STEVENSON'S WORKING MODELS

Stevenson's main object is two–fold : (i) to analyse ethical judgements and (ii) to analyse various methods of argumentation for settling the ethical disputes. Instead of presenting the moral disagreement at the very outset in the full fledged form, he proposes certain models of analysis which he regards provisional or tentative and hence calls them 'Working Models'. The models which he presents are not to be taken as the final analysis of ethical judgement because ethical terms are ambiguous and vague. So, we must not expect just one and only one final analysis of an ethical judgement. He presents three such working models which roughly present before us the ways in which different moral judgements can be analysed.

(1) "This is wrong" means *I disapprove of this; do so as well.*

(2) "He ought to do this" means *I disapprove of his leaving this undone ; do so as well.*

(3) "This is goood" means *I approve of this ; do so as well.* The working models, however, are not to be taken as literal translation of the moral judgement. They are just broad outlines of their analysis.

Such an analysis has two parts : (1) declarative and (ii) imperative. The declarative or descriptive part is expressed by the first part of the model, in, "I approve or disapprove of this", and the imperative part is expressed by the second part of the model ..., "do so as well".

The models are claimed to be adequate on the following grounds :

(i) Every moral disagreement (or agreement) involves two things : disagreement or agreement in belief and disagreement or agreement in attitude. The working models are justified on the ground that they take care of both the types of disagreement or agreement. As such they are capable of explaining successfully the nature of moral judgement. The descriptive part takes care of agreement or disagreement in belief and imperative part takes care of agreement or disagreement in attitude.

(2) The models are justified also on the ground that they can also be used to explain ethical arguments, i.e., the cases of ethical agreement and disagreement can also be translated quite adequately in terms of the models

For instance :–

    A. This is good.

    B. I fully agree, It is indeed good.

It is a case of ethical agreement. It can be translated in terms of (3) in this way :

    A. I approve of this; do so as well.

    B. I fully concur in approving it, (continued to) do so as well.

Again :

    A. This is good.

    B. No, it is bad.

It is a case of ethical disagreement and it can be translated in terms of the model as

    A. I approve of this; do so as well.

    B. No, I disapprove of this; do so as well.

Criticism– One of the reasons given by Stevenson in support of the model is that we can translate quite adequately a case of ethical disagreement in terms of a model for the ethical world involved in the judgement of the disputants. Similarly, we can also translate ordinary ethical agreements in terms of the models. But an ethical agreement in ordinary language is not expressed in terms of Stevenson's model. It is expressed in terms of convergent moral judgements. Therefore, it needs no argument to say that the satisfactoriness of the models very greatly depends on the legitimacy of the claims Stevenson makes of in saying that they can take care of ordinary language version of agreement or disagreement. His own illustration is as follows :

    A.   This is good

    B.   I fully agree. It is indeed good.

Translated into his working model due to the ethical word ' good ' as follows :

    A.   I approve of this; do so as well.

    B.   I fully concur; do so as well.

This, he thinks, is the right way of translating the ethical agreement. But it may be remarked that this is perhaps not the right way to translate in terms of the model used. Using the model in a logical manner, the right translation seems to be the following.

    A.   I approve of this; do so as well.

    B.   I accept that you approve of this and you want me to do as you are doing; I also approve of this, do so as well.

This translation obviously shows that it is a mistranslation of the real ethical agreement and, therefore, it is *ipso facto* clear that the models cannot be used to express adequately what we express by our judgements.

Further, in the ordinary language version the second part of B's statement i.e. 'It is indeed good' is redundant. It is redundant because B cannot say "I fully agree but I do not want to call it good." But the translation effected on the line of the model makes it not so redundant.

