

Harman's Moral Relativism*

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Moral relativism, a theory typically beclouded by inexact formulations and confusions with cultural relativism, has recently been defended lucidly and forcefully by Gilbert Harman.¹ His article has the dual virtues of carefully stating the version of moral relativism being proposed and drawing explicit attention to the logical grounds underlying his advocacy. Indeed, Harman characterizes his relativism as "a soberly logical thesis," [3] and it is as such that it deserves analysis.

Harman is careful not to prejudge matters by assuming that all moral judgments fall into the same logical mold. His relativistic thesis is formulated for only that subclass of moral judgments he calls "inner judgments"², those of the form:

P ought (ought not) to have done A; or
It was right (wrong) of P to have done A;

where "P" refers to some person and "A" to an action performed by P. Harman argues that sense can be made of inner judgments only if they are understood in relation to agreements in intentions entered into by members of a group. It is in this sense that his position is relativistic.

The theoretical structure of these agreements is complex and will not be examined in this paper. Instead, I shall try to undercut the basis for his relativism in two ways. First, I shall reexamine certain inner judgments that Harman takes to be logically flawed and show that the oddity attaching to them cannot plausibly be explained by invoking relations to implicit agreements but can be understood without recourse to relativism. Second, I examine puzzling moral phenomena that Harman claims are best explicable by reference to a structure of agreements. I contend that Harman's explana-

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tion at best goes only a limited way toward making sense of our considered moral intuitions in this area and that a nonrelativistic account based on classical views of human rights is a more satisfactory device for removing Harman's puzzle.

I. The Logic of Inner Judgments

Harman's argument rests importantly on the fact that there is something inappropriate about making inner judgments where the person whose action is being judged is not capable of being motivated by the relevant moral considerations. One example: an employee of Murder, Incorporated, benignly untroubled by any concern for members of society not of the gangster persuasion, is assigned to kill Bernard J. Ortcutt, a bank manager. It would be reasonable to label such a person a loathsome criminal, urge that the police track him down and otherwise make efforts to eliminate this menace to society. But, claims Harman:

If we were to try to convince him that he should not kill Ortcutt, our argument would merely amuse him. We would not provide him with the slightest reason to desist unless we were to point to practical difficulties, such as the likelihood of his getting caught. Now, in this case, it would be a misuse of language to say of him that he ought not to kill Ortcutt or that it would be wrong of him to do so, since that would imply that our own moral considerations carry some weight with him, which they do not.[5]

Similar considerations hold for judgments about extraterrestrial beings who are unconcerned about human happiness or judgments about habitual cannibals; while we would properly resist their practices it would be odd to say of them that they do wrong, that they ought not act in that way.

Harman attributes the oddity to a general characteristic of inner judgments: "They imply that the agent has reasons to do something."^[8] The beings discussed in Harman's examples are "beyond the motivational reach of the relevant moral considerations," [8] and therefore an assertion implying that they do have reasons which could motivate them to act in the desired way is inappropriate.

This key stage in the argument demands closer inspection. It is no doubt true that the inner judgments Harman cites *may* appear as being out of place in the contexts cited; it is not clear though that such judgments are equally improper (or even slightly improper) in all contexts within which they can be offered. Nor has it been established that whatever oddness does obtain is due to the kind of logical lacuna Harman offers as a principle of explanation. If either of these alternatives can be made persuasive, then Harman's progress toward moral relativism is stymied. I shall argue that on *both* points he is vulnerable.

Consider first the connection between the absence of susceptibility to moral considerations and the impropriety of saying to the Murder, Incorporated employee, "It would be wrong for you to kill Orcutt." Analogous cases can be constructed that *do* seem to indicate that a logical blunder is indeed being made. Imagine the following situation: while driving across town in his station wagon, my friend Jones runs over a pedestrian. I am horrified and exclaim to him, "You ought never have done such a thing!"⁴ I may be entirely justified in making this judgment. Alternatively, Jones may be able to show that some excusing circumstance obtained ("He ran right out in front of me!" or "The brakes failed with no prior warning!"). If the latter, then I am guilty of making too quick an assessment, one that I am obliged to withdraw. But whichever way things happened, my initial judgment is logically impeccable. It may be hasty, callous and false; it is not, however, senseless.

