

ON 'GOOD' AND 'BAD'

by

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The two words: *good* and *bad* are among the most frequent expressions in anyone's English speech. And the same can be said about their counterparts in all languages. The latter statement implies that there ARE such counterparts, i.e. counterparts with exactly the same meanings, in any language. Is this to be taken for granted? For some reason the idea of omnipresence of 'good' and 'bad' strikes everybody as almost self-evident: it is immediately and overwhelmingly suggestive. One is prone to say: it is simply unbelievable to have a natural language where 'good' and 'bad' in some shape were missing.

Still, because of certain facts, caution seems to be well advised. The ideal situation of exact interlingual counterparts, i.e. a one-to-one correspondence of the occurrences of English *good* and *bad*, on the one hand, and of some specific expressions in a different language, on the other, is hardly to be found anywhere. And this is due not only to trivial phenomena like the presence of set phrases where *good* and *bad* or their usual translation substitutes are, in point of fact, deprived of any meaning whatsoever, cf. *good-father*, or like inflectional differentiation, cf. Polish *dobry*, fem. *dobra*, etc. There are expressions which, by all reasonable standards, can properly be decomposed into, say, *good* with its ordinary meaning and the remaining part, but which correspond to equally decomposable expressions in another language where *good* idiomatically translates into something else than its ordinary counterpart in that language, cf. *good weather* – Polish *ładna pogoda* 'pretty weather' (this example draws on Wierzbicka's observation of the absence of *bon temps* in French (Goddard, Wierzbicka 1994: 496); in French, we have *beau temps*, although we have *mauvais temps*, whereas in Polish the exact counterpart of *ładna pogoda*, viz. *brzydka pogoda*, is made use of.

However, cases of this kind do not create, after all, a very serious danger to the claim of universality of 'good' and 'bad' as inherent in English *good* and *bad*: the fact that another concept is applied to 'weather' in Polish, albeit a fully regular and conventionalised phenomenon, is in no way concomitant with any kind of incorrectness or incomprehensibility of the literal counterpart of the

English expression, viz. Polish *dobra pogoda* which is possible and appropriately understandable. This allows us to speak about special conventions of conceptual CHOICE (of contextual determination of activating these or other concepts, out of a number of concepts which are equally applicable to the object at hand), conventions which leave the concepts themselves intact (cf. Wierzbicka on idiosyncratic extensions of, and restrictions on, the range of use in Goddard, Wierzbicka 1994: 496).

What seems to be more troublesome from our present point of view is the presence, in some languages, of more candidates than one to the status of the counterparts of English *good* and *bad* (especially the latter). Thus, German, for example, has three words which may translate the English *bad*, viz. *schlecht*, *böse*, *übel* (we may leave aside further possible translation equivalents, such as *schlimm* or *arg*: the former is distinctly colloquial, the latter – archaic, and these stylistic qualities exhaust the difference between the two words and *schlecht*). This kind of situation undermines the otherwise promising prospects of PAIRING each of *good* and *bad* with one exact equivalent in every language.

But even this obstacle on our way to the acceptance of the claim of universality of 'good' and 'bad' is by no means insurmountable. The point is that there is a hierarchy of adjectives in German: *schlecht* is by far the most neutral term and it may cover the field otherwise occupied by the remaining expressions. This was emphasised, in particular, by Brentano (1955, fn. 26). As a result, one may be justified in upholding the pairing thesis even under so complicated circumstances as those concerning German.

The claim of universality of 'good' and 'bad', or G and B, as I shall henceforth write, has been forcefully defended in a number of Wierzbicka's works (e.g., Wierzbicka 1989, 1991, 1992a, 1992b). The recent volume (Goddard, Wierzbicka 1994) on a fair selection of 'exotic languages' as exhibiting their own means of expressing 'primitive concepts' is a serious step towards finding a solution of what the universal and perhaps also primitive concepts are; and the set proposed as the outcome of this investigation does include G and B.

Let us accept Wierzbicka's and her collaborators' findings as leaving practically no room for any reasonable hesitation as regards the universality of G and B.

It should be emphasised, once again, that what is at stake here are CONCEPTS, not words. These concepts materialise in some separate lexical items of every language (a very important circumstance), but they are also present, in a covert form, in extremely numerous 'ameliorative' and 'pejorative' counterparts of evaluatively neutral expressions of all languages, cf. *illegal, unlawful – legally unfounded, bastard – illegitimate child, to get sozzled – to get drunk*, etc. This reinforces the claim of a very special place of our two universal concepts in the entire fabric of the semantic system.

The prominent rôle of G and B is all the more intriguing as there are no simple, easily graspable or palpable GENERAL qualities of objects, persons, events, actions, properties, etc., described as G or B that our words could refer to. At the same time, a very strong intuition suggests that the concepts G and B cannot be split into a multitude of specific features of these objects or other, according to the myriad of particular kinds of the objects: G and B ARE UNIQUE traits of most varied classes of things. As is well known, the undeniable existence of the all-pervading unique contrast of G and B has been a baffling experience to hundreds of thinkers. To many of them, it constitutes, especially because of its radically abstract nature, perhaps the most mysterious aspect of the reality (just recall Wittgenstein's relevant reflections in the *Tractatus*, cf. Wittgenstein 1922: 6.4 - 6.45).

The feeling of a kind of ultimate intractability of the concepts has led, in a rather natural way, to the idea of declaring that they have the status of indefinable, primitive notions. This idea has been supposed to put an end to the debate in which the successive definitional proposals had appeared to be so unsatisfactory to so many people. The most important philosopher to be recalled at this point is of course G. Moore (cf. Moore 1903, 1966).

A linguistically aided revival of this view has recently come with the works of Wierzbicka and her school.

For my part, I shall submit a consideration on the possibility of a compositional approach to G and B. The decisive conceptual component in the relevant composition will be 'want'.

Notice that Wierzbicka's claim (which we have just accepted) to the effect that G and B are universal concepts does not entail their primitive character in the sense of their non-compositionality: all primitive, and therefore non-compositional, concepts are necessarily

universal, but universal concepts need not be non-compositional. Wierzbicka rightly emphasises this point and supplies a very convincing example: the concept of 'mother' which is most certainly universal, but is a transparent composition of more elementary concepts like 'woman', 'give birth to' (cf. Wierzbicka 1987).

