DISCUSSION AND REVIEWS :

ON KANT'S THEORY OF SYNTHETIC *A PRIORI*

In his paper " Kant's Theory of Synthetic *a Priori* " (Indian Philosophical Quarterly, (Briefly, I.P.Q) New Series, Vol. II, No. 7, July 1975, pp. 395–403) Mr. Ram Lal Singh has made an attempt to defend Kant's view regarding synthetic *a priori* judgements against logical postitivists and modern logicians. Whether his defence of Kant is acceptable or not (he has not given any arguments in support of Kant's doctrine), there are many erroes in his exposition of Kant's and other relevant views regarding the subject. I wish to point out some of these here.

Mr. Singh at the beginning of his paper tries to explain the nature of Kant's analytic and synthetic judgements. However, he is not careful in presenting Kant's definition of these judgements. He nowhere mentions Kant's definition of an analytic judgement as one in which the predicate is contained in the subject. Instead, at the end of the paragraph, he remarks, " A judgement whose denial would be a contradiction in terms and whose negation would be logically impossible would be analytic " (I.P.Q., *ibid*, p. 395). Mr. Singh seems to think that the denial and the negation of propositions are two different processes, which they are not. And Kant does not define an analytic judgement in this way. Kant makes use of the law of contradiction in showing the truth of such (i.e. analytic) judgements.

Further, contrasting an *a priori* judgement with an *a-posteriori* one, Mr. Singh says, " The *a posteriori* judgement increases and extends our knowledge but lacks necessity and certainty " (*ibid*, p. 396). It seems that a distinction has to be made between necessity and certainty. The former is a logical notion related to the law of contradiction, whereas the latter is an epistemological one, referring at times to one's mental states, admitting of degrees, and varying with the kind of evidence available to us. Further, necessity is a non-temporal predicate, certainty is a temporal one, having a reference to the point of time, when the judgement is made. In view of the above distinction it can be held without any error that even an *a posteriori* judgement may be certain. The term is associated with Descartes, and it is gene-

rally held that the fundamental truth which he arrived at through his method of doubt, was certain without being necessary. The question whether *COGITO ERGO SUM* is an empirical proposition can indeed be raised, but is independent of the distinction that has just now been drawn, and can be discussed separately.

Mr. Singh's next sentence runs, " The *a priori* judgement accounts for the necessity and universality, but it is unable to increase our knowledge. " Now this statement will be true only if such *a priori* judgements are analytic.

Mr. Singh refers to Mill's views regarding the truths of logic and mathematics, and remarks that if Mill's view is accepted, then Kant's distinction between analytic and synthetic judgements " crumbles down " (*ibid*, p. 398). It should be only " crumbles ". However it has not been made clear at all how Mr. Singh arrives at this conclusion. For, in the first place, from the fact that Mill held that the propositions of mathematics do not differ in kind but only in degree from empirical ones that these are *inductive generalizations based on an extremely large number of instances*, it does not follow that no analytic can ever be made. And in the second place, Mill explicitly makes a distinction similar to the analytic/synthetic distinction, though he calls it by a different name. Let us see how Mill makes the alleged distinction.

Adopting the traditional scholastic distinction between the " essential " and " accidental " propositions, and adding to it his own distinction between the " real " and the " verbal " propositions, Mill holds that (1) all essential propositions are identical ones, and (2) that an essential proposition is a verbal one. (*A System of Logic :* Bk. II, Ch. 6, Sect. 4). The proposition " Every man is rational " conveys no knowledge to a person who is familiar with the connotation of " man ". The attributes connoted by all the predicates are already asserted when somebody is called a man. These essential propositions, therefore, do nothing but merely explicate or repeat one of the essential attributes which are already though in the concept of the thing. Mill calls such propositions identical, for here the predicate attibute is one of the essential attributes which form the essence of the concept of the subject. The identical proposition can be easily shown to be analytic by using the containment criteriorn of Kant. The real proposition according to Mill is one in which the predicate does not form part of the connotation of the subject-

term. All real propositions are informative because they convey information which is not already involved in the connotation of the subject-term. Mill clearly says that the distinction between the verbal and the real propositions corresponds to Kant's distinction between analytic and synthetic judgements. (Op. Cit. Bk. I, Ch. 6, Sect. 4). It is to be noted that both Kant and Mill hold the semantical (or the meaning explication) theory of analyticity and their views regarding the nature of such propositions are essentially one and the same.