What *would* be senseless though is if I were to turn to Jones' car and say that *it* ought not to have collided with the pedestrian, that in doing so it did wrong. One would be hard put to give that kind of remark any reasonable interpretation, and surely it could have no application in its straightforward sense. (A macabre joke?) What is it that is wrong with blaming station wagons? One is tempted to respond: Everything! If a more detailed explanation were called for, it could be noted that automobiles neither understand nor react to moral reasons, that they are not the kind of entity that can be motivated. Therefore it simply makes no sense to blame (or praise) a car for causing some state of affairs. Inner judgments whose subject is some piece of machinery are not merely false; they are ill-formed.

One is seldom tempted to utter inner judgments about cars. But a case in which similar logical constraints obtain is the following: in a public park a man walks up to my young son and fondles his hair. The child is frightened by this action, and I start to berate the stranger. I am then informed by someone else that the man suffers from a form of brain damage such that he had no inkling that his action might scare a child. Moreover, he only stares blankly while I rail at him, not understanding nor able to be motivated by my judgment that his conduct was wrong. Clearly this new information should lead me to revise my initial response. I will no longer insist that the man acted wrongly in caressing my child, that he should not have done so. Since he cannot understand and be moved by such inner judgments, there is no point to my offering them. It does not follow that I must be indifferent to his actions. I can properly maintain that he is a menace to small children and that the good of society demands that he be institutionalized or provided with a keeper. I may have the best of reasons for putting forth these latter claims, but once the fact of brain damage and its consequences comes to light I have *no* reason to assert that he ought not have done what he did.

Since his disability renders him an improper subject of that judgment I would be guilty of a logical confusion were I to offer it.

It might seem that these two examples, especially the latter one, reinforce those offered by Harman. The Murder, Incorporated employee does not suffer from organic damage as does the brain-damaged individual, but one could argue that his upbringing and on-the-job training have resulted in a comparable inability to be motivated by moral reasons. In neither Harman's nor my own examples would it make the slightest difference to say, "You really ought not to do that." The only response would be either a sneer or a blank look, not the wished-for modification of future conduct. Therefore, the argument continues, if the brain-damaged individual is not a proper subject for inner judgments, neither is the Murder, Incorporated employee. In both cases it would be reasonable to protect oneself from the deviant individual, warn others and so on; only one could not (reasonably) maintain that he should not so act.

The analogy between Harman's cases and my own, however, is less close than it might at first appear. While the brain damaged person is unable to respond to *any* inner judgment, the gangster is not so completely handicapped. Suppose that, instead of criticizing his plans, I were to say to him, "We all have our jobs to do; yours is to kill Ortcutt, so you surely ought to go and get it over with." Not only would he understand what I am saying, he would doubtless agree. Perhaps he would be surprised by my remark, declining to take it seriously because of its unexpected source. But it is presupposed by the possibility of his doubting my sincerity that he understands and can respond to the straight-forward meaning of my words. Nor is it the case that he simply recognizes an English language sentence whose meaning he comprehends; what I have said may provide a reason that motivates him to act in the indicated way.⁵ Therefore, abiding by Harman's strictures as to when inner judgments are properly formulated, I have succeeded in uttering a logically impeccable statement. This result casts doubt on his own example. For if some statement *p* is well-formed, one would expect that its denial, $\sim p$, is also well-formed.⁶ But Harman wishes to claim that it would be logically improper to say, "You ought not kill Ortcutt," although, as has been shown, "You ought to kill Ortcutt," is not improper. It will not do to argue that, by concurring with his plans, I have in effect entered into the requisite agreement in intentions with the gangster. Two points tell against that retort. First, he may be motivated by my remark without assuming that my reasons for approval are congruent with his own. Second, at this stage of his argument Harman is marshalling linguistic intuitions about what sounds odd to render plausible his relativistic thesis. It would clearly be begging the question to use that thesis to explain away apparent disconfirming evidence. Here then there is a clear disanalogy with

the brain damage case, where the individual is beyond motivation by *both* the inner judgment p and by $\sim p$.