The first observation I would like to draw attention to as favouring the idea of compositionality of G and B is that of the very well known 'relativistic' aspect of the concepts. Although in many, perhaps even in the vast majority of contexts in real life, there is practically no disagreement among the collocutors, at least after both parties to the conversation have ascertained the relevant facts, as to whether something deserves the attribute G or B, cf.:

- (1) This map is good.
- (2) He's cleaned the carpet well.
- (3) His killing his brother was a bad thing to do.

there are also cases where people quarrel in earnest over the evaluation of whatever is the object concerned, cf.:

- (4) Abortion is bad.
- (5) Abortion is not bad: it is morally indifferent or even good, under circumstances.

Now, the most uncontroversial instances of primitive concepts are applied in a uniform or almost uniform manner by all discourse participants: it is only in rare cases that external, factual circumstances of different people's acquaintance with the situation at hand (acquaintance which in certain cases happens to be insufficient) may lead to incongruence in the relevant ascriptions, but this incongruence gets easily overcome by methods everybody knows equally well. The concepts themselves are absolutely clear, and operations on them (given sufficiently favourable external circumstances) involve no difficulties. To exemplify this, we may refer to such concepts as 'part of', 'know that' or 'do (something)'. All of this is in a striking contrast with what we have to do with in cases like (4) - (5).

It is important to stress that the straightforward decidability of concepts is no sufficient index of their primitive character: there are of course plenty of conceptual compositions which are most easily decidable as well; suffice it to point to the case of 'rectangular'. The only index I am actually inclined to apply is negative: the LACK of uniform and straightforward use of a concept to be observed in a good proportion of relevant cases is indicative of its being COMPOSITIONAL in nature. And this negative index does apply to G and B.

The second observation to be invoked is a reminder of a fair number of explanatory remarks and even elaborated proposals in both dictionaries and special (in particular, philosophical) works where G and B have been set in a relation with the concept 'want' or with some related concepts such as 'desire', 'interest', and the like (Wierzbicka is of course fully aware of this, cf. Goddard, Wierzbicka 1994: 36). This kind of relationship was claimed to exist, e.g., by Aristotle (1912), Spinoza (1923-25), Schlick (1949) and many others. Such vast convergence of judgements can hardly be a matter of pure chance.

Moreover, we can test the judgements by trying to confront the respective evaluations with denials of existence of ANY states of wanting (or similar ones) and observing the ensuing reactions. Consider the following pronouncement:

- (6) It is good that it's raining, but my saying it's good has literally nothing to do with any need or anyone's (including my own) wish, desire, etc., of any kind.

To my ear, (6) sounds simply incomprehensible.

Notice that (6) provokes one to ask the utterer of (6) the following question:

- (7) But then you might also say 'it's good that it isn't raining' if it WEREN'T raining in the same situation? Why couldn't it 'be good' both ways if no specific measures or standards of these needs or other can be applied to 'good'?

To my mind, remark (7) is absolutely reasonable. Normally, a situation which is contradictory with respect to a state of affairs described as 'good' cannot be thought of by the same person against

the same background as 'good'. And this circumstance can hardly stand in no relation to the fact that needs, wishes, desires, etc. have an 'objective' and the latter is ONE of the opposing (contradictory) states of affairs, to the exclusion of the other one(s).

The third clue I wish to present has to do with a striking peculiarity of G and B concerning their range of application: contradictory and analytic sentences, in fact, even a broader spectrum of predicates, viz. those predicates which have no opposing non-contradictory alternative, are immune to G and B (as applying to the respective content). Thus, all of the following sentences are undeniably deviant:

- (8) * It's good / bad that he is asleep and not asleep at the same time.
- (9) * It's good / bad that when he is asleep, he is asleep.
- (10) * It's good / bad that $2 \times 2 = 4$.
- (11) * It's good / bad that it's true that he is asleep.
- (12) * It's good / bad that it's untrue that he is asleep.

(especially, when *it's true*, *it's untrue* carry sentential stress; if not, (11) - (12) are just strange variants of the respective sentences without *it's true*, *it's untrue* which add nothing to the latter, because of the factive character of G and B; notice that (12) has, ultimately, the same content prefix as in (11), viz. 'it's true', with the difference that it is followed by the negation of 'he is asleep').

Now, it is conspicuous that the deviant series illustrated with (8) - (12) has a clear parallel in the form of a series of sentences with *want* and similar predicates, cf.:

- (13) * I want him to be asleep and not asleep at the same time.
- (14) * I want it to be the case that when he is asleep, he is asleep.
- (15) * I want 2×2 to be equal to 4.
- (16) * I want it to be true that he is asleep.

- (17) * I want it to be untrue that he is asleep.

The phenomenon illustrated with (13) - (17) is a reflection of the essence of 'want' and related predicates: they represent a kind of 'attraction' of the entity in question (a human being, a living being) to one of the real, equally non-contradictory, contingent, incompatible conceptual (i.e., non-numerical, QUALITATIVE) poles, coupled with the entity's diversion from the other pole(s). They are 'idle' when they get mechanically concatenated with structures where no such situation is imaginable (as is the case in (13) - (17)). And the same thing, 'polarity', is characteristic of G and B. It is uttermosty implausible that the two facts have nothing to do with each other. And as 'want' can hardly involve G or B as its components, cf.:

- (18) That dog wants to drink.

where neither G nor B is needed to understand (18), what suggests itself as a solution to the puzzle is the idea of G and B being based on 'want'.

Fourth, there is a further obvious parallelism between G and B, on the one hand, and 'want', on the other.

