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Empiricist Normativity vs Rationalists Normativity

Empiricist’s and Rationalists differ on the importance of the motivating factor of the hypothetical imperative. Empiricists believe that the motivating factors of a hypothetical imperative are automatically normative or at least motivating enough to make them normative. They see hypothetical imperatives as more of a practical application of sound reasoning because they view rationality as the means to assess relationships between things. This means actions only show causal relationships because our motivations or ends are theoretical. This why empiricists will see “ought” as prediction that it will occur rather than it should be done. If something ought to be done, then there should be enough of a motivating factor to drive someone to do that thing.

Rationalists hold a similar but different view that actions are guided by judgement and not caused by it. They assert an obligation to apply principles of rationality because we posses them and wouldn’t be able to not use them. We must make some sort of judgement about the out comes of our actions, but the principles of rationality are not strictly enforced. The principles aren’t strictly enforced but we still hold an obligation to use them because we have them. Korsgaard shows that this application of rational principles is what makes them normative because it’s impossible to go through life with that knowledge and not use it. Rationalists hold more to situational application of rationality because something might almost always ought to be done, but there could arise a situation where that wouldn’t be the optimal situation.