This suggests that the inappropriateness of telling the gangster, "You ought not kill Ortcutt," is not a function of his being the kind of subject about whom inner judgments cannot reasonably be offered. Rather, one can simply note that it is generally fruitless to offer such judgments when there is no chance thereby of influencing conduct or attitude. One will generally refrain from criticizing an agent's intended course of action if one is convinced that criticism will have no tendency to alter it. To oversimplify, morality is preeminently practical, and pointless judgments sin against practicality. It does *not* follow that they are logically flawed due to implying a non-existent implicit agreement in intentions or that inner judgments are relative in the way Harman specifies.⁷

There is a further consideration suggesting that a non-relativistic account will better handle the examples offered by Harman. Because it is senseless to say to the brain damaged individual, "You ought not have done that," it would be equally senseless to make the third person report, "He ought not have done that." The subject of both judgments is not the type of agent to whom such moral considerations apply, and therefore both judgments are ill-formed. But it *does* make perfectly good sense to say of the Murder, Incorporated employee, "*He* ought not kill Ortcutt." Of course in most situations there would be little point to doing so; either one is speaking to a decent citizen who does not need to be told that gangland killings are wrong, or else one is confronted with yet another gangster who will respond with yet another sneer. Suppose though that your interlocutor is an ardent Kantian who is genuinely distraught at the idea of someone being murdered but who also knows that a contract for Ortcutt's demise was agreed to (and, after all, promises *should not* be broken. . .). Suppose also that he respects your moral insights and often acts in accord with them. In that case there would be a real point to your saying, "He ought not kill Ortcutt." (And there would be a real point to your saying the opposite.) The judgment is both meaningful and motivating. Therefore its subject is a suitable one, and since "You ought not kill Ortcutt," when said to the assassin himself has the same subject, it too must be meaningful.

No attempt has been made to undercut the intuition that there is *something* dubious about remonstrating with the gangster concerning his intended course of action. Rather, the foregoing discussion indicates that the difficulty does not obtain at the level of the logic of inner judgments. It can be traced instead to our conviction that such judgments have a primary role of being practical, of being applied to influence another's conduct.⁸ When the lever on conduct is sundered the judgment forfeits its practicality. But it should be noted that there are *numerous* ways in which an inner judgment

can fail to alter actions and consequently fail to be overtly practical. At one extreme, the person to whom the judgment is offered may understand it, sympathize with some or all of the reasons supporting it, yet decline to act on it because he believes that still other considerations dictate a different course of action. In such a case it is clear that, whatever the exact details of the logic of inner judgments may be (a difficult question which I have no wish to prejudge), a sensible exchange of moral opinions has taken place. At the other extreme, one may fail to influence future events because the judgment is addressed to a being unable to understand and be moved by moral considerations at all. That is what has gone awry in the examples of the automobile and the brain-damaged individual; no matter what one urges, necessarily the results will be nil. It does not even make sense to offer inner judgments about them to a third party because the subject of the judgment is incapable of basing his action on any moral grounds.

Harman's examples stand in between these extremes. The Murder, Incorporated employee has some conception of a good, but one flagrantly different from our own. He is able to recognize that we are pressing moral claims on him, but he totally and unambiguously rejects them. He understands why we protest his actions, but that understanding does not have the slightest tendency to make him rethink them. In short, there are ineliminable obstacles to any fruitful moral exchange with him *even though* he is someone who falls within the class of those beings about whose conduct we can meaningfully apply moral notions.

For an inner judgment to be a fitting remark within a conversational context, more is required than that it be well-formed or even supportable by some cogent justification. If it is not responsive to the motivational matrix of the person to whom it is addressed, it remains an idle display and not a suitable instrument for molding action. Harman's examples are somewhat persuasive precisely because they pick out situations in which this last consideration does not obtain. But it fails to follow that "inner judgments . . . imply that the agent has reasons to do something." [8] The presence of suitable motivation may be an external check generally imposed by our desire to be practical and not internal to the judgments themselves. Since Harman has not succeeded in showing that "the judgment that it is wrong of someone to do something makes sense only in relation to an agreement or understanding," [3] we need not accept his version of moral relativism.

II. Mutual Aid and Moral Relativism

A further argument for the truth of moral relativism is offered which, unlike the one previously considered, takes an indirect form. It is a puzzling feature of our moral views that we assign more weight to our duty not to harm other people than we do to the duty to extend positive help to them. A revealing

example is that we would regard it as wrong for a doctor to cut up and distribute the parts of one healthy patient in order to save the lives of five others even though we suppose that doctors have a general duty to help their patients. The duty not to harm overrides utility considerations and the duty to help. Why should this be so?