Mr. Singh further holds that there is a " marked difference " between Kant's conception of the principle of contradiction and that of the contemporary logicians. According to him whereas contemporary logicians explain the principle with the help of synonymity, Kant explained it with some psychological elements. Now in truth-functional logic the principle of contradiction assumes the form to be $\sim(p \cdot \sim p)$, and this does not require any synosymous expressions at all. The truth of the principle does not depend upon the *meaning* of p. Kant states the principle of contradiction as A is not both B and not–B (at the same time in the same respect,) (*Critique of Pure Reason*, B, pp. 190–191), and it is hard to find which psychological elements it involves since there are no such elements referred to by Kant. Mr. Singh's remark above is, therefore, incomprehensible, since he gives no explanation of his statement.

Referring to the Intuitionistic School of Brouwer, Mr. Singh remarks that according to it the propositions of mathematics are not analytic but synthetic, and he thinks this to be the point in favour of Kant against the logistic account of mathematics. But it should be noted that the intuitionistic school does not entirely agree with Kant. As S. Korner has observed, " Though the intuitive constructions are alleged to be self-evident, the existence of non-sensory intuition is by no means uncontroversial. This can be seen by considering that the Kantian doctrine of the synthetic *a priori* character of Euclidean geometry which is disputed by the intuitionists." Also " The modern intuitionists reject the Kantian claim that there is a self-evident, sharp, and restrictive spatial intuition which alone would make Euclidean geometry a body of *unique* synthetic and *a priori* statements " (*The Philosophy of Mathematics* : Hutchinson, (1950), pp. 140–141).

In the last paragraph of his paper Mr. Singh holds without giving any justification in support of it that Kant would maintain the distincition between analytic and synthetic judgements against Quine and Austin. His definition of an analytic judgement in this context is not only mistaken, but also irrelevant. It should be " An analytic judgement is one whose truth (not the meaning) is determined by the laws of logic alone." Finally Mr. Singh remarks that the claims of science and morality against scepticism can be justified only if the system of synthetic *a priori* judgements is accepted. However, this can hardly be the final answer regarding the nature of propositions about the world. It may indeed be asked in this connection whether Kant's synthetic *a priori* judgements have really solved the problem of causality, or whether it continues to be the " skeleton in the cupboard " of philosophy. Recent ethical theory has devoted its attention to the analysis of the language of morals, and its findings are not favourable to Kant's view regarding morality.

Mr. Singh, however, refers to an important point during the course of his paper and this point occurs in the last but one paragraph of his paper. He says there that Kant uses the word " necessary " in synthetic *a priori* judgements in quite a different sense from the usual one. These propositions are not necessary in the sense in which analytic *a priori* propositions are necessary, viz., that their denial involves a self-contradiction—as Leibniz points out. From the fact that a proposition is synthetic, it is clear that its denial is possible, and therefore, the necessity ascribed to it must be quite different from the logical necessity. These propositions are necessary in the sense of being indispensable for the possibility of experience. The proposition " Every event has a cause ", for example, is necessary according to Kant because even though its denial is not self-contradictory, its use is one of the conditions for the possibility of knowledge. Following the terminology of Mr. W. H. Walsh, Mr. Singh calls it " transcendental necessity ", and remarks that understood in this sense, there is not absurdity in the idea of synthetic *a priori* judgements. It would have been better if Mr. Singh developed this important point, making it the main argument of his paper, against the attacks of the recent logico-epistemological theories on Kant.

Vidarbha Mahavidyalaya,
Amravati. **B .Y. Deshpande**

Satyavan P. Kanal : *The Ethics of Devatma*, 1974, Munshi Ram Manohar Lal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, pp. XVII + 350, Price Rs. 40.00.

Recent Indian thought has displayed many tendencies to present some original thought within certain general categories of western thought. The present book is the outcome of a dedicated attempt by Mr. S. P. Kanal, Reader in the Department of Philosophy, University of Delhi, to present in a systematic and lucid way the ethical thoughts of Shri Sheo Narain Agnihotri who, in the late Nineteenth Century, founded Dev Samaj in the Punjab and who was subsequently called Devatma.