Unlike 'know that' which does not admit of a conjunction of *know-that*-phrases with incompatible complements (this is, as a matter of fact, what incompatibility consists in in the first place), 'want' is readily complemented with incompatible phrases even under coreference and the resulting *want*-phrases are licit (only contradictory complements in *want*-phrases are illicit), cf.:

- (19) He wants to write the letter and he doesn't want to write it / he diswants ... / he wants not

And we observe an analogous phenomenon on G and B: the opposing evaluations can be applied to one and the same object or state of affairs. It is true that when something is viewed through one definite prism (this being the most ordinary situation), no one can expect a pronouncement to the effect that '*a* is good; *a* is bad'; and in any case, such a pronouncement must be accompanied by special reservations concerning the different aspects or points of view involved, in order to avoid giving the impression of a jocular

contradiction being presented. But the all-important fact is that '*a* is good; *a* is bad' actually does NOT involve any contradiction. I shall cite one genuine example from my own experience. In a talk on 'newspeak', while describing the psychological situation of Poles in the memorable Solidarity era of 1980-81, I said: 'the memory of the past terror is becoming more and more pale; this is good, but at the same time bad: for we get accustomed to light-heartedness'. Clearly, there is no kind of deviance or word play in this kind of usage.

Still, in spite of the observations made above, one must admit that the relativisation of G and B to 'wanting' or any other cognate predicate is no easy matter: the big problem is how to find the corresponding ADEQUATE formula.

Consider just one avenue of thinking about it which may seem promising. It is clear that G and B are somehow easily associated with the idea of consequences. Thus, we rightly abhor equating *a is good* with *there are qualities in a which I want* or with *there are qualities in a which someone / everyone wants* because no such WANTED qualities compel one to say: *therefore, a is good*; and we are apt to try to resort to something like *a with its qualities is wanted because of the (or some?) consequences that are wanted which a with its qualities has* (I leave it open what the wanting subject is to be). But clearly, if the consequences have, in turn, their DISWANTED consequences, *a* cannot be wanted in the way 'good things' are wanted. Here, our quest comes across the possibility of trying out 'having consequences of type T' where 'type T of consequences' is equal to 'consequences having wanted consequences of type T'. But then a conceptual infinite regress immediately opens out and we must face the consequence of G being a concept which can never be applied conclusively, being an 'undecidable' concept, something G most certainly is NOT. At this juncture, a desperate move may lead us to something like '*a* has good consequences'. Here, we have gone a full circle towards the most malicious vicious circle. It is the feeling that that kind of vicious circle is inescapable in any attempts at defining G and B which no doubt makes one so responsive to the alternative idea of the primitive nature of our concepts.

I shall briefly discuss a few further examples of the many formulations that may spring to one's mind, but must rather quickly be put aside because of their inadequacy.

Spinoza (1923-25) says that in considering something good we recognize it as something we desire and try to achieve. If applied to

specific utterances, with the proviso that 'we' refers to the appropriate speaker and the rest is understood literally, Spinoza's formula misses the point drastically. Consider, for example,

(20) He bought a good horse.

Clearly, the speaker of (20) need not try to achieve anything that is connected with the horse in question. But Spinoza's account would be even less appropriate if it were interpreted as involving a generalised 'we'; one may ask: are 'we' the speaker and hearer? or a special group of people? if so, which one? or perhaps mankind? No answer is satisfactory.

Ziff (1960: 247) suggests the following definition of 'good': 'answering to certain interests'. Suppose 'good' does entail 'answering to certain interests'; for example, sentence (20) seems to conform to this idea. However, there is little doubt that a sentence with *answering to certain interests* taken, in its turn, as a starting point cannot be replaced by an appropriate sentence with *good* in place of that expression so that NO SURPLUS OF INFORMATION is conveyed. Clearly, one may insist on the truth of

(21) That John killed Harry answers to certain interests.

or of

(22) Someone wanted John who killed Harry to kill him.

(which seems to entail (21)) without at the same time being prepared to pronounce the judgment

(23) That John killed Harry is good.

Among other things, the speaker of (23) in a way takes a stand towards those 'certain interests' whereas (21) is completely neutral in this respect.

Puzynina (1992: 52) has proposed, roughly, the following analysis of 'good':

- (24) *a* is good = *a* is such that I (as well as, possibly, people in general, a group of people or an authoritative person) want *a* to exist and/or to be, in principle, as *a* is

((24) is an elaboration of an earlier suggestion made by Wierzbicka (1971: 235-36) which she abandoned long ago.) Since the addition in parentheses is optional, everything boils down to the speaker's wanting *a* to preserve at least its essential features.

There are a number of points which undermine the adequacy of this particular formulation, even though the idea of relating G and B to this particular predicate, 'want', seems to me to be crucially important and correct (and I am certainly indebted to Puzynina in my own thinking about our present topic).

First, wanting presupposes the absence of the relevant state whose installment IN THE FUTURE is welcome, whereas G may refer to existing, past objects, as is the case of judgments concerning historical matters. Of course, Puzynina is aware of this, but her FORMULATION implies preservation of something or somebody in the future.

Second, the appraisal of *a* as G excludes neither the speaker's will to change something in *a* nor his regarding *a* as absolutely ideal. Cf.:

- (25) The speed at which he drives the car is good, but I would advise him to increase it by 2 miles per hour.

- (26) The speed at which he drives the car is good; moreover, it is ideal and I want him to change nothing at all in it.

which are fully licit statements. But then both 'wanting *a* to be as *a* is' and the qualification of this clause by means of a hedge like 'in principle' introduce elements which make (24) inadequate.

Third, a sentence like

- (27) I want *a* to exist and to be as *a* is.

(where 'I want *a* to exist' is in fact equal to 'I want *a* to CONTINUE its existence') can be set in an argumentative context where '*a* is good' appears to play the part of the argument, cf.:

- (28) I want *a* to exist and to be as *a* is because *a* is good.

Now, (28) is certainly very different in its purport from

- (29) I want *a* to exist and to be as *a* is because I want *a* to exist and to be as *a* is.

which is, by the way, at least pragmatically deviant (to my mind, it is even syntactically, let alone semantically, deviant). On the other hand, (28) is distinctly opposed to

- (30) *a* is good because I want *a* to exist and to be as *a* is.

which is a very poor argument (unlike (28) which is quite acceptable). All of this shows that '*a* is good' conveys something different from, in particular, something richer than, (27).

Fourth, there is the problem of questions. Is

- (31) Is *a* good?

equivalent to

- (32) Do I want *a* to exist and to be as *a* is?

Clearly not.

These are, however, only partial drawbacks of definition (24).