Harman contends that his relativistic theory provides an explanation for this otherwise hard to explain view. Since our moral beliefs are the result of an implicit bargaining process among persons of widely varying wealth and strength, no principle will emerge as generally acceptable unless it benefits all the parties to the bargaining. A strong principle of harm avoidance (hereafter PHA) will be of advantage to all. But since the poor and the weak will stand in need of most help while being unable to extend much aid to the rich and the strong, the latter group will regard a general principle of mutual aid (hereafter PMA) as a bad bargain:

In other words, although everyone could agree to a strong principle concerning the avoidance of harm, it would not be true that everyone would favor an equally strong principle of mutual aid. It is likely that only a weaker principle of the latter sort would gain general acceptance. So the hypothesis that morality derives from an understanding among people of different powers and resources can explain (and, according to me, does explain) why in our morality avoiding harm to others is taken to be more important than helping those who need help. [13]

There are several reasons for rejecting this argument. First, it seems to leave no basis for understanding why *any* PMA, even a weak one, would emerge from the bargaining process. Consider a (weak) principle of charity. The rich must realize that they would be disadvantaged by the acceptance of this principle since they would frequently be called upon to be charity dispensers and would never or hardly ever have occasion to be charity recipients. They would then, assuming a motivation of rational self interest, reject even a very weak principle of charity. This conflicts with our considered judgment that there is at least *some* duty incumbent on those well-off to provide for individuals in straitened circumstances.

I leave this point aside because there are yet more crucial objections to Harman's argument. Christopher New⁹ points out that not all would benefit from agreeing to a PHA. Suppose Person A is strong but poor, while Person B is weak but rich. Would they agree not to harm each other? Surely B would find such a bargain acceptable because he has little to gain from harming A and much to lose should A harm him. But for just those reasons A would not agree to the principle. He has little fear of B either wanting to or being able to harm him, while he is able to harm B and can thereby appropriate B's wealth. Since only some would benefit from general acceptance of a PHA just as only some would benefit from a PMA, no acceptable

explanation has been given as to why the former principle is thought to impose a more thoroughgoing duty.

Even if moral relativism could explain the precedence of the duty not to harm others, that would buttress the standing of relativism only to the extent that competitive theories are unable to do likewise. I believe that Harman is correct in noting the feebleness of attempted utilitarian justifications of this intuition. Utilitarianism though is not the only other contender. Robert Coburn has argued¹⁰ that natural selection may favor those genetic endowments that result in behavioral dispositions consistent with the prevalence of strong harm avoidance and weak mutual aid principles. He provides no direct evidence for the existence of such a genetic underpinning, but perhaps one could argue that behavioral dispositions are unlikely to become widespread unless they tend to promote survival of the species. This line of thought, though, is only partially successful as a rejoinder to moral relativism because one can admit *both* that there is a genetic basis to some practice P, and *also* that P is justified for . . . reasons. That is, Harman could contend that just those genetic factors which promote the acceptance of certain moral principles do so via a process of implicit bargaining. So Coburn has failed to show that his evolutionary hypothesis is a genuine alternative.

There is an undeniably genuine alternative theory, though, that does account for the circumstances Harman regards as confirmatory of moral relativism. It is a basically Lockean view of natural rights, holding roughly that the range of permissible actions open to an individual is limited by the fact that one operates in a world containing other individuals each of whom has his own life to live. Rights operate as constraints on interference with the activities of others.

Within this broadly Lockean framework there is room for considerable latitude as to just which constraints must be recognized in order to secure the inviolability of individuals. Even if it can be assumed that any credible theory of individual rights must include principles regulating coercion, property use, punishment and compensation, etc., exactly how these principles are to be specified leaves much room for disagreement. For the purposes of this paper it is unnecessary to select one member from the family of Lockean theories as the favored candidate. *Any* account that takes the distinctness and individuality of persons as the basis for ascriptions of rights will be able to justify a distinction between a PHA and a PMA. An exposition of that justification will now be sketched out.

