

Summary

The Logic for Masters, Slaves and Kibitzers A Philosophical guide through the world of deontic logic

The aim of the book is to provide a comprehensive account of philosophical problems associated with projects that aspire to develop tools for the logical analysis of prescriptive discourse. The resulting logical systems are usually subsumed under the term "deontic logic." The key foundational problem of the area of research is related to the fact that prescriptive sentences or utterances – commands, regulations, instructions, permissions etc. – are not truth bearers and hence seem to fall outside of the traditionally conceived domain of logical studies.

The first of the eight chapters of the book provides a historical survey of the investigations that belong to the area of deontic logic. Pioneering theories presented by predecessors of modern deontic logic – E. Mally, A. Hofstadter and J. C. C. McKinsey – are briefly outlined. More attention is devoted to the foundational *Old System* that G. H. von Wright published in *Mind* in 1951. The appearance of his paper entitled *Deontic logic* stimulated a wave of interest in the research area and led to a formulation of the system known as *Standard Deontic Logic*, which is also presented in the chapter. A brief review of the most discussed paradoxes of deontic logic concludes the chapter.

The next chapter is devoted to philosophical questions that are connected with attempts to create logical systems suitable for the analysis of logical relations specific to prescriptive discourse. The key problem is presented in the form of so called Jørgensen's dilem-

ma. Individual sections of the chapter examine different aspects of the dilemma and scrutinize solutions that have been proposed in relevant literature.

The third chapter is one of the central parts of the book. It provides a general layout of the problem area of deontic studies. Its main point is that studies focused on logical and semantic analysis of prescriptive discourse should be based on a careful formulation of problems that particular logical theories aspire to solve, and on distinguishing between different ‘sublanguages’ of the discourse. In particular it argues that it is very important to make clear whether we wish to analyze the language means suited for describing normative situations or the language means that are used for issuing prescriptions of different kinds. It shows that normative language games proposed by David Lewis, together with his conception of scorekeeping in the games, can provide a suitable starting point for the parceling.

The only players in the games are *the Prescriber*, *the Doer* and *the Kibitzer*. The Prescriber’s moves consist in issuing commands and permissions to the Doer, whose moves consist in doing what the Prescriber requires. The Kibitzer’s moves are his descriptions of the normative situation. The steps of the game are indexed by the order in which the Prescriber issues prescriptions. Situations (or possible worlds) conforming to the Prescriber’s commands and permissions together create *the sphere of permissibility*. At the start of the game, the sphere of permissibility does not differ from *the sphere of accessibility*, i.e. the space of all possible worlds that come into consideration as alternatives to the actual world.

The roles of the players determine what kind of moves are in their repertoire. The Prescriber addresses the Doer only with sentences that are to be interpreted *prescriptively*. To manifest that clearly, we can suppose that he only uses sentences in the imperative mood and permissive sentences employing the phrase “you may...” The Kibitzer, on the other hand, has in his repertoire only sentences *describing* the normative situation, i.e. statements to the effect of what the Doer is obliged (must), is forbidden (must not)

or is allowed (may) to do. (He is not in position to issue any commands or give his own advice.)

Using this perspective of the game we can distinguish different theories that can be developed within deontic logic. They differ a) in their focus on different kinds of moves in the language game, b) in their conceiving the language game either as static (all prescriptions are issued simultaneously) or as dynamic (typically new prescriptions 'surpass' old ones), and c) in their explanatory ambitions. Classifications of the theories from this area can, of course, be more or less fine-grained. In the chapter, a classification dividing the field of logical studies into six subareas (DL1–DL6) is proposed.

Chapter 4 is devoted to the concept of permission. It provides a classification that distinguishes different kinds of permissions both within the language of the Master and within the language of the Kibitzer, and points out problems connected with what D. Lewis calls the kinematics of permissions.

The next chapter concentrates on conceptual and ontological problems of prescriptive discourse. It puts forward an original ontological foundation for the studies. The foundation is based on a specific answer to the question of what constitutes the existence (resp. validity) of a rule or a norm. The basic idea is that norms are established by a specific kind of relation among social subjects. The proposed terminological distinctions can hopefully reduce number or fallacies and misunderstandings that have vexed the studies focused on logico-philosophical analysis of normative discourse.

Chapter 6 is devoted to topics related to semantics of prescriptive discourse. It presents two crucial semantic theories that have been proposed for deontic logic – the formal semantics for *Standard deontic logic* and Hintikka's semantically constructed system of deontic logic. In the last parts of the chapter, the concepts of validity of a prescription and fulfilling a prescription and issues concerning the relation between semantic and ontological problem are examined.

The semi-last chapter presents in a short outline some prominent logical systems of the statically conceived deontic logic that have been proposed by distinguished logicians. In particular it presents critical surveys of the *New System* proposed by von Wright, of the logic of commands presented by N. Rescher and of the system of logic of imperatives developed by P. Vranas. Attention is also devoted to the distinctive place that free-choice prescriptions have within the prescriptive language.

The last chapter focuses on logical problems that arise if prescriptive discourse is conceived dynamically, in particular on problems of the kinematics of commands and permission. Its core consists in the presentation of a simple logical language, in setting a general framework for the inquiry of the dynamics of the prescriptive discourse and in the proposal of an original solution to the problem of the kinematics of permission presented by D. Lewis. The proposal can, hopefully, establish grounding for development of a comprehensive theory that would provide a means for systematic logical analysis of prescriptive language games.

The reader who will work her or his way through the eight chapters of the book should get a vivid picture of the development of deontic logic and a good insight into the main logico-philosophical problems in the area. This insight should also help him toward a better understanding of some interesting problems concerning the foundations of logic.