

Ought and Reality

Hägerström's Inaugural Lecture Re-considered

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1. This is a revised and enlarged version of my paper "Reality and Ought" presented in a tribute to my old friend Aleksander Peczenik.¹ In his recent books, Peczenik discusses the merit and demerit of theories of legal positivism and natural law, claiming that there is a need for a third legal theory to be called "juridisk avvägningslära" (the doctrine of judicial balancing).² This doctrine is put forward as an attempt to integrate the insight of theories of legal positivism, that is to say the normative and institutional structure of the law, and the insight of natural law theories, that is to say that the law has an ethical content. This leads Peczenik to hold the doctrine that ethical values constitute the ultimate foundation of the validity of a law. This is important for the law and its application since legal and juridical reasoning involve ethical values that require to be balanced. This raises the questions what these ethical values are, whether they can be known and if so, by what methods. Hägerström addresses also these questions in his lecture. In this article I would like to reconsider this lecture that sets the direction for his inquiries into the nature of morality and law.³

I shall proceed as follows. In section 2, I shall present an account for the received view of Hägerström as a precursor of the meta-ethical analysis of moral language that leads him to announce a non-cognitive thesis that moral utterances

¹ Jes Bjarup, Reality and Ought, in *Justice, Morality and Society*. A Tribute to Aleksander Peczenik, ed. Aulis Aarnio, Robert Alexy, Gunnar Bergholtz, Lund 1997 pp. 79-109. I have changed the title in order to make clear that the articles differ.

² Aleksander Peczenik, *Vad är Rätt? Om Demokrati, Rättssäkerhet, Etik och Juridisk Argumentation* (What is Law? On Democracy, Legal Security, Ethics and Legal Reasoning), Stockholm 1995, *Juridikens teori och metod* (Legal Theory and Method), Stockholm 1995. See my review (in Danish) *Juridisk Tidskrift* 1995-96 pp. 1174-1192.

³ For a short exposition of Hägerström's philosophy, see Jes Bjarup, *Skandinavisk Realism. Hägerström - Lundstedt - Olivecrona - Ross*, Freiburg 1978. A more detailed account is offered in Jes Bjarup, *Reason, Emotion and the Law. Studies in the Philosophy of Axel Hägerström*, submitted to the University of Edinburgh 1982, also Aarhus 1982 and my summary in Jes Bjarup, *Epistemology and Law according to Axel Hägerström*, *Scandinavian Studies in Law*, vol. 29, 1985 pp. 13-47. Also Peczenik, *Vad är Rätt?*, p. 388f.

cannot be said to be true or false. I shall argue that this view fails to place Hägerström's philosophy in his philosophical context and fails to notice that Hägerström offers a thesis within substantive ethics in relation to the possibility of an autonomous morality, to be called the thesis of the ideal of self-realization. In section 3, I shall present an overview of Hägerström's philosophical writings prior to his lecture. In Section 4, I shall place his philosophical position as an adherence to insight ideal as opposed to the agency ideal of knowledge to be followed in section 5 by a comparison with the philosophical approach by G. E. Moore. This is the background for his lecture considered in sec. 6 offering an account of the questions addressed by Hägerström. The objectivity of knowledge of normative ideas requires the condition of universality to be considered in sec. 7 with respect to the comparison of different moral standards and with respect to the universality of the criterion of moral standards in sec. 8. Next there is the condition of truth considered in sec. 9, and the condition of necessity considered in sec. 10. A comparison of Hägerström's scepticism and ancient scepticism is offered in sec. 11. In sec. 12, I consider Hägerström's substantive moral thesis of the ideal of self-realization considered. I shall conclude by considering the importance of Hägerström's lecture for law and legal reasoning in sec. 13.

2. Hägerström's lecture was delivered on 11th March 1911 on the occasion of his appointment to the Chair of Practical Philosophy in the University of Uppsala. It was published in April as "Om moraliska föreställningars sanning" (On the Truth of Moral Ideas) although his intended title was "Verklighet och Böra" (Reality and Ought). Thus Thomas Mautner informs us in his edition of the lecture, using Hägerström's drafts to produce a valuable version of the inaugural lecture as well as printing Hägerström's manuscripts to a series of lectures given in the Spring term of 1911 that cast light on Hägerström's thinking on ethics.⁴ According to Mautner, Hägerström's lecture is significant in the history of ethics since "for the first time a consistent non-cognitivist theory of ethics was unequivocally put forward" (M p. 25 cf. p. 7). It has, indeed, been the received opinion that in this lecture Hägerström departs from the traditional view of moral philosophy concerned with the morality of human conduct in favour of moral philosophy concerned with the conceptual analysis of moral language. Thus it is held that Hägerström anticipates the strict division between substantive ethics and meta-ethics that is introduced later by the adherents of

⁴ Axel Hägerström, *Moralfilosofins Grundläggning* (The Foundation of Moral Philosophy), with a summary in English, ed. Thomas Mautner, Uppsala 1987. References to this book are inserted into the text, prefixed by M for Mautner's and MH for Hägerström's text. Hägerström's lecture has been translated into English by Mautner, and I am grateful to him for providing me with a copy as well as for his comments to my former article. Hägerström's lecture has also been translated by Robert T. Sandin, and published under the title *On the Truth of Moral Propositions* in Axel Hägerström, *Philosophy and Religion*, ed. Robert T. Sandin, London 1964 p. 77-96. I have altered Sandin's translation in several places. References in the text, prefixed by H.

logical positivism and analytical philosophy within moral philosophy.⁵ This division within moral philosophy can be set out as follows:

Substantive ethics is concerned with moral knowledge as expressed in moral judgements or beliefs about what is morally good or bad, what is morally right or wrong and what morally ought or ought not to be done. These moral judgements can, I suggest, be divided into *value judgements* about state of affairs, e.g. the well-being of people, policies, and institutions such as the law, *normative judgements* about the morality of human actions, and *ethical judgements* about persons and their virtuous character. The point of these distinctions is that these judgements may differ and hence require separate treatment within substantive theories. This is so since the task within substantive ethics is to advance theories of value, normative, and ethical judgements that can be used to guide and evaluate the specific and personal questions that an individual person faces in human life as well as serve for the enactment of the law and its application.

Metaethics asks about the analysis and justification of moral knowledge as put forward by the various theories of substantive ethics. This study can in turn be divided into various enquiries. There is the *linguistic inquiry* into the meaning of moral words and sentences that are used by people to express ethical, normative and virtue judgements. There is the *ontological inquiry* into the nature of value, normative and ethical facts or properties. There is the *epistemological inquiry* into the truth and justification of value, normative and ethical judgements and theories.

Distinct from moral philosophy is *moral science* or *descriptive ethics* in terms of an empirical inquiry into moral ideas in order to offer a description and explanation of value, normative and ethical beliefs or judgements as manifested by individual people or by various codes within societies.

The received view is that Hägerström's inaugural lecture is based upon these distinctions and that his lecture falls squarely within meta-ethics as distinct from substantive ethics. The reason adduced for this opinion is Hägerström's conclusion that "moral knowledge cannot be a teaching *in* morality, but only a teaching *about* morality" (H p. 96, MH p. 50, his italics). Thus Hägerström restricts moral philosophy to be "a teaching about morality" in the sense of a meta-ethical inquiry that is concerned with the analysis of moral language. The received view is based upon Hägerström's claim that "the moral idea as such, i.e. as the idea that a certain action represents a supreme value, cannot be said to be either true or false. It is not at all an idea that the action really or in truth is the right action" (H p. 92, MH p. 45f). This leads Hägerström to advance the meta-ethical thesis of non-cognitivism that moral utterances cannot be considered to be truth-evaluable. As Hägerström puts it, "it is an unmeaning to

⁵ Jocelyne Couture and Kai Nielsen, *Introduction: The Ages of Metaethic*, in *On the Relevance of Metaethics*, Canadian Journal of Philosophy, Suppl. Vol. 21, ed. Jocelyne Couture and Kai Nielsen, Alberta 1995 p. 2f. and their *Afterword: Whither Moral Philosophy*, p. 276.

consider the idea of ought as true” (H p. 95, MH p. 48).⁶ Hägerström’s use of the word “unmeaning” may be a reason for the received view that Hägerström is engaged in the meta-ethical inquiry in terms of a linguistic analysis of the meaning of moral language. As Mautner comments, other terms have been used to label this thesis such as “non-deskriptivism, value-nihilism, anti-objectivism” (M p. 13 n20). The thesis of non-cognitivism implies the thesis of moral or normative nihilism that holds that there are no objective moral or normative facts. This nihilist thesis does not imply that people behave immorally. It implies, however, that there can be no moral beliefs or moral knowledge as expressed in normative judgements. Hence there is no room for any knowledge within the area of substantive ethics. By contrast the non-cognitive thesis implies that there is room for the scientific study of morality or “a teaching about morality”. This is an empirical inquiry into the origin of moral ideas as feelings and volition to be described and explained in scientific judgements. The support for this is Hägerström’s claim that this inquiry is “a mixture of historical experience, sociology, physiology and psychology” (H p. 95, MH p. 49). According to Hägerström, moral science in this sense “cannot be described as moral knowledge, because in itself it has nothing to do with morality” (H p. 95, MH p. 49). Thus there can be no such thing as moral science in terms of substantive moral knowledge, but there is such a thing as moral science in terms of empirical knowledge of moral ideas as feelings. Thus Hägerström restricts moral science to be a branch within the empirical sciences in which the aim is to arrive at knowledge of the truth by means of establishing the causal relations among the facts within the region of moral ideas.

It is also the received view that Hägerström’s moral philosophy has “nothing to do with morality”. It is based upon the strict division between meta-ethics and substantive ethics that confines moral philosophy to be a meta-ethical inquiry into meaning of the moral language as expressed in philosophical judgements. These philosophical judgements have no relation to the practical level of moral questions facing ordinary people and their moral judgements in relation to what is right or wrong conduct. This is the position held by the adherents of the school of Uppsala-philosophy based upon the reference to the authority of Hägerström’s philosophy.⁷ This position is also found among the adherents of logical positivism in their attack upon metaphysical ideas based upon the principle of verification.⁸ Thus A. J. Ayer writes, “we find that ethical philosophy consists simply in saying that ethical concepts are pseudo-concepts and therefore unanalysable”.⁹ According to Ayer, “there cannot be such a thing as

⁶ Hägerström uses the word “omening”, translated by Sandin as “nonsense” and by Mautner as “does not make sense”. I have chosen the word “unmeaning”, used by the English idealist philosophers, see e.g. Francis Bradley, *Ethical Studies*, Oxford (1876), 2nd ed. 1927 p. 66.

⁷ Gunnar Oxenstierna, *Vad är Uppsala-Filosofien?* (What is The Uppsala-Philosophy?), Stockholm 1938 p. 57ff.

⁸ Logical positivism or the Vienna School is rejected by Hägerström as metaphysics, see Axel Hägerström, *Erkenntnistheoretische Voraussetzungen der speziellen Relativitätstheorie Einsteins*, Theoria, vol. 12, 1946, pp. 1-68, at p. 33.

⁹ A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*, (1936), 2nd. Ed. Harmondsworth 1975, p. 148f.

ethical science, if by ethical science one means the elaboration of a ‘true’ system of morals“. Hence it follows that “ethics, as a branch of knowledge is nothing more than a department of psychology and sociology“. This position implies that the meta-philosophical inquiries into moral ideas are insulated from the substantive inquiries into moral questions and thus have no impact upon ordinary moral discourse. I shall argue that this position has no foundation in Hägerström’s lecture.

Hägerström’s non-cognitive thesis has been widely discussed but this discussion proceeds upon the assumption that conceptual analysis only begins in this century and is confined to the linguistic analysis of moral words.¹⁰ The result is a distorted account of Hägerström’s lecture since it ignores to place it in the philosophical context of his prior philosophical works and the political context of his time. In this article I would like to restore the balance. I shall argue that the received view overlooks that Hägerström’s main concern is a question within substantive ethics, that is the question whether there is a supreme criterion of right action that can be used to justify normative judgements and thus determine how a man morally ought to act.¹¹ Hägerström’s concern with the justification of normative judgements involves him in a meta-ethical inquiry. According to the received view, Hägerström’s meta-ethical analysis is confined to the linguistic analysis of the meaning of the moral vocabulary. This view overlooks that Hägerström proceeds within the traditional view of moral philosophy that also considers the ontological and epistemological questions concerning the nature of moral properties and how they can be known. This meta-ethical inquiry is in turn important for the account of moral questions addressed within the area of substantive ethics, see below sec. 6.

3. The chair of practical philosophy in the University of Uppsala was considered to be the most prestigious chair in philosophy. It had formerly been held by C. J. Boström (1797-1866) from 1842 to 1863. His philosophy is a version of idealism that combines the Berkelian principle, to be is to be perceived, and Platonic ideas located in the rational consciousness of men and ultimately in the consciousness of God. This leads to his philosophical position, called “rational idealism“, that holds the metaphysical view that nothing but consciousness and their ideas exist as a spiritual reality and the related epistemological view that reality can be known by reason. Although the tenability of Boström’s rational

¹⁰ Bo Petersson, *Axel Hägerströms värdeteori* (Axel Hägerström’s Theory of Value), Uppsala 1973.

¹¹ In Swedish the concept of man is feminine, and thus the question of gender can be evaded. But I do not believe that Hägerström is an ardent feminist, see his daughter’s account in Margit Waller, *Axel Hägerström. Människan som få kände* (A.H. The Person Whom Few Knew), Stockholm 1961 p. 139f on his view of the difference between man and woman. Hägerström’s view of women is quite Hegelian, see G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, transl. H. B. Nisbet, ed. Allen W. Wood, Cambridge 1991, § 166. Waller reports of Hägerström’s abiding interest in political questions. She does not mention whether he supports the suffrage of women that was a burning issue of his own time, and to my knowledge he does not discuss the question. In Sweden, women did not get the right to vote to general elections until 1921.

idealism had been questioned, it still has an impact in Swedish intellectual life.¹² Hägerström was addressing a cultivated and enlightened audience which were rather shocked to listen to the newly appointed professor's lecture which was understood to announce "that there is and cannot be any scientifically established morality" (M p. 7). This implies a rejection of Boström's view that the task of moral philosophy is to advance a morality grounded in eternal ideas of reason and thus binding on all men as rational beings.¹³ This is the context for the claim by Svante Nordin that Hägerström's lecture questions the received view and this gives him a revolutionary reputation.¹⁴ Mautner joins issue with Nordin holding that it was a well-known fact before the lecture that Hägerström held radical opinions and was opposed to Boström's philosophy (M p. 7). This is not formally recognized, however, until the appointment to the chair that gives Hägerström the opportunity to further his philosophical views, cf. below p. 29. To be sure, from the very beginning of his philosophical career Hägerström considers himself to have a mission in life, that is to say to advance human understanding through his way of philosophical thinking. In his philosophical thinking Hägerström claims to make the decisive break with the prevailing philosophical doctrines and his philosophy is advanced as the authoritative foundation for the pursuit of scientific knowledge. I shall try to support this view by presenting an account of Hägerström's writings prior to his lecture.

Hägerström begins his philosophical career by the publication of his dissertation on Aristotle's ethics in relation to Aristotle's epistemology.¹⁵ The dissertation is important since it stresses the relationship between epistemology or theoretical philosophy and ethics or practical philosophy that is important throughout Hägerström's career. Hägerström subscribes to Aristotle's view that all men by nature desire to know the truth about the world and men's place in the world. This is manifested in the allusion to Aristotle in lecture where Hägerström writes "Plato amicus, veritas amicio" (H p. 82, MH p. 33). He also follows Aristotle's view that man is born with cognitive capacities to arrive at the truth by means of intellectual efforts. Thus the reason that truth is difficult lies not in the world, but in human beings. In the book, Hägerström takes Aristotle to task for failing to grasp the nature of man's personality. According to Hägerström, Aristotle overlooks that the nature of personality is based upon the universal will that controls the particular will of individuals through ethical laws that enable men to display the proper character and behave accordingly.

¹² See Svante Nordin, *Den Boströmske skolan och den svenska idealismens fall* (The School of Boström and the Fall of Swedish Idealism), Lund 1981. Also Anders Wedberg, *Den logiska strukturen hos Boströms filosofi* (The Logical Structure in Boström's Philosophy), Uppsala 1937.

¹³ See *Professor C. J. Boströms Föreläsningar i Etik* (B's Lectures in Ethics), ed. Sigurd Ribbing, Uppsala 1897, *Professor C. J. Boströms Föreläsningar i Etik, Vårterminen 1861* (B's Lectures in Ethics, Spring Term 1861), ed. Gustaf Klingberg, Uppsala 1916.

¹⁴ Svante Nordin, *Från Hägerström till Hedenius. Den moderna svenska filosofin* (From Hägerström to Hedenius. The Modern Swedish Philosophy), Lund 1984 p. 27.

¹⁵ Axel Hägerström, *Aristoteles etiska Grundtanker och deras teoretiska Förutsättningar* (Aristotle's Fundamental Ethical Thoughts and Their Theoretical Presuppositions), Uppsala 1893.

This is not the place to consider Hägerström's criticism. Suffice it to mention that he subscribes to the Aristotelean view that human beings are necessarily social animals living in a state that exists for the well-being of its members.¹⁶ He also accepts that man has a moral purpose to pursue the right character and the corresponding action. But then Aristotle provides an aesthetic rather than an ethical criterion for what is right action. This is also the theme of the lecture where Hägerström repeats his criticism of Aristotle (H p. 77f, MH p. 27f).

Hägerström continues to consider ethical questions in terms of man's moral purpose by the publication of two books, one on the possibility of an empiricist ethics and its sequel on the reasonableness of moral feeling and desires.¹⁷ They are written and submitted for the candidacy for the vacant chair of practical philosophy in Uppsala. Hägerström's intention in submitting his application was not to be nominated to the chair but solely to receive the formal recognition of his philosophical qualifications. He was infuriated when the board of experts unanimously stated his incompetence.¹⁸ In the former book Hägerström considers "modern utilitarianism" that is to say the views of Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer, Leslie Stephen and Harald Höffding. According to Hägerström, the principle of utility may be useful as a standard for legislation, but it cannot constitute the proper moral standard since it restricted towards advancing the pleasure of the individual. Hägerström next considers the higher perspective as advanced in the ethics by Wilhelm Wundt but he also fails to establish the proper relationship between the universal will and the particular will of individuals. This is followed by an extended discussion of the religious presuppositions within empiricist ethical thinking. In conclusion Hägerström rejects the moral philosophy advanced by the empiricists since the foundation of moral standards cannot be established by reference to any sensory reality. The foundation of the moral standard must be found in the intelligible reality constituted by reason. Thus the way is paved for the next book that deals with

¹⁶ This is stressed in one of Hägerström's last articles, *En straffrättslig principundersökning*, Svensk Juristtidning, vol. 24, 1939 pp. 209-225, translated by C. D. Broad as *On Fundamental Problems in Law* and published in *Inquiries into the Nature of Law and Morals*, ed. Karl Olivecrona, Uppsala 1953 pp. 348-366, at p. 350. See below sec. 13.

¹⁷ Axel Hägerström, *Undersökning af Den empiristiska Etikens Möjlighet med särskild Hänsyn till dess Moderna Hufvudformer* (Inquiry into the Possibility of the Empiricist Ethics concerning its Modern and Principal Versions), Uppsala 1895, *ibid*, *Om den moraliska känslan och driften såsom förnuftige i Den Moderna Rationalismens Hufvudformer* (On the Moral Sense and Desire as Reasonable within the Modern and Principal Versions of Rationalism), Uppsala 1895.

¹⁸ See Waller p. 95ff. Hägerström attributes this refusal to the failure of the board of experts to recognize his new departure from the received views and writes a plea against the members of the committee. See Axel Hägerström, *Om den af de sakkunniga vid tillsättandet av Profesuren i Praktisk Filosofi Upsala 1896 företagna granskningen af mina afhandlingar* (On the Scrutiny of My Books by the Experts in Relation to the Appointment to the Chair of Practical Philosophy Upsala 1896), Uppsala 1896. This is followed by a counterplea by a member of the board, P. J. H. Leander, *Svar på Kritik af ett Kompetensutlåtande* (Reply to the Criticism of an Expert Opinion), Lund 1898. I am indebted to Aleksander Peczenik for getting me a copy of this writing. According the critics, Hägerström is a gifted philosopher but his books are sign of a sense of 'Sturm und Drang', that is to say a revolt against prevailing theories but without any logical support.

the rationalist philosophers from I. Kant, progressing through the higher views of J.G. Fichte, F. H. Jacobi, F. D. E. Schleiermacher to culminate in the philosophy of G. W. F. Hegel or, as Boström holds, in his philosophy of rational idealism. They all subscribe to the view that the foundation of the moral standard must be established by reference to reason that universally determines men's thinking and feeling in order to arrive at what is the particular duty for the individual. Hägerström accepts this but objects that they all share the common feature of being dogmatists whereas it matters to be critical. This is Hägerström's position. Hence the task is to supply the proper philosophical standard for the rational justification of moral duty in terms of man's moral purpose based upon the view of mankind as a unity of individuals connected in permanent and internal relations of universal values.