To harm an individual is to interfere with his leading his own life. (Helping a person against his will also interferes. Therefore, a Lockean theory will impose constraints on paternalistic actions. The significance of this for our purposes is that it underlines the fundamental distinction between Lockean and utilitarian theories.) In other words, what is wrong

with your harming me is not simply that you *worsen* my welfare but that you *worsen* my welfare. A moral theory that takes individuality seriously will therefore adopt a strong PHA. A theory like utilitarianism that does *not* take individuality seriously may also adopt a strong PHA, but if it does so it will be for a different reason, namely that harming generally results in overall welfare diminishment.

Would a Lockean theory accept a correspondingly strong PMA? Consider what such a principle would require. You would be required to come to my assistance whenever you could thereby better my lot, provided that conditions $C_1 \dots C_n$ obtain. Different principles will be generated by different specifications of the C conditions, but it can be assumed that they will include: your aiding me is not at too great a cost to yourself; no other person can provide me with as much or more aid at equal or lesser cost; there is no one else to whom you can provide as much or more aid at equal or lesser cost. These conditions are vague because of failure to specify a minimum ratio R of the value of aid received to the cost of that aid being extended such that when R is exceeded providing aid is mandatory. The lower the particular R specified, the stronger the PMA being endorsed. When $R=1$ aid must be extended even though the cost of aid is as great as its value. Presumably no stronger principle ($R < 1$) is rationally acceptable as *generally* obligatory, although an occasional saint may choose to efface himself by allowing R to approach zero. For our purposes it will suffice to call a PMA strong if it takes R to be close to or equal to 1.

Already one disanalogy between PHA's and PMA's has surfaced. Within a framework of Lockean rights I cannot justify harming you simply because by doing so I am benefited more than you are disadvantaged. Even if the prohibition of harming is not absolute, it could never be justifiably overridden by a slight net utility gain.¹¹ But a strong PMA would mandate the extension of aid even though utility would thereby be only slightly increased. That is to say, while a strong PHA is relatively insensitive to resultant overall net utility, a strong PMA is *very* sensitive to it. If there are strong objections to utilitarianism from a Lockean standpoint, it follows that there are good reasons for a Lockean to reject a strong PMA while maintaining a strong PHA. It now remains to be shown why a Lockean would object to a strong PMA, whether embedded in a strictly utilitarian theory or elsewhere. Again, the reasons stem from emphasizing the primacy of individuals' self-direction.

If you are obliged to come to my aid whenever the ratio R stipulated by a strong PMA is exceeded, then you are potentially always on call to aid me (and I to aid you). Since the world contains many individuals and since they are frequently in a position to be made better off by some other individual, there is no limit (except that set by R) as to how often you will have to

interrupt the pursuit of your own goals to dash off and provide help to someone else. You will perhaps still be promoting the attainment of ends, but they will no longer be *your* ends. Rather, your actions will be continually governed by what is of value to others and whether circumstances are such that it is causally possible for you to produce those values. No doubt in many situations it will be true that the person whose well being you can most advance is yourself, causal factors being what they are, but even so, there is no special reason for you to promote some state of affairs *S* on the grounds that *S* matters *to you*. Ends are being viewed as a kind of community trust, to be realized by whomever is able to do so with greatest efficiency. Given a strong PMA, there is no place (except so far as causal contingencies provide) for a link between *S* being a goal valued by you and it being preeminently your concern that *S* is promoted.

On two levels this community trust view runs afoul of the Lockean emphasis on individualism. It means, as has been noted above, that your plans may at any moment have to be put into indefinite abeyance so that the interests of someone else can be advanced. You cannot give uninterrupted attention to the ends which are central in your life. It could even be argued that, when one is continually on call to others, one will be psychologically debilitated from conceiving plans of one's own since "static" from other stations will frequently drown out the signals from one's own. The result will be a general disinclination among persons to formulate and act on more than modest conceptions of a good. So Lockeans understandably will refuse to acquiesce to a strong PMA.

This is not an invalid argument, but it cannot state the entire Lockean case against a strong PMA. To see that it is insufficient, note that a parallel argument could be advanced to show the unacceptability of a strong *PHA*. Sometimes you are called upon to refrain from promoting a state of affairs *S* because all the ways in which *S* can be achieved entail harming someone. Therefore, accepting a strong *PHA* will also require the modification or banning of some individuals' ventures. It could be replied that a strong *PHA* is, on balance, consonant with emphasizing individuality because the harm to persons (and their plans) prevented outweighs the constraints imposed on potential harmers (and their plans). The problem with this objection is that it, too, can easily be turned into a parallel justification of a strong PMA; though your aiding me interferes with your projects, that interference is outweighed by the assistance tendered me for my pursuits.