The most important obstacle on our way to accepting (24) and many other proposals of a similar kind is Moore's classical and irresistible objection (earlier on voiced particularly strongly by Brentano (1955)) to what he called 'naturalistic fallacy': G and B carry OBJECTIVE claims, such as are proper to knowledge claims, and are radically opposed to any reports on anyone's options (even everyone's within a vast majority of mankind). In accordance with the theory inherent in Moore's work, but also in full harmony with our common linguistic intuitions, one can say:

- (33) Everybody except me says sincerely that *a* is desirable and good, but in point of fact *a* is bad.

Moreover, statement (33) is apt to start a debate over whether *a* IS good or bad. On the other hand, any REPORT on what these or other people's attitudes towards *a* are and what their evaluations in terms of 'I regard *a* as good / bad' are may be calmly accepted by the

addressee and left without any subsequent dialogue or polemic, as a piece of factual information which in no way affects his own options.

From these (positive and negative) observations on some necessary conditions of an adequate account of G and B let us proceed to the relevant explicit proposal of their analysis which will hopefully satisfy the reasonable requirements.

The analysis has, basically, the form of 'paralocutions' for G and B which are given below:

(34) [Ga]

a such that (i) something_i is such that
 someone knows something_i about *a*
 or someone knows about *a* something_i ' else than
 something_i which_i ' is a part of something_i
 (ii) someone wants / wanted something_i which_i is other
 than *a* ,
 you know what_i ,
 to happen
 or wants / wanted something_k which_k is other than *a* ,
 you know what_k,
 not to happen

is such that because of

something_i such that someone knows something_i about
a,
 either
 something_j which_j (i) is other than *a* '
 (ii) is such that anyone who knows that
 something_j happens
 knows that something_j happens
 can / could happen
 or

something_m which_m (i) is other than *a* '

(ii) is such that anyone who knows that
 something_m happens knows that
 something_k happens

cannot / could not happen

where: *a* ' = one of : (1) *a*, (2) something_i such that someone knows
 something_i about *a*,

(3) what is incompatible with either (1) or (2)

(35) [Ba]

same as (34) except that the clauses can / could happen and cannot /
 could not happen are mutually exchanged

In addition to (34) - (35), a comment on their mutual relation is necessary. The crucial wantings of something *j* and diswantings of something *k* which have the same notation in both paralocutions are embodied by real complements which come in pairs of incompatible items, *C* ' which is incompatible with *C* '' which is incompatible with *C* '. If some wanting or diswanting of *C* ' in a given conceptual structure applied to a specific object is exchanged for *C* '' , or vice versa, OTHER THINGS BEING EQUAL, (34) must be replaced with (35) and vice versa. I.e., the same thing MUST be both good from the point of view of some wanting and bad from the point of view of the symmetrical wanting with an incompatible complement; non-symmetrical wantings with identical, compatible or incompatible complements MAY make things good and bad at the same time; nothing can be good and bad at the same time FROM THE SAME POINT OF VIEW.

The structure and notation of (34) - (35) call for some comments.

The paralocutions are divided into two parts: the thematic part and the rhematic part.

The thematic part contains, first, the indication of the theme, together with possible 'thematic dicta' as involved, e.g., in a definite description introducing the theme, and second, a special 'thematic dictum' in points (i) and (ii) which present the assumption of a certain unspecified exhaustive truth about the theme, i.e., among other things, of the existence of a given state of affairs or of some

qualities, if the theme is not a state of affairs, and the assumption of an equally realised state of someone's wanting. It will be understood that if an indication of something is embedded in a *know*-structure, its existence is implied, and what is embedded in a *want*-structure is to be taken as representing propositional content which has as yet not materialised. The notation *a'* allows us to cover, on the one hand, states of affairs which are ascribed G or B, and on the other, qualities of other objects which are ascribed G or B. As usual, the thematic part contains elements which remain unchanged under negation, interrogativity and hypotheticality; it can easily be checked, at least in myriads of ordinary cases of use, that they indeed remain so unchanged, as opposed to what is given in the rhematic part.

The latter presents a logical link of unilateral implication between what is known about the theme and 'satisfaction', for G, or 'frustration', for B, of wantings as assumed in the thematic part. This link is represented by *because of* and by clauses (ii); it should be emphasised that non-identity of the antecedent and the consequent in (ii) is not stipulated (e.g., *I* may be equal to *j*).

A few minor points concerning the notation in (34) - (35): *such that* and *is such that* are syntactic devices introducing, respectively, the thematic and the rhematic part; the expressions with *I* represent alternatives of the appropriate tense variants the choice of which is assumed to be determined by the context (thus, e.g.,

(36) Queen Elizabeth was a good monarch.

is to be explained by using, among other things, *could happen* rather than *can happen*).

As can easily be seen, the meaning representations in (34) - (35) are, by and large, Wierzbicka-style formulas. What is the most important circumstance, the elements used in them are, for the most part, to be found on her latest lists of semantic primitives (notice that *incompatible* corresponds to her negation, or *not*, which in the present context would be misleading; it would be interpreted as 'other than' which is something different, also in her scheme). Others, in particular, *which*, *what*, (*either*) *or*, *anyone who*, are close to some of her primitives and their appropriate translation in her terms could be provided on the same basis as she assumes for all those, so very frequent, expressions in their other occurrences.

Both for stylistic and substantive reasons, I do not modify the relevant fragments of (34). The substantive reasons apply, above all, to the relative constructions which I think cannot be resolved in sequences of independent clauses (with, say, demonstratives, words like *the same*, etc.). At bottom, we have to do here with the problem of identity and its representation. To my mind, identity IS established by various linguistic expressions in an effective and strict way (not just by way of mere hints, like in the case of *the same*, *other*, etc., used without the explicitly given *relata*); moreover, identity is at the heart of language as such. The relevant identities are indicated, foremostly, by the global, indivisible character of ONE expression (with its sometimes very complicated relational content). It is to do justice to this aspect of linguistic reality that one must resort to artificial means of representation, in particular, to subscripts (such as used in (34) and as are avoided by Wierzbicka).

