradigm particulars, but rather that, as a supposed paradigm case would serve as a standard for other particulars, our notions of things serve as standards for all the respective particulars that come under them. The various particulars exemplify more or less what they are supposed to be under a certain description. It is by virtue of this fact that we can evaluate them. (155)

The claim here about paradigm cases connects with one of Kovesi's remarks on Aristotle, whom he thinks to be correct in saying that the meaning of 'good' is to be explained by analogy, but mistaken in thinking this to be a refutation of rather than an elucidation of Plato's views (Nicomachean Ethics 1096b); for what the Greek means is, according to Kovesi, that to find out what we mean by saying that something is good we do not judge by analogy with a paradigm case but consider what is common, for example, to sight being in the body and intelligence being in the mind (32-33). The standard is not, as it were, external to our notions. What is common is to be found within them, in the needs and interests incorporated in their formal elements. Indeed, even a so-called paradigm particular could not function as a standard independently of notions. For example, the standard metre in Paris is a piece of platinum which, in itself, is of no use to us in measurement, for to use it we must know to

attend to its length rather than its mass or colour or its potential as a weapon. We need, that is, not only the standard metre, but also the notion of length.

Recall Kovesi's early claim that the prominence of the formal element of a notion varies directly with the number of ways we can exemplify a thing, and that something can be good in so many 'empirical' ways that one is inclined to say that 'good' is just a formal element (35). Recall also that, on different grounds, I did not share Kovesi's inclination (see 1.4, above). Nor was I happy with his application of argument A, but I argued that apparent counter-examples could be accommodated by allowing relations as well as one-place predicates as material elements (see 2.5, above). There are good reasons for saying that 'good' is not a one-place predicate. For example, to explain the saying that a bird in the hand is worth, or is as good as, two in the bush, we must do two things: specify the description under which the birds are being evaluated ('as a meal'), and explain how a bird's location is relevant to its evaluation under this description. Whether a bird is good as a meal depends not only on such one-place predicates as its size, weight and texture but also on the relation between its location and that of the consumer, for if it is too far away it is no good as a meal. Of course to substantiate the general claim that 'good' is not a one-place predicate would require more than one example; I should have to examine other descriptions under which things can be evaluated, along with other uses of 'good'. Fortunately this work has already been done, for my claim that 'good' is not a one-place predicate is equivalent to the claim that 'good' is a syncategorem, or that it is

attributive, which have been plausibly argued elsewhere (see Katz 1966, 288-317; Geach 1956).

Although the standard expression used in the evaluation of particulars is 'a good such and such', this is not the sole expression thus employed; 'Other constructions and phrases using the word "good" fall into the pattern of "a good such and such" with one notable exception, when "good to ..." is used meaning good towards and not good with an infinitive. In this case we are not saying that someone or something is a good instance of a such and such but are talking about human relationships that can bring us back to the field of morals' (151-152). The other constructions Kovesi mentions are as follows:

We do not use the phrase 'good for' when the object is for what we would want to judge it good for. We do not say that telephones are good for ringing up people ... We can say however that telephones are good for, say, keeping the door open. We use the phrase 'good for' when we use something for what it is not for, when we want to evaluate something under a different description, e.g. in this case good as a doorstop. The phrase 'good as' should be followed by a description, and the phrase indicates under what description we are evaluating something. Sometimes no single term exists for a new description and this may obscure the fact that all these phrases conform to the pattern of 'a good such and such'. To evaluate skills we use the phrase 'good at'. ... 'Good to ...' when it is followed by a verb, falls into the same pattern: what is good to eat is good as food or as nourishment. (152)

All this is essentially correct, although usage is not quite so uniform as Kovesi supposes. We do, for example, say not only that aspirin is good as medicine but also that it is good for relieving pain, and if what Kovesi says about 'good for ...' were always true then we

should not say the latter, since relieving pain is just what aspirin is for. But this is a minor matter. The important and undisputed point is that we always evaluate particulars under a certain description, and that the expressions 'a good ...', 'good as ...', 'good for ...', 'good at ...', and 'good to ...' followed by a verb, are used in this activity.

5.2 Complete terms and evaluation

Some other uses of 'good' are quite different, being concerned not with the evaluation of particulars but with certain logical features of our notions. Consider the 'savingdeceit' example: it is not always wrong to lie, but by forming the notion of savingdeceit we exclude those cases that are not wrong; we can then say that lying is always wrong, or simply that lying is wrong, and that savingdeceit is right or good (106-109); we have turned the notion of lying into a complete moral notion. But, as Kovesi says, 'we have not made lying any worse than it was before, nor would an act of lying be any better if in the absence of these refinements of language we could only say that lying was sometimes wrong' (121). This last point is most important. To say that something is always wrong or always good is not to say anything about how wrong or good it is, but is to say something about the notion rather than what it denotes. In a dispute as to whether, say, lying is always wrong, we should not attend to how wrong the various instances of lying are, but to whether the notion of lying is formed so as to exclude all the instances of saying what is not

the case which we regard as not being wrong.

Kovesi goes on to state his claims generally:

Let us say that a, b, c, d, are instances of an act X. If a and b are good while c and d are bad we can say that X is sometimes good. If by the help of two new terms we separated the first two by calling them Z while we call the second two Y, then we could say that Z is always good. But just because Z is always good, if we did Z we would not be performing a better act than if we did X when it was good to do it, for in both cases we would be doing a or b. Nor would we be any less culpable of doing either c or d if we did them under the description of X just because X is sometimes good. (122)

Like 'always wrong', the expression 'always good' tells us something about the term to which it is applied, and only secondarily about the merits of the particular things, acts or situations to which the term applies. Certainly they must all be good, but how good they are is beside the point.