The books are important since Hägerström announces a methodological principle, that is the principle of self-examination. This principle holds that a philosopher is always engaged in self-criticism of his own writings as opposed to paying attention to criticism from other writers. Hägerström's account is based upon this principle but he contradicts his own methodological principle by introducing his own definitions of crucial terms. This is inconsistent since the principle of self-examination implies that in order to understand a philosopher it is necessary to consider and analyse his definitions rather than substituting one's own definitions. However, Hägerström adheres to this methodological principle throughout his career. It is witnessed in his lecture where he re-considers his lifelong concern with the question of the objectivity of moral knowledge.

Hägerström presents his own critical view concerning philosophy and its importance for knowledge and the meaning of life in a booklet.¹⁹ This is a plea for the importance of the pursuit of empirical or scientific knowledge that has been ignored by Boström based upon his rational idealism. Hägerström makes room for scientific knowledge based upon the scientific consciousness of experience. The scientific consciousness is based upon presuppositions that require a logical analysis to be provided by philosophy. Philosophy is the highest form of knowledge since it is a critical inquiry based upon reason that is dedicated to establish the ontological and epistemological foundations for the pursuit of knowledge of reality. Hence the importance of philosophical knowledge in relation to scientific knowledge in order to understand the nature and structure of reality. Philosophy is also important as an investigation into the moral consciousness of the individual that is characterised by conflicting elements. This is reflected in the struggle between the opposing views of idealism and materialism concerning the moral purpose of life that is related to conflicting political views concerning the organisation of the life of individuals within the state. In this connection it is interesting to notice Hägerström's reference to the philosophy of Auguste Comte. The crucial question is to establish reconciliation between these different views by means of a proper

¹⁹ Axel Hägerström, *Om filosofiens betydelse för människan* (On the Importance of Philosophy for Mankind), Uppsala 1898. He attaches great importance to this work at the time of its publication, and it is odd that he fails to mention it in his bibliography attached to his *Selbstdarstellung*.

philosophical analysis of the meaning of life. For Hägerström, the proper philosophy of life is based upon the moral consciousness according to which it is the inner life of the person that is the crucial element. What is morally right cannot be constituted by obedience to external commands, but depends rather upon the adherence to a universal unwritten law, which is found within the inner life of a person. The right action has its own virtue and reward. Hägerström refers with approval to Kant's dictum concerning the good will and the task of purifying the moral consciousness from irrelevant elements. This theme is found in the lecture in Hägerström's inquiry into the "elements which are foreign to the ought or the supreme value itself" (H p. 87, MH p. 39). Another important theme is Hägerström's view of a "truly autonomous morality". This is his view that once man's consciousness is purified from false beliefs concerning the demands of absolute moral authorities, all will be well for civilized men to realize their supreme values through actions that are determined by the right feelings (H p. 93, MH p. 46). This is the thesis of the ideal of self-realization that is put forward in the lecture, see below sec. 12.

The philosophy of Kant occupies Hägerström from the very beginning of his philosophical career. His striving for a genuine understanding of Kant's philosophy finally materializes in his voluminous book on Kant's Ethics in relation to his theory of knowledge.²⁰ Thus Hägerström continues to stress the relationship between ethics and epistemology. Again he claims to make a break with the prevailing understanding of Kant's epistemology in order to present what Kant had really meant. The target of Hägerström's criticism is the contemporary Neo-Kantian philosophers Kuno Fischer, Hermann Cohen, Alois Riehl and Hans Vaihinger. According to Hägerström, they hold that Kant's appeal to ideas as the transcendental conditions that determine the forms and conditions of knowledge is a psychological inquiry. This view subordinates philosophy to empirical psychology as the foundation of the objectivity of knowledge. For Hägerström, this is tantamount to psychologism, that is to say the confusion of epistemological questions concerning the philosophical consciousness in relation to the objectivity of knowledge with questions of psychology concerned with the empirical study of the subjective consciousness. I cannot enter into a discussion whether Hägerström's criticism is tenable, nor whether his account is influenced by the philosophy of Edmund Husserl. Suffice it to mention that Hägerström stresses the difference between the methods used within the natural sciences and the human sciences or *Geisteswissenschaften*. The natural sciences use the empirical method of physical or chemical analysis and this method cannot be applied within the human sciences, including philosophy. Within this area another method must be used, that is to say the hermeneutic method. This method requires an immanent understanding of the inner unity of thinking as manifested in the philosopher's works. Hägerström endorses this method based upon the principle of self-examination to present an account what Kant really had meant concerning the conditions of the objectivity of knowledge. It is the case that scientific knowledge is based upon assumptions

²⁰ Axel Hägerström, *Kants Ethik im Verhältnis zu seinem erkenntnistheoretischen Grundgedanken systematisch dargestellt*, Uppsala 1902.

that require an independent philosophical investigation. The foundation of scientific knowledge is to be found in the principle of self-consciousness whose uniqueness consists in the fact that what is thought is identical with the thought itself. Hägerström applies this principle in his investigation of Kant's moral epistemology to claim that if the concept of will has any objective meaning then it must include the natural causality of freedom. The pure will cannot be understood as an empirical will of command but is rather characterized by the idea of reason and the unconditional worth of autonomy which is included in the concept of ought. In the end the moral consciousness of duty is the feeling of certainty as manifested in man's conscience. According to Hägerström this leads Kant to hold that conscience is the final criterion concerning the meaning of the ought or what the right action is. Hägerström admires Kant's philosophy and it is obvious that it has influenced Hägerström's way of thinking. But Hägerström's own philosophy can be seen as a sustained attack upon Kantian ideas. This is also made manifest in Hägerström's lecture that is a rejection of Kant's moral philosophy (see H p. 80f., MH p. 31f.).

Hägerström's book on Kant announces the epistemological principle of the pure self-consciousness to provide the objectivity of knowledge. This principle is the epistemological foundation for his book on the concept of law or the relation between the state and the law.²¹ This book is written in relation to his application for the vacant chair of practical philosophy in the University of Lund. He was put in second place by the board of experts and did not get the chair. This time, however, Hägerström accepts the decision without any complaints since he is quite happy with his life in Uppsala.²² The subject-matter of the book is the relationship between state and law, which can be considered from different perspectives. From the philosophical perspective, he makes a distinction between a theoretical and a practical perspective. The theoretical perspective is characterized as an empirical or sociological inquiry into the origin of state and law as a matter of empirical reality in terms of social-psychological facts. This inquiry is based upon the state as a commanding agency that maintains its laws by means of the use of force and presents a description of the law as the rules that are actually enforced by the authorities. The practical perspective is an inquiry into the nature of law in relation to its power to bind people and the legitimacy of the use of force on the one hand and into the nature of the state as the supreme power or legal authority on the other. It is the practical perspective that is important for the study of law as a separate and distinct reality from the empirical reality of the rules in force.

The study of law from a practical perspective is in turn divided into a transcendent perspective and an immanent perspective. The transcendent

²¹ Axel Hägerström, *Stat och Rätt. En rättsfilosofisk undersökning. I* (State and Law. A Jurisprudential Inquiry. I), Uppsala 1904.

²² Höffding, one of the members of the board, considers Hägerström's philosophy to be "metaphysical" and "useless dogmatic speculation" in contrast to a philosophy of law and morality based upon empirical inquiries endorsed by Höffding as the only proper approach, see Nordin, *Boströmska skolan*, p. 169. Höffding's opinion of Hägerström's philosophy may explain why Höffding's *Ethics* is singled out for special treatment and rejected as "unscientific" (H. p. 96, MH p. 49).

perspective is found within jurisprudence or legal philosophy asking the question what really is man's supreme good or what really is the principle of man's duty where the answer determines the nature of law. The immanent perspective is found within juridical or legal dogmatics that deals with the logical structure of law. The primary task of legal dogmatics is to provide a proper classification of the laws in order to secure their proper application. This task requires, however, the prior philosophical analysis of the legal ideas of right and duty in order to find out whether these ideas can be established as rational ideas having practical impact within the law. Hägerström takes legal scholars writing textbooks to task for confusing the theoretical with the practical perspective. Further legal scholars operating within the practical perspective ignore the transcendent perspective concerned with the philosophical analysis of the legal ideas of right and duty. Hägerström is concerned to remedy this deplorable situation. His philosophical analysis relies upon Hegel's philosophy in order to scrutinize the rational nature of the idea of duty and the corresponding idea of right. The result of this analysis is that the ideas of duty and right are properly speaking legal ideas rather than moral ideas.

Hägerström's title suggests another volume that Hägerström also promises to deliver, but it never materialized. This is a serious matter since Hägerström claims that the volume to come is crucial for the correct understanding of the published volume. If so, a reader of the published volume "Stat och Rätt" cannot understand it. This is perhaps a reason for the book to fall into oblivion.²³ Another reason is that Hägerström rejects the epistemological foundation of the book and this is in turn important for his later inquiries into the nature of law and morals. Considering "Stat och Rätt" in relation to his lecture, it seems to me to be important to notice that Hägerström's analysis is restricted to the truth of the idea of ought in relation to what the right action is. It is another question whether this analysis also applies to the legal idea of ought in terms of legal duties and obligations. As just noticed his book proceeds upon the distinction between moral and legal ideas based upon the epistemological foundation of the principle of pure self-consciousness that provides the conditions for the objectivity of moral knowledge. This principle restricts knowledge to the knowing subject and its own states of consciousness of objects. Hägerström changed his mind concerning the tenability of this principle since it in the end implies a version of epistemological solipsism or subjectivism. From this subjective perspective there is no access to what is truly objective. Hägerström find himself in the deplorable position of scepticism and struggles to find a solution.

The result of this struggle is the rejection of subjectivism based upon the principle of pure self-consciousness in favour of a new epistemological position. Hägerström's philosophy proceeds upon the assumption that knowledge of reality requires a single principle to make the objectivity of knowledge possible. Hägerström applies his method of self-examination dedicated to find the truth concerning the single principle of knowledge in relation to reality and the result

²³ There is a reference, however, in Östen Undén, *Juridik och Politik* (Legal Dogmatics and Politics), Stockholm 1927 p. 23.

is published as “Das Prinzip der Wissenschaft. I”.²⁴ This book advances his new epistemological position that the principle of knowledge is based upon the nature of reality. The published volume is concerned with the metaphysical concept of reality to be accompanied by another volume concerned with the correlative concept of knowledge. Again Hägerström fails to deliver but he considers “The Principle of Knowledge” to be his “most important book”.²⁵ He claims to advance another “Copernican Revolution” that holds that the foundation of knowledge is reality as an intelligible order of necessitating causes and effects. It is Hägerström’s considered view that the determinate nature and reality of objects determine the rational consciousness and thus secure the objectivity of knowledge. Hägerström’s starting point is the sceptical charge that the task of establishing the objectivity of knowledge is an impossible task. This is also Hegel’s view in his investigation of knowledge.²⁶ Hegel rejects Kant’s philosophy since it is merely a psychological narrative of consciousness that remains within the circle of circularity. This commits Kant to the study of appearances and such a study can arrive at what is. For Hegel, philosophy is fundamentally about what is. What matters is to proceed by necessity concerning the objectivity of consciousness in relation to the things themselves. Kant’s philosophy is rejected as a version of subjective idealism in favour of Hegel’s absolute idealism. Thus Hegel watches the things themselves as manifested in various forms of consciousness that develop and criticize themselves with no contribution from Hegel himself. Hägerström accepts Hegel’s dismissal of Kant’s philosophy since it leads to subjective idealism. Hegel’s philosophy is, however, just another version of idealism since Hegel is committed to the idealistic view that the object of philosophy is the same as the object of religion. For Hegel, the fundamental object is truth, and God is the only truth. This happens to be Boström’s position as well.

Hägerström firmly rejects this idealist view in favour of his superior view that reality is the truth and the foundation for the rational consciousness of knowledge. Knowledge is propositional and involves thinking based upon concepts as expressed in true judgements. The foundation for these judgements is the objectivity of consciousness in terms of the conditions of universality, necessity and truth. These conditions are found and determined by the determinate nature of the objects located within reality as opposed to be located within the knowing subject. Thus Hägerström’s “Copernican revolution” implies the reversal of Kant’s “Copernican revolution“. Kant advances the so-called

²⁴ Axel Hägerström, *Das Prinzip der Wissenschaft. Eine logisch-erkenntnistheoretische Untersuchung. I. Die Realität*, Uppsala 1908. The title is interesting. In 1903 G. E. Moore published *Principia Ethica*, Bertrand Russell *The Principles of Mathematics* and Gottlob Frege *Grundgesetze der Arithmetik*.

²⁵ Axel Hägerström, *Selbstdarstellung, Die Philosophie der Gegenwart in Selbstdarstellungen*, ed. Raymund Schmidt, Bd. VII, Leipzig 1929, pp. 111-159. Translated into English by Robert T. Sandin and published in *Philosophy and Religion*, pp. 33-74, p. 37. This can be seen as the accompanying volume but it causes surprise and disagreement among the Uppsala philosophers that cannot be discussed in this article, see Nordin, *Från Hägerström till Hedenius*, p. 40ff. with further references.

²⁶ Michael Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary*, Oxford 1992 pp. 282ff with references.

Copernican revolution in order to establish a new relationship of the knowing subject towards objects. As Kant puts it, “Up to now it has been assumed that all our cognition must conform to the objects” but we may have more success “by assuming that the objects must conform to our cognition”.²⁷ Kant stresses the activity of the knowing subject and the use of transcendental categories as universal conditions that make reality intelligible and experience of objects of objects possible. This experience is in turn expressed in judgements representing objects. For Hägerström this amounts to a version of subjectivism that defines knowledge in subjective terms of “knowing things inside out” that must be replaced with objectivism that defines knowledge in objective terms of “knowing things outside in”.²⁸ Hägerström subscribes to the latter view and stresses the passivity of the rational consciousness of the knowing subject that records the intelligible reality of objects as expressed in true judgements. Hägerström’s revolution is a return to a pre-Kantian view of medieval scholasticism. Thus Hägerström endorses a realist position that holds that ideas are found as common elements in the things themselves that are related to the rational consciousness of human beings as meaningful words expressing universal concepts. He rejects the nominalist view that holds that concepts are mere words introduced and imposed upon things by human beings. By contrast Hägerström holds that concepts are embedded in the objects that exist independently of the consciousness of individuals. These concepts are accessible to the conceptual inquiry related to the rational consciousness of philosophers in order to provide the foundation for empirical investigations from the scientific consciousness.

Hägerström’s book makes difficult reading due to his use of the traditional vocabulary of German idealism. In this respect he does not make any revolutionary break with the past. A more accessible version is published in a dialogue between a philosopher and a scientist concerning the necessity of the theory of knowledge.²⁹ In this book, Hägerström’s defends philosophy as such against the attack from natural scientists, exemplified by the botanist, who asserts that the method of induction used by natural science is the only proper way to arrive at knowledge. To be sure, Hägerström recognizes the importance of scientific knowledge based upon the inductive method but this requires a proper philosophical foundation. This is provided by Hägerström’s inquiry into the epistemological and ontological conditions that make empirical knowledge of reality possible. The conditions of the objectivity of knowledge are universality, necessity and truth and these conditions are inherent in the things themselves making an impact upon consciousness in terms of thinking as expressed in concepts and true judgements. Hence Hägerström’s claim that

²⁷ I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, transl. and ed. Paul Guyer & Allen W. Wood, Cambridge 1997 p. B xvi.

²⁸ For these terms I am indebted to A. Mark Smith, *Knowing Things Inside Out: The Scientific Revolution from a Medieval Perspective*, *The American Historical Review*, vol. 95, 1990 p. 726ff.

²⁹ Axel Hägerström, *Botanisten och filosofen. Om kunskapsfilosofiens nödvändighet* (The Botanist and The Philosopher. On the Necessity of Epistemology), Uppsala 1910.

reality has a logical structure based upon the logical principle of identity. This principle demonstrates that the actual existing world is the only logically possible world. Hence his rejection of the existence of a super-sensible world. It is also the case the actual world is an intelligible world since what there is in reality is an order of necessitating causes and their effects that are there to be known. This knowledge is expressed in judgements using concepts that state the internal coherence among things in terms of causal laws.

In lectures delivered in 1907 Hägerström refers to his own epistemological position as “rational naturalism”.³⁰ This title implies, of course, a rejection of Boström’s “rational idealism” that is committed to the metaphysical view that reality is spiritual and the related epistemological view that reality can be known by reason. By contrast Hägerström’s rational naturalism is committed to a metaphysical view according to which reality is material consisting of things in space and time and the related epistemological view that what is there in space and time can be known by experience as expressed in scientific judgements.³¹ Hence proper scientific explanations are naturalistic explanations in terms of causal necessities between things and events. Hägerström’s ontology raises the question if there is any room for the existence of values as objective features or properties of things. Hence the importance of his ontology for his investigation into the truth of moral ideas as presented in his lecture. Hägerström’s ontology locates ideas as objective ideas or concepts present in the reality of objects as opposed to subjective ideas in the consciousness of men. This is a worry to the adherents of scientific socialism since this can be seen as idealism, as manifested in the review of Hägerström’s book by Erik Hedén.³²

Considering idealism, a distinction can be made between idea-ism and ideal-ism.³³ The term “idea” is the important one that has been used in different ways, and one way is to use it in the sense of “concept”. The term “ideal” is used in the sense of the end or standard of perfection set for human beings to realize in their lives. This distinction makes it possible to subscribe to idea-ism, that is to say it is necessary to use concepts in order to think and express judgements about what is the case as well as judgements what ought to be the case or advance ideals. It is, however, possible to decline to advance any judgements concerning ideals and thus reject ideal-ism. Hägerström is known for his rejection of idealism but

³⁰ Axel Hägerström, *Jesus. En karaktärsanalys* (Jesus. An Analysis of his Character), ed. Martin Fries, Stockholm 1968 p. 113.

³¹ Axel Hägerström, *Till Analysen af det empiriska Själfmedvetandet. En psykologisk och Filosofisk Undersökning* (An Analysis of the Empirical Selfconsciousness. A Psychological and Philosophical Inquiry), Uppsala 1910. The book is written in relation to the application for the vacant chair. Since Hägerström was called to the chair, the book was not distributed. It is reissued Uppsala 1945. Hägerström’s rational naturalism faces him with the mind/body problem that is dealt with in the book but without any contribution to a tenable solution.

³² Erik Hedén, *Axel Hägerström: Botanisten och filosofen* (review), *Tiden* 1910 pp. 222-224, see also Erik Hedén, *Axel Hägerström: Om moraliska föreställningars sanning* (review), *Tiden* 1911-12 pp. 208-210.

³³ Godfrey Vesey, *Foreword: A History of Ideas*, in *Idealism. Past and Present*, Royal Institute of Philosophy Lecture Series, vol. 13, Supplement to *Philosophy* 1982, ed. Godfrey Vesey, Cambridge 1982, p. 1.

the question is whether he rejects ideal-ism or idea-ism? Hägerström may be understood to reject ideal-ism, that is to say he may adopt the strong position to abstain from advancing any ideal at all or the weaker position to abstain from advancing religious or spiritual ideals for human beings to pursue in the present life. According to Hedén, Hägerström adopts the latter position by rejecting the existence of supernatural powers and this is quite consistent with scientific socialism. Hägerström is, however committed to the existence of ideas as concepts and this raises the question of their location. For the adherents of idea-ism, concepts are located in the consciousness of human beings as subjective representations of things. By contrast Hägerström locates concepts in reality or the things themselves. This commits him to a version of realism that holds that concepts exist independently of the consciousness of the individual human being. As Hedén notices this is consistent with the view of scientific socialism that holds that the laws governing things in the universe exist independently of men's consciousness as opposed to the view that they are created and imposed upon nature by human reason. Hence Hägerström's philosophy is no threat to a scientific socialism dedicated to present the truth of the concepts and laws inherent in the capitalist mode of production.

Hägerström is deeply interested in social and political questions and delivers lectures on Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and the socialist ideas.³⁴ The lectures were quite an event in Uppsala as revealed in letter to his parents. Hägerström writes, "I now lecture on socialism and for the most part the lecture room is crowded with people, including many socialist students. The question is not whether socialism is right or wrong but rather to consider the underlying ideas of modern socialism, that is to say to return to the innermost part of human nature where the socialist food is cooked, in other words to understand the socialist ideas. Thus you have no cause to fear that I shall eventually turn into a socialist propagandist. For a philosopher immersed in his subject, practical life as such is not important, he only wishes to understand the internal coherence in what happens".³⁵ This is to endorse the Hegelian view that philosophy is solely concerned with what is actual as opposed to what ought to be. Considering the Marxian ideas, Hägerström rejects the labour theory of value as flawed on conceptual grounds since the value of a commodity is not determined by society but governed by the costs for the individual owner. Further there are no internal contradictions to be found in the very existence of a capitalist system. The capitalist system may be obnoxious from a moral perspective but this is a one question. It is another question to present a scientific account of its existence from the scientific perspective.