As for the status of the elements used in (34) vis-a-vis the categories of semantic primes and semantic non-primes, I am strongly inclined to accept the following semantic primes: 'know about ___ that ___' (with a 'pronominalised' *that*-part, as well as, occasionally, also *about*-part, in the form of *something*, *what*, etc.), 'something', 'someone'. Incidentally, *someone knows about ___ that ___* seems to me to be the best analysis available of *it is true about ___ that ___*. I am not going here into any reasoning that underlies the choice just indicated (for the concept of knowledge, see Bogusławski 1981, 1986, 1989).

Among the remaining elements, a particularly strong candidate for the status of a semantic prime is 'want' (with its obligatory concomitant expressions like *that* or *to*); I shall not elaborate on some possible doubts about this status of 'want'. In any case, for the purpose of the elucidation of G and B, 'want' is precisely the right concept; and its great value is particularly reinforced by its universal character (cf. Goddard, Wierzbicka 1994) which allows it to match the no less universal concepts G and B.

The elements of (34) which I have not mentioned here are items whose alleged semantically primitive nature needs much more critical investigation or seems to me less than probable (but whose possible correct decomposition is a problem I shall not discuss at this place).

I shall now pass on to a substantiation of (34) - (35).

It will take the form of a confrontation of actual features of G and B and our paralocutions: if the latter represent, perhaps in cooperation with certain more general mechanisms, a sufficient basis for a satisfactory account of the former, then their acceptance appears to be justified.

First, let us recall the features of G and B mentioned earlier on as those ones which have governed our search for an analysis of the concepts.

1. *Non-uniformity and non-straightforwardness of application of G and B, or their 'relativism': G and B can be ascribed, from different points of view, to the same objects.*

(34) predicts this: it shows G and B as relations to freely selected wantings and diswantings which are often divergent among the volitive subjects (even if their overlappings prevail).

2. *Contingent states of affairs as the exclusive domain of G and B.*

The reflection of this feature in (34) is secured by the crucial rôle of 'want', as well as 'happen', in it.

Next, several further features of G and B have to be discussed in more detail as duly encapsulated in (34) - (35).

3. *Factivity of G and B.*

It is well known that G and B are 'factive', i.e. they presuppose the existence of either the state of affairs appraised as G or B or of the state of affairs known to be true about another kind of object appraised as G or B (say, a thing or a person). All of this is taken care of by means of clause (i), based on 'know', in the thematic part of (34). Notice that the former kind of state of affairs, introduced in clauses satisfying the schema *that* — *F*, e.g. *that Harry is asleep (is good/bad)*, is not so much a state of affairs to be symbolised with some *Fb* as a state of affairs to be symbolised with *someone knows that*

Fb or *Fb such that someone knows that Fb*. In ascriptions of G or B to abstract relations (kinds of states of affairs irrespective of their realisation), to be illustrated with sentences like

(37) Learning is good.

we should think of conditional or possible situations whose correct rendering can have a form which, if applied to our example (37), reads:

(38) If someone is learning, it is good that he is learning.

It will be remembered that in such cases the existence of the relevant abstract structures is no less presupposed than the existence of the real facts in the other cases.

4. *Objectivity of G- and B-claims.*

A striking feature of G- and B-claims is the fact that, although they are relativised in a special way (as noted on p. 1), they show no traces of indecisiveness, shakiness (unless they are embedded in hypothetical expressions like *it seems to me*, rather than used in categorical assertions). On the contrary, they are expressed with exceptional firmness and self-confidence which makes them similar to statements of analytic or necessary truths.

In terms of (34) - (35), this feature appears to be perfectly understandable: the rheme as presented there is of a logical nature; moreover, the antecedent in the relevant entailment is 'what is known', i.e. a truth, rather than any guess or supposition.

One could even say that a G- or B-pronouncement, in the case of some resistance on the addressee's part, has a flavour of a manifestation of a critical, perhaps even contemptuous attitude towards the addressee: he may be allowed to disagree, but only at the expense of being treated as less than well informed, sometimes as downright stupid. Notice that the superiority of the speaker in terms of his knowledge is not stated directly; nor is there any part in (34) which would amount to such a direct statement. His superiority is conveyed or suggested pragmatically. The point is that it is the speaker who takes responsibility for the whole statement, in

particular, for the knowledge claim and for the claim of its consequences: should he himself hesitate whether or not he knows everything of importance, he could not sincerely claim that that knowledge is proper to someone.

5. *Presence of some definite and manifest 'point of view' or 'wanting target'*

Already in the introductory part of this article we have pointed out that a G- or B-claim can only be understood, if some 'wanting target' is assumed by the speaker.

To see that this is indeed a necessary ingredient of the semantic structure of G and B, consider the following situation: one member of a group walking in a valley picks up, all of a sudden, a random stone and says:

(39) This stone is good.

Clearly, nothing is missing from (39) that is required syntactically or semantically: one can easily imagine a situation where nothing but an utterance of (39) is needed. (39) is only inappropriate in the external circumstances we have described. And the source of the flaw is shown by a normal reaction of a hearer:

(40) What do you mean to say? 'Good' from what point of view?

Another clue pointing in the same direction is the presence of such reasonable rejoinders to evaluative statements as

(41) From a certain point of view you may be right, but this is not my point of view; you have certainly made assumptions I do not share, contrary to your expectations.

Finally, there is the obvious empirical fact of evaluative statements sometimes being accompanied by explicit clauses invoking a definite 'wanting target', cf. expressions like *from the point of view of, in terms of, in order to, etc.*

I would maintain that 'the point of view' is given in one of the following two ways. One of them is the explicit way just mentioned,

the other one is enthymematic: the point of view is obvious to the hearer, owing to his knowledge of the speaker, of their mutual relationship and the entire situation; it belongs to what constitutes their 'common ground'.

In both cases, we may safely assume that what 'wanting target' has been presupposed by the speaker is known to the addressee. In order to account for both the assumed 'wanting target' itself and its being known to the addressee, I have introduced, in (34), clause (ii) of the thematic dictum with the quasi-parenthetical subclauses *you know what_j; you know what_k*. Notice that what these subclauses amount to is just the POSSIBILITY that the addressee IDENTIFIES the 'wanting target', not any orientation on his part in all the relevant details. In cases when no specific information is forthcoming, the addressee may just accept the following identification of the 'wanting target': 'whatever the speaker has in mind as the point of view he adopts'.