A better objection against equating *PHA*'s and *PMA*'s is this: there are a specifiable number of ways in which you can harm me (i.e., violate my Lockean rights), so by rational forethought you can take care to ensure that your intended actions do not incorporate elements of impermissible harm. There is, however, no reliable procedure for providing yourself assurance that you will not be in a position to aid me. That is because (1) there are an

indefinite number of ways in which one can stand in need of aid—what counts as aid is dependent on what it is that a person wishes to accomplish—and, (2) whether you are in a position to aid me depends as much on *what I do* and desire as it does on what precautions you take. So a strong PMA violates individualism by largely taking it out of an agent's hands whether he will be able to pursue his own goals without interruption. A strong PHA does not.

This objection is decisive but should not be regarded as simply a quantitative observation on the bothersomeness of harm avoidance vs. that of mutual aid. On a deeper level, what is being pointed to is that accepting a strong PMA involves a curious dissociation between agents and their ends.¹² For if ends are a kind of community trust such that they are to be advanced by whomever is able to do so most efficiently, then there is no respect in which the fact that S is integral to your life plan provides you with *any* greater reason to promote S than is provided someone else. But in that case it is no longer clear that we can even make sense of distinguishing whose end S is. Since anyone who is able (efficiently) to promote S has the same reasons as anyone else similarly situated to bring about S, it would seem to be a matter of indifference which person does act to achieve S. In particular, it is a matter of indifference whether you act to attain "your" end or I act to attain it for you. The end is yours only in the attenuated sense that its genesis is due to some desire or volition seated in you. But once S has been "let loose" so to speak, it floats free of any special relation to reasons for its promotion-by-you. If you have no reason to bring about S that is not shared by everyone else, it is no longer reasonable to identify S as your end. It is in this sense I claim that accepting a strong PMA involves a dissociation between agents and their ends.¹³

One could now try to take the final step and argue that any theory entailing the divorce of an agent from his ends violates a formal constraint on practical reason and thus is incoherent. That step will not be attempted here because a weaker result suffices. A Lockean theory, valuing as it does individual self direction—including the embracing and pursuit of ends as one's own—cannot accept a principle which entails the dissociation from ends sketched above. So a Lockean has good reason to accept a strong PHA and yet reject a strong PMA. As has been seen, Harman's relativism is unable to account for accepting the one and rejecting the other. Therefore, our moral intuitions in this sphere fail to support moral relativism while they do buttress at least one nonrelativistic theory of morality.

III. Conclusion

This paper has addressed itself to only one version of moral relativism which, though not refuted, has been found to be groundless. No attempt has been made to claim that all versions of relativism must fail similarly. Still, a

theme running through Harman's argument can be expected to be generally conducive to relativistic analyses and so deserves a concluding look.

Leaving aside crude conflation of cultural relativism with moral relativism, perhaps the single most important factor suggesting that some version of moral relativism is correct, is the phenomenon that some moral utterances are seed spilt on barren ground. They excite no response in terms of action or even serious consideration by the persons to whom they are addressed although they would excite such a response if addressed elsewhere. This phenomenon is unsettling because, whatever else may characterize moral utterances, they are meant to motivate. Where motivational thrust is out of the question, something has gone seriously wrong. It may be supposed that what is wrong involves the absence of some relation between the utterance and its audience such that, when the relation fails, to obtain the utterance is logically inappropriate. The greater part of Harman's article consists of the attempt to construct that relation via his complex account of implicit agreement in intention.

What this paper suggests is that there are *numerous* ways in which a moral judgment can fail to have the desired motivational thrust, and they should not summarily be assimilated under the rubric "logically flawed." Logical incoherence is a sin against practicality, but it is not the only sin—nor is it necessarily the most important one. Irrelevance, however camouflaged, is also a culprit. An adequate metaethical theory must concern itself with the entire gamut of considerations bearing on motivation, taking into account the many varieties of ethical discourse we employ and their logical presuppositions. What will such a theory look like in all its fleshed-out splendor? We may wonder about that, but there is no good reason to suspect that it will be relativistic.