Hägerström also objects that the Marxist view is based upon a commitment to social teleology. This teleology is concerned with cases of human aiming or striving towards goals to be realized by human efforts. Hence scientific

³⁴ Axel Hägerström, *Social teleologi i marxismen* (Social Teleology in Marxism), Uppsala 1909. See also his lectures delivered 1908 to 1909 published posthumously as *De socialistiska Idéernas Historia* (The History of the Socialist Ideas), ed. Martin Fries, Stockholm 1946.

³⁵ Waller p. 177 for the letter dated November 1904, my translation.

explanations are presented as teleological explanations in terms of the intentions and interests of the agents. Hägerström proceeds upon the assumption that the only scientific explanations are naturalistic explanations in terms of causal relations between objects and events. For Hägerström, a naturalistic explanation is based upon the indifferent scientific consciousness confronted with the objective reality of events and objects. A naturalistic explanation is knowledge of what an object or event is and why it is so in relation to causes. These causes not only bring the object or event about but also provide the proper explanation. Teleological explanations imply that there are inherent values in the reality of objects that are there to be revealed by the scientific consciousness. Since this is not the case these explanations must be rejected as unscientific. This can be contested but cannot be pursued in this article. More generally, Hägerström holds that the Marxian view confounds the scientific and the moral questions. This is so since the Marxist view is based upon the moral consciousness of Marx and saturated with his wishful thinking in terms of his own construction how reality should be. The consequence of the Marxian view as science may be that it is taken for gospel truth by the proletariat just as the Christian religion is taken as gospel truth by the bourgeois. Both classes are carried away by their different feelings rather than relying upon thinking based upon scientific knowledge in terms of naturalistic explanations that state the necessary causal relations between events. This is the underlying theme in Hägerström's lecture concerned with "the present bitter strife between capital and labour" (H p. 78, MH p. 28). It is also important in connection with his substantive moral thesis of the ideal of self-realization.

It should be added that Hägerström is sympathetic to the Marxian cause but strongly against any violent revolution. Hägerström's intention is to reconcile the opposing classes and he holds that this is possible by means of philosophical understanding and scientific knowledge. In this respect a crucial element is the use of the law. Hägerström pays tribute to the importance of the Marxian idea that it is reality that determines the consciousness of men rather than the other way round. This fits with Hägerström's rational naturalism. His rational naturalism has implications for the understanding and analysis of the law, raising the question whether legal ideas are located in the reality of objects or actions. If the legal ideas are rooted in the reality of objects or actions then there are legal concepts related to legal thinking. This is to endorse a realist position. By contrast if this is not the case then legal ideas do not constitute legal concepts but are rather words that are used to express feelings or volitions. This amounts to a nominalist position. This is important in relation to Hägerström's analysis of the meaning of the normative vocabulary used within morality and the law.

Considering the analysis of human consciousness, there is also an interesting difference between Marx and Hägerström. Marx claims in his analysis that the consciousness of men is determined by their social being as members of different classes. Thus moral and legal ideas are determined by the impact of social, political and economic forces that in turn are reflected in morality and the law. Hägerström duly recognizes this but he remains within the philosophical tradition that is concerned with the objectivity of consciousness in relation to the internal forces of consciousness. This can be seen by his reference to his phrase

“the innermost part of human nature“, in his letter cited above. Hägerström conceives human consciousness in terms of the faculties of thinking, willing and feeling. In the end, it is not the influence of external economic forces that alienate human consciousness but rather the inner forces of feelings and volitions upon thinking that cloud the consciousness of men to face reality as it is. Hägerström emphasizes the force of spiritual and religious feelings that mystifies man’s consciousness and leads human beings to ignore the proper impact of the conceptual forces of natural facts. Again this is manifested in the lecture where Hägerström considers the origin and development of moral consciousness in relation to “the centuries of religious education” (H p. 86, MH p. 28). This is also important in relation to his thesis of the ideal of self-realisation. Once man’s consciousness is purified from its dependence on superstitious ideas there is scientific evidence for a truly “autonomous morality“, (H p. 93, MH p. 46), see below sec. 12.

In a contribution to his former mentor E. O. Burman, Hägerström turns to a critical discussion of the theories of value advanced by Alexius Meinong, Christian von Ehrenfels and Franz Brentano.³⁶ These theories are concerned with the question concerning the character of the consciousness involved in the evaluation of objects as expressed in judgements in order to establish their proper meaning. Hägerström’s analysis is concerned with the consciousness of value in relation to objects. This consciousness is expressed in value judgements and the question is to see if these judgements express beliefs, feelings or volitions. This question raises a methodological issue concerning the proper approach to the analysis of consciousness of values. Hägerström also discusses this question in a review concerning the moral ideas of good and evil.³⁷ Within moral psychology Hägerström makes a distinction between the subjective perspective and the objective perspective. This distinction is based upon the distinction between the act of judging and the content of the judgment. The subjective perspective is concerned with the analysis of the act of judging and this is a scientific question that involves looking upon the acts of judgments in their historical context, that is the social and psychological forces that determine men’s ideas. The objective perspective is concerned with the analysis of the content of the ideas as expressed in judgements and this is a matter of philosophical analysis that is partly a logical and partly a psychological analysis. It is a logical analysis since it involves an immanent understanding of the content of the ideas in relation to objects as expressed in judgements in order to decide what is thought. It is also a psychological analysis since it is concerned with an investigation into the character of the ideas without regard to the reality of the object. Both perspectives are needed since the objective perspective is concerned with the content of ideas in order to fix them for the scientific use from the subjective perspective concerned with presenting an account of various

³⁶ Axel Hägerström, *Kritiska punkter i värdepsykologien* (Critical Points in the Psychology of Values), Festskrift tillägnad E. O. Burman, Uppsala 1910 pp. 16-75.

³⁷ See Axel Hägerström, *I moralpsykologiska Frågor* (On the Questions of Moral Psychology) A review of Kristian Birch-Reichenwald Aars, Gut und Böse, Christiania 1907, Psyke, vol 2, 1908 pp.85- 99 and pp. 273-287.

of acts of judging in relation to values. Hägerström's view of this philosophical analysis can be seen as psychological analysis in terms of a descriptive psychology advanced by Brentano.

It is interesting to notice that G. E. Moore also pays attention to Brentano.³⁸ Moore follows Brentano in insisting upon the distinction between the act of perceiving or judging and the object of the act of perception or judgement. This is the foundation for Moore's rejection of idealism. Moore insists that a philosophical analysis cannot be a psychological analysis concerned with the experience of values but must be an analysis concerned with the nature of values of objects. Hägerström's analysis is also based upon Brentano's view that consciousness is intentional, that is to say directed towards objects. Hence the consciousness of subjects is essentially related to objects and their properties. The result of Hägerström's analysis leads to the view that values cannot be seen as objective properties of objects. Hence Hägerström arrives at the thesis of value nihilism. Hence the linguistic meaning of value terms is determined by subjective acts of feelings. Hence it follows that value judgements lack logical or cognitive content since they are expressions of feelings as opposed to expressions of beliefs. This leads Hägerström to present a descriptive inquiry into the various states of consciousness in relation to objects that is akin to the analysis advanced by Edmund Husserl's phenomenology.³⁹

Hägerström's approach is based upon the Kantian distinction between "what exists" and "what ought to be".⁴⁰ Hägerström endorses Kant's view that "in nature the understanding can cognize only what exists, or has been, or will be. It is impossible that something in it ought to be other than what, in all these time-relations, it in fact is; indeed, the ought, if one has merely the course of nature before one's eyes, has no significance whatever. We cannot ask at all what ought to happen in nature, any more than we can ask what properties a circle ought to have; but we must rather ask what happens in nature, or what properties the circle has". This is important for Hägerström's understanding of consciousness as related to objects. In my terminology introduced above sec. 2, Hägerström endorses the distinction between value judgements and normative judgements. According to Hägerström's analysis it is the case that the linguistic meaning of value judgements is determined by men's consciousness of feelings in relation to the goodness or badness of objects or states of affairs. Hence Hägerström endorses a nominalist position that holds that value terms are nothing but words. Hence value judgements lack cognitive or logical content. It is also the case that the meaning of value terms in the sense of their importance or significance for the individual depends upon the adoption of a subjective attitude of feelings. By

³⁸ G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica*, Cambridge 1903 p. x where Moore refers to his forthcoming review of Franz Brentano, *The Origin of Our Knowledge of Right and Wrong*, 1889, English ed. and transl. by Roderick M. Chisholm and Elizabeth H. Schneewind, London 1969. The review appears in *International Journal of Ethics*, vol. 14, 1903, reprinted in *The Philosophy of Brentano*, ed. Linda L. McAlister, London 1976 p. 176ff.

³⁹ Jan Bengtsson, *Den fenomenologiska rörelsen i Sverige* (The Phenomenological Movement in Sweden), Göteborg 1991 p. 83ff for an account of the relation between Husserl's philosophical approach and the approaches by Hägerström and Phalén.

⁴⁰ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. A547/B 575.

contrast the normative judgements are concerned with the value of what is right or wrong behaviour. The linguistic meaning of normative terms depends upon real elements to be found in actions and it follows that there are normative concepts. Hence Hägerström endorses a realist position that implies that these judgements have logical or cognitive content in relation to the objective attitude of thinking. It is also the case that the meaning of these normative judgements in the sense of their importance is crucial for civilized life within the state. Hägerström supports this position by reference to his own book "Stat och Rätt". It is interesting to notice that Hägerström does not subscribe to moral or normative nihilism since there are moral or normative facts. He refers to the law and its application as an example of normative judgements having cognitive content. The concept of legal duty "includes moral elements" based upon thinking, hence the duty to apply the law is a matter of knowledge and logical thinking. In this article Hägerström advances the non-cognitive thesis that value judgements lack cognitive content based upon the thesis of value nihilism. But he subscribes to a cognitive thesis with respect to normative judgments. It is the analysis of the objectivity of normative judgements that is the theme for Hägerström's lecture.

In this section I have tried to present an overview of Hägerström's philosophical beliefs prior to his lecture in order to arrive at a proper understanding of his intentions. Hägerström's appointment to the prestigious chair of practical philosophy is the recognition of his accomplishments. For Hägerström, to be is to be recognized and this is shown in the important fact that he did not apply but was called to the chair that he had longed for so long. The chair gives him the security he needs to pursue his views within the area of practical philosophy in relation to his epistemology and ontology. It also provides him with the authority of a professor to set the agenda for the province of what can be taught within practical philosophy. The inaugural lecture gives him the opportunity to present his views to the public and it certainly enjoyed great publicity see above p. 16. It seems to me that Nordin has a point that Hägerström's lecture gives him the reputation of being a revolutionary. It may very well be the case that Hägerström's motive in his lecture was to upset his audience. If so, he certainly admirably succeeded, as Maunter testifies (M p. 7). But the effect of upsetting people may be that their beliefs in the prevailing moral ideas are re-inforced rather than weakened and this is contrary to Hägerström's intentions to purify men's consciousness of false ideas in order to arrive at true ideas. Whatever Hägerström's motive may have, this is irrelevant for considering whether the content of the lecture has a revolutionary character. What is relevant in this respect is to consider Hägerström's intentions as expressed in his judgements to his audience in order to decide whether or not to believe and endorse them. Hägerström's intentions depend upon his philosophical position where he subscribes to the insight ideal of knowledge. This is the theme for the next section.

4. Within the philosophical context Hägerström advances his own moral philosophy as knowledge beyond "good and evil" (H p. 96, MH p. 50). As Mautner correctly notices this is an allusion to Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche

occupies the intellectual point of view of the free scholar that questions that philosophers can “furnish the rational ground of morality” in terms of a “science of morals”.⁴¹ Nietzsche subscribes to the agency ideal of the knowing subjects as a cognitive agent actively engaged in producing knowledge of objects based upon the will to truth. By contrast Hägerström’s approach is based upon the desire for truth and he subscribes to the insight ideal of the knowing subject as a cognitive spectator passively related to objects to be known by reason.⁴² From the agency perspective, Nietzsche holds that there are no natural facts but only natural interpretations of facts. This is the radical understanding of the agency ideal according to which philosophers or scientists produce the objects of knowledge. In a similar way there are no moral facts but only moral interpretations of facts. This is the radical demand “to create values” based upon the will to truth that is equivalent to the will to power. As Nietzsche puts it, “*Actual philosophers, however, are commanders and law-givers: they say ‘thus it shall be!’*, it is they who determine the Wherefore and Whither of mankind“. By contrast Hägerström occupies the impartial perspective of “viewing things *sub specie aeternitatis*, from the insight that everything is only a moment in an endless natural context, in which nothing is in itself higher or lower” (H p. 95, MH p. 48, his italics). This is, of course, an allusion to Benedict Spinoza’s view of the philosopher as the rational spectator in possession of adequate ideas based upon reason who regards “things, not as contingent, but as necessary”.⁴³ Spinoza adheres to the insight ideal of the knowing subject and Hägerström follow suit. Thus Hägerström’s philosophy is located within the tradition of the insight ideal. Hence his position with respect to contemporary philosophers who advance the agency ideal since his philosophy is advanced as a rejection of this ideal in favour of upholding the insight ideal. This is in turn important for understanding his lecture concerned with the question if there is any rational ground for morality.

The insight ideal can be traced back to René Descartes and his solitary approach of the philosopher as the lonely subject confronted with observing his world of ideas. The insight ideal is linked to the view of man in God’s image and the corresponding epistemological and ontological approach. This approach is based upon the distinction between the knowing subject and the reality of objects. What is there in the world can be known by reason as the divine and infallible element in man. This is what enables Descartes to reveal the mathematical structure of the world governed by universal laws as the

⁴¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, transl. and ed. R. J. Hollingdale, London 1977, § 186, p. 90, and § 211, p. 123 for the next quotation, Nietzsche’s italics. See also Allen W. Wood, *Attacking Morality: A Metaethical Project*, On the Relevance of Metaethics (note 5), pp. 221-249. See below sec. 5 p. 30.

⁴² Edward Craig, *The Mind of God and the Works of Man*, Oxford 1971 for an account of the ideal insight of knowledge endorsed by Descartes, Berkeley, Spinoza, Leibniz and Hegel, it is criticized by Hume and replaced with the agency ideal of knowledge introduced by Kant. It is endorsed by Marx and Engels, and further developed by Nietzsche and by Peirce and James.

⁴³ Benedict de Spinoza, *The Ethics*, transl. R. H. M. Elwes, New York 1955, Part II, prop 44, p. 117.

commands of God. The insight ideal is located within the context of Christian thought and has an anthropomorphic tendency. This view is firmly opposed by Hägerström throughout his philosophical career. Within his philosophy there is no room for god and his creation of the world. The idea of a supersensible world must be discarded. There is only one world, the sensible and intelligible world in time and space that is there to be known by the use of man's cognitive capacities. Like Spinoza, Hägerström is committed to the insight ideal in the secularist way of seeing things from the absolute perspective dedicated to the disinterested pursuit of truth. Hägerström's secular approach is based upon the rationality of the philosophical consciousness that is passively related to the reality of objects in the world as an intelligible order of causes and their effects. It is unintelligible to maintain, with the subjective idealist, that I know nothing but my own ideas. Thus Hägerström rejects subjectivism that he attributes to Kant. Another reason for the rejection of Kant's philosophy is that Kant subscribes to the agency ideal of knowledge whereas Hägerström subscribes to the insight ideal.

The starting point for philosophical inquires for Kant and Hägerström is the reality of the world. Hägerström follows the Kantian admonition to dare to use one's own reason or "sapere aude" as he concludes in a lecture delivered 1909.⁴⁴ The use of reason implies freedom of thought. For Kant, freedom of thought is not a to be seen as a solitary operation of the mind engaged in the purely private matter of entertaining one's own ideas or beliefs. This is the position according to the insight ideal. For Kant, freedom of thought implies the expression of public judgements since this is the only way of making one's belief definite. As Kant puts it, "we do admittedly say that, whereas a higher authority may deprive us of freedom of *speech* or of *writing*, it cannot deprive us of freedom of *thought*. But how much and how accurately would we *think* if we did not think, so to speak, in community with others to whom we *communicate* our thoughts and who communicate their thoughts to us! We may therefore conclude that the same external constraint which deprives people of the freedom to *communicate* their thoughts in public also removes their freedom of *thought*, the one treasure which remains to us amidst all the burdens of civil life, and which alone offers us a means of overcoming all the evils of this condition".⁴⁵ Thus Kant rejects the solitary approach in favour of a communal approach based upon public communication. As noticed above the starting point is the reality of the world in which autonomous persons are engaged in the cognitive activities of exchanging judgements based upon reasons concerning man's place in the nature and society. This is quite distinct from the solitary approach of the individual philosopher confronted with observing objects within the world endorsed by

⁴⁴ Axel Hägerström, *Filosofien som vetenskap* (Philosophy as Science) ed. Thomas Mautner, Filosofisk tidskrift, vol 1 Stockholm 1980, No. 2 p. 1-13, vol. 2. Stockholm 1981, No. 3 p. 45-47, at p. 47.

⁴⁵ I. Kant, *What is Orientation in Thinking*, Kant, *Political Writings*, transl. H. B. Nisbet, ed. Hans Reiss, 2nd ed. Cambridge 1991 p. 247, Kant's italics.

Hägerström based upon his principle of self-examination according to which communication with other philosophers is only of minor importance.⁴⁶

Kant stresses the active role of reason to structure the experience of reality according to categories and the pure intuitions of space and time. For Hägerström, the Kantian idea of the regulative role of reason is tantamount to the claim that man replaces god. It seems to me that Hägerström confuses Kant's claim that that man creates knowledge of objects with the radical claim that man creates the objects of knowledge. This view is advanced among some adherents of the agency ideal, e.g. Nietzsche. For Hägerström, this claim is tantamount to endorse an idealist position and this is just as absurd as the claim that god creates the world. As noticed in section 3, Hägerström claims to have refuted subjectivism in favour of his own epistemological and ontological approach that makes ideas or concepts to be objective constituents of the objects in the world. It is not man's consciousness that determines the objects within reality but rather the reality of objects determines the content of man's consciousness. Hägerström accepts that objectivity of knowledge implies the conditions of universality, necessity and truth but these conditions are not introduced by the knowing subject but found in the objects. These objects exist independently of the ordinary consciousness and can be directly known by philosophical thinking. This position rules scepticism out since the philosophical way of thinking has direct and accurate access to the objects of thought. Hence Hägerström's view that every judgement is true. For Hägerström, concepts are embedded in the logical structure of reality. This is akin to Hegel's position that leads to the view that reality is spiritual and constituted by the dialectical development of ideas. Hägerström rejects the Hegelian appeal to dialectical logic in favour of the traditional laws of Aristotelean logic. He also rejects Hegel's idealism in favour of his materialism that holds that reality is material consisting of physical objects that interacts necessarily and through contact in relation to the rationality of consciousness. This is what enables the scientific consciousness to present a scientific account based upon the principle of causality.

The principle of causality is important within Hägerström's philosophy (see MH pp. 100ff). Hägerström proceeds upon the assumption of causality that everything that exists necessarily has a cause (the principle of causal universality), that every particular cause necessarily has a particular effect (the principle of causal necessity), and that like causes have like effects (the principle of causal similarity). It is thinking in terms of these principles that makes it possible for man to arrive at knowledge of the real and lawful necessities among things and events. The principle of causality not only accounts for the existence of objects and events but also provides the only proper knowledge of what there is in nature and society in terms of naturalistic explanations. The principle of causal universality rules out that anything can produce itself. Hence Hägerström's rejection of Spinoza's moral philosophy based upon the idea of

⁴⁶ Hägerström, *Selbstdarstellung, Philosophy and Religion*, p. 38 where Hägerström mentions his colleague Adolf Phalén and continues to write: "For the rest, I have not been significantly influenced by contemporary philosophy, on account of what is, in my opinion, its uncritical point of departure".

causa sui (MH p 107 cf. p. 117f). This is so since the concept of a self-originating cause contains a *contradictio in adjecto*. Hägerström's rejection of the concept of *causa sui* is important in relation to the understanding of human beings. Hägerström's view implies that human beings are not conceived in terms of thinking agents having the capacity to act upon reasons. For Hägerström, human beings are conceived in terms of thinking animals that are acted upon by other animals and objects. This is similar to the view advanced by David Hume rejecting the view of man as made in the image of God in favour of the view that man is natural object or an animal alongside other animals within nature.⁴⁷ Hägerström also endorses Hume's secular approach and he proceeds to apply the causal principles of necessity and similarity to reject idealism in favour of materialism. George Berkeley is also committed to this principle or "the old axiom: Nothing can give to another that which it hath not itself".⁴⁸ Berkeley uses this axiom to destroy the existence of matter to be the cause of man's ideas in favour of the existence of ideas. Ideas in the minds of people can only be caused by ideas in another mind, in the end the mind of god. Hence Berkeley's immaterialism or idealism. This is also Boström's view as expressed in his rational idealism. By contrast Hägerström advances his rational naturalism and its foundation is also "the old axiom". Hägerström uses this axiom to hold that the reality of matter or the objective features of objects cause men's ideas. Hence the task of the philosopher is to purify the consciousness of human beings from entertaining false ideas in favour of true ideas that cohere with the reality of objects. Hägerström has the capacity to perform this task since he occupies the standpoint of the cognitive spectator that reveals what is real as expressed in his philosophical judgements. In this respect he is within the traditional view of philosophy as the supreme tribunal of knowledge that decides claims to knowledge.