It should be emphasised that the choice of the point of view is mainly constrained by the requirement of its being possibly clear to the addressee. It is true that this is normally achieved by the speaker's selecting such wantings as are common to him and the addressee, as well as to further people, perhaps to large groups of people or all people. But this is by no means necessary. After having exchanged a wheel in a watch, someone can say:

(42) This watch is good now.

Under normal circumstances, the 'wanting target' is 'when looking at the watch, one is correctly informed about the clock-time'. But (42) can as well be used in a situation when the watch has just been spoiled for a gang trying to harm someone making use of it; and the speaker who has done that, say, under duress, may not share the gang's intentions. Thus, our solution in (34) where a certain wanting is ascribed by the speaker to just 'someone' appears to be correct (after all, the speaker is someone, too).

6. *The extraneous nature of the 'wanting target'*

Already in our introductory remarks we have noticed that in claiming something is good or bad the speaker does not inform us

that he or anyone else wants or likes the relevant state of affairs, i.e. a state of affairs denoted by the theme *that Fb* or proper to the object spoken about. Hosts of fully correct utterances where the speaker expresses his diswanting what has just been described by him as good (or wanting something considered by him bad) confirm this, cf.:

(43) It's good to be here, but I want to leave.

(44) It's bad to smoke, but I have decided to have a cigarette right now.

What these observations pertain to is perhaps the most important feature of G and B: our concepts introduce the idea of a SYSTEM of states of affairs where the initial state of affairs has some consequences for the possibility of ANOTHER state of affairs.

It is depending on whether that DIFFERENT state of affairs just taken into consideration is wanted or diswanted by someone just being referred to that the initial state of affairs comes out as 'good' or 'bad'. Recall our examples (25) - (26); suppose the car moves at the speed of 65 miles an hour. When we call it good, we do not imply that someone, perhaps we ourselves, wanted it to be exactly 65 miles an hour: the speed of 64 miles an hour would do as well, although both magnitudes (as well as all the other ones) are incompatible with each other. The point of declaring that the speed is good is, rather, that someone wants the passengers to come in time to the point of destination and the observation that the actual speed, alongside many others that are possible, but by far not all, ALLOWS one to make the desired situation come true.

It is to reflect the crucial feature of G and B we are now speaking of that I have introduced the clause *other than d'* at several places in (34).

To see that this is indeed a necessary prerequisite of G and B, it is useful to consider acceptable and unacceptable ways of justifying G- and B-claims: observations of this kind no doubt directly point to what the common understanding of G and B is. Notice that what we have in mind are NECESSARY conditions inherent in G and B, not varying circumstances under which these speakers or others are at all inclined to make use of G or B: such circumstances may be substantially richer than the necessary conditions. Accordingly, when we talk of acceptable and unacceptable ways of justifying G- and B-

claims, we only think of judgments on whether given claims can at all count as minimally falling within the category of the relevant justificatory claims or whether they are just random and completely irrelevant remarks; we do not think of judgments about whether the judging person would regard the respective G- or B-claims (not justificatory claims with regard to the G- or B-claims), under given circumstances and with a given kind of justification, as worth being made in the first place.

Consider the following utterances:

(45) He scratched his head. That's good.

(46) He wanted to scratch his head. That's good.

Although these utterances are acceptable, they are quite puzzling as they stand. One is prone to ask the utterer of either of (45) - (46):

(47) What does that 'good' consist in?

But what would count as an acceptable and ultimate (not question-begging) explanation (in the sense of 'acceptability' as just described)? Certainly not the answer concerning (45):

(48) That's good because John wanted him to scratch his head.

or the answer concerning (46):

(49) That's good because John wanted him to want to scratch his head.

These may be hints at some possible explanation which, however, is still not forthcoming. Interestingly enough, although

(50) It's good that he wanted to scratch his head because he did scratch his head.

cannot pass even for such a hint,

(51) It's good that he scratched his head because he wanted to scratch his head.

seems to go some way towards a necessary explanation of (45).

Still, the addressee may retort to (51) as follows:

(52) It is astonishing that 'his scratching his head' and 'his wanting to scratch his head' in neither of which I can see anything good should jointly yield something good.

I shall show two examples of acceptable answers to this kind of doubt:

(53) I say (51) because people generally want to feel satisfied owing to the fulfilment of their wishes unless some other important wishes are thereby frustrated. And what happened to him was just a case of this kind.

(54) I say (45) because this allowed him to get rid of the itchy feeling, something people badly want.

Notice, first, that (53), (54) really close the question (even for, say, a masochist in the case of (53)), second, that they invoke something wanted, but different from the initial state of affairs (even from a sheer combination of two initial states of affairs, as in the case of (53)), third, that the whole pattern follows the structure presented in (34) very faithfully. This seems to provide a strong piece of evidence for (34).

7. *Asymmetry in relations between G, B and their negations.*

One very special feature of G and B is as follows: to the extent that something is not bad, it is good, but not vice versa: if there is nothing good in something, it may be indifferent and not bad, not even bad just to the extent that it cannot be ascribed the quality G. This feature is no doubt quite peculiar, given that other 'antonyms' do not exhibit a similar property: e.g., something that is not low is not thereby high and something that is not high is not thereby low.

Now, if we look at (34) - (35), it appears that their internal structure is indeed responsible for exactly the feature just stated: if some wanting is not frustrated by the qualities of something (so that that something is not bad), this very fact is in harmony with another wanting, viz. with the generalised wanting that wantings fail to be

frustrated, and from this point of view a thing which is not bad turns out to be good, just for THAT reason; but if the fulfilment of some wanting is not made possible by the qualities of something (so that that something is not good, although it may simply be indifferent, not bad), this very fact is in no disharmony with another wanting, viz. with a generalised wanting that EVERYTHING makes it possible for some wanting to be satisfied, simply because no such wanting is in sight; therefore, a thing which is not good does not automatically (for that very reason) turn out to be bad.