Again the translation seems to entirely misrepresent the ethical point of an ethical agreement When B agrees with A it means that B agrees on a moral issue i e, B agrees with A in having the same evaluation of the object concerned. It is out of point to say that B accepts that A approves of the object A calls good. Agreeing with A when B says x is good means agreeing in calling x good. But if Stevenson's model for good is accepted, it becomes possible to say, "I fully agree but I do not call x good". This becomes equivalent to "I accept that you approve of x and you want me to do the same, but I do not want to do so." This expanded sentence is not a contradiction. Hence, the analyses i.e., the translation after the model is not the faithful explication of the analysandum, i e. the ordinary expression of ethical language.

Now to emphasise the disagreement or agreement in attitude and to avoid the confusion between agreement or disagreement in belief and the same in belief about attitude, he distinguished the model with another which seems to be identical with it but in fact is not. This is as follows :

" This is good " means I approve of this and I want you to do so as well.

Though it looks very similar to the above mentioned model yet it is quite different from them. In this scheme, agreement or disagreement in attitude has been entirely ignored. Both of its components are descriptive. The second part looks like imperative but virtually it refers to an agreement in belief about attitude.

Moreover, this model reduces an ethical judgement to a conjuction of two introspective statements and therefore it will rule out the very possibility of argumentation in the field of moral. But we do and we can argue about any ethical judgement. Secondly, if this model of analysis is accepted then an ethical dispute ceases to be a real dispute. It seems to be one due to the non-recognition of the ambiguous nature of the pronouns used. For example, suppose A and B disagree.

> A. I approve of this (x) and I want you to do so as well.
>
> B. I disapprove of this (x) and I want you to do so as well.

In a real dispute the statements of the disputants are contradictory but here they are not. They are really as stated below.

A approves of x and wants B to do so. And B disapproves of x and wants A to do so as well.

They are two different statements and they do not contradict each other. If 'p' stands for one statement, the other, in order to be its contradictory, should be represented by 'not-p'. But here we cannot use 'not-p' for the second statement. Rather we should use q. However, the whole statement is very confusing here.

Accepting the models as they are, there arises another question : what implication will these models have on ethical methodology, i.e., if we accept the models then what effect shall they have in settling the ethical disputes ? In an ethical argument we prove the ethical judgement which according to Stevenson consists of two parts—declarative and imperative. Hence to prove an ethical judgement we have to prove both these parts. The declarative part can be proved but the imperative part cannot be proved,

though we can give substantive proofs or supportive reasons to get it accepted. These reasons work on attitude via beliefs, e. by changing the beliefs the reasons change the attitude and get the imperative accepted.

But Stevenson is not correct here, because imperative can be proved according to the rule of logic and further the declarative part cannot be proved because it is a personal feeling of like or dislike. Stevenson proposes certain modifications in the working models in order that the models may become satisfactory tools for the analysis of moral judgement. So he points out certain defects in the working models and shows how they can be removed.

Firstly, the descriptive part of it makes the descriptive meaning of the ethical term very poor. The descriptive meaning of the ethical term, viz., "I approve of this" refers to the speaker's attitude only. But what we want to describe in the moral judgement is very offten more than what the model represents. For example, by 'x is good' we generally mean that x possesses many qualities and not only one i.e, the speaker's attitude towards it. Stevenson says that this inadequacy can be eliminated by accumulating as much by descriptive content as we desire in the reasons given to support a moral judgement. For example, if one asks "why should I call x good", we should reply "because x is polite, kind, generous etc." This we can do because the descriptive meaning of ethical terms is both ambiguous and vague.

Secondly, the presence of imperative part of the model makes the model too direct, crude and blunt. This defect is eliminated by introducing the notion of emotive meaning i.e, by saying that a moral judgement is not exactly an imperative but works like an imperative in virtue of its emotive meaning. The emotive meaning of a word is its power to express, arouse, effect or strengthen

feeling, emotion and attitude. All ethical words have ethical meaning by virtue of which they function like imperative. But they influence conduct or attitude more indirectly and politely and they are not as coercive or crude as ordinary imperatives are.

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