There are, however, differences between particular things and acts; 'To make a particular thing which is sometimes good into one which is always good we have to use a screwdriver or some other means in order to effect changes in it. To make an act which is sometimes good into one which is always good we do not exert some special effort in the performance of the act to make it better; instead, we have to specify the circumstances under which the act would be good, or provide the relevant facts that were missing from the description and without which we could not judge it to be always good' (125). For example in the 'savingsdeceit' story, by further specifying the relevant facts we made lying always wrong (121).

Kovesi considers the possible objection that we can

never succeed in specifying the relevant facts sufficiently to make an act always good (125). First, he says that our task is eased by the fact that, of the infinite number of facts one could mention in connection with anything, only facts which can make a difference to the situation are relevant; there is a limited number of types or categories of facts, and whole categories can be ruled out as being irrelevant (126). Presumably by 'limited' he means 'finite', for he gives no argument to show that there are no more than, say, seventeen, or seventeen thousand, categories of facts. And, as finite numbers can be large (in mathematicians' language, without limit), this move hardly solves the practical problem on hand. Of course Kovesi might believe that we can enumerate some finite list of all the categories of facts and show that there are no more, but he neither says nor establishes this. Indeed, he does not seem to realize that a solution to his problem requires not that we know that the number of categories of facts is limited but that we know what the limit is, and that it be relatively small. Knowledge of the first sort allows that there be categories of facts other than those on our list.

What we are aiming at, of course, when we are trying to specify the relevant facts sufficiently to make an act always good, is a complete term, for such a term specifies something about the relevant facts in all the possible fields; the only relevant facts are those that will affect the proper use of the term (127). If we have a complete moral term, the type of act to which it refers will be always good (or bad). The problem then is how to arrive at such a term. Kovesi's method will not necessarily work, and could never be shown to have worked, and

if it does not work the only approach would seem to be to deem a certain term to be complete. Three problems arise here. The first is that if we start off without a complete term and somehow arrive at one, the new term will not refer to precisely the same particulars as were referred to by the original one. This being so, it will not be strictly correct to say that we have made an act always good or always bad, always right or always wrong. In the 'savingdeceit' example, the reference of 'lying' changes, and so the act which is always wrong at the end of the process is not the same as that which was only sometimes wrong at the beginning.

An apparently more serious problem is that making a notion complete in a way fossilizes it (cf. Wittgenstein 1969, pgs 656-657). Consider the 'savingdeceit' story once more, where Kovesi says that by further specifying the relevant facts we made lying always wrong. Now to be quite sure that we will not come up with another class of acts, like acts of lying but not acts of savingdeceit, which we will not want to say are wrong, we must rule out the possibility by fiat. We must stipulate that lying is always wrong (cf. 4.4, above). This, as it were, fixes or fossilizes the notion of lying; it is no longer so free to change as our needs and interests change. Of course this resistance to change is not absolute. Certainly, if 'lying' becomes a complete term we can apply it to and only to acts which we regard as wrong, but we are still free to change our minds as to what facts are relevant to the rightness or wrongness of the uttering of falsehoods. We could come to regard as relevant facts from fields hitherto considered irrelevant, and vice versa. And Kovesi could agree with all of this.

After all, he is simply pointing out that 'always good' etc. tell us about the logic of the terms to which they apply rather than the merits of their instances. In no way is he advocating the use of complete terms; rather, he is at pains to point out the philosophical dangers of attending unduly to these terms (142-143).

The third problem is logical. Kovesi's views on the expressions 'always good' and 'always wrong' seem to imply that these expressions can apply only to complete terms. Is this so? If someone disputes a claim that a certain type of act (S) is always wrong, is the only correct way of settling the dispute to determine whether the term 'S' is complete, formed completely from the point of view of the wrongness of the act? Certainly this would sometimes be the correct course, say if the term were 'murder', but is this always so? For example, people disagree as to whether masturbation is always wrong. Some hold that it is prohibited by Holy Writ, and others hold that this, even if true, is not relevant to whether it is right or wrong. Now one possibility is that the disputants have rather different notions of masturbation, or regard different parts of its formal element as being central, so that one thinks that it is a complete moral notion while the other does not. If this is not so, then one of the disputants is contradicting himself when he says that masturbation is (or is not) always wrong, or else 'always wrong' can be applied to terms which are not complete. These are the logical possibilities. Each of them presupposes that such disputes can be settled, be they verbal or not. On this question Kovesi does not commit himself, but I am inclined to say that in one sense the disputes, if verbal, can be

settled, while in another they cannot. The sense in which verbal disputes can be settled is that in which we can come to understand each others' notions without in fact having the needs etc. incorporated in their formal elements. The sense in which it may be impossible to settle them is that in which we cannot always have, as opposed to understand, each others' notions. No one can in fact have all of the needs and interests incorporated into the formal elements of all notions, but there is no logical bar to knowing what it would be to have any of them.

Kovesi considers three classes of use of 'good': 'a good such and such', 'good as ...', 'good at ...', 'good for ...', and 'good to ...' followed by a verb, are used when we evaluate particulars under a description; 'always good' and 'sometimes good' tell us about ~~the~~ logic of the terms to which they apply rather than about the merits of the particulars to which these latter terms apply. The third class is, 'unconditionally good', 'good in itself' and 'good without qualification', which, along with 'always good', are contrasted with the expression 'highest good', as follows: despite many philosophers' beliefs to the contrary, the judgements that a certain act is always good, or good in itself, or good without qualification, or unconditionally good, do not imply that the act is the highest good. In preparation for this, Kovesi makes some remarks about particular acts.