This is why our author of (39) makes a pronouncement which after all has some immediate initial plausibility, whereas his situation would be utterly hopeless, should he tell his audience

(55) This stone is bad.

instead while being similarly unable to appeal to any specific guesses on the audience's part about what he is after.

The survey of the above points of harmony between what (34) - (35) predict and the real facts about G, B and their usage is unequivocally favourable for our paralogues.

However, there remain certain features of G and B which are not as easily reconstructible on the basis of (34) - (35).

What I have in mind is, first, the approval/disapproval character of G / B, second, a kind of appeal to the addressee's own attitudes which is inherent in G- and B-utterances, third, their apparent aptness to being opposed to ANY other appraisals or statements of someone's wanting something and thus to any relativisation of what is being spoken about to a DEFINITE set of goals someone might contemplate.

All these aspects of G and B seem to be at variance with what can be summarised as the following net effect of the concepts in the light of what is directly given in (34) - (35): *a* said to be good/bad is said to influence the reality in harmony/disharmony with something ELSE wanted by someone (and identifiable by the addressee), where 'someone' is in no way determined by the speaker and thus may refer to just anyone, including the speaker or the addressee, but without any indication that would be inherent in (34) - (35) as they stand pointing to anyone among the latter. This makes (34) - (35) appear to be detached statements of relations between

some wantings and their effects, i.e. reports on what human attitudes happen to materialise and what their relations to 'hard facts' are. One is inclined to say (with Moore): that's NOT what G and B are all about. True enough, G and B do not just express what the SPEAKER wants or likes, but they involve the speaker (and his relationship to the addressee) crucially, not just as a transmitter of cold information about some logical links between different states of affairs (one of which is someone's wanting something): the speaker's attitudes and his purported knowledge of the objects concerned are inalienable from the impact sentences based on G or B have.

I shall tackle the problems just raised in the subsequent points.

8. *The approval/disapproval aspect of G/B.*

How can one explain the fact that a G- or B-sentence tends to convey the actual personal approval or disapproval of its theme on the utterer's part, rather than just a statement of the existence of someone who would approve or disapprove of it?

It would be wrong to mention the speaker and his own attitude in the semantic representation of G and B. G and B CAN be used irrespective of whether or not the speaker manifests his own options: we do have sentences like

(56) From a certain point of view, that's good.

(57) For the purpose of her being elected, that move was good.

where no one can say, on the basis of texts (56) - (57) alone, whether the speaker shared the 'point of view' mentioned in (56) or whether he wanted 'her' in (57) to be elected.

But if NO point of view is mentioned in a G- or B-sentence, if the crucial 'wanting of something' is given enthymematically, both possibilities with respect to a given theme open out: the one including the structure with C' incompatible with C'' as good and with C'' incompatible with C' as bad, cf. our comment immediately following (34) - (35), and the one with the reverse arrangement. And, as we have stated in the comment just mentioned, it is impossible for the two arrangements to materialise at the same time: what is known about some *a* cannot lead to the realisation of

contradictory features since what is known about *a* is not self-contradictory (and the assumption of the contradictories being jointly realised would necessarily induce one to accord more features to *a* than it, non-contradictorily, can have).

At this point, a pragmatic factor, albeit functioning with a logical necessity, enters into the picture. There is only one way of solving the dilemma just outlined: it is to relativise the content of the sentence to the unique person that remains within sight, i.e. to the speaker. Should HIS OWN option favour something incompatible with 'something' as mentioned in (34) (for G), he would normally describe *a* viewed through the prism of 'wanting something', where *something* refers to that 'something', and bringing about that 'something', as bad, not good (regardless of who else's attitudes are of that kind); and vice versa.

Notice that this move is necessary given the clause *you know what* (whose presence we have justified above): the addressee who has only to do with SOME presupposed wanting on SOMEONE's part, even if the broad domain of the appropriate wanting is clear to him, will always face the alternative of the two possible wantings with incompatible complements in that domain, each proper to a different 'someone'.

When left without any further indications, the addressee can only think of EITHER of the two wantings as possibly good with the opposing member bad. He will know that both poles of the alternative cannot materialise jointly, but he will have no idea which pole to choose. The speaker's choice of G or B allows him to make his decision: he can rely on whatever he knows about the speaker's relevant options or, in any case, on what explicit information he can obtain from the speaker concerning the grounds of the speaker's choice of G or B.

That choice is, in normal cases, sincere, i.e. the speaker selects G when someone's (perhaps his own) wanting he thinks of is identical with his own, and B, when his own wanting has a complement incompatible with the complement of the former wanting. But this kind of approach is not logically necessary. The speaker is free to PRETEND to favour a given option. Cf. the case of the 'spoiler' of the watch in our example (42) who takes into account the obvious wanting on the part of his addressee which he himself does not share; he might as well use sentence (58):

(58) This watch is bad now.

which would be in agreement with his own options. The only thing that matters is to make oneself correctly understood as to the quality of *a* and its consequences (which, under one set of goals, will appear to be 'good', and under another, 'bad').

9. *Appeal to the addressee's options.*

It is a fact of life that the addressees of G- and B-utterances, at least in an overwhelming majority of cases, understand them as making an appeal to their own options, as implying the speaker's and their own common ground as far as their wishes are concerned; and, in fact, the addressee's refusal to agree with this suggestion tends to be received by the speaker as either a misunderstanding or an effect of the addressee's insufficient knowledge. This is the source of the well known 'persuasive' character of G- and B-utterances which at times allows them to be instruments of outright manipulation.

Still, we cannot modify (34) by enriching it with a special clause which would account for this property. The reason is simply that it is possible to mention the relevant wanting while at the same time adding an explicit remark either to the effect that the addressee accepts the relevant standards himself or to the effect that he rejects them or else to the effect that he is indifferent to them, cf.:

(59) This move is good in terms of the party unity which is so close to your heart.

(60) This move is good in terms of the party unity, something you do not care for at all.

But then, what mechanism is responsible for the undeniable features we have just recalled?