Hägerström emerges as the cognitive sovereign having the capacity and authority to settle the province of knowledge. This is so since the consciousness of the cognitive spectator is the passive consciousness of the intellect that is informed by the impact of concepts that cohere with the reality of objects. The passive relationship between consciousness and its objects implies that it cannot introduce any distortion into the fixity of objects and the related concepts. The distortion of what there is rather based upon the intrusion of foreign element caused by feelings or volitions. Thus Hägerström's philosophy presents the true account of the objectivity of knowledge of reality. Human consciousness is related to things or concepts by the causal principles that guarantee the objectivity of knowledge. The condition of necessity is assured ontologically through the cause of things that necessarily produces an effect that is experienced by the consciousness. The condition of truth is assured epistemologically through the similarity between the object and the experience of the indifferent and passive observer. The condition of universality is assured ontologically and epistemologically since causes produce judgements. Every

⁴⁷ Craig, *The Mind of God*, p. 70.

⁴⁸ George Berkeley, *Third Dialogue between Hylas and Philonous*, p. 236, quoted from Craig, *The Mind of God*, p. 42.

judgement is true since its truth ontologically depends upon the cause of an object producing a necessary effect in the consciousness as a true concept and epistemologically upon the passive consciousness of the indifferent observer of the truth of the concept.

From the perspective of the philosophical consciousness there is a distinction between the world of true ideas as expressed in concepts and judgements and the world of false ideas that expressed in empty words and utterances since they fail to cohere with any objective features in reality. The confusion of ideas related to different objects brings about the world of false ideas that determines the consciousness of idealist philosophers as well as ordinary people. Hence the need for Hägerström's philosophical inquiry into the origin of ideas in order to dispel the confusions by presenting an account of true ideas that cohere with objects and thus express concepts or fail to cohere with objects and thus are empty words. What matters in relation to scientific thinking are the scientific consciousness and the use of true ideas or concepts that cohere with the reality of objects. Hence the philosophical task is to see if this is the case in relation to the philosophical consciousness in order to fix the concepts for the pursuit of truth within the sciences. This is also important with respect to the moral thinking based upon the moral consciousness. For Hägerström, there is a relationship between philosophy and science or between meta-ethics and substantive ethics. This is overlooked by the received view. The received view also overlooks that there is a relation between philosophy and the ordinary consciousness. For Hägerström, the philosophical task is to emancipate the consciousness of ordinary people from superstition and religious fears that lead them astray to disregard the importance of scientific knowledge. It is not religion but scientific knowledge that liberates people and provides the foundation for a meaningful life for human beings within a state based upon the maintenance of the law. This is surely an important message in the present strife between opposing classes, see below sec. 12.

Hägerström endorses the insight ideal of knowledge and occupies the absolute position of the rational spectator of the world. This raises the question whether this position is possible at all for a human being that cannot be dealt within the scope of this article.⁴⁹ Nor is it possible to consider Hägerström's understanding of causality that is vulnerable to Hume's criticism. Suffice it to mention that there is a tension in Hägerström's thinking between the insight ideal and the agency ideal of knowledge. According the insight ideal, change is something that happens to people. The important thing in life is to understand this in order to maintain one's peace of mind on the one hand and peace and prosperity within society on the other. The agency ideal is related to human agency stressing that change may be something valuable that people can bring about by their own actions based upon reasons in order to further "the happiness and civilization of mankind" (H p. 94, MH p. 48).

In this section I have tried to give a short account of Hägerström's epistemology and ontology in terms of the insight ideal. It is this ideal that informs the lecture concerned with the question if there is any rational ground of

⁴⁹ See Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere*, Oxford 1986.

morality. This ideal commits Hägerström to the ontological or metaphysical view that reality has an inherent conceptual structure that is recorded in philosophical and scientific thinking. A related ontological view is put forward by Moore. This invites a comparison between Hägerström and Moore that is the subject of the next section.

5. Moore is known for his article, *The Refutation of Idealism*, published in the *Mind* 1903. Hägerström is also known for his rejection of idealism. They both proceed upon the view that idealism ignores the distinction between an act of consciousness and the object of consciousness. This distinction is in turn based upon Brentano's view of the intentionality of consciousness that always is directed towards objects. Moore proceeds upon the distinction between consciousness and reality that leads him to reject idealism in favour of realism. Moore regards the objects as concepts and holds that reality is composed of concepts that in no way depends upon their being discovered or known. As Moore puts it, "all that exists is composed of concepts necessarily related to one another in specific manners, and likewise to the concept of existence".⁵⁰ Hägerström claims that the refutation of idealism is due to his own philosophical thinking. It has been a moot question whether Hägerström is familiar with Moore's article in *Mind*. Konrad Marc-Wogau has carried out an investigation with the result that Hägerström cannot have had access to this article.⁵¹ But Hägerström may have been familiar with Moore's writings from other sources, and one source may be an article presenting an overview of philosophy in England printed in the journal "Archiv für systematische Philosophie" that is also familiar to Hägerström.⁵²

In this article, Moore takes Henry Sidgwick to task for confusing an act of cognition with the object of cognition. As noticed above, this is Moore's objection to idealism. It is also Hägerström's objection to subjectivism, that is to say the view that the individual's consciousness is the only and ultimate ground of knowledge. Moore refers to Sidgwick's discussion of Herbert Spencer's evolutionary ethics and endorses Sidgwick's criticism that Spencer's premises are unable to support any ethical conclusions for his 'Absolute Ethics' in terms of human evolution. In his lecture Hägerström concurs with Moore (H p. 89 cf. MH p. 85). Moore rejects the "personal idealism" of relativistic humanism put forward by F. S. C. Schiller, based upon the theory of truth by William James. This theory holds that the criterion of truth is utility, hence no judgement is true unless it is useful. Moore's objection is that Schiller "confuses the view that the useful is true, with the view that the willed is so." Hägerström also rejects the

⁵⁰ G. E. Moore, *The Nature of Judgement*, *Mind*, vol 7, 1899 p. 176ff, at p. 181. Moore continues, "I am fully aware how paradoxical this theory must appear, and even how contemptible. But .. I have appealed throughout to the rules of logic; nor, if any one rejects these, should I have much to fear from his arguments. An appeal to the facts is useless".

⁵¹ Konrad Marc-Wogau, *Studier till Axel Hägerströms filosofi* (Studies in the Philosophy of A.H.), Falköping 1968 p. 19f.

⁵² G. E. Moore, *Jahresbericht über "Philosophy in the United Kingdom for 1902"*, *Archiv für systematische Philosophie*, N. F., Band x, 1904 pp. 242-264, for Hägerström's references to this journal, see Hägerström, *Kritiska Punkter*, p. 18n3, 40n1, 57n1, 62n1.

“attempt made in modern philosophy of value to vindicate the possibility of an objective supreme value through a new interpretation of the concept of truth itself” (H p. 90, MH p. 43). Moore claims that “our ethical beliefs cannot all be shewn to be true of false by any anthropological inquiry.” This is also discussed by Hägerström (H p. 95 cf. p. 90, MH p. 49 cf. p. 43).

To be sure, Hägerström does not make any reference to Moore, but this does not rule out that he is familiar with this article and perhaps with Moore’s “Principia Ethica” as well.⁵³ It seems to me that there are common elements in Hägerström’s and Moore’s approach to the study of moral philosophy that have been overlooked by the received view. The reason may be the acceptance of Hägerström’s confidence in his the originality of his own work that precludes him from acknowledging that his philosophical thinking is influenced by foreign elements. This understanding fits with Hägerström’s methodological principle of self-examination. It also fits with the insight ideal of knowledge since insights cannot be shared.

Moore’s understanding of reality as composed of concepts is also important for his moral philosophy. His “Principia Ethica” is based upon his ontological theory that the world is composed of eternal and immutable concepts that in no way depend upon being known or willed or desired. Concerning the analysis of moral concepts, Moore writes, “it appears to me that in Ethics, as in all other philosophical studies, the difficulties and disagreements, of which its history is full, are mainly due to a very simple cause: namely to the attempt to answer questions, without first discovering precisely *what* question it is which you desire to answer”.⁵⁴ Moore is at pains to try to discover what is the kind of question one has before one’s mind before attempting to provide an answer. In a similar way Hägerström is at pains to consider “whether or not it is right to ask about the truth or falsity of moral ideas” (H p. 83, MH p. 33, cf. H p. 87, MH p. 39), see below sec. 6, p 31. For Moore, two kinds of questions can be asked. One question is “what kind of things ought to exist for their own sakes?” The second question is “what kind of actions ought we to perform? The former question is concerned with the concept of good and the relevant evidence offered for what is good. This is important for the second question since the performance of right actions depends upon knowledge of what is good. Hence the importance of providing an analysis of the concept of good. By contrast the fundamental concept for Hägerström is the concept of ought.

⁵³ Petersson, *Hägerströms Värde teori* p. 115n2 holds the view that Hägerström “probably” had no knowledge of Principia Ethica. However, he admits that Hägerström makes use of Moore’s open-question argument! He refers to Moore’s and subsequently Hägerström’s criticism of Mill, and claims that Sidgwick’s *The Methods of Ethics* is the common source. I beg to differ and will only ask why Hägerström does not mention the criticism when he deals with Mill by reference to Sidgwick, see Hägerström, *Den empiristiska Etiken*, p. 17? Petersson excludes Hägerström’s writings prior to 1907 since “these writings only to a small extent are concerned with questions of value”, p. 13. Petersson proceeds upon the false assumption that conceptual analysis only begins in this century. He also takes for granted that the conceptual analysis is confined to the linguistic analysis of moral language to the exclusion of ontological and epistemological questions. - Mautner also fails to mention Moore in his introduction.

⁵⁴ Moore, *Principia Ethica*, Preface p. vii, Moore’s italics.

They agree, however, that there is a need for conceptual analysis of moral concepts. The conceptual analysis is not conceived in terms of a linguistic analysis of the moral vocabulary in order to establish the proper meaning by reference to usage or custom. Nor do they refer to Bentham's view of linguistic analysis according to which it is the sentence as opposed to the word that has primacy in the analysis of meaning.⁵⁵ Bentham's view signals a departure from John Locke's empiricist view concentrating on the analysis of the origin of ideas. Gottlob Frege also emphasizes that words only have meaning in the context of a sentence and stresses the distinction between the sense and reference of a word as well as the employment of modern logic in conceptual analysis.⁵⁶ Although Moore and Hägerström are concerned with the conceptual analysis of concepts they do not understand this to be a linguistic analysis of the meaning of moral language as is the case within the meta-ethical approach favoured by logical positivism. Their approach to conceptual analysis is rather based upon the primacy of ontological and epistemological questions. The conceptual analysis is based upon the distinction between mental acts and their objects. For Moore, this distinction implies that there is a division between psychology and philosophy. Psychology deals with consciousness of objects in terms of discovering causal relations between thoughts. By contrast philosophy deals with objects of consciousness in terms of discovering timeless relations between the objects of thoughts. For Moore, the philosophical analysis is concerned with providing definitions of concepts. In this respect it is crucial to consider the object actually before the mind in absolute isolation from everything else. Thus Moore can be understood to endorse the insight ideal of knowledge.

Within moral philosophy Moore is concerned with providing the proper definition of good and holds that no definition in terms of natural or transcendent properties is tenable. Moore subscribes to the referential theory of meaning according to which the meaning of a word is the object it denotes. This can be demonstrated by the use of "the open question argument" introduced by Moore. Moore applies this argument to claim that Mill commits a serious fallacy by defining "good" in terms of "desirable". This is to commit "the naturalistic fallacy" that provides a definition of goodness in terms of natural properties. It is also a fallacy to define "good" in terms of transcendent elements. If we then ask Moore what "good" means, his answer is that "good is good, and that is the end of the matter". For Moore, the concept of good is a simple and unique concept denoting a non-naturalistic and indefinable property. Hence W. K. Frankena holds that the naturalistic fallacy is rather to commit the definist fallacy.⁵⁷ This is the fallacy "that two properties are being treated as one, and it is irrelevant, if it be the case, that one of them is natural or non-ethical and the other non-natural or ethical". For Moore, the fallacy has no connection with the Kantian

⁵⁵ See Ross Harrison, *Bentham*, London 1983 pp. 64ff.

⁵⁶ See Gottlob Frege, *Begriffsschrift*, Breslau 1879 for the claim that ordinary language is riddled with confusions and thought is enslaved by the tyranny of words that can only be removed by the devise of a formal language in terms of a propositional calculus.

⁵⁷ W. K. Frankena, *The Naturalistic Fallacy*, Mind 1939, reprinted in *Theories of Ethics*, ed. Philippa Foot, Oxford 1967 p. 50ff. at p. 57.

bifurcation of reality and ought. Moore advances his naturalistic fallacy in order to reject Mill's hedonistic utilitarianism in favour of his own ideal utilitarianism. The naturalistic fallacy does not lead Moore to embrace non-cognitivism. On the contrary Moore is a moral cognitivist holding that what is good is expressed in a synthetic judgement whose truth is based upon intuition. Thus Moore holds that there are "truths" such as "personal affections and aesthetic enjoyments" that "form the rational and ultimate end of human action and the sole criterion of social progress".⁵⁸ Thus Moore is committed to moral realism since what there is in the world includes values that exist independently of human consciousness and are there to be known by intuition or experience.

Hägerström's conceptual analysis resembles Moore's analysis by stressing the importance of considering the object actually present in consciousness to be contemplated by philosophical thinking. Hence his analysis is based upon his ontology since objects and their properties cause what is present in consciousness. Like Moore, he subscribes to the referential theory of meaning. In this respect there is a crucial difference between Moore and Hägerström. Moore holds that the word "good" can be used to express a meaningful concept despite the lack of any natural elements in the object. Moore rejects the empiricist view of meaning based upon the origin of ideas. This is quite clear from his criticism of Brentano who is committed to the empiricist view. So is Hägerström since he holds that the meaning of a word depends upon the presence of natural elements in the objects that in turn determine consciousness (H p. 81, MH p. 32 and p. 156). This is required by his ontology since only what can be seen or felt by the senses can have an effect upon consciousness and this effect can in turn be scrutinized for its content. Hence Hägerström's principle of the meaning of words depends upon his ontology. Hägerström's principle of meaning holds that words stand for or denote ascertainable properties or qualities in objects or actions. Hence he is committed to reject Moore's moral realism concerning the concept of good denoting a non-naturalistic property in favour of a nominalist position that holds that "good" is not a concept but a word that leads him to embrace his version of value nihilism.

Hägerström's principle of meaning is important for understanding his view concerning concepts. For a word to express a concept requires an expression stating the relation between a thing or quality and its conceptual name. Hence his insistence that the conceptual or logical meaning of words depends upon what can be seen or felt by the senses in relation to thinking. Hägerström diverges also from Moore's realism by holding that an objective or indifferent attitude of thinking is necessary for words to have cognitive meaning. It is also the case that a subjective attitude of feeling is required for moral words to have meaning (H p. 92, MH p. 45). This is important in relation to his value nihilism, where he endorses a nominalist position, see above sec. 3 p. 18. It is equally important in relation to his analysis of the meaning of the concept of ought. This analysis leads him to abandon his former realist position in favour of a nominalist position that holds that "it is an unmeaning to consider the idea of ought as true", see below sec. 8.

⁵⁸ Moore, *Principia Ethica*, p. 189.

Hägerström uses the word “meaning” ambiguously to refer to the conceptual meaning of words and to refer to what is important or significant. In his lecture, Hägerström is concerned with the meaning of ought or duty. Surely there is a difference between the question: “what does the word ‘duty’ mean?” and the question. “Is a duty of any importance or significance?” Hägerström fails to keep these questions apart. In addition Hägerström also uses the word “meaning” to refer to what an individual means by using sentences, that is to say his intentions in using words or sentences having a certain linguistic meaning (H p. 91, MH p. 44). The sentence “it is a duty to do something” has a linguistic meaning that must be understood in order to apply the sentence with the intention to inform or to command or to prescribe what is the proper action. According to the received view Hägerström is engaged in the linguistic analysis of the use of the moral vocabulary. If this is the case his principle of meaning can be contested since it commits him to endorse “the ‘Fido’-Fido principle of meaning“, to use Ryle’s term.⁵⁹ Hägerström also fails to discuss the different uses of the word “meaning“. This suggests that Hägerström is more concerned to present an analysis based upon his ontology and epistemology as advanced in his rational naturalism.

Hägerström’s ontology is composed of concepts. This is also Moore’s position that commits him to realism, although it must be added that he abandons his theory that reality consists solely of concepts since this cannot explain the existence of error. Hägerström faces a similar difficulty and provides the unsatisfactory solution that every judgement is true. It seems to me that Hägerström’s commitment to realism is more in doubt. He stays within the idealist tradition regarding common sense as “a world of false concepts” as he puts in his lectures (MH p. 111, my translation). He never waives in his view concerning common sense as uninformed parochial prejudices.⁶⁰ This is quite different from Moore’s attitude and his defence of common sense. Hägerström endorses the distinction between consciousness and objects. But this distinction can be made in two ways. One way is to make the distinction between consciousness on the one hand and objects on the other. This is Moore’s position that commits him to realism. The other way is to make the distinction within consciousness as a distinction between consciousness and objects. This fits with the insight ideal that considers the ideas of objects in relation to the rational consciousness. This seems to be Hägerström’s position. To be sure, Hägerström rejects subjectivism, that is to say the view that restricts ideas of objects to the consciousness of the individual human being. There is no doubt, however, that Hägerström endorses a version of idealism that holds that the ideas of objects or concepts depend upon consciousness. This must be an embarrassment for people committed to view that Hägerström claims to have refuted idealism. But there

⁵⁹ Gilbert Ryle, *Meaning and Necessity*, Philosophy vol. 24, 1949 pp. 69-76. According to Ryle, this principle holds, “that to ask What does the expression “E” mean? Is to ask, To what does “E” stand in the relation in which “Fido” stands to Fido. The significance of any expression is the thing, process, person or entity of which the expression is the proper name”, p. 69.

⁶⁰ Hägerström, *Selbstdarstellung, Philosophy and Religion*, p. 38f.

are different versions of idealism. It is not the existence but the nature of reality that Hägerström puts in question. He only rejects subjectivism to subscribe to his own version that holds that what there is and how things are cannot go beyond what we in principle could think about (see MH p. 156ff).⁶¹

From Hägerström's perspective, the province of moral philosophy is that "moral knowledge cannot be a teaching *in* morals, but only a teaching *about* morality." According to the received view, this signals Hägerström's intention to break with the past and introduce the distinction between meta-ethics and substantive ethics, see above sec. 2, p. 3. As I see it, this is a mistaken view. Hägerström's rejection of moral philosophy as a teaching in morality is firmly established within the tradition of the insight ideal. The target of Hägerström's view is rather the agency ideal of moral knowledge advanced by Nietzsche, presenting a radical critique of all moral values and the demand for the creation of new values, see above sec. 4, p. 19. Hägerström shares Nietzsche's view that it is a philosophical task to act as a reformer of the common consciousness in order for human beings to come to terms with reality as it is. Hägerström is committed the insight ideal of knowledge and rejects that is a philosophical task to offer any moral advice. Thus Hägerström endorses Hegel's criticism of philosophers who want to teach the world how it ought to be.⁶² This view is also strongly voiced by Francis Bradley since "all philosophy has to do is 'to understand what is,' and moral philosophy has to understand morals which exist, not to make them or give directions for making them. Such a notion is simply ludicrous".⁶³ Although Moore is strongly against Bradley's idealism, he also holds that "it is not the business of the ethical philosopher to give personal advice or exhortation".⁶⁴ The reason for this view is that moral decisions depend upon unique and individual facts that are beyond the province of moral knowledge to supply. Another important reason is respect for the autonomy of the individual having to make moral decisions of his own. This does not exclude the importance of moral knowledge. Thus Moore presents his moral philosophy as a "Prolegomenon to any future ethics that can possibly pretend to be scientific" that is to say "to discover the fundamental principles of ethical reasoning". For Moore there is moral knowledge of what is good expressed in value judgements as well as moral knowledge of what we ought to do as expressed in normative judgements. This is quite consistent with a refusal to give moral advice.

Hägerström may endorse this position that does not entail a non-cognitivist view, as Mautner seems to think. As I shall argue below, Hägerström introduces a moral thesis of self-realization and this implies that it cannot be the task of the moral philosopher to give any advice. However, Hägerström also presents a non-cognitive view. This is a departure from his former view of since he now not only endorses value nihilism but also moral nihilism. If moral nihilism is true it

⁶¹ See also Axel Hägerström, *Letter to Arnold Sölvén of 4th January 1931*, printed in Tiden 1940 p. 86f.

⁶² Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Preface p. 21.

⁶³ Bradley, *Ethical Studies*, p. 193.