The first of these I have already mentioned. An instance of an act which is always good need not be better than a good instance of an act which is only

sometimes good: 'An act of saying something that is not the case with the intention to deceive, when it is good,--if for instance it saves your brother from a maniac--may be much better than an act which is always good, like consoling a distressed child' (123). The same of course applies to people. The little girl with the little curl, in the nursery rhyme, was by no means always good, but when she was good she was very very good; another little girl might be good always but never as good as she, at her best. In this respect judgements about human acts are unlike judgements about particular things. For example, a motor car which is always good is better than one which is only sometimes good, and there must be something wrong with a particular thing if it is only sometimes good. But in the case of acts, one which is always good need be no better than one which is only sometimes good, and we cannot even talk of particular acts as being sometimes good or right (124-125). This he says is because 'Human acts are not identifiable particulars in the way in which animals and marbles are' (123).

Unfortunately Kovesi does not say why this is so. A reason which is consistent with what he says is that animals and marbles are persisting objects in the world of space and time whereas particular human acts are events. Our methods of identifying objects and events differ. When we say that a particular object is sometimes good we are thinking in terms of duration, just as when we say that the weather in Wellington is sometimes good. Now we might say the same of a particular event; we might say that our holiday was sometimes good but mostly not, meaning, as with the car or the weather, that

it was good some of the time. We just could not mean in either case that some but not all of the instances are or were good, for we are talking about a particular.

The distinction which matters for Kovesi's argument is not that between human acts and particular things, however this may be spelled out, but that between classes and individuals. The claim that something which is always good need not be better than something which is only sometimes good applies to all classes: for example, Peugeots are (almost) always good and Jaguars are often no good at all, but a good Jaguar is better than any Peugeot. In fact, the claim involving 'good' is but an instance of a more general truth. Another instance is this: rubies are always red, but it does not follow that they are any redder than roses, which are only 'sometimes' red.

Kovesi makes the same claim about the expressions 'good in itself', 'good without qualification' and 'unconditionally good'. We must not, he says, yield to the temptation of thinking that what is unconditionally good is the condition of, and thus better than, other goods. As with 'always good', it is to complete terms that 'good in itself', 'good without qualification' and 'unconditionally good' apply. These phrases do not express an extra evaluation of particular things or acts, but tell us that the terms to which they apply are formed completely from the point of view of goodness (134-135): 'an act specified by a complete term can be said to be good in itself. It is good in itself because all that we need to know in order to judge it good is incorporated in the term that specifies that act in question. The

same is true about "good without qualification" and "unconditionally good". We have to give further qualifications to an incomplete description or specify certain conditions in order to be able to judge these acts always good. Once these qualifications and/or conditions are incorporated in a term then an act referred to by that term can be said to be good without qualification or unconditionally good' (135). The conclusion, then, is the same as in the case of 'always good': 'We have seen, however, that an act which is describable by a complete term may not be as good as an act whose description requires a host of qualifications. So these judgements are not about the merits or value of our acts but about the logical features of the terms that we use in talking about our acts' (135-136).

Many philosophers, Kovesi says, have tried to find a highest good, and some of these, including Moore and Kant and, in Aristotle's mistaken opinion, Plato (136-142), have thought they have found this in what is always good, good without qualification, good in itself, or unconditionally good, thinking that these must be better than what is not always good, good only with certain qualifications, not good in itself, or not unconditionally good; 'Someone may go even further than saying that these acts are better, and claim that an act or state of affairs which can be described by these terms must be the highest good or one of the highest goods. Indeed, if someone were to look for a highest good he would not settle for anything less than what can be described in these terms, and once he found such a thing, surely, he may think, he must have found the highest good. It may even be assumed that we could find the foundations of morality this

way, for what is unconditionally good must surely be the condition of all other goods' (134-135). Kovesi's argument, that the difference between that which is always good and that which is sometimes good, and likewise for 'good in itself', 'good without qualification' and 'unconditionally good', is not one of degree of value or merit but degree of specification (136), thwarts all such attempts to find a highest good.

5.3 Evaluation and valuing

Kovesi warns us not to confuse the evaluation of particulars under a description with valuing things for what they are, but before examining this distinction, I wish to consider some rather obscure remarks he makes about value: 'In an important sense, in the world there is no value and there are no murders, tables, houses, accidents or inadvertent acts. But our language is not about that world in which there is no value or no tables, houses, accidents or inadvertent acts. That world, the world of raw data, cannot be described for the sense of that world also lies outside it and the very description of it, likewise, lies outside it. Thereof one really cannot speak' (19; cf. Wittgenstein 1922, 6.41, 7). He goes on to say that the nearest analogy in our language to words which would mirror the world of data are colour words. Mayo comments that he seems deliberately to ignore the question whether there are any other words which do this (Mayo 1969, 287). Certainly he does ignore the question, but even if he does so deliberately, the move is defensible, on the grounds that, on the one hand,

colour words are said to be but an analogy to words which would mirror the world of data (and if my criticisms are in order, the analogy is not so close as Kovesi thinks), and on the other hand, the everyday activities of description and evaluation are not concerned with that world.