The book under review has been written with a view to present, the ethics of Devatma in its metaphysical setting. As the author rightly points out, the ethical thought of Devatma is a corrrollary from his views concerning the nature of reality and, hence, on Spinozaistic method, it can not be understood without first explicating the metaphysics of Devatma. The model is strikingly that of Spinoza's *Ethics* where reflections on the nature of reality lead to the conception of human bondage and freedom. Mr. Kanal writes with the zeal and passion of a completely committed follower of Devatma who is so authentic to each and every word that Devatma has spoken or written.

The book is divided into four parts. First, the Introduction supplies the biographical details about the life and time of Shri S. N. Agnihotri and his intellectual and spiritual development. It vividly unfolds the mind and character of the future Devatma. The second part deals with the nature of the universe. The nature is presented as the all-comprehensive totallity of things which are embodied, mutually related, causally connected but subject to change and qualitatively different in their unique modes of existence. Such a totality is called Nature which is "*one, unlimited, uncreated, self-existent*, whole of *embodied* existences in *ceaseless change for better or worse*" (p. 49). Such an account of reality needs no God to explain anything. Thus, atheistic naturalism is the only answer to the question concerning the nature of reality.

The third part concerns itself with the explication of the nature of the human soul and it is directly related to the next chapter

which discusses the nature of the human good and evil as the author says : " The moral laws are the laws of the soul. . The laws of ethics and spirituality have no existence apart from the soul. " (p. 64). On soul, Devatma's views may be summarised in these words : Human soul is born and is mortal; there are many souls which are all necessarily embodied and subject to change, growth, decay and death as the bodies are; the soul is the doer. But one will surely look askance when he hears from the author that " Human soul is neither a substance nor a pure cognition. . it is an organism with nutritive, motor, sensory and affective, conative and cognitive functions " (p. 143). If, despite such characteristics of the human soul, it is not a substance, what category it should belong to is not made clear. But earlier (p. 69) Devatma, so the author tells us, rejects any materialistic as well as idealistic reductionism and appears to be in favour of presenting matter and soul as two irreducible ends which are nevertheless mutually related. If so, the two must be recognised as belonging to two distinct but real categories which are not supplied. On the other hand, there are passages where the soul is said to arise out of inorganic nature through a process of evolution and yet it is not identical with the body. This insistence on retaining the concept of soul or spirit as something real and yet the desire to give a thoroughly naturalistic or Human account of the same make the whole discussion baffling. One may, in the end, ask why a fancy for ' soul ' which has all the determinate and determinable characteristics of matter except the verdict of Devatma that it is nonetheless not body but soul ?

The fourth and the last part of the book explains in interesting and minute details the nature of the human good and evil. It is here that most of Devatma's ethical ideas are clearly formulated and explained. One connot but appreciate the down-to-earth pragmatic and relastic stance of the propounder as well as that of the author. In fact, both are indistinguishable. The author speaks with the same authenticity and conviction with which Plato spoke of Socrates. But unlike Plato, Mr. Kanal has not deviated a whit from what the master has taught. In the light of the expositions, rendered in this part, we may probably characterise Devatma's ethics as a species of naturalistic, altruistic-hedomistic evolutionism with the vowed aim of applying empirical method in discovery of both moral laws and principles as well as

particular injunctions or *adeshas*. But it is in the latter that Devatma's interest appears to be predominant. Moore once declared that ' Casuistry is the goal of ethical investigation ' but he was of the view that the problems of casuistry can be adequately dealth with only after we have arrived at satisfactory answers to the questions of theoretical ethics. Devatma appears to have satisfactory answers to the theoretical questions of ethics as well as a correct approach to human psychology. Hence, he ventures constructing a system of casuistry which entitles him to opine on such minor, though important, practical questions as to how we should treat our children and how to regulate our sex-life and whether to smoke tobacco and drink coffee etc.

