

DR. WADDINGTON appears to identify 'ethical' with whatever the super-ego demands, which is surely too sweeping. Even when it presents its demands in the name of conscience the super-ego is, emphatically, *not* always a trustworthy guide. Anyone who has studied the vagaries of conscience must agree that this still, small voice (or raging dictator) may, and sometimes does, inspire appalling behaviour; and conscience, as we recognize it, is only a small and relatively reasonable portion of the Freudian super-ego. Its less rational behests, in the form of morbid compulsions, may well land its victims in gaol, or in the mad-house.

Actually, diseased super-egos are the greatest menace with which humanity has to contend. According to Freudian psychopathology, intellectual and emotional abnormality results from the deadlocking of the vital human impulses by these misguided repressive super-egos. I therefore warmly agree with Prof. Julian Huxley about the close connexion between 'evil' and what he calls "the locking up of the 'energies' by the repressive mechanisms of the unconscious", and with his contention that 'good' may result from "releasing these 'energies' from their grappings". It will only result, however, if some other type of control, better adapted to reality (that is, what Freudians call the 'ego') can be developed to take over the regulation of these energies, since blind decontrol would be no better than blind automatic repression. I am, however, entirely in agreement that the stultification of human 'energies' is 'evil' and their utilization 'good'.

The theory underlying this view of 'good' and 'evil', to which we both subscribe, seems to be that the subject-matter of ethics is human personalities; 'evil' would then roughly coincide with intellectual and emotional disease, 'good' with intellectual and emotional growth and sanity. This is, in fact, my own present working hypothesis with regard to ethics and I believe it is very like Dr. Waddington's. Human personalities seem to be important among the results which evolution has produced and so may be presumed to have been aimed at; moreover human personalities as they mature tend spontaneously to develop their capacities more fully and regulate their conduct more realistically. I suggest that we may apply the term 'good' to this developmental tendency, or rather to the personalities which, if it were successfully carried through, would be evolved by it.

Working against this tendency, however, there appears to be a counter-tendency, the results of which I suggest we should call 'evil', which arrests and even corrupts this developmental process. I do not know whether we are justified in excluding this counter-tendency from the scheme of evolution. The disquieting progress made by this 'evil' tendency *may* be due to the institutions of our particular 'culture' and thus may be remediable, provided human beings are not too corrupted already to be willing and able to undertake the task of altering their own unhealthy 'culture'. On this question we have not the knowledge, at present, to pass a final judgment, though, obviously, we must act as though they *were* capable of it.

A word in conclusion: with reference to Prof. Joad's question: "What . . . does all this talk about the super-ego and its imposition upon the personality . . . really amount to?", if Prof. Joad would study the

curious phenomenon of compulsive behaviour, most clearly exemplified in obsessional neurotics, and would then familiarize himself with Freud's theory of intrapsychic conflict, he would get some inkling of the answer he is looking for. This study might, however, still take him some years, since it does not yet seem even to have begun.

KARIN STEPHEN.

Court House,
Ash Priors,
Nr. Taunton,
Somerset.

PROF. DINGLE¹ has picked out of my essay a sentence which, given the definitions with which I was operating, is a tautologous expansion of the argument. He appears to have thought that it was intended as an empirical statement, and he denies that it actually is empirical. From this basis he proceeds to reject my opposition to the apriorist view of ethics on the grounds that the opposition is itself apriorist, since it is not based on observation. He even states that it has no application to experience, although it clearly implies that in making an ethical choice we should pay more attention to the probable effects of the alternative courses of action in relation to the scientifically ascertained direction of evolution than to our own or other people's ethical intuitions or any system of ethical rules, etc.

The whole misunderstanding depends on the implicit adoption by Dingle of the traditional, and to my mind quite unsatisfactory, theory of the nature of an ethical aim as something absolute and without history. Thus, in a recent publication², he wrote: "It is clear that since the [ethical] principles of action must in essence be independent of the consequences of action, these latter being usually unknown, they cannot be expressed in terms of a rationalisation of past experience". Now the grounds advanced here for the independence of principles from their consequences are quite inadequate, since the consequences of our actions are never certainly known even when we guide them by an obviously empirical working hypothesis. One suspects that the independence is asserted merely on the basis of the introspection of an adult man who disregards entirely his own development. But however it has been arrived at, this view discounts at the outset the possibility of observing the genesis of aims, and thus any statement about their origin must appear non-observational. The apriorist view in fact becomes a tautology, since it has been smuggled into the discussion at the very beginning under cover of a theory of nature of aims in general.

It is, however, by no means impossible to observe the genesis, and thus the nature, of an aim; I mentioned in particular psychological and anthropological observations. The possibility of such a study has been overlooked in traditional thought partly because of the late appearance of an interest in evolutionary and developmental problems in general, and partly on account of the spurious 'absoluteness' of ethical aims, towards an elucidation of which both Prof. Huxley and I made suggestions. But it is the total neglect of such considerations which lies behind both the simple objections of Prof.