⁶⁴ Moore, *Principia Ethica*, p. 3 and preface p. ix for the next quotation.

follows that there are no objective normative facts. Hence there can be no moral or normative knowledge, hence there cannot be any scientific teaching in morality. The question to be considered is how Hägerström arrives at this non-cognitive view and whether it is true. This leads to consider Hägerström's lecture in the sections to follow.

6. The crucial question in Hägerström's lecture is put forward rather late. This is the question is "whether or not it is right to ask about the truth or falsity of moral ideas?" (H p. 83, MH p. 33, cf. H p. 87, MH p. 39), see above sec. 5, p. 26. Hägerström continues to say "If someone inquires whether gold is just or unjust, of course he would be immediately laughed out of court. The history of science, and particularly of philosophy, abounds with such false questions, even if they are not so obviously false. Just as gold is neither just nor unjust, so it may be that the ought or the morally right is of such a character that one can say that it neither can be said to be really valid or not valid for a certain mode of acting". Hägerström's reference to gold is an allusion to Locke.⁶⁵ The difficulty Hägerström faces is one about the use of ideas in general, rather than one about moral ideas in particular. The analogous question about gold is: "whether or not it is right to ask about the truth or falsity of the idea that gold is just or unjust?" Another difficulty is that Hägerström uses the word "riktigt" and this word can be used to in the sense of "right" or in the sense of "correct". It is surely right (permissible) to ask the question, another question is whether this question is a right (correct) question to ask. Considering the question concerning gold, Hägerström holds that this is not a proper question to ask. If a person puts the question then she should be laughed out of court. Hägerström does not give any reason. But then the reason is that the question presupposes that the thing gold has the inherent quality of being just or unjust. Since these qualities cannot be found in the object, Hägerström is quite right that this inquiry is based upon a false question. But the reason why this is the case is that we know that it involves a category mistake, to use the term introduced by Ryle.⁶⁶ The concepts of just and unjust apply only to human beings and their actions, and actions presuppose human agency and communication. Since gold can neither act nor communicate with people this entails that gold can be neither just nor unjust. If some people nevertheless ask the question if the thing gold is just they can be corrected. There is no need for ridicule as Hägerström suggests. But then it is a well-known rhetorical strategy to "make our intellectual adversaries appear laughable, thereby undermining their arguments and advancing our own at the same time".⁶⁷

To return to the question whether or not it is right to ask about the truth or falsity of moral ideas, Hägerström presupposes that the truth of a moral idea depends upon the presence of the qualities of rightness or wrongness as inherent

⁶⁵ John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch, Oxford 1975 Book II, Ch. 30, Of Real and Fantastical Ideas, p. 372f.

⁶⁶ Gilbert Ryle, *Categories, Logic and Language*, 2nd Series, ed. Antony Flew, Oxford 1953 pp. 65-81.

⁶⁷ Quintin Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes*, Cambridge 1996 p. 390.

in actions. This is also required by his ontology that is related to his principle of meaning, cf. above sec. 5. His suggestion is that “when we conceive a certain action as objectively right another as objectively wrong, we combine with rightness and wrongness a belief that is altogether foreign to them” (H p. 83, MH p. 33). This is certainly the case concerning the belief concerning gold, combining this belief with the foreign element of justice. Hägerström claims that it does not make sense to ask the question concerning gold. By parity of reasoning, it does not make sense to ask the moral question either. If a person asks whether an action is objectively right or objectively wrong she should immediately be laughed out of court. Hägerström’s comparison of this question with the question concerning gold implies that this involves a category mistake. If so, then it cannot make sense to ask the question in the first place. When Hägerström compares these questions he invites the audience to believe that it cannot be right to ask the moral question whether a moral belief is true or false. If a person asks this question she should be immediately laughed out of court since she is asking a false question. It is a false question to ask whether the belief that gold is just, is true. It is a false question to ask whether a moral belief that an action is just, is true. If it is the case that it is a false question then this threatens to put an end to the lecture before it is started. It is an ordinary common sense belief that sentences can be used to express various ethical beliefs in terms of judgements. This common sense belief may be problematic but Hägerström’s comparison begs this issue. Hägerström suggests that the belief that an action is right or wrong is confused in the same way as the belief that gold is just or unjust is confused. If the common sense belief in the truth or falsity of moral beliefs is confused then the professor in moral philosophy faces the task of addressing this confusion. This is also Hägerström’s intention to present a philosophical account that unravels the confusions inherent in ordinary moral thinking as well as in philosophical thinking concerning the objective ground of moral duties.

As I see it, Hägerström’s moral philosophy is within the traditional understanding based upon the insight ideal of knowledge. Thus moral philosophy is concerned with a conceptual or meta-ethical inquiry, not as a separate and distinct study, but as an integrated part within substantive ethics. This philosophical inquiry is advanced to provide an analysis of moral thinking in relation to moral conduct. Hägerström’s lecture is restricted to provide a conceptual analysis of normative judgements that state and motivate people to perform what is right. Thus Hägerström addresses the Kantian questions “1. What can I know? 2. What ought I to do? 3. What may I hope?”.⁶⁸ Hägerström assumes that he is addressing a proper question: “whether or not it is right to ask about the truth or falsity of moral ideas“. This question can in turn be understood to ask the personal question whether it is morally right for a person to ask whether the prevailing normative standards represents the right action. This question raises the Kantian question “what ought a person to do?” Hägerström is committed to that this is a proper question to ask by his own admonition to use one’s own reason, see above sec. 4, p. 21. The personal question is also related

⁶⁸ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. A805/B 833.

to a burning and practical issue of the time of the lecture, hinted at by his remark concerning the person facing “the conflict between, one can almost say, the moral points of view of different classes” (H p. 78, MH p. 28). This is the political context of Hägerström’s lecture. Persons are facing normative questions how to act and perhaps expect that the moral philosopher can provide the answer. Hägerström’s answer is that this is beyond the province of moral philosophy. However, the personal question concerning the right action raises a philosophical question within substantive ethics whether the content of the prevailing normative standards is right or wrong. This substantive question is in turn related to the meta-ethical question concerning the truth of moral ideas. The background for these philosophical questions is the political context in terms of “the present bitter strife between capital and labour”. The philosophical contribution is to clarify the consciousness of men by addressing the Kantian question “what can I know?” Hägerström assumes with Kant that the question to consider is whether the prevailing normative standards represent what is objectively the right or wrong action to do. These standards require a justification based upon the existence of “the supreme principle of morality” to be addressed within a philosophical inquiry.⁶⁹

Hägerström’s lecture proceeds upon the assumption that the supreme principle must be determined in relation to the question: “what man’s moral purpose is” (H p. 79, MH 30). From the very beginning of his philosophical career he has endorsed this assumption and in this respect his lecture makes no break with the past, see above sec. 3. Hägerström’s answer is that it is man’s moral purpose to behave according to “the specific moral motive of ‘the ought’ as the supreme value” (H p. 84, MH p. 35). This raises the philosophical issue concerning the objectivity of moral knowledge in terms of the conditions of universality, truth and necessity. I shall argue that Hägerström applies the sceptical strategy of opposing normative standards in order to discover if there is a universal standard, sec. 7. This presents difficulties and Hägerström proceeds to consider the normative criterion for moral standards in terms of conscience, naturalism and non-naturalism with the result that they are found wanting, sec 8. This raises the epistemological question about the truth of “the moral idea as such, i.e. the idea that a certain action represents the supreme value”, to be considered in section 9. Hägerström proceeds to present his analysis of the condition of necessity in relation to motivation, to be considered in sec. 10. On the basis of this inquiry Hägerström arrives at his non-cognitive thesis that “the moral idea as such, i.e. the idea that an action represents a supreme value, cannot be said to be either true or false. It is not at all an idea that the action really or in truth is the right action.” (H p. 92, MH p. 46). Or as he also puts the result of his philosophical inquiry, “it is an unmeaning to regard the idea of an ought as true” (H p. 95, MH p. 48). I shall offer a comparison of Hägerström’s scepticism and ancient scepticism in sec. 11.

Hägerström’s non-cognitive thesis is based upon the thesis of moral or normative nihilism that holds that no inherent qualities of rightness or wrongness can be found in actions, hence there are no objective duties. This

⁶⁹ Kant, *Practical Philosophy, Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 4: 392.

thesis implies that there can be no moral beliefs or moral knowledge to be expressed in normative judgements. This view can be seen as a threat to proper moral behaviour. But normative nihilism is not for Hägerström a cause for despair but rather a cause of relief. This leads Hägerström to address the Kantian question: “what can I hope?” Hägerström’s intention in his lecture is to reconcile “the class-hatred of our day (that) has its roots in the fact that popular morality makes its own values absolute authoritative” (H p. 94, MH p. 48). The solution is precisely the non-cognitive thesis that makes people realize that the ordinary moral view is confused since there are no objective moral facts. This is a revisionary account of ordinary consciousness since Hägerström’s moral nihilism holds that there are no objective duties based upon normative facts. If this is true it follows that there is no possibility of being right but also that there is no possibility of being wrong. Now this is just the point to solve the conflict between the classes since they are engaged in a pointless discussion based upon the belief that there are objective duties. Hence the importance of Hägerström’s philosophy with respect to the political situation for human beings that face the practical question what is the right action to do. This aspect is completely overlooked by the received view since it is confined to a linguistic analysis.

The received view also overlooks that Hägerström’s normative nihilism leads him to advance a substantive moral thesis, to be called the ideal of self-realisation.⁷⁰ For Hägerström, this thesis is based upon the fact that “an actually autonomous morality is within us, determined only by direct regard for what we esteem most of all” (H p. 93, MH p. 43). The purpose of Hägerström’s lecture is to make a case for the moral thesis of self-realization since its acceptance will lead people to co-operate and respect the law. Hence Hägerström’s normative nihilism based upon the non-cognitive thesis is neither advanced to reject values nor a call for a revolutionary overthrow of the existing social system. It is advanced to make room for the thesis of self-realization that supports the traditional social and cultural values. I shall deal with this thesis in section 12, and its importance for the law and legal reasoning in sec. 13.

7. The underlying question in the lecture is the personal question in relation to the normative question what is the right action? This question is related to a philosophical question concerning the proper moral standard to be used to arrive at an answer to the personal question. Hägerström addresses this philosophical question to provide an answer by means of the use of the sceptical method. This is the point of beginning the lecture by presenting the famous story told by Herodotus concerning the Persian King Darius summoning Greeks and Indians to tell about opposing moral practices concerning the burial of fathers. (H p. 77, MH p. 27). The Greek philosophers use these records to present a sceptical point. So does Michel de Montaigne later in his essay on customs.⁷¹ Montaigne’s scepticism is the revival of the ancient Pyrrhonic scepticism using the sceptical method. The sceptical method proceeds upon making a comparison

⁷⁰ See Bradley, *Ethical Studies*, p. 64 that the end of morality is self-realization.

⁷¹ See Richard H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Spinoza*, London 1979 Ch. 3.

between different beliefs that lead people to recognize the difficulty of deciding which belief is the true or right belief. This difficulty in turn leads to the sceptical doctrine of suspension of judgements as to whether a belief really is right. This leads to the appropriate attitude that is called ‘ataraxia’ or tranquillity of mind characterized by freedom of anxiety that results from suspending belief about the nature of reality. Anxiety lurks in any commitment to an action being right or wrong. Suspension of judgement about what is right or wrong is detachment from values. The result of the lack of belief in values is happiness and security. Thus the suspension of belief offers a guide to practical actions to follow the customary traditions of one’s society as the only sensible way of life. This view fits with Hägerström’s adherence to the insight ideal, see above sec. 4.

Kant rejects the sceptical doctrine of suspension of belief.⁷² For Kant, this doctrine is “a principle of technical and scientific ignorance, which undermines the foundations of all knowledge, and strives in all possible ways to destroy its reliability and steadfastness”. But Kant is in favour of the use of the sceptical method by “impartial umpires” which aims at certainty. This is the method “of watching, or rather provoking, a conflict of assertions, not for the purpose of deciding in favour of one or other side, but of investigating whether the object of controversy is not perhaps a deceptive appearance which each vainly strives to grasp”. Hägerström occupies the position of the impartial umpire investigating whether the controversy concerning the object of ought in terms of universal standards is a deceptive appearance. But he may also advance the argument to arrive at the sceptical doctrine of suspension of belief. The received view has completely overlooked that Hägerström’s lecture is based upon the structure of the sceptical argument.⁷³ The structure of the sceptical argument can be presented in the following steps:

1. Action a appears right to those of belief b
2. Action a appears wrong to those of belief b”
3. The action a cannot be both right and wrong
4. There is no reason for me to prefer belief b to belief b”
5. I suspend judgement as to whether an action is right or wrong.

Hägerström uses this argument to in relation to offer a comparison between the non-Christian values of Aristotle and the Christian values of Jesus; between the contemporary clash of values between different social classes and finally to the conflict “between an altruistic and a vengeful morality” within the individual (H p. 78f, MH p. 27f). The sceptical point is that belief about what is right or wrong is not to be explained by reference to any independent facts, but rather by reference to certain facts about us as manifested in various customs. About any moral rule or practice, the question can be put: is the rule part of the local realm of custom, or is it rather part of the universal realm of nature? Hägerström provides an answer by reference to the Pre-Socratic claim: “if one allowed men

⁷² Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. A424/B451 for the following quotations.

⁷³ Julia Annas & Jonathan Barnes, *The Modes of Scepticism*, Cambridge 1985 for the structure of the argument.

to cast into a pile the customs which they regarded as good and noble, and afterwards permitted each one to choose out of the pile those which seemed to him to be base and outrageous, nothing would be left over, but everything would have been distributed among them all” (H p. 77, MH p. 27).

The sceptical position may lead to endorse ethical relativism. Ethical relativism can in turn be explained by reference to social upbringing and education, as Hägerström also suggests in the lecture (H p. 90f, MH p. 44). If this explanation is accepted then Hägerström’s account can be understood to deny that there is anything more to a right action than what the laws or the conventions of a society lay down. The fact that the standards are relative does not imply that they lack any objectivity, although this seems to be Hägerström’s conclusion. This is the basis for Hans Larsson’s rejoinder to Hägerström.⁷⁴

Larsson claims that Hägerström overlooks that there is a common moral element to the particular and relative beliefs concerning what is the right action. Mautner informs us that Hägerström did not pay attention to this objection in public, and Mautner questions its relevance (M p. 10). The received view is that Larsson’s objection can be discarded. Larsson for his part also admits that it does not settle the issue concerning the existence of a universal standard. Thus the received opinion is that Hägerström’s sceptical method plays no important role in his argument for his non-cognitive thesis. This seems to me to be a mistaken view based upon the belief that conceptual analysis is confined to the linguistic analysis. Hägerström’s account is based upon the sceptical method of opposing normative beliefs to question the condition of universality that is important for the objectivity of normative knowledge. Whether a normative belief is true or false depends upon whether reasons can be given to justify the belief rather than how many believe it. According to Mautner, this is also Hägerström’s position (M p. 10). Still the objection is that Hägerström overlooks to consider the belief that there may be a universal principle underlying the particular and specific judgements concerning right action for people living in different societies. The rejoinder is that this is noticed by Hägerström when he writes “that right conduct can have only one principle, even though the particular applications of the principle may be different on account of the differences in the situations in which it is applied” (H p. 88, MH p. 41).

Hägerström’s claim can be understood to advance the sociological claim that there is one supreme standard in terms of the harmonization of the interests of people that in turn underlie the specific moral rules in various societies or cultures. This position can be called sociological absolutism in contrast to sociological relativism. The question is then to decide whether sociological absolutism or sociological relativism is true. This is an empirical issue that is decided by Larsson in favour of sociological absolutism. By contrast Hägerström sides with sociological relativism (H p. 91, MH p. 44). If so, then this raises the question of the importance of the sociological claim in relation to the normative question what the right action is. Hägerström’s answer is that neither sociological absolutism nor sociological relativism can settle the normative question. His argument is that what is believed to be the right action

⁷⁴ Hans Larsson, *Filosofien och Politiken* (Philosophy and Politics), Stockholm 1915 p. 73ff.

is one thing what the right action really is quite another. As Hägerström puts it “knowledge of actual valuations is by no means knowledge of value” (H p. 89, MH p. 43).

Hägerström’s argument is related to the normative question whether there are universal standards of right action. This raises the issue between normative ethical absolutism that holds that there are universal moral standards in the sense that what is right in one society must be right in all societies, whether they believe so or not. The opposite of normative ethical absolutism is neither sociological absolutism nor sociological relativism but normative ethical relativism. Hägerström is addressing the question whether normative ethical absolutism or normative ethical relativism is true. This raises the issue of scepticism and relativism.

The sceptic advances the conclusion that the action is either right or wrong, but he cannot know which action is really right. If this is the case the only plausible conclusion is to suspend judgement in matters of morality, cf. step 5 above. The sceptic suspends judgement whether normative ethical absolutism or normative ethical relativism is true in favour of following the appearances without any intellectual commitment. By contrast the relativist accepts step 1 to 3 to arrive at the conclusion that the action is neither right nor wrong in general, but only right in relation to the particular beliefs within a particular society. Thus the relativist rejects step 4 since there is reason to prefer the beliefs expressed in the normative standards of one’s society. Thus the relativist also rejects step 5. There is no reason for suspension of judgement since the relativist claims to be a position to know what the right action is. The relativist makes an intellectual commitment that judgements about actions can be true, not by reference to any universal and absolute standards but only true by reference to relative and absolute standards in relation to a person’s or a society’s beliefs. This is tantamount to a rejection of normative ethical absolutism favour of normative ethical relativism. For the sceptic, this is a dogmatic position since it leaves the relativist holding beliefs what is right or wrong. This is incompatible with the sceptical position of suspension of belief.

The sceptic sides with the relativist rejecting normative moral absolutism. This leads to the question whether scepticism after all is compatible with relativism. There is no space for considering this question. Suffice it to say that it seems to me that there is a tension in Hägerström’s position. On the one hand he seems to endorse the sceptical position. Hägerström accepts step 5 (I suspend judgement as to whether an action is right or wrong) on the basis of the insight ideal. This ideal implies that the more we know, the more we realize that our actions are necessary events in the chain of causes and effects. This implies that any evaluation of human behaviour “will also bear the stamp of a milder judgement on all human aspiration, which follows from viewing things *sub species aeternitatis*, from the insight that everything is only a moment in an endless natural context, in which nothing is in itself higher or lower” (H p. 95, MH p. 48, his italics). On the other hand Hägerström is driven by his desire to pursue and reveal the truth concerning the place of men in nature and society. This leads Hägerström to consider step 4 (There is no reason for me to prefer belief b to belief^a) in order to see whether there is reason to prefer one standard

to another. The desire for knowledge leads him to address the problem of the criterion.

8. Hägerström also applies the sceptical method to address the problem of the criterion. This is normative and epistemological question concerning the proper universal criterion for moral standards with respect to what is the right or wrong action. In this respect there are different beliefs concerning the universal criterion in relation to “man’s moral purpose” (H p. 79, MH p. 30). Hägerström assumes that man has a moral purpose that determines what it is right to do. This is expressed in normative judgements in terms of “ought”. Hägerström overlooks that there are different kinds of normative judgements in term of “ought” that can be distinguished conceptually by the use of different terms. Thus there are judgements in terms of obligations related to a person’s commitments. Next there are judgements in terms of duties related to a person’s office or position. Finally, there are judgements in terms of the moral ought of rightness related to what is the right thing to do for a person. These normative judgements are founded upon normative standards that in turn call for a justification in terms of a normative criterion. It seems to me that Hägerström is concerned with judgements of the moral ought of rightness since these judgements are justified by standards in relation to man’s moral purpose. This is not necessarily the case with respect to judgements related to obligations or duties. Hägerström assumes that there is a common criterion that applies to all normative judgements. This assumption may be mistaken since the criteria of justification may be different. He also assumes that there must be a single criterion and addressed this by reference to a person’s moral consciousness and the naturalistic and the non-naturalistic criterion.

Hägerström briefly considers moral consciousness in terms of a man’s moral conscience. For Hägerström it is “evident” that conscience cannot be the proper criterion. What Hägerström has in mind is that the verdicts of a man’s conscience are confined to his own actions. Thus conscience cannot establish the foundation for the supreme criterion of rights actions with respect to the conduct of other people. Hägerström also objects that conscience “is not itself unambiguous” since is split between “an altruistic and vengeful morality” (H p. 79, MH p. 29). Thus “from the scientific point of view” his conclusion is that the reference to a person’s conscience is “to make a declaration of bankruptcy” (H p. 82, MH p. 33). The reason for Hägerström’s rejection is his assumption that conscience is a faculty of feeling that may present different answers according to the individual human beings. This contrast with his prior view put forward in the booklet “On the Importance of Philosophy” where he appeals to conscience as the final arbiter, see above sec. 3. It also contrasts with his thesis of self-realization put forward in the lecture since this is also founded upon conscience as the final criterion, see below sec. 12. Further Hägerström overlooks that conscience may refer to the faculty of reason common to all men. Thus his dismissal can be questioned.