In contrast with the world of raw data is the world we can and do describe, the world in which there is value and which is populated with murders, houses and accidents as well as colours. Not only is this latter world the only world in which there is value; it is the only world whose contents can be evaluated, for to evaluate something we must know what it is supposed to be, and only descriptions can do this. 'Descriptions, unlike proper names, can provide standards. It is significant the philosophers who claim that in the world there is no value attempt to "describe" that world by a process more akin to naming than describing' (156). These same philosophers, Kovesi complains,

succeed in their various ways in distilling all value from our ordinary life and language, leaving them empty of value, concentrating it into a 'purely evaluative element'. For an intuitionist like Prichard the consideration of facts is not a moral activity but is like any other empirical consideration: the moral act is the act of intuition. The positivists only substitute an expression of attitude towards, in place of an intuition about, something which they think can be empirically ascertained. In other systems the 'purely descriptive' statement of our acts takes either the form of a minor premiss with which our obligation is deductively connected via a major premiss, or the form of a causal statement with which our obligation is causally connected via a highest good. The existentialists are no exception and provide another variation of this pattern. Their world is without values and the purely evaluative element is there in the claim

that we create values by our decisions. We have seen that what is created in these situations is that formal element in the absence of which there could not be a complete moral term. (142-143)

Kovesi draws the distinction between valuing and the evaluation of particulars as follows:

One way of making the distinction is to say that we can evaluate particulars as good or bad instances of a such and such, but then we also value or detest, seek or avoid or are indifferent to things in so far as they are such and such. ... In cases where we value or detest something in so far as it is a such and such we do so because we formed the notion of a such and such from the appropriate point of view. We form notions from other points of view than those of valuing or detesting, seeking or avoiding certain things but my observation applies generally. In cases where we are indifferent to things in so far as they fall under a certain description we have no reason to value or avoid them under that description, otherwise we would have formed different notions of them. (153)

In this passage there are several related claims. One of them may be expressed by saying that we evaluate particulars (under a description) whereas we value classes. This is true (and realizing that it is true casts light on the Analysis debate of Geach 1956, Hare 1957, and Duncan-Jones 1966), but some details of what Kovesi says about the latter activity require clarification.

Consider first the claim that in cases where we are indifferent to things insofar as they fall under a certain description, or belong to a certain class, we have no reason to value or avoid them under that description. This does not mean that there is no reason for doing so. For example, many of us are quite indifferent to butter insofar as it falls under the description 'saturated hydrocarbon' and yet there is a good reason to avoid it.

And if, as a result of the combined efforts of medical researchers and public health publicity agencies, we come to recognize that there is reason to avoid it, our notion of butter could change; another point of view could enter into its formation. This connects with Kovesi's next point, that if we had reason to value or avoid, or, as I prefer to say, were aware of a reason to value or avoid something insofar as it falls under a certain description, we would have formed a different notion about it. Certainly we could have done so, but to say that we would have presupposes that we are, collectively, quite rational, and in particular that we form our notions from all known relevant points of view. There is strong evidence in favour of saying that such a view is unduly optimistic. For example, it is well-nigh universally agreed that we have good reason to avoid smoking cigarettes, yet our notion of smoking them is only starting to take account of this.

As is so often the case with Kovesi, some care is needed in working out precisely what relationships he claims do hold. Concerning the relationship between our valuing something because it is a such and such and whether the notion of a such and such is formed from the point of view of valuing, Kovesi says both that we do the first because of the second and that if we do the first then we will have done the second (153). The relationship then is two-way; to value something insofar as it is a such and such is to form the notion of a such and such from the point of view of valuing. If this is so then it is impossible to value something insofar as it is a such and such without the notion of a such and such being formed from the point of view of valuing.

Now, if we all have the same notions and agree about what are their instances, it would follow that it could not be the case that some people would value something insofar as it is a such and such while others would not (my earlier point about disagreeing as to the good instances does not affect this; see 5.1, above). In the language of classes, this is to say that if we all have the same notions, and agree that a particular thing is a member of a certain class, then either all of us or none of us must value it. But it appears that what this argument rules out does occur, so the premisses must be examined.

First, then, must we agree of a particular thing whether it is a member of a certain class? In other words, must we agree as to whether a particular thing is an instance of a certain notion? In saying that the formal element of a notion enables us to follow a rule for the use of its term, Kovesi seems to say that if we all understand the notion we must agree what are its instances. But we do not always agree. How then are we to decide who is correct? The reasoning employed here is analogical rather than deductive, but would he say that analogical reasoning, like deductive, must be either correct or incorrect, or would he say that it admits of degrees? We do have agreed criteria for the correctness of many sorts of deductive argument, but not for analogical arguments, and even if unlike deductive arguments they admit of degrees of correctness, it would be a misuse of the word 'argument' to say that two good or satisfactory analogical arguments could lead from shared premisses to incompatible conclusions. It is precisely because they allow this that Kovesi objects to what he

understands to be Wittgenstein's 'family resemblance' arguments (22; see 2.3, above). Thus, although it is not clear what Kovesi's view is, the most plausible interpretation is that he would not allow outright disagreement as to whether a particular thing is an instance of a certain notion. To admit this would rob his talk of formal elements of much of its value. Insofar as we do disagree as to whether something is an instance we do not have exactly the same notions, or at least do not regard the same parts of their formal elements as being central (assuming, that is, that no straightout mistakes have been made, such as confusing halliards with sheets or believing that all birds can fly). Thus one of the ways in which he might have allowed that some but not all people could value something insofar as it is a such and such, is apparently not open.