The mechanism is, here again, pragmatic in nature. It consists in a stable association of what, albeit not entailed by the expression in question, happens in fact to accompany what is referred to by it in a vast majority of its occurrences. In such cases, in order to avoid activating the corresponding notion (of the accompanying characteristic), one must resort to its explicit negation; the very

ABSENCE of such negation is a pragmatic CONFIRMATION of what might be negated. This is the substance of what has been described as 'preferred interpretation', 'inference by default', or (something which is especially pertinent to our phenomena) Gricean 'generalised conversational implicature' (cf. Grice 1975).

It must be recalled, at this point, that G- and B-expressions are short, handy instruments used to assure the addressees of the harmony / disharmony between some wantings and some practical effects in quick, almost uninterrupted communication of everyday life. The matters concerned in this kind of communication are foremostly those which the addressees are particularly interested in; and such are relations of THEIR own wantings or of wantings they share with others; secondarily, such wantings can be of interest which the addressees at least do not reject (even if they are not resolute to support them). The pressure of this pattern, which materialises in some 99,999... of cases is so strong that the speaker cannot achieve his semantically possible aim of alluding to some wanting which the addressee rejects without an explicit remark about that rejection: otherwise, he would be, in the end, understood as imputing that very wanting to the addressee. Complementarily, the speaker is free to tacitly assume the kind of agreement between himself and the addressee just under consideration; the addressee, in his turn, must take it for granted that the speaker behaves accordingly.

Notice that this pattern of 'preferred interpretation' is also to be found in more elaborate and therefore less 'subjectivised' wordings than those of G and B. Cf.:

(61) Leaving keys in the reception is in conformity with the hotel regulations.

which is normally taken to be a way of encouraging the addressee to leave his hotel key in the reception although nothing is said in (61) about the speaker's or the addressee's acceptance of the regulations. Their acceptance of the regulations is simply taken for granted. But this makes all the difference as regards the real impact of (61).

10. *The quasi-absolutistic flavour of G and B.*

Apart from plainly relativistic uses of G and B, there are uses which may seem to invoke no specific 'wanting target'. In such cases, the speaker creates the impression of assigning the object in hand a fairly mysterious quality of 'good / bad in itself', 'inherently good / bad', 'good / bad in the absolute sense of the word', or the like. It is to this area of use that Moore made an appeal when he rejected any relativisation of G and B.

If there is indeed such a special reading of G and B which not only does not require any 'wanting target', but even does not admit of it, should G and B be understood properly, then adequacy of (34) - (35) is seriously challenged.

But let us inquire into what kind of situation gives rise to the idea that we have come across some special unrelativised, absolutistic concepts of G and B.

A typical situation that could generate the dilemma just outlined is NOT that of an INITIAL evaluative judgement. Such a judgement is made normally as a reaction to the need of having it; and inherent in that need is already some specific 'wanting target', either suggested in someone's question or imported by the speaker himself who is going to win his addressee's support for the easily identifiable actions he is after (including purely propagandistic ones).

The typical situation which presents a real problem in the context of our discussion is that of the LAST pronouncement in a sequence of contrary evaluative judgements and their justifications formulated by partners to a debate. Such is, in effect, Moore's situation of someone's 'obstinately' maintaining that something is good or bad, as against all the arguments to the contrary put forth by the majority of other persons or even by all of them, and adding, in the end, no further arguments of his own.

But is there really, in this situation, no 'filling' for clause (ii) in the thematic part of (34)?

Recall that, as has been stated in p. 5, the necessary identification of the 'wanting target' (and thereby, its very existence) requires just invoking the idea that the SPEAKER can provide an indication of it on demand since he commits himself to contemplating such a 'wanting target' by his very act of using G or B; whether a given speaker is able to give a sensible answer to the relevant question is

quite another matter (we often use words, together with their entire endowment, without actually being prepared to cope with all the problems this endowment may present).

But even more can be said in the situation we are presently considering. Our would-be absolutistic G or B in fact HAS a 'wanting target' about which everybody can say something fairly SPECIFIC and DEFINITE. Recall that there is a wanting whose complement is INCOMPATIBLE with the one proposed by the adversary in the dispute. It is this kind of wanting that is in fact appealed to by the 'obstinate' speaker who is thus supplying his addressee with a reasonably concrete notion of what he is after.

Of course, there is yet another possibility open to him, a possibility of saying something in a more positive vein. To wit, he may say:

(62) What I have in mind is what the wisest people would advise.

However, he must reckon with a good chance that, this time, it is his adversary who will stick to something incompatible with what he wants, viz. something incompatible with what the 'wisest people' advise, by saying:

(63) Well and good. I just uphold what is contrary to what YOUR 'wisest people' want.

When one talks about 'good' and 'bad', one cannot help getting involved in a dispute between 'absolutism' and 'relativism' as the competitive conceptions of 'values'.

Clearly, this topic has been looming large in the above text, too. Just a few concluding remarks about it seem to be in order.

In one sense, G and B are irreparably relativistic: they imply a 'wanting target' which is contingent, which always comes as a partner of something incompatible with it, but equally real and logically equally admissible as the complement of 'want', which, finally, can only be derived, on a par with its partner, from something superordinate to both of them if that something is a contradiction.

In another sense, G and B are absolutistic. They are absolutistic to the extent that logic is absolutistic: what they state, in their thematic part, is a logical relation.

But what about 'intersubjective, universal moral values' whose existence is said to be rejected by 'relativists' and accepted by 'absolutists'? It will be understood that the denominations of 'relativism' and 'absolutism' assume here yet another sense.

Just as a starting point for a discussion which it is impossible to develop in this article, I shall say the following.

There is a good candidate for 'absolute moral evil'. This is not anything in the domain of what people do, even less so in the domain of what just happens. This thing is the human will itself.

Let us formulate one kind of human will as follows:

- (T) *i* wants to frustrate anything any other human being *j* wants or does
which is not what *i* wants or what *i* allows for

and let us dub it 'totalitarian'.

Now, there is a kind of UNIVERSAL wanting (at least, proper to human beings who want to live in a community) from the standpoint of which (T) must qualify as bad. The decisive point here is that (T) is evaluated as bad by totalitarians themselves, in fact, even more forcefully so than by others; a totalitarian NN may approve of just one IMPLEMENTATION of (T), viz. of the counterpart of (T) where NN is substituted for *i*, but not of (T) as it stands.

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