Having ruled out conscience, he proceeds to consider the criterion or supreme standard in relation to naturalism and non-naturalism.

First, Hägerström considers the supreme criterion in naturalistic terms of evolution. This is the criterion that “mere life itself is the ultimate principle of value.” This is just the opposition between optimism and pessimism referring to different beliefs concerning the meaning of life. This in turn implies the rejection of a universal criterion in favour of relative criteria. This does not provide an answer but just asks the question. The sceptical method of opposing beliefs supplies an answer in terms of the doctrine of suspension of belief. Hägerström does not endorse this answer. On the contrary he dismisses any naturalist criterion that holds that the right action is the action that brings about good states of affairs. His rejection of naturalism is already put forward in his earlier writings based upon the Kantian view that the meaning and significance of “the ought” cannot be established by reference to nature, see above sec. 3 p. 18. For Hägerström, the Kantian distinction between nature and freedom is tantamount to the distinction between reality and ought, the original title for the lecture as Mautner informs us (M p. 5). For Hägerström, reality and ought or “existence and value denote something entirely different. Therefore value cannot be included within existence” (H p. 87, MH p. 40). The rejoinder to this argument is the similar argument: “house and table denote something entirely different. Therefore a table cannot be included within the house“. Surely, the word “house” cannot be included in the word “table“, but the words can be used to denote different things, and it is obvious that a table can be included within a house. Thus Hägerström’s argument is not conclusive. It is also the case that the word “existence” cannot be included in the word “value” but again these words can be used to denote different things, hence it is possible that values can be included within existence.

Hägerström’s argument may be seen an application of Moore’s definist fallacy in relation to the concept of ought or moral duty. Hägerström’s claim is that the criterion of right action must refer to the concept of ought or moral duty and this concept cannot be defined in naturalistic terms. Hägerström’s rejection implies a rejection of Moore’s claim that the concepts of “right” and “duty” can be defined in naturalistic terms. Thus Moore holds, “that ‘right’ does and can mean nothing but ‘cause of a good result,’ and is thus identical with ‘useful’; whence it follows that the end always will justify the means, and that no action which is not justified by its results can be right“.⁷⁵ Thus Moore’s claim that “Our ‘duty’, therefore can only be defined as that action, which will cause more good to exist in the Universe than any possible alternative“. This leads Moore to advance his ideal utilitarianism. To be consistent Hägerström must reject any version of utilitarianism to provide the supreme criterion of normative standards and judgements in relation to man’s moral purpose and her actions. I shall return to this below sec.13.

Secondly, Hägerström proceeds to consider the supreme criterion in metaphysical or non-naturalistic terms of “the supernatural reality which is supposed to manifest itself in the consciousness of an ought” (H p. 80, MH p. 31). Hägerström refers to Kant’s moral principle of humanity that “each one ought to be treated, as it is said, never only as a means, but always likewise as an

⁷⁵ Moore, *Principia Ethica*, p. 147, and p. 148 for the next quotation.

end”.⁷⁶ Hägerström briefly discusses the difficulty of conceiving “the supernatural will in us (to be) actually our own will”. Hägerström’s discussion is based upon the assumption that the Kantian distinction between ‘what is’ and ‘what ought to be’ is an ontological distinction between a natural world and a supernatural world, endorsed by Mautner (M p.13). This is to overlook that Kant’s distinction is not advanced as an ontological but as an epistemological distinction. There is but one world and this world can be seen from the perspective of nature and from the perspective of freedom. For Kant, the legislation of human reason has “two objects, nature and freedom, and therefore contains not only the law of nature, but also the moral law, presenting them at first in two distinct systems, but ultimately in one single philosophical system. The philosophy of nature deals with all *that is*, the philosophy of morals with that which *ought to be*“. It is from the perspective of freedom that the moral ought has conceptual meaning and normative importance for human action. Hägerström arrives at another conclusion that “only as demanding some action or attitude to the sensible world does a supernatural will acquire any individual significance for us. That is to say, it is precisely our actual moral interests, attached to our natural life, which alone give meaning to the thought. Take away these natural elements, and the whole is lost in the dim distance” (H p. 81, MH p. 31). This is, of course, an application of his principle of meaning that requires that a concept must denote a natural element in order to have any cognitive content. This is in turn related to his other use of the concept of meaning to denote what is important, significant or valuable. Surely, if Hägerström’s analysis is a linguistic analysis of moral ideas then it must be discarded as a failure since it fails to distinguish between the different uses of the concept of meaning. However, Hägerström applies the causal principle of similarity to argue that the natural element or “idea of mercy loses all meaning when it is transferred to an absolute being, who can feel no compassion”. This excludes god and religion as well as Boström’s version of idealism to constitute the proper criterion. Then there are the relations between human beings and their moral interests. What applies to the idea of mercy is also applicable to the ideas of vengeance and justice. These ideas only acquire meaning in relations between human beings. What matters then is for individual human beings to have the proper consciousness of interests. Having used the Kantian argument to refute the naturalistic standard, Hägerström now uses a naturalistic argument to refute the Kantian standard.

It is significant that Hägerström rejects the Kantian moral principle of humanity by advancing the moral objection that “from the standpoint of the stated principle...any exploitation of man would be justified” (H. p. 82, MH p. 32f). This seems to me to be a complete misunderstanding of Kant’s moral philosophy. This is all the more surprising since Hägerström has written a book on Kant’s philosophy, see above sec. 3. Now he endorses Mill’s view, also held

⁷⁶ Hägerström does not provide any reference nor does Mautner in his edition to Kant, *Practical Philosophy, Groundwork* p 4:429: “So act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means”. For the next quotation, see Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. A 840/B 868, Kant’s italics.

by Brentano, that Kant “fails, almost grotesquely, to show that there would be any contradiction, any logical (not to say physical) impossibility, in the adoption by all rational beings of the most outrageously immoral rules of conduct”.⁷⁷ The rejoinder surely is that Mill and Brentano fail to understand Kant’s moral philosophy. Moore claims that “Kant also commits the fallacy of supposing that ‘This ought to be’ means ‘This is commanded.’ He conceives the Moral Law to be an Imperative. And this is a very common mistake”.⁷⁸ This is also Hägerström’s objection. Hägerström’s understanding of Kant is that “the whole of ethics is an utterance of will”, and this is dismissed by Hägerström as “pure nonsense” (MH p. 127). For Hägerström, the will itself cannot be conceived as a faculty of knowledge. Hägerström overlooks that the will for Kant is identical with practical reason. Practical reason has by itself the cognitive capacity to determine the judgements concerning how persons should act as well as the conative capacity to motivate persons to act on these judgements without relying on any prior desires, see below sec. 10. What is important for Kant is the autonomy and freedom of the individual person to act morally according to maxims based upon categorical imperatives. Hägerström’s moral thesis of the ideal of self-realization also appeals to autonomy, but differs significantly, see below sec. 12.

Hägerström’s rejection of Kant’s moral philosophy is important within the political context of the lecture. The Kantian philosophy of individualism is put forward within socialism, for example in the writings of Hermann Cohen, precisely appealing to the principle of the supreme value of the individual person as an end in itself that has absolute worth and therefore must be treated with respect. This is to endorse ethical absolutism in the sense of the universal normative criterion that supplies the foundation for objective moral standards that are applicable to all human beings and determine what is the right action to do. This is attacked by orthodox Marxists, for example Karl Kautsky, to be a drastic breach with the proper Marxist tradition.⁷⁹ The Marxian view endorses ethical relativism that holds that normative criteria are relative to social classes and can only be established by reference to social interests. Hence the concept of duty in relation to right action must be determined by social needs. Hence the rejection of the Kantian morality as the morality of the bourgeois.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, ed. Mary Warnock, London 1962 p. 254. For Brentano, *The Origin of our Knowledge of Right and Wrong*, p. 49f. This objection can be traced back to Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, § 135. Nietzsche also rejects Kant’s moral philosophy since Kant’s “categorical imperative smacks of cruelty”, *The Genealogy of Morals*, (1887), transl. Francis Golffing, New York 1956 p. 197 (2nd Essay, VI).

⁷⁸ Moore, *Principia Ethica* p. 127-128. Moore’s view can be disputed but this is not the place. I only wish to draw attention to that Hägerström also claims that it is a fallacy to identify “ought” and command” in his refutation of the “will-theory of law”. Hägerström, *Inquiries into the Nature of Law and Morals*, pp. 127ff and pp. 192ff. In his *Selbstdarstellung* he claims that it is a fallacy to identify “reality” with “something real” which is the root of metaphysical errors, see *Philosophy and Religion*, pp. 60ff.

⁷⁹ Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, transl. P.S. Falla, vol 2, Oxford 1978 Ch.13.

⁸⁰ See Ernst Wigforss, *Socialism och moral* (Socialism and Morality), Tiden 1910 pp. 97-106 and pp. 132-143.

Although Hägerström does not mention this debate, he is surely aware of it. As a matter of fact Hägerström endorses Kautsky's view that Kant's moral philosophy is a defence of Protestantism. Hägerström also objects to what he calls "the religious element" that is embedded in the popular morality (H p. 86, MH p. 38 and see pp. 131, 181). According to Hägerström, the religious element only gives expression to "the apotheosis of man" and "the tendency to make her own values into the true essence of reality" (H p. 90, MH p. 44 cf. p. 129). This is of course a rejection of the agency ideal in relation to morality. It is also a rejection of Kant's philosophy based upon the natural right to freedom. In this respect Hägerström's philosophy cannot be seen as revolutionary. His criticism of natural rights is just a repetition of the view held by his mentor Burman that the concept of the natural right of freedom is absurd since there is no corresponding duty, and the Kantian concept of duty is an empty concept.⁸¹ In this respect Hägerström's philosophy does not break with the traditional hostility in Sweden towards natural rights that can be traced to Boström's rational idealism.

The result of Hägerström's inquiry into the criterion is that no universal criterion to justify normative standards can be found, hence there is no foundation for normative judgements. The consequence "seems to be that there is no objective distinction between right and wrong. But is it really the case that our ideas of right and wrong are nothing but illusions?" (H p. 82, MH p. 33). It seems to me that this may be the case for judgements in relation to the moral ought of rightness. These judgements require that it is always man's moral duty to perform the supreme right action. This implies the position of moral perfectionism and this position may very well be an illusion. It is another question whether judgements in terms of duties or obligations are illusions as well. Hägerström overlooks that there are different normative judgements and holds that the criterion for judgements of the moral ought of rightness is the criterion for all normative judgements. This is a mistake since judgements in terms of duties or obligations can be justified by criteria that are independent of man's moral purpose. Hence it follows that these duties and obligations cannot be seen as illusions. Hägerström lumps all normative judgements together in order to see whether they are based upon true or false ideas. This leads him into an ontological and epistemological inquiry in to the truth of moral ideas.

9. Hägerström is concerned with the objectivity of knowledge and this requires the condition that normative ideas or beliefs can be true or false. The only way to consider if this is the case is to proceed "in a scientific way" (H p. 82, MH p. 33). In this respect Hägerström finds it necessary to consider the origin and development of moral ideas" (H p. 83, MH p. 34). Hägerström is aware of the distinction between the social and psychological origin of beliefs and the philosophical justification of normative beliefs. He takes Spencer and Westermarck to task for overlooking this distinction (cf. H. p. 90, MH p. 43, cf.

⁸¹ E. O. Burman, *Hegels Rättsfilosofi* (Hegel's Legal Philosophy), ed. E. A. Akmar, Uppsala 1939 p. 8. Lectures delivered by Burman in 1901. Burman accepts Hegel's criticism of Kant.

H p. 83f, MH p. 34). If the social origin of a moral belief has no bearing on the question whether the belief is true or false, it can hardly be “necessary” to spend valuable time in a lecture discussing this question. Hägerström’s account is either misplaced or evidence of confused thinking. If Hägerström presents his philosophical analysis as an empirical investigation then he contradicts his own philosophical approach that philosophy provides the rational foundation for scientific inquiries, see above sec. 5.

From the insight ideal of knowledge, however, Hägerström’s analysis makes sense. He is primarily concentrating on ontological and epistemological issues concerning the foundation and origin of our ideas or beliefs see above sec. 4. Hägerström’s secular approach links him with Hume’s philosophical approach dedicated to replace the Christian view of man as made in the image of god with another view of man as a thinking animal alongside other animals and objects with nature.⁸² For Hume, the philosophical task is to put the science of man on a new footing based upon “an accurate scrutiny into the powers and faculties of human nature” in terms of “a mental geography”.⁸³ Thus Hume’s observes with a strict philosophic eye what makes an impact upon the mind in terms of impressions and their corresponding ideas. This leads Hume to hold that necessity is something that exists in the mind and not in the objects. It is also the case that the principles of causality cannot be conceived as rational principles but are only conventions founded upon custom that are used to explain regularities between events. The result of Hume’s inquiries is the radical contingency of the world. Hägerström endorses Hume’s view that the philosophical task is to provide “a mental geography” by means of observing the impressions of objects upon consciousness. He differs from Hume, however, since he stays within the insight ideal of knowledge that upholds the rationality of the causal principles in relation to the philosophical consciousness. He is also committed to the view that necessity is located in the nature of things that implies a rejection of Humean view of the contingency of the world. Thus Hägerström occupies the position as the rational spectator of the world concerned with providing an analysis of men’s ideas related to the impact of natural, social and religious forces upon men’s consciousness in order to determine whether these ideas are true or false.

Thus his analysis can be seen as a phenomenological description of the psychological and historical origin of different modes of consciousness in relation to social facts. Hägerström suggests that his analysis be carried out without any presuppositions. This invites the rejoinder that this is not the case. Hägerström’s analysis is based upon the assumption that that the idea or concept of the ought must be a pure concept. This is manifested in his judgement that “on the account of the connection between ought and custom, the former comes to be attached, even in its development, to a certain authoritative reality, whether it is the will of a god, an order of the world, or the demand of conscience.

⁸² Craig, *The Mind of God*, Ch. 2.

⁸³ David Hume, *Enquiries concerning Human Understanding and concerning the Principles of Morals*, 3rd. Ed., ed. P. H. Nidditch, Oxford 1975, *Enquiry into Human Understanding*, Sec I, § 8, p. 13.

Naturally something foreign to ought is thereby attached to it” (H p. 87, MH p. 40, my italics). My italics of the word “naturally” indicates that Hägerström’s analysis is based upon the assumption that the concept of ought is a pure concept. The pure concept has then been contaminated by the foreign elements referred to. This in turn leads to the belief that there is an objective distinction between what is right or wrong determined by the existence of “a moral authority or norm, as a reality which is good *in itself*” (H p. 87, MH p. MH p. 40, his italics). For Hägerström, the existence of this authority or norm “is objectively regarded, something absurd”. This is tantamount to a rejection of the non-naturalistic standard in terms of Kant’s moral principles that holds that persons and a good will are good in themselves. It is also a rejection of the naturalistic standard in terms of Moore’s version of ideal utilitarianism based upon that there are objects that are good in themselves. The only argument Hägerström offers for his rejection is that “existence and reality signify something entirely different. Therefore value cannot be included within existence” (H p. 87). I have already considered and rejected this argument, see above sec. 8. To be sure, Hägerström believes that his judgement is true, but since this is not the case there is no reason for us to accept it.

Hägerström subscribes to the ordinary concept of truth and takes for granted that his audience knows what this is (H, p. 90, MH p. 43). He rejects “the new interpretation of truth” advanced by William James that is based upon the agency ideal of knowledge. Hägerström’s rejection is similar to Moore’s rejection of the pragmatist theory of truth, see above sec. 5. There is no space to discuss this rejection. But some remarks upon Hägerström’s understanding of truth may be offered.

According to Hägerström’s understanding of the ordinary concept of truth this amounts to saying, “this *is* the way it is, is what any defender of such a theory must mean with respect to his own claims. This *is* the way it is, he must mean, independently of all valuation” (H p. 90, MH p. 43, Hägerström’s italics.) Hägerström’s view raises a philosophical issue concerning truth. The ordinary definition of truth is “that it is the agreement of cognition with its object”.⁸⁴ This is a nominal definition that raises the question whether truth is to be analysed epistemologically in terms of the use of the predicate “true” as it is applied to judgements or proposition that contrasts with the Platonic view that truth is to be analysed ontologically in terms of what there is in reality. It seems to me that Hägerström’s endorses the ontological view that truth is present in reality. Hägerström rejects the epistemological view that “truth is seen as an immediate, universal, value of certain judgements” as “absurd” (H p. 90, MH p. 43). This suggests that he endorses an ontological analysis that locates truth as a universal element to be found in the objects or events in reality. It is the presence of the determinate element of truth in objects or events that cause the corresponding concept of truth to be present in consciousness. Truth is its own standard in relation to the rational consciousness. Hence the importance of the passivity of the indifferent observer that enables his rational consciousness to reveal the necessary qualities of how things are in reality that in turn can be recorded

⁸⁴ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. A 58/B 82 and p. A822/ B 850 for next quotation.

epistemologically through public judgements that state that this is the way the world is.

Hägerström's understanding of truth is related to the Kantian view of holding something to be true as expressed in judgements. As Kant puts it "taking something to be true, or the subjective validity of judgements, has the following three stages in relation to conviction (which at the same time is valid objectively): *having an opinion*, *believing*, and *knowing*. *Having an opinion* is taking something to be true with the consciousness that it is subjectively *as well as* objectively insufficient. If taking something to be true only subjectively sufficient and is at the same time held to be objectively insufficient, then it is called *believing*. Finally, when taking something to be true is both subjectively and objectively sufficient it is called *knowing*. Subjective sufficiency is called *conviction* (for myself), objective sufficiency *certainty* (for everyone)".

Hägerström has no difficulty of conviction, "if we consider that something is actually the case, i.e. that truth is present, we consider also that it is so entirely without regard for our subjective posture towards the fact, our feelings or our interests vis-vis- the fact" (H p. 89, MH p. 42). This conviction is a case of knowing based upon his commitment to the ontological view of truth. This leads in turn to his claim "that if we are standing indifferently before ourselves and our actions, only observing, we can only establish factual situations. But in the fact that something is, it can never be implied that it ought to be. That something is better than something else is meaningless for the indifferent observer. For him nothing is better or worse". Hägerström occupies the objective perspective of "the indifferent observer". But this position is based upon an ambiguity. Does Hägerström hold that the indifferent observer is a disinterested observer or is it rather the case that the observer is an uninterested observer? Surely, the uninterested observer does not care how things are or ought to be. Hence this position implies that the question whether something is green or red, or something better or worse is meaningless in the sense of lacking importance or significance. It does not follow that words used to express concepts are nothing but words. Then there is the disinterested observer presenting a record of the facts. Hägerström begs the question that factual situations lack the moral element of ought. His argument is that "in the moral idea as such we do not at all mean that the ought really belongs to the action. That would imply that the ought is valid without respect to any subjective attitude to the action. But that would be meaningless." (H p. 89, MH p. 42). The rejoinder is that for both observers of the action, the concept of ought may very well belong in a meaningful way to the action without respect to their subjective attitudes. Hence they may endorse a realist position. The uninterested observer does not care so the only difference between them is a question of curiosity. By contrast Hägerström only endorses a realist position with respect to the existence of factual situations and adopts the nominalist position with respect to normative situations. Hägerström holds that the disinterested observer "is interested in the investigation of what is observed" (H p. 88, MH p. 41). But for this observer "every attempt to draw out of the situation the conclusion that it is actually in the highest degree of value to undertake the action is doomed to failure" (H p. 88, MH p. 41). But why is this

doomed to failure? Hägerström's answer is "that no ought or supreme value can be discovered in such a way" (H p. 89, MH p. 42).

Hägerström's argument is a version of Hume's argument, "take any action allow'd to be vicious: Wilful murder, for instance. Examine it in all lights, and see if you can find that matter of fact, or real existence, which you call *vice*. In which-ever way you take it, you find only certain passions, motives, volitions and thoughts. There is no matter of fact in the case. The vice entirely escapes you, as long as you consider the object. You can never find it, till you turn your reflexion into your own breast, and find a sentiment of disapprobation, which arises in you, towards this action. Here is a matter of fact; but 'tis the object of feeling, not of reason. So that when you pronounce any action or character to be vicious, you mean nothing, but that from the constitution of your nature you have a feeling or sentiment of blame from the contemplation of it. Vice and virtue, therefore, may be compar'd to sounds, colours, heat and cold, which, according to modern philosophy, are not qualities sin the objects, put perceptions in the mind".⁸⁵ Hume rejects moral realism with respect to normative judgements in terms of the normative ought. But he endorses a version of quasi-realism that holds that there are normative facts in terms of feelings as opposed to reason. It is also the case that Hume's moral philosophy is more concerned with ethical judgements related to a person's character than with normative judgements related to obligations or duties. This aspect it is overlooked within Hägerström's moral philosophy concentrating on normative judgements.