It seems, then, that he would have to accept my claim that we can understand each other without having exactly the same notions (see 5.2, above). At first sight this might seem an unlikely admission; Kovesi says that our notions must be public, being formed from the point of view of anyone, and this is surely correct. The needs and interests which our notions incorporate must be those of anyone. But he is at pains to point out that they **do** not have to be those of everyone. Whether all people in fact share a certain need or interest is beside the point; the point is whether, in the formation of the notion, the possibility of any person's not having that need or interest is ruled out as a matter of logic. It is only if we do this that a notion incorporating that need or interest will be barred from entering our language. Thus, we do not all have to have the same notions. Take

for example the word 'prayer'. There are those who need (or at least say they need) to believe that there is at least one intelligent being who is not a human being and with whom communication is possible, and there are those who do not need (or at least say they do not need) to believe this. The term 'prayer' is used by some members of the first group to refer to an activity which they believe to be that of communicating with such a being, and is used by some members of the second group to refer to an activity which they believe to be not that of communicating with such a being but that of falsely believing oneself to be doing so. Between these extremes there is a host of intermediate beliefs. Now it is quite plausible to say that the two groups have different notions of prayer, and this is quite consistent with what Kovesi says. Anyone can understand both notions, for each is formed from the point of view of anyone (though not everyone). For each person, it is possible to have either or neither of the beliefs mentioned, and it is a matter of fact, not logic, that some have one, some the other, and some neither.

Much the same holds for Wittgenstein's remarks about forms of life. First, although the exact relations are not made clear, forms of life are meant somehow to enter into or determine our notions. Given this, and the claim that they are given, or have to be accepted (Wittgenstein 1958, p. 226), we might suppose that they have to be the same for everyone, or at least for all speakers of a language. This is reinforced by his earlier remark that, although we need not agree in our opinions, we must agree in forms of life (pgh 241). Now it is hard to tell what he means here, and in particular, whether he

is saying that we cannot understand each other unless we have the same notions. He goes on to say that we must agree 'not only in definitions but also (queer as this may sound) in judgements' (pgh 242), which looks like a straightout contradiction of the former remark. Stroud, though, maintains that this agreement in judgements is not 'unanimous acceptance of a particular truth or set of truths', but is 'the universal accord of human beings in behaving in certain ways--those "natural reactions" which we all share' (Stroud 1965, 516).

This interpretation removes the apparent inconsistency, but still seems to imply that the users of a language must have the same notions. But why is it necessary to say that they all share certain 'natural reactions'? In Wittgenstein's own terms, would family resemblances not suffice? If overlapping sets of similarities between our 'natural reactions' would permit understanding, then there need be no universal agreement in any particular form of life, among the users of a language. Of course this would not appeal to Kovesi, who rejects family resemblances. I think the proper move here is to note that what is natural need not be universal. Certainly, as Stroud says, forms of life are natural, but although they have to be the sort of thing or activity that is recognizably human, it does not follow that they must be shared or engaged in by all the speakers of a language. In a particular case, a speaker could know what it would be to engage in a form of life without ever doing so (cf. 5.2, above). What I am trying to give is an interpretation of Wittgenstein much the same as that of Rhees, who says that the agreement is not in reactions but 'has to do rather with what is taken

to make sense, or with what can be understood: with what it is possible to say to people: with what anyone who speaks the language might try to say' (Rhees 1959, 186). If this is what Wittgenstein has in mind, his view is almost exactly the same as Kovesi's.

Still, it is largely a matter of taste whether we describe the outcome of the 'prayer' example as a case of different groups having different notions of prayer or as a case of there being two or more different notions of prayer which we all share. The former relates primarily to our beliefs, the latter to our understanding. As far as the argument about values is concerned, it is our beliefs that matter most; in this sense Kovesi's views on the public nature of language allow that we need not all have the same notions in order to understand each other, and thus he can avoid the false conclusion that we must agree as to the value of something insofar as it is a such and such.

However, in a case where we do not agree as to the value of something insofar as it is a such and such and have different notions of a such and such, there is a strong temptation to say that we are not disagreeing as to the value of one and the same thing (cf. the argument about making terms complete in 5.2, above). In the 'prayer' example, some of us value prayer and some do not, but is what is valued by those of us who do value prayer the same as what is not valued by those of us who do not? This looks like a case of using one word to describe two rather different activities: that of truly believing oneself to be communicating with an intelligent non-human being and that of falsely believing this. If

we admit, then, that we do not all have precisely the same notions, we could say that what we have called disagreements as to the values of things are a case of disagreeing as to whether a term has instances (cf. 2.1, above).

Recall now that Kovesi distinguishes between a world of 'raw data', about which ex hypothesi there can be no disagreement because we cannot speak about it, and the world in which there is value, which is the world we talk about and about which all our notions are, from various points of view, formed (19). Disagreements as to whether a notion has instances, as to what there is, can be concerned solely with the latter world. But why say that there is just one such world, over whose contents we may disagree, rather than that there are or at least can be many such worlds? Why not say that corresponding to each possible set of notions there is such a possible world, and that, insofar as we do not all have precisely the same notions, we do not 'live' in precisely the same world? Such talk does not bring up the spectre of logical privacy, of course, for on the one hand it is a matter of fact only that a person has a certain set of notions (or 'lives' in one world rather than another), and on the other hand we could not as a matter of logic admit a set of notions if there were any logical restrictions on who could understand them.

