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Reviewed Work: Escapism: The Logical Basis of Ethics by A.N. Prior

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A. N. PRIOR. *Escapism: the logical basis of ethics. Essays in moral philosophy*, edited by A. I. Melden, University of Washington Press, Seattle 1958, pp. 135-146; and paper-bound edition, University of Washington Press, Seattle and London 1966, pp. 135-146.

Alternative formulations of the Andersonian simplification of deontic logics (A. R. Anderson, *The formal analysis of normative systems*, O. N. R. Report, New Haven 1956, afterwards published in *The logic of decision and action*, ed. N. Rescher, Pittsburgh 1967) are presented, advantages of basing deontic logic upon a strong modal (alethic) logic are discussed, and some philosophical implications of such simplified deontic logics are explored.

Suggested as a plausible set of postulates for deontic logic is some postulate set sufficient for "ordinary" modal logic (say S5, S4, or Feys's T) together with: O1. OCOpp, O2. COpPp, O3. C-OCpq-COpOq, O4. C-LCpq-COpOq, Df.P. Pp = df NONp.

The postulates: L1. CLpp, L2. C-LCpq-CLpLq, L3. C-Lp-LLp, L4. C-NLp-LNLp, Df.M. Mp = df NLNp, together with ordinary two-valued propositional calculus with substitution and detachment are used to formulate T (PC, L1, L2, and Df.M), S4 (T and L3), and S5 (T and L4).

It is shown in this O1-O4 version of the T-based deontic system O-T that CLpOp is provable and that O4 can be replaced by it without changing the system. Paralleling the Andersonian simplification, another version of O-T is formulated in which a deontic constant E (escaping all sanctions) is defined in terms of Anderson's disjunction of all sanctions, S, (E = df NS); obligation is defined in terms of escaping (Op = df LCEp); and the sole axiom postulated is ME. In this ME version of O-T, it is shown that LC-E-CLCEpp (corresponding to O1) C-LCECpq-CLCEpLCEq (corresponding to O3), and C-Lp-LCEp (corresponding to CLpOp) are provable and that C-LCEp-MKEp is provable and corresponds to both O2 and ME. Hence the O1-O4 and ME versions of O-T are merely different formulations of the same system.

On the advantages of basing deontic on a strong modal logic, the contention is that it is intuitively evident that OCpOp is equivalent to C-NOp-ONp; and since it is demonstrable that this equivalence is provable only in O-S5 and not in O-S4 nor O-T, the author views the non-provability of C-OCpOp-CNOpONp in the two weaker systems as an argument in favor of O-S5. Evidence of the intuitive evidentness of the claimed equivalence is not presented; instead, the assumed equivalence seems to be based upon a possible confusion between non-provability and falsity of the pair of cited propositions.

It is further argued that O-S5 is preferable to O-S4 because with Anderson's alternative definitions of obligation, forbidden, and permission, i.e., (O)p = df K-LCEp-KMpMNp, (F)p = df K-LCENp-KMpMNp, and (P)p = df K-MKEp-KMpMNp, it is provable in O-S5 that NXYp—where X and Y range over (O), (F), and (P)—but not provable in O-S4. That the provability of such theorems as N(P)(F)p and N(P)(O)p is an argument for, rather than against, O-S5 seems to the reviewer at least open to question.

In arguing that O-S4 is preferable to O-T, it is shown that in a quantified modal system, an Andersonian deontic system results from taking as axioms MIIpCOpp, C-LCIIpCOppp-Op, and C-Op-LCIIpCOppp, and that E can then be defined as IIpCOpp. It is further shown that these three axioms are provable in any O-system that has, in addition to modal postulates: O4. C-LCpq-COpOq, O5. OIIpCOpp, O6. COpMp, O7. COpLOp. Then it is observed that O7 is provable in O-S4 but not in O-T, tacitly justifying a preference for the stronger system. But no reasons are given why a system that does contain COpLOp as a theorem or a postulate should be regarded as preferable to one that does not. Castaneda (see article reviewed below) regards the provability of COpLOp in a deontic system as absurd. To say the least, it forecloses the interpretation of 'O' as 'legal obligation' or the obligation of any other dynamic normative system in which there is the possibility of terminating obligations. Furthermore,

there is another reason for thinking that O-S4 is too strong a system for adequately formalizing the concept of obligation. In O-S4 it is provable that COpOOp (although not in O-T), but there are many counterexamples—legal obligations which are legally permitted not to be so, i.e., Op and PNOp; in other words, Op and NOOp. Furthermore, it seems to the reviewer that even O-T, in which it is provable that COpMp, is too strong on that account. That COpMp ought to be the case seems plausible, but granting that only acknowledges the desirability of having OCOpMp provable in a deontic system, not the desirability of having COpMp. Maybe legislators ought not to enact contradictory norms, but do they (or could they)? Provability of COpMp would exclude the possibility of such as a matter of logic.

Two philosophical questions associated with the Anderson formulations of deontic logic are considered. The provability of C-LCpq-CLCqSLCpS in T-, S4- and S5-based deontic systems is interpreted as asserting "what necessarily implies what is forbidden, is itself forbidden": for example, that since helping the victim of a robbery necessarily implies a robbery, helping is forbidden because robbery is forbidden—a result that is entitled the Paradox of the Good Samaritan. On the question of whether Andersonian deontic logic is naturalistic, it is acknowledged that OE (i.e., FS) is provable and a persuasive explanation of why it should be, in terms of the definition of "escaping," is presented. The reviewer believes that perhaps an even more persuasive explanation results from interpreting Anderson's S as the disjunction of all *violations*, rather than *sanctions*—that FS (all violations are forbidden) is intuitively more plausible than that all sanctions are. Some of the virtues of the Anderson-Prior approach are that it (1) simplifies deontic logic, (2) suggests new ways of relating the differences between T, S4, and S5 to intuitive considerations, and (3) reveals the parallel between the logical structure of "being perfect" and "escaping all violations."

Misprints: page 137, line 6, for 'LCpLCpqq' read 'LCpCLCpqq'; page 138, line 31, for COCpqCOqOq' read 'COCpqCOpOq'; page 143, line 26, for 'MIIPCopp' read 'MIIPCOpp'.

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