But the questions of casuistry apart, what one may find difficult to admit is the theoretical or conceptual scheme of this ethics which is based on a particular metaphysics and voluntaristic-evolutionistic psychology. In Pt. II, Ch. 9 (value and existence) the author spells out the framework of Devatma's ethics. Value-disvalue is said to be one of the dimensions of the existents. There is a causal relation between value and existence. But causal relation, as we have earlier heard (Ch. 6) is emergent and so are physical effects. On the strength of the emergent view of causality, different levels of existence are denied (p. 69). Instead of additive, causation is summative and emergent. But values definitely admit of degrees and levels and its identification with his view of causality makes it wholly amorphous. Mr. Kanal rightly holds : " we cannot say that to be is to be valuable ", but the reason he has to offer is that it " will amount to denial of existence to disvalue or evil " (p. 100). Then, surely, the metaphysics of Devatma should allow a slightly modified version of this statement, i.e. we can say : ' To be is to possess value or disvalue '. Since the criterion of reality has been formulated as ' to be is to be causally related ', and value and existence being causally related, it indeed follows that there is a causal necessity between the two. It would definitely make value-disvalue an inseparable aspect of reality. He himself says that value is ' a necessary condition which *furthers existence* ' and ' a necessary condition for *persistence in existence* ' (pp.100–1). Hence, value is equated with a mere process of evolutionary change.

The logical outcome of applying empirical method to the highest category of ethics is the denial of value—at least in the

sense in which values, separate from facts, may be said to be real. When Induction with Hume and ' basic sentences ' with some logical positivists lost their credibility on the empiricist criteria of observation, experience, verification and testability, values have least chance to survive. If scepticism, nay *solipsism*, is the only fate of human knowledge for the consistent empiricist, ethical empiricism would mostly land into moral solipsism. But Devatma would surely avoid such a disconcerting consequence and, hence, defines value in such a manner that it becomes identical with certain physical and observable features of reality. The treatment of value is the same as meted out to soul. They are both rejected and retained at the same time. In the same way as Devatma traces the origin of soul from organic and inorganic nature, he also asserts that " Values, like facts, are part of Nature " (p. 189).

A familiar and oft-repeated analogy within Devatma's ethical expositions is that of medicine. He talks of health and hygiene of human soul. He says : " Ethics discovers the laws of the health of the soul " (p. 202). He indeed talks of the distinction between the descriptive and prescriptive elements in moral laws but hastens to add that the latter is also amenable to empirical method (p. 203). One is left wondering as to what is the distinction between the two and, unfortunately, Mr. Kanal has none to offer—at least within the framework of the ethics he is expounding.

In his main ethical teachings Devatma rejects the unbridgable chasm between the flesh and the spirit and with a rare practical sagacity and anti-spiritualistic zeal he rejects all form of asceticism and self-mortification as the path leading to the attainment of *moksha*. The author enlightens us with a vidid picture of the state of human bondage which is one of ' low loves ' and ' low hates '. The former are exemplified in selfishness, egotism, indulgences in the satisfaction of biological needs, laziness, greediness etc. Low hates appear in personal jealousy, cruelty, causing avoidable sufferings and harms to others, social, religious, political and personal prejudices and so on. These include all the personal and social evils which are harmfull both to the agent and others (Chs. 27 and 28). One of the most important causes of human bondage is love of pleasures which is the ' secret subtle enemy of the soul ' (p. 270). In the state of bondage man is afflicted with spiritual blindness, spiritual perversions, avoidable suffereings

and, finally, the death of the soul (Ch. 30). Low loves and low hates cause the death of the soul (p. 276). [Incidentally, the warning concerning the death of the soul becomes inconsistent in the light of an earlier assertion that ' soul's involvement with the body is both beginningless and endless ' (p. 190).] Deliverance from low loves and hates heralds the dawn of *moksha* which consists in freedom from lust, greed, selfishness, dishonesty etc. After the negative process of *moksha*, there sets in the positive process of *vikas* or evolution which is marked by higher loves and higher hates '. The former include varieties of altruistic feelings which are generically said to be ' altruistic feeling of responsiveness to the needs of others '. These are sense of justice, sense of duty, sense of discipline etc. Higher hates comprise hate of all that is contrary to higher loves. In his account of the rise of altruistic feelings the author rejects the common hedomistic account of some writers that altruism arises out of prudence or self-love. But being an empiricist, Devatma can not also take the benefit of the Butlerian intuitionistic approach. He even goes to the extent of denying practical reason since he understands it as supersensible (p. 197). Thus, he is left with the admission of the truth of altruism as a natural product of evolutionary change !

