

# Philosophy Notes

29th November 2015

## 1 Week M

### 1.1 Monday

### 1.2 Tuesday

Read from Alex Miller, Contemporary Metaethics (4.1), Norm Suppression (5.1).

#### 1.2.1 Gilbert's Contribution: NORM EXPRESSIVISM

Moral judgements (like lying is wrong etc.), they're a non-cognitive mental state (thus not truth evaluable); They express certain kinds of norms that we accept. (this seems to Murthy to be the most apt way of describing moral judgements).

Idea of rationality: If something is wrong, lying is wrong for example, it only means that I'm rational to be held guilty for that act. It's rational for other people to feel angry for that act. So rationality here allows you to accept norms; this acceptance entails guilt and anger etc. (ask how rational).

This seems to suggest that there must be some truth condition; because rationality usually is this way. However he is extending the idea of rationality to something else, which is non-cognitive. How it's applied, is acceptance of norms.

Kant talks about rationality in terms of maxims (rules etc.). There rationality amounts to identifying some inconsistency etc. The inconsistency can also come, because in some way, there's some sort of rule operating. He also states that reason commands you to do something. He is in this sense defining rationality. (what about idea of freedom defined using rationality). Here however, the idea of rationality matches still. The rule acceptance is...

#### 1.2.2 Hare's response: Non-cognitive

Interestingly, there'll be always some cognitive aspect in non-cognitive theories. If the primary component is cognitive, then the theory is cognitive. If it's not, then, you know. This is how he challenges Stevenson. The use of good has a commendatory aspect. And it also has a command aspect also. If X is good, then there's a descriptive part (using some criteria you evaluate this), which can change and a prescriptive part (the commandatory aspect of it). So Stevenson was combining commands with saying it possessed a certain kind of emotions. Recall there was magnetic component also, which entailed that the language has a goading aspect.

Aside: Locution: , Elocution: How is it stated, eg. warning, command (!? etc.); that can be used by modulation of voice. Perlocutionary aspect: Force by which one is made to act

So the charge on Stevenson was (by Hare) that Stevenson confused the perlocutionary aspect of moral language with morality itself. Moral language has two aspects as stated. The prescriptive aspect is not the same as perlocution.

Supervenience thesis: If something's commendable (this would come from descriptive properties) then something else with same properties will also be commendable. So there's some sort of universalizability. (why did he mention this?) Once you command,

Summary: Within non-cognitivism, we studied emotivism (Charlie, came by discarding Moore's naturalism); Emotivism gave rise to prescriptivism etc.

Meta ethics: What exactly do moral statements/judgements mean? Are they truth evaluable or not?

### 1.2.3 Egoism

One obstruction to ethics was relativism. Another one is egoism. Most of our actions are motivated by self interest. It is motivated by self interest only. Psychological egoism. All actions are (not ought to be) motivated by self interest. It's an all encompassing theory. It can justify anything. This generated another theory. It is different from utilitarianism in the sense that there it was utility for all, now it is for an individual.

## 1.3 Wednesday

### 1.3.1 Egoism (resumed)

Self interest undermines morality. Now egoism claims that self interest is drives our action/motivation etc. and therefore egoism is what matters and morality doesn't matter. There two kinds of egoisms: (i) Psychological and (ii) ethical. Psychological Egoism makes a statement (claims, 'are' or 'is') that self interest is what drives our actions, viz. *all* our action is driven by self interest. They say that even if we cooperate, we do so to get our interest. However, this you can use to defend both alternatives. Eg. giving charity makes us happy, thus self interest. Not giving charity, we save money, self interest. Thus it doesn't explain anything, by explaining everything.

! Observe that most of our motivations arise out of desires. If my desires are satisfied, then it entails that this is self interest.

(1) All I do is motivated by my desires (2) All my desires are for the satisfaction of my interests

The argument valid but may not be sound. Let's test. For Hume, no action can arise without desire. Kant countered this. For instance, staying back on a Sunday out of duty. However, for Kant it seems that being rational is desired. Thus it may become hard to separate reason from desire. So much for the first. Now let's look at the second premise. Say you want to do something and you get something out of it. Counter (possible) example is that you have a friend who's unwell and you take him to the doctor. What self interest could you have? Well, the egoists will say that you couldn't see him suffer, you wanted to reduce your suffering of seeing him suffer.

Ethical egoism says that all your desires ought to take care of your self interest. Why though? The self interest becomes the basis of morality.

Helping others, intruding into their freedom (talking about countries), become permanently dependent. Counter is that this doesn't say you shouldn't help. Just means that the means of helping is not the best. Eg. use the Golden Rule, perhaps modified to include helping those that don't reciprocate;

### 1.3.2 Social Contract Theory

How do I formulate a law for myself to live together in a society. What's the sociological and psychological basis for morality? This is not like a scientific discovery. You're trying to construct certain laws, where there's an implicit agreement in the society. Agree to a certain contract, (maybe of historical origins) and if you don't abide by it, then you're wrong. One thesis is Thomas Bob.

Resources: John Shands -> Fundamental of philosophy | desires | John Shands -> Ethics (Egoism)

## 2 Week M+1

### 2.1 Monday

Social Contract theory: We forge an implicit agreement that gives advantage to everyone. Going against this agreement is immorality.