Hägerström accepts Hume's dismissal of moral realism with respect to normative facts. It is not the case that "obligatoriness actually belongs to the action" (H p. 89, MH p. 42), or as he also puts it, "it is an unmeaning to regard the idea of an ought as true" (H p. 95, MH p. 48). Hägerström's claim is based upon his ontology that requires the existence of visible or audible elements in order for the idea of ought to be a true and meaningful concept. This requires the experience of the idea of rightness to be present in the action. This ontological view is related to his epistemological view that requires causal interaction between the action as cause and the experience of an idea of rightness as effect in consciousness. Hägerström then applies his principle of meaning that requires that an idea must denote must denote some independent and objective element of rightness in order to be a true idea or concept. He subscribes to the principle of causality that there must be an intelligible link between cause and effect. This requires that the objective element must be a sensible element in order to cause the corresponding element as effect in terms of a concept that represents this objective element. This leads to endorse a realist position in relation to reality of concepts denoting the common properties or qualities inherent in the nature of things that cohere with the concepts that are common to the intellectual consciousness of human beings. In contrast Hägerström endorses the nominalist position with respect to normative ideas, since no common element of rightness in terms of sensible or audible elements of rightness can be found in the actions.

⁸⁵ David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 2nd ed., ed P. H. Nidditch, Book III, Part I, Sec I, p. 468f.

Since the principle of causality for Hägerström is the principle of similarity between cause and effect the conclusion is that the idea of an objective ought in terms of the rightness of an action cannot exist as an objective fact independently of human consciousness. Since no element of moral rightness is present to the intellectual consciousness of the disinterested observer it follows that there is no concept of ought. The concept of ought is unmeaning since it is only a word that is used to express feelings or volitions. Hägerström's non-cognitive thesis is based upon his ontology that leaves no room for moral or normative facts. The conceptual meaning of an objective ought requires that the word denotes an objective and common element of rightness to be present in the action and this is not the case. Thus Hägerström's non-cognitive thesis implies the rejection of moral realism. His target is the Hegelian view that locates values as immanent elements within the intelligible structure of things that in turn are accessible to the disinterested observer of reality. Hägerström also occupies this position as the rational spectator of the world and cannot discover any normative elements. Hence Hegelian idealism is ruled out.

Hägerström's position is based upon the assumption that moral or normative qualities exist as elements in actions in a similar way as natural qualities exist in objects. This is vulnerable to Moore's argument that "it is immediately obvious that when we see a thing to be good, its goodness is not a property which we can take up in our hands, or separate from it even by the most delicate scientific instruments, and transfer to something else. It is not, in fact, like most of the predicates which we ascribe to things, a part of the thing to which we ascribe it".⁸⁶ Moore uses this argument to refute any definition of good in naturalistic or transcendent terms. For Moore, the concept of good is a simple concept that cannot be analyzed into more simple concepts. This does not imply that the concept is meaningless. On the contrary the concept is meaningful and unique concept that can be known by intuition. It is also the case that the concept has meaning in the sense that it is of the utmost importance for persons to pursue what is good. For Moore, "goodness is what is is, and not another thing" to paraphrase Bishop Butler. For Moore, goodness is a simple and unique concept that denotes a non-naturalistic and indefinable property.

In a similar way Hägerström holds that "ought is what it is and not another thing". In contrast to Moore, Hägerström cannot find any property of ought to be inherent in actions. Having abandoned normative realism Hägerström proceeds to consider the Kantian position. Like Kant, Hägerström holds that the concept of ought must be a pure concept. Hence his efforts to purify the concept from foreign elements, especially the element of external moral authorities. Kant also rejects normative realism in favour of the view that it is the will or practical reason that introduces the moral ought in terms of what is what is right or wrong conduct. For Kant, the concept of ought is a meaningful concept since it is related to the self-legislation of human reason that elevates human beings as autonomous persons above natural inclinations. According to Kant, the will, or practical reason, consists in the capacity to act according to presentations laws as objective reasons for belief and action. What distinguishes human beings from

⁸⁶ Moore, *Principia Ethica* p. 124.

other animals is precisely the use of the will as practical reason that enable human persons to conceive of laws of their own making, to accept these laws as principles for conduct, and to act accordingly. By contrast animals lack practical reason and only behave according to empirical laws in terms of causes. The meaning of the ought is represented in the moral law: “Act morally based upon principles of reason and the supreme values of a good will and respect for persons“. It is the moral law that is important since it informs legislation passed by human persons to determine what is right or wrong.

Hägerström rejects the Kantian view of the will as practical reason as a case of idealistic metaphysics. Hägerström’s rejection is based upon his metaphysical theory of reality that holds that reality is an intelligible or logical order of things and events in time and space. Within this ontology there is no room for an objective ought. This is related to his epistemology that confines reason to theoretical reason and thus rejects the existence of the will as practical reason.

The result of Hägerström’s analysis is that once the concept of ought is purified from foreign elements only the element of the word remains. Hence it follows that the concept of the ought of rightness cannot be seen as a concept but only as an appearance or empty word devoid of conceptual content. It follows that the consciousness of the objectivity of the ought of rightness rooted in the actions themselves must be replaced with the objectivity of consciousness that there are no normative facts. This is Hägerström’s normative nihilism that is related to the philosophical consciousness of pure thinking as expressed in the judgement “that it is an unmeaning to consider the idea of ought as true“. There is a tension in Hägerström’s position as the disinterested observer based upon the insight ideal that considers the existence of an objective ought as an appearance. On the one hand this may lead to the sceptical attitude that accepts the appearances as necessary for people to behave properly and thus follow the received standards of conduct. On the other hand it may lead to adopt the critical attitude that replaces the illusions of the objective ought with what is actually the case. This is related to the agency ideal and Hägerström’s substantive moral thesis of the ideal of self-realization that replaces the illusion of the objectivity of ought with the reality of the subjectivity of ought, see below sec. 12.

10. So far Hägerström has considered the objectivity of normative knowledge in terms of the conditions of universality and truth and found both wanting. He proceeds to an inquiry into the condition of necessity. This is his claim that “it can be directly shown that in the very idea of an ought, of an action as valuable in the highest degree, there is present no consciousness of objectivity whatsoever” (H p. 88, MH p. 41). Hägerström’s former argument is addressed to the question whether there is a universal criterion that determines the existence and truth of normative beliefs. This inquiry is based upon the passivity of the rational spectator to provide the answer that there is no reason to believe that this is the case. Now he addresses a different question whether moral reasons motivate or determine particular actions. This is the issue concerning the condition of necessity that turns the spectator into an agent. This is manifest since he continues to write, “But turn the situation around. We are considering how to act, and different motives appear. Now the fact that we should act in a

certain way gets immediately a very determinate meaning for us. In this case we no longer stand indifferently before ourselves and our actions, but we assume a certain position towards that which is given. In this position a supreme value really does mean something to us” (H p. 89, MH p. 41). Thus Hägerström’s argument is addressing the question of the concept of ought in relation to motivation in terms of moral interests.⁸⁷ This has been completely overlooked by Hägerström’s commentators Bo Petersson and Sven Danielsson.⁸⁸ They offer a linguistic analysis of what they call “Hägerström’s master argument” that completely overlooks that Hägerström’s argument is concerned with the analysis of moral motivation.

This raises the important issue between the Kantian view and the Humean view. On the one hand there is Kant’s view that holds that there is only one reason, that can be applied either theoretically or practically. On the other hand there is Hume’s view that rejects the existence of practical reason. Hägerström’s starting point for his discussion of moral motivation is a reference to Kant (H. p. 88, MH p. 41).⁸⁹ For Kant, a normative judgement “is not valid for us because it interests us (for this is heteronomy and make practical reason depend on sensibility - that is to say, on an underlying feeling) - in which case practical reason could never give us moral law; the normative judgement interests us because it is valid for us men in virtue of having sprung from our will as intelligence”. By contrast Hägerström’s claim is that the moral judgement is valid or true because it interests us. This position is linked to the Humean view of motivation. The Kantian view holds that ought represents a fact or requirement that is external to the agent in the sense of being independent of his feelings and volitions. This is connected with the distinction between a person doing something for a reason and a person being caused to do something. The Kantian view stresses that persons have the capacity to act in accordance with normative beliefs as reasons for actions. It also holds that reason has the capacity to motivate actions based upon the acceptance of normative principles that is essential for moral conduct. It is one thing to have a reason for accepting a normative principle as ground for a normative judgement as true. It is another thing to have a reason for acting upon the normative judgement. Motivation is surely important for the Kantian view since it is important that persons act in accordance with normative judgements. This important question should not be confused with the different question concerning the conceptual meaning of normative judgements.

By contrast there is Hume’s view that denies that reason can be practical, or belief by itself motivate to action. This is Hume’s famous remark that “Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any

⁸⁷ William K. Frankena, *Obligation and Motivation*, in *Essays in Moral Philosophy*, ed. A. I. Melden, London 1958 p. 40ff.

⁸⁸ Sven Danielsson, *Hägerströms huvudargument* (Hägerström’s Master Argument) and Bo Petersson, *Tolkningen av Hägerströms huvudargument* (The Interpretation of Hägerström’s Master Argument) in *Filosofisk Tidskrift*, vol 11 Stockholm 1990, No. 2 p. 16-22 and No. 3 p. 16-24.

⁸⁹ Hägerström does not make any reference to Kant’s writings, nor does Mautner. It seems to me that Hägerström refers to Kant, *Practical Philosophy, Groundwork*, p. 4:414 cf. p. 4:460.

other office than to serve and obey them”.⁹⁰ This is to hold that no belief can motivate a person unless this belief is combined with some independent feeling and volition. This view obliterates the distinction between reasons for action and causes of behaviour. This is important for Hägerström since the nature of objects necessarily causes the corresponding concepts. Hence the corresponding objectivity of scientific judgements. In contrast, normative judgements do not represent any objective normative properties but only natural elements as causes of behaviour. Hence the normative judgement can only be efficacious in motivating behaviour by means of feelings and volitions. The choice of action is motivated in terms of what appears right in relation to the importance of the person’s volitions and feelings rather than motivated in terms of moral beliefs what is objectively the right action. Thus Hägerström’s non-cognitive thesis rests upon the Humean theory of motivation. The Humean view makes the commitment of the will to be essential for the meaning of normative judgements. As Hägerström puts it, “in order for anything to become better or worse, the knowing person must assume a certain attitude of feeling or will in relation to what is given” (H p. 92, MH p. 45). As Hägerström makes clear, if the person “should lack the appropriate attitude of feeling and volition, the obligation in question would in no way exist for her” (H p. 91, MH p. 44). This is clearly important for Hägerström’s observer as agent in relation to his own actions. If Hägerström occupies this position then he clearly interested in performing the right action. If so, it seems be possible to be impartial rather than partial in relation to different motives, but this is dismissed by Hägerström.

Hägerström invites us to believe that if a person lacks the appropriate attitude of feeling and volition then the obligation vanishes for her. The importance of this position is illustrated by Hägerström’s claim that “the attempt to convince a Cesare Borgia of the objective rightness of a more social disposition is as preposterous as it would be for the sheep to want to prove to the wolf that it is wrong to bite it so inconsiderately. This does not make it out of the question that there is a duty for society to protect itself from such natures - just as there is a duty for the shepherd to prevent the wolf from doing harm” (H p. 92, MH p. 45). Why is it the case it is “preposterous” to try to convince a Cesare Borgia? It may be that the answer is that this is an ethical judgement in contrast to a normative judgement of duty. Hägerström does not discuss this possibility. His position is based upon that any moral or normative argument only convinces the committed within a particular society (H p. 91, MH p. 44).

Hägerström endorses a version of conceptual relativism within ethics that makes ethical reasoning impossible between conflicting positions. This seems to me to be just wrong. Hägerström’s position implies a rejection of Moore’s position dedicated to discover the principles of normative reasoning, see above sec. 5, p. 30. It follows that is not “preposterous” to argue with Cesare Borgia, although it may be that the argument fails to convince him. It does not follow that the argument is invalid or normative judgements cannot be true or false as Hägerström suggests. It is interesting to notice that Hägerström reifies society, making it a certain kind of human agent as the shepherd certainly is. There is a

⁹⁰ Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Book II, Part III, Sec. III, p. 415.

duty for them to perform a particular action. If we accept Hägerström's argument then neither society nor the shepherd can think of this duty as an objective fact "without regard to (their) subjective attitude towards the fact". They "must assume a certain attitude of feeling or will in relation to what is given". If society or the shepherd should lack the principle of valuation then the duty in question would in no way exist for them. This is surely an amazing and radical position to hold.

There is one way to evade this position. Hägerström's claim is that "it can be shown directly that in the very idea of an ought, of an action as valuable in the highest degree, there is present on consciousness of objectivity whatsoever" (H p. 88, MH p. 41). This claim can be understood to be restricted to hold only for normative judgements in terms of the moral ought of rightness. This fits with his view that his non-cognitive thesis is "that the moral idea as such, i.e. the idea that a certain action represents the supreme value, cannot be said to be true or false" (H p. 92, MH p. 45). This makes room for Hägerström to argue that the idea of a moral duty in relation to a person's status or position as well as the idea of a moral obligation in relation to a person's actions have an objective character and determine their actions. This position is supported by way of his reference to society and the shepherd. The rejoinder to this argument is that this cannot be Hägerström's position since he does not make any distinction between different kinds of normative judgements in terms of duties and obligations. Thus he endorses the strong thesis that holds that all normative judgements lack objectivity. The result of this thesis is that human beings are not motivated to act on the basis of any objective moral ought or any judgement of moral obligation or moral duty. The thesis of moral nihilism is supported by the Humean view that moral motivation requires feelings in order to behave properly.

Hägerström claims that "the only thing of which one can be convinced on objective grounds is a certain character of reality" (H p. 92, MH p. 45). Now, Hägerström's claims that the character of a moral action is the lack of any objective moral properties. Applying the principle of causality in terms of the similarity between cause and effect it follows that the knowing person cannot possibly be impressed with any moral properties. The effect is like the cause. There are no cognitive moral properties in the presentation of an action as a cause or reason for an obligatory action. Hence the motivation to act as an effect cannot depend upon any impact of objective moral properties. Hence the motivation of behaviour can only be affected in terms of ought as an apparent property of an action that depends upon the person's feelings and volitions, seeking what appears right and avoiding what appears wrong. This is clearly important in relation to the meaning of the duty of society and the obligation for the shepherd endorsed by Hägerström. For Hägerström, the existence of the duty or obligation depends upon the appropriate attitudes. Take the attitudes away and you take the meaning of the duty and the obligation away. To be consistent Hägerström must claim that the duty for society and the obligation for the shepherd only have a subjective character. Their meaning depends solely upon the commitment of the will of society or the will of the shepherd to enforce the duty or obligation. Hägerström's position is important since if they lack this

commitment the duty and the obligation will disappear. This is idealism with a vengeance.

Hägerström's position is also important in relation to "the bitter strife between capital and labour" (H p. 78, MH p. 28). This strife cannot be settled on any objective ground based upon normative judgements. There is a conflict between different normative positions. Hägerström's view implies that this conflict cannot be solved by the use of any practical reasoning in terms of normative judgements that represent reasons for belief and action. As Hägerström puts it, "it is an unmeaning to consider the idea of ought as true". From Hägerström's intellectual point of view the normative vocabulary is only "a sign language of the emotions", to use Nietzsche's expression.⁹¹ Hägerström's nominalist view of the normative vocabulary also provides the solution to the conflict between different classes since they can be brought to realize that normative discourse is only a matter of words. One way to proceed is to reject the use of normative words as unmeaning since they are not determined by thinking but only express feelings and volitions. Another way to proceed is to continue to use the normative vocabulary to cause the appropriate behaviour based upon philosophical understanding and scientific knowledge. The use of the normative vocabulary can be informed by scientific knowledge with the effect that the conflict will disappear. Thus the meaning of the normative vocabulary can be established by reference to its effects upon the ordinary consciousness of human beings. This use of normative language is meaningful since it is informed by solid scientific knowledge that will convince people on objective grounds what is the case. In this way conflicts can be solved by peaceful means using the normative vocabulary to bring about the appropriate patterns of behaviour among people. The meaning of the normative vocabulary requires the existence of the appropriate feelings. Hägerström addresses this question and provides the answer in terms of his substantive moral thesis of the ideal of self-realization, see below sec. 12.

Hägerström's "master argument" for his non-cognitive thesis is based upon his ontology that can be questioned. It is also based upon the Humean view of motivation that Hägerström dogmatically takes for granted. It follows that he has not shown "that in the very idea of ought, of an action as valuable in the highest degree, there is present no consciousness of objectivity whatsoever" (H p. 88, MH p. 41). Hence it follows that his non-cognitive thesis is not convincing for the unprejudiced person. Perhaps the acceptance of Hägerström's judgements depends rather upon the authoritative force of his personality than the strength of his arguments.

11. The result of Hägerström's inquiry is the sceptical non-cognitive thesis founded upon the related thesis of moral nihilism that there are no normative facts. This is grounded on the secure foundation of philosophical knowledge. Hägerström uses the ancient strategy of scepticism to arrive at this position. But then there is a crucial difference between Hägerström's modern scepticism and the ancient scepticism. The ancient Greeks and their modern followers advance a

⁹¹ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, § 187, p. 92.

global scepticism to question the objectivity of all beliefs and judgements. Hence they are exposed to Kant's criticism that this sceptical doctrine undermines the reliability of knowledge and destroys any certainty, see above sec. 8. By contrast Hägerström's scepticism is a local scepticism that is restricted to question the objectivity of the moral consciousness in terms of beliefs concerning the rightness of an action. It is only in relation to the moral consciousness that Hägerström uses the sceptical method to undermine the reliability of ordinary moral beliefs. The sceptic regards people who believe actions to be morally right or wrong as misguided and in need of correction. This correction is achieved not by altering their moral beliefs, but by putting them in a position where they lose them. For the sceptic this is to arrive at the doctrine of suspension of belief as to whether an action is really right. For the sceptic this doctrine is seen as liberation. Although it is the case that any action may appear to a him to be right, he will have lost the belief that it is right, and equally be unable to acquire the belief that it is wrong. This suspension of belief leads in turn to a state of "ataraxia" or tranquillity of mind characterized by the absence of anxiety and the presence of certainty to live according to the appearances.

By contrast Hägerström's sceptical strategy is a local strategy that is limited to normative judgements. Hägerström's normative scepticism is based upon the existence of the philosophical consciousness that reveals the foundations for the pursuit of scientific knowledge based upon the scientific consciousness. Hägerström does not question that scientific judgements express true beliefs. It is obvious for him that there is such thing as scientific or classless knowledge in terms of fulfilling the conditions of objectivity, universality and truth as manifested in scientific judgements in relation to the necessary causal relations between facts.

Hägerström's sceptical strategy is restricted to "doing without objective values" in relation to the moral consciousness, to borrow Julia Annas's phrase.⁹² Hägerström proceeds upon the objective judgements in relation to the philosophical and scientific consciousness. His intention is to undermine the scientific status of the moral consciousness in terms of a moral ought. Hence his moral nihilism that there are no moral obligations. It follows that there is no room for any moral authority to provide moral knowledge in terms of objective judgements what is right or wrong conduct. This is to be seen as liberation rather than a reason for despair. The objectivity of values implies that it is possible to be right, but then also to be wrong. The sceptic's attitude is then suspension of belief what is right or wrong. But there is a crucial difference between the ancient strategy and Hägerström's modern strategy based upon the insight ideal of knowledge. The ancient strategy applies not only to moral judgements but to any kind of judgement expressing beliefs. Thus it is a global strategy covering all beliefs and the result of this is suspension of belief on any matter. Hägerström does not question the existence of knowledge based upon the impartiality of the philosophical consciousness as manifested in true judgements.

⁹² Julia Annas, *Doing without Objective Values: Ancient and Modern Strategies*, in *The Norms of Nature*, ed. Malcolm Schofield and Gisela Striker, Cambridge 1986 p. 3ff.

The ancient sceptics put this position into question. So do contemporary philosophers endorsing the agency ideal of knowledge like Nietzsche. These philosophers are questioning the possibility of the impartial observer that is the corner stone of Hägerström's philosophy. If this is a tenable position then Hägerström's strategy collapses since it is grounded upon the existence of the impartial philosophical consciousness as manifested in his philosophy.

Hägerström is committed to that scientific knowledge liberates people from holding false beliefs in favour of holding true beliefs. There are scientific authorities to provide the availability of scientific knowledge in terms of true judgements concerning the necessary connections between causes and their effects. It is scientific knowledge rather than moral knowledge that must be seen as the secure foundation for the construction of stable institutions on scientific principles. This is also the view put forward in his booklet "On the Importance of Philosophy", see above sec. 3. Hägerström's non-cognitive thesis makes room for this scientific approach to reconcile the opposing moral views of capital and labour. The reconciliation is possible by using the peaceful means of scientific knowledge to unify the consciousness of human beings rather than using revolutionary violence based upon moral ideas that will destroy social institutions. The crucial thing for Hägerström's strategy to work is to convince other people that this is the only way of sensible behaviour. It is in this respect that Hägerström's moral thesis of the ideal of self-realization is important.