Devatma is said to have taken a cosmic view of good, bad and value and applies these categories to even non-living things. But what is not made clear is that if ethics concerns itself with the discovery of the laws of the soul, how do ethical categories apply to non-living existents. It would surely appear to be a form of primitive animism to think that consciousness is also present among non-living things which alone would make it possible to talk of low loves and hates if not of high loves and high hates or, else, what does it mean to say that values extend to non-living things ?

Mr. Kanal suggests that Devatma is practical enough to admit that human psychology is under the dominant influence of pleasure principle (p. 243). It is claimed that the *adeshas* or commandments of Devatma are perfectly consistent with the satisfaction of all our biological and other needs which must contribute to our health and care of the body. To this extent, it is one of the kinds of hedonism (pp. 234–35). But his reasons against others forms of hedonism are sometimes mistaken. But it is doubtful that the

hedonists eliminate conation and take pleasure-pain to be the motives of thought action' (p. 164). Hence, he falls in the mistake of faculty-psychology which he himself so ardently rejects on the same page. His own analysis of human consciousness as pleasure-pain consciousness (*sukh-dukh-bodh*) makes such a criticism unwarranted. In rejecting the claim of what he has called other forms of hedonism except that of Dvatma, Mr. Kanal uses the Moorean technique of showing that pleasure without consciousness cannot be good. But, as I have discussed elsewhere (see, my article 'Moore's Evaluation of Sidgwick's Hedonism', *IPQ*, Vol. I, No. 2), this criticism is a needless objection against some forms of hedonism. It, however, appears that the application of the term 'hedonism' in the absence of accepting the category of pleasure (in whatever sense it is admitted) as the highest ethical category does not seem justifiable.

To conclude, the lucid account of Devatma's ethics as rendered by Mr. S. P. Kanal in a simple style is a welcome attempt to present a neglected chapter of recent Indian thought. When the current writings on the subject tend mostly to be analytic and meta-ethical, it is refreshing to read a treatise on metaphysical ethics—at least, for a change.

Department of Humanities, **S. A. Shaida**
IIT, Kanpur.

ANNOUNCEMENT

One of the chief purpose of Indian Philosophical Quarterly is to provide a forum for fresh philosophical thinking for students of philosophy. Hence we would like to introduce a new feature of the journal. Short contributions from bona fide students of philosophy on any philosophical concept or problem they find interesting are invited. Such contributions may not exceed 900 words (approximately *three* pages of the Journal). Such contributions may be sent to the Editor, Indian Philosophical Quarterly alongwith evidence of class and College/Institution. Sufficient return postage should also be sent alongwith contribution.

EDITOR

Robert Busa : *Index Thomisticus* (Thomist Index), *Sancti Thomae Aquinatis Operum Omnium Indices and Concordantiae* (Indexes and Concordances of All the Works of St. Thomas Aquinas), *Concordantia Prima* (First Concordance), 23 volumes, ten of which are in print since 1974. Stuttgart, Frommann–Holzboog, D. M. 370 per volume.

This monumental work made with the help of I. B. M. machines was begun at Gallarate (Italy) in 1949 and carried on later at verious centres in Italy and U. S. A. Robert Busa S. J. is the animator of the large team of scholars who took part in this novel and enormous enterprise. *The Thomist Index* is a pioneer work, for it applies for the first time automation to the field of humanities. It gives the result of the linguistic analysis of all the works of Thomas Aquinas and of some important works connected with them. A collection of texts of over 10 million words is thus analysed.

While helping students of Linguistics and especially of Middle Ages Latin, *Thomist Index* is meant first and foremost to be an instrument for the study of Catholic theology and scholastic philosophy. The *First Concordance*, which is here under review, will contain 23 volumes. The complete series will extend to 40 volumes. The question is, of course, how does one pass from extensive lists of words and verbs to the understanding, not only of concepts, but also of doctrines and of a system of doctrines. The work is an intimation of the new era towards which we are advancing, when, not only Aquinas, but other authors like Śaṅkara, Kant and Wittgenstein, will be subjected to such analyses and then be compared with one another. We can hardly fathom the type of results which this kind of endeavour will yield. The present work is an inspiring witness to the new vision which its authors have. What impact cybernetics will eventually have on the Humanities and on the progress of the human mind is anybody's guess.

Jnana Deepa, Poona–14 **J. de Marneffe**