Much the same can be said in terms of forms of life, if we ignore the difficulties in individuating them, for these 'possible worlds' can be thought of as sets of forms of life. I have distinguished between having a notion, in the sense of having the needs etc. incorporated

in its formal element and seeing the point in bringing together the instances as examples of the same thing, and understanding the notion, in the sense of knowing what would count as having those needs etc. and seeing that there could be point in bringing the instances together. Likewise, there is a distinction between understanding a form of life and engaging in it, and just as a person can understand a notion without having it in the sense specified, he can understand a form of life without engaging in it. The world he 'lives' in will be constituted by the forms of life in which he is from time to time engaged, but it does not follow that we all 'live' in the same world, nor does it follow that worlds in which we do not 'live' are beyond our ken. And if this is so, Winch's thesis that the standards of rationality of a form of life cannot be assessed from without (Winch 1958 and 1964) seems untenable.

5.4 The moral point of view

One of Kovesi's central theses is that the move we make from material elements to what we judge a thing or act to be, for example a table or a murder, is not a move from description to evaluation, even in cases like the latter. We describe the features of the world for different purposes, and the contrast which is of importance is not that between description and evaluation but that between describing from the moral point of view and from other points of view (63). Moral notions are those which are formed from the moral point of view (157); complete moral notions are those formed completely from

the moral point of view (109). But to say that the difference between moral and other notions is that moral notions are not only formed by ourselves but are also about ourselves insofar as we are rational beings is not sufficient, for so are some non-moral notions, such as 'clever', 'consistent' and 'learned'. Fully to explain the difference between moral and other notions, which is not a logical difference, would require an investigation of the difference between the moral point of view and others, and such an investigation, Kovesi says, is not his concern (147). However, although it would require a work on a scale more ambitious than Kovesi's and this, his talk about notions formed about ourselves insofar as we are rational beings suggests an outline for such an investigation.

Consider first a context within which we use the expression 'point of view'. When discussing, for example, where to route a new highway, we might say that a certain route would be fine from the farmers' point of view, giving them quick and easy access to a port, but, being more expensive than the alternative, not so good from the point of view of the funding body. We could seek expert advice to find out just how good a route is from various points of view. Assessing it from various points of view is the same as evaluating it under various descriptions: as an inter-city highway, as an investment of public funds, as a piece of long-term military strategy, and so on. This is very like saying that to look at a problem from a certain point of view is to engage, at least in the imagination, in various forms of life. In many cases some training is needed for this. For example, the set of activities, linguistic and others,

which characterize the farmers' or the military strategists' form of life cannot immediately be engaged in by the 'man in the street'. But in the appropriate sense they could be engaged in by anyone. Any limitations here, due say to a lack of aptitude, interest, training or intelligence, are purely contingent. And more importantly, as I have already argued, one does not have to engage in these activities in order to know what it would be to do so.

Thus, although we sometimes rely on experts or specialists in assessing a project from various points of view, this is only because and to the extent that no one of us knows enough about all of the relevant facts to assess it under all of the relevant descriptions. Expert advice is often necessary, but never logically necessary. And it is not in any sense sufficient. We are entitled, and wise, to place special weight on the judgement of an expert only within his field of expertise. From the point of view of the whole community, the best highway might not be the one most favoured by any of the experts; it might not be the best from any more restricted point of view. Further, the expert, qua expert, is in no better position than anyone else to judge whether his specialized appraisal is relevant to the overall merits of a project.

The expression 'moral point of view' shares this feature with 'point of view of the whole community', in that here too, although the advice of various experts will often be relevant, assessing something from the moral point of view is thought somehow to transcend all fields of expertise. It is thought of as leaving open the

possibility that, however desirable something may be from any other point of view, it is still the wrong thing to do. But this does not, as it were, specify a difference between the moral point of view and others. To go back a little: Kovesi says that we would expect only those features of the world that are relevant for forming a notion to be incorporated in the notion (64), and that the difference between moral and other notions is to be found in their ingredients, in what is incorporated in the notions, rather than their logic and structure (53). The problem, as Kovesi sees it, is specifying this difference in ingredients (147).

Now if we ask what features of the world can be incorporated in our moral notions, which of them can have moral significance, the answer seems to be that any of them can. We might not at present see their significance (for example, it was not until recently suggested that it might be wicked to use aerosols), but our inability to see the significance of something does not mean that it has none. This is probably true not only of moral notions, but that would not affect my argument. The view which I am suggesting is wrong is something like this: that the features of the world (including, of course, those of our lives) break up into fixed classes: that we can tell once and for all which features will have, for example, medical or moral significance. Further, even if some or all other sorts of notion are like moral notions in this respect, in the case of moral notions not only must we leave open the possibility that any feature of the world might have significance, but also it is hard to see what would count as showing beyond reasonable doubt that something has no moral significance.

Again, this might be the case in other fields as well, but at least when some aim or purpose can be specified, as for example in medicine or engineering, there are ways of telling whether a particular sort of fact can safely be ignored without seriously jeopardizing the aim of the activity. But apart from certain formal or hypothetical restrictions (e.g., if a person cannot do something he can be under no obligation to do it), nothing like this seems possible with questions about moral significance. My point then is that it is not at all clear that any attempt to delimit the ingredients of moral notions, or to specify the moral point of view, can succeed. Of course moral notions must be about ourselves, and about ourselves insofar as we are people, but the same question arises here. What are, as it were, the boundaries of the notion of a person? Surely anything which we are prepared to regard as a moral agent we will also be prepared to regard as a person.

