

Emotional Justificationism

- ***Precisely state this position. (6%)***

Emotional Justificationism is my extension of error theory (or of Emotivism) which claims that morality is essentially a mechanism of humans for justifying certain spontaneous emotions. It claims that moral judgments express beliefs of the speaker about objective moral facts in an attempt to justify his emotions. And by uttering this belief, the speaker is simultaneously expressing his emotions. The theory denies the existence of any objective moral truth metaphysically, rendering all moral sentences untrue.

- ***Elaborate on and clarify this position to avoid potential misunderstanding and confusion with similar positions. (4%)***

EJ considers Emotivism as partially true, as the name suggests, namely moral judgements do express the speaker's emotions. What it disagrees, however, is that an expression of non-cognitive attitudes is the only essential content of the judgements. Instead, any moral judgement must contain two integral parts: (a) Emotions felt by the speaker towards the object being judged, and (b) the subsequent belief about some (presumptive) objective moral facts formed by the speaker to justify the emotions. Contrast EJ also with plain error theory, which claims that moral judgements primarily reflect beliefs of moral facts and ignores the expressive power of the judgement. In this regard, EJ is somewhere between non-cognitivism and cognitivism.

- ***State and explain your main target opponent position(s) in preparation for your attack of it below. Note that your answer here should not include everything about this opponent position. Rather, you should analyze it to highlight its disadvantageous features to be compared with your own theory in the next question. Your answer to this question serves purely as a preparation for your answer to the next question. But remember to represent your opponent fairly. (4%)***

ET denies the existence of objective moral truths by arguments from relativity and queerness, thereby assigning errors to ordinary speakers who holds beliefs of such objective moral truths. It also convincingly explains the source of these errors via the patterns of objectification. However, ET fails to capture the non-cognitive component contained in a moral judgement, namely the speaker's emotions towards the subject matter. On the other hand, Emotivism suffers FGP for only recognizing the non-cognitive component in a moral judgement. According to Emotivism, the meaning of a moral sentence would differ when it is embedded in a compound sentence as a premise, since it has lost the essential emotions of the speaker. Emotivism also fails to capture the external, authoritative aspect of ethics.

- ***Compared to your main target opponent position(s), what advantage(s) does your own position have, what problems does it solve/avoid? (8%)***

EJ takes account of the role of emotions by including it as an essential component of a moral judgement. Consider someone condemning murder. We must all agree that there is a stark difference between the words "Murder is wrong." coming from an anti-war peace activists who truly feels compassion for the innocent victims, and that from the mouth of a cold-blooded murderer having no remorse, which we consider as ingenuine. What this example suggests, is

that the speaker's emotion is clearly an integral part of a moral judgement, that a judgement is valid only when the speaker genuinely "feels it." But then we may ask - feels what? It is unlikely that the speaker could just *feel* the truth directly from the sentence itself. What is far more likely, is that we are requiring certain emotions to be felt by the speaker - fury towards the murderer, compassion for the victims, or simply a spontaneous disgust for slaughtering - prior to his judgement. As a response, the speaker naturally attempts to justify the emotions by forming the belief of some objective wrongness of murder, and then he utters this belief by saying "Murder is wrong." While the appearance of this sentence seems to suggest a cognitive state of mind of the speaker making the judgement, the emotion which triggers the chain of justification is equally essential. And the expression of that emotion is also contained in a moral judgement.

EJ also avoids FGP for Emotivism by recognizing the cognitive component in moral sentences. Namely, the sentence contains the speaker's belief of some objective moral truth as justification of his emotions. These factual contents, although non-existent, function just like regular descriptive sentences in examples of FG without problems.

- ***What would your main target opponent(s) say to attack your position and/or to defend her own position from your attack? (4%)***

- ***How would you respond to this attack/defense of your opponent? (4%)***

Why am I disgusted? Aha, there must've been something inherently wrong about killing innocent people! By saying "Murder is wrong!" the ordinary speaker is expressing the belief he just formed about the "objective wrongness" of murder, as well as the emotion of being naturally disgusted due to this "objective wrongness". What the speaker does not realize, however, is that in order for him to form this belief of objective wrongness, he necessarily has to be disgusted, or in general, emotionally disturbed at first. Then what, we may ask, could be objective about this wrongness if it ultimately stems from an emotional activity, which is anything but objective?