NOTES

1. Gilbert Harman, "Moral Relativism Defended," 84 *Philosophical Review* (1975), pp. 3–22. Bracketed numbers are page references to this article.
2. The term "inner judgment" is perhaps tendentious. It suggests an internalist construal of these judgments, where by "internalist" is meant the view that it is logically necessary that, if an agent recognizes an obligation to perform an action, then he has some motivation to perform it. See William K. Frankena, "Obligation and Motivation in Recent Moral Philosophy" in *Essays in Moral Philosophy* ed. by A. I. Melden (Seattle, 1958), p. 40. I accept Harman's use of "inner judgment" while declining to accept his version of internalism.
3. It is because Harman speaks of implication and not, say, a vague suggestion conveyed by these remarks in context that he can claim to be presenting a logical thesis. In this section the logical thesis alone is being attacked. That inner judgments may otherwise suggest the presence of reasons is not being denied.
4. Suppose that, rather than exclaiming, I had calmly and deliberately expressed my opinion that obliterating pedestrians is wrong both in general and on this particular occasion. Surely the remark would be ludicrously inappropriate. Why this should be so cannot be a matter of some flaw within the statement itself (since the exclamation offers no different

appraisal of Jones' conduct), but rather in its tone not meshing with the seriousness of the incident. This points up one way in which inner judgments can sound odd without being guilty of any logical impairment. There is immediate application to Harman's analysis of what is wrong with saying, "Hitler ought not to have ordered the extermination of the Jews." He claims that "the inner judgments sound too weak not because of the enormity of what Hitler did but because we suppose that in acting as he did he shows that he could not have been susceptible to the moral considerations on the basis of which we make our judgment." [7] This must be wrong. The enormity of Hitler's barbarity is *by itself* sufficient to render the inner judgment misplaced, whatever we may believe about his susceptibility to moral considerations.

5. Someone might object that what I say cannot truly motivate him because he is *already* determined to kill Orcutt and thus my urging him to do so will make no difference to the way he acts. Such an objection ignores the fact that even Murder, Incorporated employees can vary in their dedication to their calling (perhaps inflation has rendered the standard piecework wage insufficient for his needs) such that encouragement and approval can affect their enthusiasm. Besides, it would be awkward to argue that an inner judgment is appropriate only if it has motivational content and that it has motivational content only if the subject of that judgment does not already fully agree with it.
6. There are, it is true, some obviously sensible statements whose negations are incongruous. First person statements are conspicuous examples: "I am alive." But even there it seems preferable to hold that its negation is meaningful even though invariably and self-defeatingly false. At any rate, Harman has provided no argument to support a conjecture that inner judgments can be well-formed and their negations not well-formed.
7. David Lyons suggests a similar point in "Ethical Relativism and the Problem of Incoherence," 86 *Ethics* (1976), p. 121.
8. Of course it is not only inner judgments (or even ethical discourse broadly construed) that have a primary role of being practical. For example, warning someone to watch out for an approaching vehicle is also fundamentally practical. Warnings also lose their point when there is no likelihood of their influencing the course of conduct. However, they remain warnings.
9. Christopher New, "Implicit Bargaining and Moral Beliefs," 37 *Analysis* (1977), pp. 130-133.
10. Robert Coburn, "Relativism and the Basis of Morality," 85 *Philosophical Review* (1976), pp. 87-93.
11. Because I am commenting on a general feature of all Lockean theories and not trying to construct an optimal one I duck the very difficult question of what would justify overriding a PHA.
12. This argument is prompted by strategies employed in Thomas Nagel's *The Possibility of Altruism* (Oxford, 1970), although his arguments are being cruelly turned on their head.
13. In Section 5 of "A Critique of Utilitarianism" in J. J. C. Smart and Bernard Williams, *Utilitarianism: For and Against*, (Cambridge, 1973), Williams pursues an intriguing criticism of utilitarianism. He argues that its incessant demand that overall utility be maximized is incompatible with maintaining personal integrity. I am unclear as to precisely how he construes integrity, but if he means by it something like what I refer to as individuality, then his argument would bear strong affinities to the Lockean case against a strong PMA sketched out above.

One caution: my argument should not be misconstrued as claiming that no PMA is compatible with Lockean theories or, worse yet, that a Lockean theory must be egoistic. A suitably weak PMA will not entail the dissociation of agents from their ends and thus will not be incompatible with individualism.