I am not of course saying that there are no questions worth investigating here. If my suggestions are correct, questions about 'the' moral point of view, which appeared to be central to moral philosophy, are bogus questions. But we can still profitably discuss and assess what various people and groups take to be the moral point of view, and here I think that the connection with the notion of a person will be worth pursuing, for it could well be that what someone regards as being central to the notion of a person will provide the key to his moral notions, to what he takes as being the moral point of view. If, for example, someone takes the will as being central to the notion of a person, then for him the highest virtues and deepest vices will probably be connected with its

operation, and likewise for the intellect, the pursuit of happiness, bliss or salvation. Even the notions Kovesi wants to exclude, 'clever', 'learned' and 'consistent', could be moral notions. The formal element of the notion of a person is meant to determine not only what counts as a person but also what qualities are relevant for judging someone to be a good or bad person, and likewise for the related notion of a human action. If there is not one notion of a person but many, or at least disagreement as to the most important parts of the notion, all formed however from the point of view of anyone and therefore understandable, in principle, by anyone, it would be a mistake to expect there to be any single difference between moral and other notions. And as one's notion of a person is usually very complex as well as ever-changing, we should not expect even the question of what it is that any particular person takes to be the moral point of view to be easily answered.

This chapter has been concerned with Kovesi's attempt to re-draw the distinction between description and evaluation: with his claims that what we evaluate are particulars while what we can value are classes; that we use our descriptive notions to evaluate particulars, to evaluate the world of description, by building into their formal elements, where appropriate, the standards which something must meet to merit being called a good instance; and that our moral notions are used to describe the world of evaluation, to report the outcome of these activities in those cases where the evaluation is done from the moral point of view. This is correct and important. In conclusion, however, I wish to suggest that the formula Kovesi uses to sum up his findings is

a little misleading: that even in his terms it is not quite apt to say that moral notions describe the world of evaluation.

My claim is not that it is false to say that moral notions describe the world of evaluation but that it is not only moral notions which are used thus. First, as Kovesi insists, we do not always use a moral notion to report our evaluations of particulars. For example, when we say that this is a good knife or that is a bad egg we are describing our evaluations of particulars, but not with the help of moral notions; in such cases 'good' and 'bad' are not moral terms. Thus it is not only moral notions and terms like 'good' and 'bad' that we use to describe the world of evaluation. For all notions, as Kovesi says, the formal element tells us what qualities are relevant to our judging that something is an instance. Even when we call something a knife or an egg without claiming that it is a good or a bad one, we are saying that we have found it to have enough of the relevant sorts of quality, that it measures up to the standards incorporated in the formal element. To weigh up considerations relevant to whether a term can be applied is the same sort of activity as weighing up considerations relevant to whether it can be modified by 'good', 'bad' and the like. All notions, in this sense, can be used to describe the world of evaluation.

Now if anything different is to be said about moral notions it must be that moral notions describe the world of moral evaluation. This of course is circular, but no more so than Kovesi's claim that moral notions are the notions formed, about ourselves insofar as we are rational

rule-following beings, from the moral point of view. To break out of the circle an analysis of 'moral evaluation' or 'moral point of view' is required. Such an analysis must not seek logical differences between describing from the moral point of view and from other points of view, yet it must account for both the importance we attach to moral notions and our frequent disagreements over their proper use. My suggestion is that moral notions describe our evaluations of people as people and of human actions as human actions, while other sorts of notions describe our other sorts of evaluations. This leaves, as a major task of moral philosophy, a detailed analysis of the various notions of a person.

WORKS CITED

ARISTOTLE.

Generation of Animals.
Metaphysics.
Nicomachean Ethics.
On Generation and Corruption.
On the Soul.
Parts of Animals.
Physics.
Posterior Analytics.
Topics.

ARMSTRONG, D. M.

1973 Belief, Truth and Knowledge. Cambridge:
 University Press, 1973.

AUSTIN, J. L.

1950 'Truth!' Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Sup. Vol. 24 (1950), 111-128.
 1956 'A Plea for Excuses.' Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, 57 (1956-1957), 1-30.
 1962 How to Do Things with Words. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962.
 1962a Sense and Sensibilia. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962.

AYER, ALFRED JULES.

1946 Language, Truth and Logic. 2nd ed. London: Victor Gollancz, 1946.
 1953 'One's Knowledge of Other Minds.' Theoria, 19 (1953), 1-20.

AYER, ALFRED JULES (contd).

- 1954 'Can There Be a Private Language?' Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Sup. Vol. 28 (1954), 63-76.
- 1961 The Foundations of Empirical Knowledge. London: Macmillan, 1961.

BERLIN, SIR ISAIAH.

- 1973 'Austin and the Early Beginnings of Oxford Philosophy.' Essays on J. L. Austin. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973. 1-16.

CANDLISH, STEWART.

- 1971 'Wittgenstein's Attack on the Idea of a Private Language.' Mimeographed.

COHEN, L. JONATHAN.

- 1962 The Diversity of Meaning. London: Methuen, 1962.
- 1969 'Do Illocutionary Forces Exist?' Symposium on J. L. Austin. Ed. K. T. Fann. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969. 420-444.

COOK, JOHN W.

- 1965 'Wittgenstein on Privacy.' Philosophical Review, 74 (1965), 281-314.
- 1972 'Solipsism and Language.' Ludwig Wittgenstein: Philosophy and Language. Ed. Alice Ambrose and Morris Lazerowitz. London: Allen and Unwin, 1972. 37-72.

CRESSWELL, M. J.

- 1973 Logics and Languages. London: Methuen, 1973.

CROMBIE, I. M.

- 1963 An Examination of Plato's Doctrines. Volume 2.
London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963.

DUNCAN-JONES, AUSTIN E.

- 1966 'Good Things and Good Thieves.' Analysis, 26
(1966), 113-118.

GARVER, NEWTON.

- 1959 'Wittgenstein on Private Language.' Philosophy
and Phenomenological Research, 20 (1959-1960),
389-396.