12. Hägerström's intention is to purify the ordinary consciousness from holding the confused belief that there is an external moral and authoritative reality that determines what the right action. Having demonstrated to his own satisfaction that this is an illusion the next task is to make people realize that this is the truth and also realize another truth on objective grounds. This latter is Hägerström's substantive thesis of the ideal of self-realization based upon solid facts. This is his claim that "an actual autonomous morality is within us, determined only by direct regard for what we esteem most of all" (H p. 93, MH p. 46). This is what I have called the substantive moral thesis of the ideal of self-realization. Hägerström's intention is to make a case for this thesis based upon his non-cognitive view. It is important that the ideal of self-realization is not Hägerström's invention. It is firmly based upon solid observations in relation to the insight ideal of knowledge. There is a matter of fact an "autonomous morality is within us" but this morality has been contaminated by the foreign elements of external moral authorities, in particular in terms of a commanding will. These foreign elements have been eliminated by Hägerström's non-cognitive thesis based upon normative nihilism.

In his rejection of external moral authorities, Hägerström conflates the concept of a person having authority with the different concept of a person being authoritarian, and so does Mautner (M p. 6). For Hägerström, there cannot be any external moral authorities concerned with telling people what it is right to do. Hägerström's argument against the authoritarian morality is important since it is used to pave the way for his the ideal of self-realization. For Hägerström, the existence of the authoritarian morality depends upon the attitude of a commanding will that determines the objective meaning and significance of the

moral ought. Hence the meaning and significance of the objective ought is founded upon an attitude and accompanied with the possibility of using sanction in cases of transgression. This is related to the common consciousness of men in terms of respect based upon the fear of punishment. Hägerström rejects this authoritarian view in favour of his liberating view as expressed in the ideal of self-realization. It is interesting to notice that they rest upon a common assumption. This is the assumption that the meaning and significance of the normative vocabulary depend upon the existence of a particular attitude. The authoritarian morality is determined by the attitude of a commanding will in pursuit of power that is expressed in the objectivity of what ought to be done. In contrast the ideal of self-realization is determined by the attitude of moral consciousness that is “a subjective thinking in terms of feelings and interests” (H p. 95, MH, p. 49). This attitude is important in relation to the meaning of the ought or what is in truth the right action. The ideal of self-realization replaces the authoritarian objective ought with the autonomous and subjective ought to be determined by the feelings and interests of autonomous individuals. Hence it matters to have the appropriate feelings and interests, and this is provided by the ideal of self-realization.

The moral thesis of the ideal of self-realization is based upon the solid fact that man’s moral purpose is the secular purpose to live as a responsible member within society or the state. Hägerström endorses the Aristotelean view that society is prior to the individual. In this respect there is no break with his former view, see above sec. 3. Hägerström also holds that the individual human being can only be thought of in terms of necessary relations with other individuals and their positions within the state. This is important in relation to his claim that “an actually autonomous morality is within us, determined only by direct regard what we esteem most of all” (H p. 93, MH p. 46). This invites the question who the “we” are?. Hägerström’s answer is “civilized man always feels a responsibility, in *one* way for realizing her supreme values. More than anything else, she will always be fearful of deserting her tasks in this regard, of failing to achieve what she can” (H p. 93, MH p. 46, Hägerström’s italics). According to the authoritarian morality, the meaning of an objective ought concerning what is right or wrong is determined by sanctions or the fear of punishment. In contrast the meaning of ought in relation to the ideal of self-realization is determined by the conscience of failure to realize one’s supreme values. This raises the question what are the supreme values that civilized individuals feel a responsibility to realize? Hägerström’s answer is that “we long more than anything else for the happiness and refinement of the race” and “society’s tendency to self-preservation” (H p. 94, MH p. 48). Thus Hägerström is in agreement with Aristotle that the perfect life is a life of happiness. It is the case that the state exists for the sake of the good life since the goal to pursue is the well being of the citizens. This view has important implications for the proper legislation. It is also the case that the state is also prior to the citizens in the sense that the public interests are prior to the private interests of the citizens. This view is also important for the law and its application. Hägerström’s

position has an interesting connection with a communitarian view that is endorsed by Peczenik.⁹³

For Hägerström, the morality based upon external authorities is equivalent to an authoritarian morality to provide the existence of the objectivity of ought. This authoritarian position holds “the idea of one’s own moral view as absolute authoritative and thus as the only right one has led, and always will lead, to fanaticism” (H p. 94, MH p. 47). Hägerström rejects this moral view. His assumption is that the commitment to a cognitive view concerning the existence of an objective ought implies intolerance with respect to judgements what it is right to do. This view leads common people astray to endorse a morality that “has come to work in an anti-social and anti-cultural direction” (H p. 94, MH p. 48). Hägerström’s non-cognitive view denies the existence of an objective ought and this makes room for the social and cultural value of tolerance. Hägerström’s non-cognitive view implies that his judgement about tolerance cannot reveal the truth what is right or wrong to do since it only based upon his feelings and volitions. It is quite possible for another individual to arrive at another feeling of intolerance. Hägerström’s non-cognitive theory cannot determine whether a feeling is right or wrong. It is rather the adherent of a normative cognitivism that is in the position to advance tolerance, since the judgement “be tolerant” states a normative truth. So Hägerström’s moral objection fails.

Hägerström supports the ideal of self-realization by reference to that “not even our innermost beliefs can ultimately withstand the power of knowledge” (H p. 93, MH p. 47). Hägerström’s ideal of the autonomous morality beyond blame and guilt is based upon his philosophical analysis and scientific knowledge. Hence his claim that “there is reason to suppose that, like a Phoenix-bird, it will be born anew out of the ashes of the old morality, with a more emancipated and farsighted vision” (H p. 95, MH p. 94). Like Marx and Engels, Hägerström endorses the Phoenix myth of a fresh start that will carry human beings, if not to complete perfection, then at least to a condition that will permit an improvement of the social conditions of human life.

Hägerström’s thesis of the ideal of self-realization invites a comparison with the view put forward by Engels. Engels makes a contrast between the moralities of class societies with an “actual human morality of the future”.⁹⁴ Engels regards this “actual morality of the future” as something *future*, hence unknowable and not available to us in the present conflict between classes. Hägerström also mentions that “a revolution in the outlook of Western civilization is at hand, the full scope of which no one can comprehend” (H p. 93, MH p. 47). For Hägerström, this revolution can be brought about by peaceful means since it is based upon scientific knowledge that can be used to inform the moral conscience of individuals. This is, of course, important for the ideal of self-realization. Once the popular consciousness has been purified from superstitious ideas of an objective ought there is scientific evidence that an autonomous morality is within reach now and here. The morality of self-realization is guided by the

⁹³ Peczenik, *Vad är Rätt*, pp. 430ff. He does not mention Hägerström in this connection.

⁹⁴ Friedrich Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, Marx-Engels Werke, Bd. 20 p. 88, cited from Allen Wood, *Marx against Morality*, in *A Companion to Ethics*, ed. Peter Singer, Oxford 1991 p. 521.

scientific knowledge that human beings are determined parts in the immutable and necessary order of society. In this respect there is a tension in Hägerström's way of thinking. One attitude is to adopt the sceptical attitude of suspension of judgement since the course of evolution of society is determined. This fits with the insight ideal. The other attitude is to adopt the active attitude of using scientific knowledge to change the structure of society. This fits with the agency ideal of knowledge. In both cases the practical message is clear: there is no reason to engage in any violent revolution changing the existing structure of society nor can there be any moral criticism if the existing social conditions are changed by peaceful means.

Hägerström's ideal of self-realization is concerned with the question of the meaning of life, addressing the question of human alienation. Marx also addresses this question in terms of the external system of material forces of production. Hägerström addresses the question in terms of the internal psychological beliefs in "the authoritative reality to which the ought is connected in the morality of conscience" (H p. 86, MH p. 38). This morality of conscience is found in the popular morality of ordinary consciousness based upon "the centuries of religious education" (H p. 86, MH p. 38). This education in turn leads to that "we carry within us the conflict between an altruistic and a vengeful morality" (H p. 79, MH p. 29). This conflict within the individual person is quite important in relation to the ideal of self-realization, since it raises the question which values matter for the individual to bring about. One target of Hägerström's criticism is the view that the task of autonomous individual is to transform the old values and create new values, as exemplified in "the superman morality of Nietzsche" (H. P 78, MH p. 28). This is the morality beyond good and evil pursued by the "barbarians" of the selfish egoist in pursuit of the will to power. Another target is the Kantian view in terms of a good will as "a reality which is good in itself" (H p. 87, MH p. 40). The Kantian view endorses individualism based upon the autonomous self-legislation of practical reason and must be dismissed since "it only gives expression to man's deep-rooted tendency to make his own values into the true essence of reality.... Surely the apotheosis of man can go no farther" (H p. 90, MH p. 44). The Kantian philosophy is based upon the natural right to freedom and this is for Hägerström tantamount to endorse egoism based upon selfishness and revenge. Hägerström rejects egoism since this implies the pursuit of own's own values that lead to anti-social actions. The rejoinder to Hägerström is that he confounds individualism with egoism. But Hägerström's rejection of Kant's individualism carries an important message in relation to the thesis of ideal of self-realization.

Hägerström's ideal of self-realization is precisely put forward "against man's deep-rooted tendency to make his own values into the true essence of reality". Thus Hägerström rejects Nietzsche's project of inventing new values as well as Kant's defence of the inherited values of the natural right to freedom and respect for persons as ends in themselves. Hägerström's ideal of self-realization holds that the values to pursue are determined by society. The task for the individual is to realize her social self in communion with other individuals dedicated to the responsible fulfilment of her place in the state that exists for the well being of its citizens. Thus the ideal of self-realization is informed by the social purpose to

live together within the state based upon the common values of tolerance and altruism. This requires in turn the maintenance of the law to guarantee peace and security in order for the individual to pursue her subjective values “the relative realization of which alone makes her life worth living” (H p. 93, MH p. 46). The meaning of life for Hägerström is to occupy the chair of practical philosophy as the cognitive spectator of what there is. From this position, the task is to realize his supreme values, that is to say the desire for truth and knowledge. This philosophical approach has theoretical effect for the scientific consciousness in terms of the proper pursuit of knowledge and practical effect for the ordinary consciousness of people in terms of the pursuit of the ideal of self-realization to bring about the proper social values.

Hägerström’s non-cognitive thesis rules out that there can be moral knowledge in terms of normative obligations of what is the right or wrong action to perform. This thesis does not rule out that it is possible to have moral knowledge in terms of ethical judgements concerning what a good person is. Hägerström does not consider this aspect although it is important to substantiate his thesis of the ideal of self-realization as a case of knowledge as opposed to wishful thinking. Perhaps he endorses Hume’s view that “the moment we perceive the falsehood of any supposition, or of the insufficiency of any means our passions yield to our reason without any opposition”.⁹⁵ Hägerström has perceived the falsehood and supposition of the existence of an objective ought. He has also perceived the truth of the ideal of self-realization. The lecture only deals with normative judgements in relation to his normative nihilism and the related non-cognitive thesis in order to reject these judgements as unmeaning. It does not follow that this thesis also applies to ethical judgements. Hence Mautner commits the fallacy of hasty generalization when he claims that Hägerström presents “a consistent non-cognitive theory of ethics” (M p. 25). The thesis of the ideal of self-realization is related to ethical judgements that are central to Hume’s philosophy. It must be admitted that Hägerström does not pursue this aspect. Instead he turns his penetrating mind into an inquiry into the truth and falsity of legal ideas.

Hägerström’s ontology makes no room for values in the natural world of necessary causes. In this respect he faces a problem in relation his moral thesis of the ideal of self-realization since this thesis turns the social morality among people into the private morality of the individual. Hägerström correctly claims that the individual is brought up in “a set of commonly accepted moral valuations” (H p. 91, MH p. 44). Thus I am brought up to believe that it is wrong to murder. Now Hägerström tells me that this belief is neither true nor false. Whether my parents realized it or not this is not a moral belief at all but only a feeling that they happen to get through their upbringing and then they just continue to impress me with their feelings. Hägerström faces the difficulty that if he embraces his normative nihilism then normative judgements in terms of what is right or wrong are nothing but illusions. This implies that there can be no room for normative or practical reasoning based upon reasons for belief and action. As I see it this is a gross distortion of practical reasoning. Hägerström

⁹⁵ Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Book II, Part III, Sec. III, p. 416.

will, of course, continue to use the inherited moral vocabulary to imprint the proper moral behaviour upon his children according to his feelings. Hägerström's understanding of the normative language is similar to Nietzsche's view that this language is nothing but the sign-language of the feelings. Hence the meaning of the normative vocabulary in the sense of its significance is that meaningless words can be used to bring about the proper behaviour among human beings. This causal use of the normative vocabulary is a matter of Hägerström's feelings and in this respect he cannot be wrong. But he cannot be right either. The result of Hägerström's moral thesis of the ideal of self-realization is that it may imply a very conservative position of accepting the prevailing social values or imply a very revolutionary position overthrowing the prevailing social values. In this respect Hägerström's lecture makes no revolutionary break with the current social values in Sweden. In a way his radical non-cognitivism in relation the ideal of self-realization can be seen as a defence of the prevailing social and cultural values against the inroad of normative values such as human rights.

To summarize Hägerström's lecture. His philosophical message is that there is no reason to believe that there are normative facts. Hence there is no normative knowledge what in truth is the right action. There is reason to believe that there are natural or scientific facts. Hence there is scientific knowledge of what is true in reality. His practical message is that there is no reason for any revolutionary activities but there is reason for responsible behaviour according to scientific knowledge. There is scientific knowledge that the existence of the good life is within sight for individuals within the state that makes it possible for individuals to pursue the realization of their supreme values. In this pursuit, the autonomous individual abandons the guidance of absolute moral authorities in favour of guidance based upon the authority of philosophical understanding and scientific knowledge. If these messages are accepted and acted upon there is hope that the present strife between different classes and opposing interests can be reconciled and bring about that human beings live in peace and security within a stable state maintained by the law. This is the revolutionary character of Hägerström's lecture.

13. Hägerström advances the thesis of the ideal of self-realization as an emancipation of the human consciousness from holding confused beliefs to arrive at true beliefs. It is a confused belief to hold that there are moral authorities that have the capacity to determine what is the right thing to do. The truth is that there are no moral authorities. If this truth is accepted by civilized people Hägerström holds that "a revolution in the outlook of Western civilisation is at hand, the full scope of which no one can comprehend" (H p. 93, MH p. 47). For Hägerström this is a peaceful revolution since he holds, "if a certain reality is determinative for what we ought to do, then, of course, what we ought to do can be decided in an objective manner. All that is required is to reach clarity concerning which actions are in agreement with the reality in question" (H p. 87, MH p. 40). The question is whether there is any such reality? Hägerström's argument in the lecture is that there is no moral reality to be found within the order of necessitating causes and their effects.

I shall suggest that it is possible to observe the law as “a certain reality (that is determinative for what we ought to do)”. This understanding fits with his former book, “Stat och Rätt” as well as his article “Kritiska punkter i värdepsykologien“, see above sec. 3. Hägerström has demonstrated, to his own satisfaction, that there cannot be any external moral authorities that can command what we ought to do. This leaves the question whether there are any other normative authorities, for example legal authorities that can determine what we ought to do. Hägerström does not address this question in his lecture. But it points towards the replacement of the illusion of morality with the reality of the law. It is the law that is the authoritative reality that is determinative for what we ought to do. The individual pursuit of the ideal of self-realization requires a stable social framework. The popular morality cannot provide this social framework, see above sec. 12. This suggests that it is the law that supplants the popular morality and sets the proper standards for human behaviour. Hence the crucial importance of a true understanding of the law since it is the maintenance of the law that provides a common order of duties and obligations among human beings. It is the case that the moral idea of an objective ought is an unmeaning. It does not follow that the legal idea of an objective ought is an unmeaning as well. This is still an open question that is not addressed in the lecture. So there is the law and the related legal knowledge. Hägerström’s analysis of the law leads him to reject the view that the law can be seen as the content of a commanding will as is the case within legal positivism. Hägerström’s rejection of the will is partly based upon his ontology that makes no room for the existence of free will. It is also based upon a moral objection that the will to power implies an authoritarian morality. Thus the target of Hägerström’s criticism of legal positivism is Nietzsche’s position that makes the will to power to be constitutive of the law. It is also important that Hägerström rejects the view that the law is the content of reason as is the case within the natural rights theories. These theories imply that there are independent normative facts or natural rights to be protected and recorded in the law as a matter of justice. This Kantian position is rejected by Hägerström partly based upon his ontology partly based upon moral objections, see above sec. 8 and sec. 12.

This rejection of theories of legal positivism and natural rights is important fact since it makes room for the view that the law is there as a neutral instrument that can be used to further social interests and values. It is not within the scope of this article to consider Hägerström’s analysis. Suffice it to say that the result of Hägerström’s lecture is that the normative criterion for proper legislation cannot be the Kantian idea of justice in relation to the natural right to freedom. The only normative criterion must be a utilitarian criterion. This is, of course, the approach adopted by A. V. Lundstedt and this raises the question of the scientific status of his principle of social welfare. Lundstedt’s approach implies that the legal concepts of right and duties can be defined in naturalistic terms. This is also Moore’s view, see above sec. 5, p. 38. For Moore, a moral or normative law concerning human conduct is neither a command nor a scientific law but rather to be understood as “a scientific prediction” which always is

merely probable.⁹⁶ This is relevant for the study of law, since Moore's view implies that the law can be seen in terms of predictions what will happen. This position has, of course, been advanced but Hägerström rejects it. The function of the law is not to predict but to determine the duties and the corresponding rights to be enjoyed by people. Like Moore, Hägerström stresses the importance of the adherence to a common framework of duties and obligations in order to realize the ideal of self-realization. A stable social framework is provided by the maintenance of the law to bring security and peace about among human beings that enable them to pursue the ideal of self-realization.

In this respect Hägerström rejects his former view that the law can be understood in terms of universal judgements concerning rights and duties to be applied by using logical rules of inferences to arrive at particular authoritative judgements what is right or wrong, see above sec. 3 p. 18. It is Hägerström's considered view that the law must be considered in terms of neutral commands and the application of commands is solely a matter of psychological pressure. Thus Hägerström advances a version of legal nihilism that holds that there are no objective legal duties or legal obligations. As he puts it, "the concept of ought is nothing but a word as an expression of an interest to arouse behaviour. Hence an objective and obligatory legal order for the judge is nothing but a chimera".⁹⁷ Hägerström's considered view has important consequences for the understanding of law and legal studies. It implies that there can be no legal reasoning as practical reasoning. Of course, the legal vocabulary is used, but only as a sign-language of interests that can be used to cause the appropriate behaviour, if necessary by means of the force. For Hägerström "the legal order is throughout nothing but a social machine, in which the cogs are men".⁹⁸ This is exactly to conceive the law in terms of the authoritarian morality that is rejected in favour of the ideal of self-realization, see above sec. 12 p. 55f). Now the law is conceived as a brute fact of force within the state and the linguistic meaning of the legal vocabulary used within the law is determined by the use of sanctions. The meaning of the law in terms of its importance for human beings is nothing but its strict maintenance by officials to guarantee security and peace based upon the use of force.

The language of the law is a magical language that can be used by human beings to control human behaviour. Hägerström conceives human beings as "cogs in the machinery". Although he does tell us, the important difference is between the non-intelligent and intelligent cogs. The former follow the rules laid down as a matter of necessity. The latter have the skill how to operate the legal machinery to give their interests legal effect by means of using magic or the legal sign-language devoid of any conceptual thought. It follows that there can

⁹⁶ Cf. Moore, *Principia Ethica* p. 155. - Stig Jørgensen, *On Justice and Law*, Aarhus 1996 p. 24 presents a distorted view of Moore's epistemology that completely overlooks Moore's utilitarianism and its importance for the law and legal reasoning.

⁹⁷ Axel Hägerström, *Till frågan om begreppet gällande rätt* (The Question concerning the Concept of Valid law), A review of Alf Ross, *Theorie der Rechtsquellen*, *Tidsskrift for Retsvidenskab*, 1931 p. 48ff at p. 89, my translation.

⁹⁸ Hägerström, *On Fundamental Problems of Law* (1939), *Inquiries*, p. 354.

be no legal knowledge in terms of normative information about the conceptual content of the law, nor any normative or ethical criticism of the law. If Hägerström's position is carried through legal science is reduced to be a branch within the natural sciences. Legal science offers information in terms of true judgements about the legal rules as causal regularities among social events, that is to say the use of the legal sign-language that brings about the appropriate human behaviour. This scientific information is, of course, important for human beings in order to know their proper place in the legal machinery.

Hägerström's philosophy does not make any room for substantial normative or ethical inquiries into the law and its application. In this article I have tried to present an account of his lecture and questioned Hägerström's credentials for his position that in turn is important for his inquiries into the law. It is fitting to finish where I began by paying tribute to Alek. His recent books stress the importance of addressing ethical questions that have been neglected within the Scandinavian tradition due to the legacy of Hägerström's philosophy. We disagree about the answers but we do agree that these questions should be taken seriously. Hence legal scholars writing textbooks for students cannot just dismiss normative and ethical questions as unscientific. There is room for the normative and ethical dimension within the study of law in order to teach and learn the law as an intellectual effort to treat human beings as persons.