GEACH, P. T.

- 1956 'Good and Evil.' Analysis, 17 (1956), 33-42.

HAMPSHIRE, STUART.

- 1952 'The Analogy of Feeling.' Mind, 61 (1952),
1-12.
1959 Thought and Action. London: Chatto and Windus,
1959.

HARE, R. M.

- 1952 The Language of Morals. Oxford: Clarendon
Press, 1952.
1957 'Geach: Good and Evil.' Analysis, 18 (1957),
103-112.

HERVEY, HELEN.

- 1957 'The Private Language Problem.' Philosophical
Quarterly, 7 (1957), 63-79.

HUGHES, G. E.

- 1958 'Moral Condemnation.' Essays in Moral Philosophy. Ed. A. I. Melden. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1958. 10³-134.

HUME, DAVID.

- 1888 A Treatise of Human Nature. Ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888.

HUNTER, J. F. M.

- 1968 '"Forms of Life" in Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations.' American Philosophical Quarterly, 5 (1968), 233-243.

KATZ, JERROLD J.

- 1966 The Philosophy of Language. New York: Harper and Row, 1966.

KOVESI, JULIUS.

- 1967 Moral Notions. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967.

LLOYD THOMAS, ANNE.

- 1968 Review of Moral Notions, by Julius Kovesi. Philosophical Quarterly, 18 (1968), 375-376.

MAYO, BERNARD.

- 1969 Critical Notice of Moral Notions, by Julius Kovesi. Mind, 78 (1969), 285-292.

MONRO, D. H.

- 1968 Review of Moral Notions, by Julius Kovesi. Australasian Journal of Philosophy, 46 (1968), 289-293.

MOORE, G. E.

- 1903 Principia Ethica. Cambridge: University Press, 1903.

PITCHER, GEORGE

- 1964 Truth. Ed. George Pitcher. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1964.

PLATO

Cratylus.
Parmenides.
Republic.

QUINE, W. V. O.

- 1948 'On What There Is.' Review of Metaphysics, 2 (1948), 21-38.
1969 'A Symposium on Austin's Method.' Symposium on J. L. Austin. Ed. K. T. Fann. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969. 86-90.

RAWLS, J.

- 1955 'Two Concepts of Rules.' Philosophical Review, 64 (1955), 3-32.

RHEES, R. J.

- 1954 'Can There Be a Private Language?' Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Sup. Vol. 28 (1954), 77-94.
1959 'Wittgenstein's Builders.' Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, 60 (1959-1960), 171-186.

ROSS, SIR W. DAVID.

- 1939 Foundations of Ethics. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939.

RUSSELL, BERTRAND.

- 1940 An Inquiry Into Meaning and Truth. London:
Allen and Unwin, 1940.

SCHLICK, MORITZ.

- 1938 Gesammelte Aufsätze 1926-1936. Vienna: Gerold,
1938. Reprinted Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag,
1969.

SCHWYZER, HUBERT.

- 1969 'Rules and Practices.' Philosophical Review,
78 (1969), 451-467.

SEARLE, JOHN R.

- 1969 Speech Acts. Cambridge: University Press, 1969.
1973 'Austin on Locutionary and Illocutionary Acts.'
Essays on J. L. Austin. Oxford: Clarendon
Press, 1973. 141-159.

STACE, W. T.

- 1932 The Theory of Knowledge and Existence. Oxford:
Clarendon Press, 1932.

STRAWSON, P. F.

- 1973 'Austin and "Locutionary Meaning".' Essays on
J. L. Austin. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973.
46-68.

STROUD, BARRY.

- 1965 'Wittgenstein and Logical Necessity.' Philo-
sophical Review, 74 (1965), 504-518.

TELFER, ELIZABETH.

- 1968 Review of Moral Notions, by Julius Kovesi.
 Philosophical Books, 9 (1968) no. 2, 11-13.

URMSON, J. O.

- 1950 'On Grading.' Mind, 59 (1950), 145-169.

VENDLER, ZENO.

- 1967 'Any and All.' The Encyclopedia of Philosophy.
 Ed. Paul Edwards. New York: Macmillan and
 Free Press, 1967. Vol. I, 131-133.

VON WRIGHT, GEORG HEWRIK.

- 1951 An Essay on Modal Logic. Amsterdam: North-
 Holland, 1951.

WAISMANN, FRIEDRICH

- 1946 'The Many-level Structure of Language.'
 Synthese, 5 (1946-1947), 211-219.

WARNOCK, G. J.

- 1973 'Saturday Mornings.' Essays on J. L. Austin.
 Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973. 31-45.
 1973a 'Some Types of Performative Utterance.' Essays
 on J. L. Austin. Oxford: Clarendon Press,
 1973. 69-89.

WINCH, PETER.

- 1958 The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation
 to Philosophy. London: Routledge and Kegan
 Paul, 1958.
 1964 'Understanding a Primitive Society.' American
 Philosophical Quarterly, 1 (1964), 307-324.

WITTGENSTEIN, LUDWIG.

- 1922 Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus. Trans. C. K. O'gden. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1922.
- 1958 Philosophical Investigations. Trans. G. E. M. Anscombe. 2nd ed. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958.
- 1960 The Blue and Brown Books. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1960.
- 1961 Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus. Trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961.
- 1964 Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics. Ed. G. H. von Wright, R. Rhees, G. E. M. Anscombe. Trans. G. E. M. Anscombe. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964.
- 1969 On Certainty. Ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright. Trans. Denis Paul and G. E. M. Anscombe. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969.