- Question: Why must we agree? Here comes the idea of morality. Thomas Hobbs gives the idea of "state of nature". He says that we forge a document and agree to it. Eg. Legal agreement. The terms and conditions are stated to share the burdens and benefits. When agreed upon, each party expects the other to abide by it. However for everyday tasks, we don't always have written agreements. Eg. eating in a restaurant; its implied I'll pay for it. Now as far as a social contract theory is concerned, it has neither a written agreement, nor is there a restaurant like implicit agreement.
- In the "state of nature" [defn: no laws (police etc.), you do what you must], there's some kind of conflict. Man realizes this (that it's too insecure etc.) and forges an agreement for everyone's advantage. Why there's this type of agreement? Lets consider two examples. One is killing and one is stealing. (We're trying to see how morality prohibits me from stealing or killing) In the sense of agreement, these are wrong because you also want your possessions and yourself to be safe.
- Note that here we're not looking at equality of humans. We're looking at equality of strength. If we're equal in strength, then if I harm, then I can be equally harmed by others. [historically it lies in rousseau and plato; recall socrates being in prison and doesn't want to escape. He says that's because he has a certain contract. He says that its so fundamental that he can't violate it. Yet there's another dialogue in the context of justice, in which there's a mutual agreement and that's the whole notion of justice. He then later tries to counter this, saying there's something more fundamental to justice.]
- Criticism: The idea of mutual agreement swamps the idea of concern for others, the idea of human inclinations.
- So in essence there're two parts. (1) Egoism (what's in my best interest) and (2) I don't want "state of nature".
- Criticism (by Hobs): Who ensures that this contract is maintained? Historical (theological basis): There was this idea of divine rights (why kings are in power) this view was prevalent. This was used to justify morality. However Hobs wanted a more secular basis for this. Thus he suggested there must be a sovereign power that ensures enforcement of these agreements.
- Criticism: Free rider problem; if one or two don't follow the agreement, then "free riders" exist. Clearly unfair so long as others follow the contracts.

- On the 17th we can have a discussion of questions. Virtue, meta, natural, Non natural, + (alex miller?), Egosim (shang's book), Social Contract theory (Ben)

## 2.2 Tuesday

- The rational choice theories also face the same challenge as what is pointed out by Hobs. Just because I made an agreement, it may not agree with it, it may cease to be in my interest. So the idea is that my choice depends on choices made by others.
- This is best illustrated by the prisoner's dilemma. A and B are caught. Both convicted of stealing. Not enough evidence to know which one committed a murder. The deal is that (1) if you confess and the other doesn't confess then, you walk free and the other gets hung. (2) If both confess, then imprisonment for 5 years each. (3) If neither confess, then 2 years each.

Now individually, the best situation is that you confess and the other doesn't. Overall, both remaining silent is best. So now there's a conflict. However, the safest choice is to confess (you don't die). The idea is that you make that choice, assuming that both make this, then deviating from the said choice results in a worse situation.

- Dilemma illustrates: Interests are forward looking, then I needn't care about my agreements (backward looking). However you can't enhance your self interest without promise keeping/agreement etc.

This shows that there's a problem with the social contract theory. That theory is based on equality of strengths. The contract is between two equals so that it benefits both. If there's a weaker person, then he'll submit to me anyway. Thus the contract theory is restricted to equals.

Kant on the other hand was saying that this equality is in terms of human worth. Humanity as an end itself was a kind of rational principle (contrast to the rationality used to describe ability to maximizing self interest). Thus for Kant, there's a different kind of contract.

This shows that the idea of morality being based on self interest must go. Later Kant's idea was used to link to Justice. There he (forgot the name) uses the idea of original position where you don't know where you'd belong to, you're behind a veil of ignorance. You could be a rich person, a poor person, stupid, smart etc. He said then the principle of justice will come from this position.

The main problems were his assumptions; self interest doesn't guarantee that you'll abide by the contract. The criticism is that this contract will not work if the egoist position is assumed.

- The exam is from three to five on the scheduled day.

## Part I

# Pre-exam

### Q1 Difference b/w virtue ethics and other theories of ethics? Can the latter be seen in terms of virtue ethics?

Virtue Ethics: To decide what we ought to do, ask what we ought to be (discuss: Eg. Gandhi etc., consider virtues)

Differences with other theories

1. Use concrete *virtue judgements* as opposed to abstract principles (discuss: kant, emotions only instrumental; consequentialism, friends view each other as instrumental for overall good)
2. Dissatisfaction that motivated Virtue Ethics: (a) Abstract principles hard to implement, (b) norms of ethics that're partial (? which theory, rule utilitarianism)  
We must *evaluate agents* as opposed to their actions only. Kant and Utilitarians also suggest how virtues can be assessed; the distinction is that virtue ethics makes virtue evaluation have *primary*, viz. normative/laws aspect is based on virtue and not action suggested by the virtue.
3. Some felt: Idea is to look at ethical practices of the past and convert them into a theory that unifies them. Eg. Aristotle (student of Plato) "good" life is lived by being virtuous, viz. having all excellences of human character.

Many believe that virtue ethics are compatible with act evaluation: Virtue is the primary mode of evaluation, everything else is evaluated in terms of virtue. Specific example:

Hursthouse's theory:

- "An action is right iff it is what a virtuous agent would, characteristically, do in the circumstances..".
- Defn: Eudaimonia:=human well being
- Two types of virtues: Intellectual and moral
  - Intellectual virtues: conducive to certain kinds of knowledge
    - \* Theoretical wisdom: <not defined further>
    - \* Practical wisdom: [important; it's necessary for moral virtue] enables the agent to figure how to act well, viz. a person who can deliberate; act rationally in matters of good and bad.
  - Moral Virtue := involves activities that lead to well-being
- Virtue := a mean state; doesn't exhibit excess;  
[claim:] Practical wisdom is crucial in choosing the mean

### Q2 Issue with moral judgements being beliefs and implication of "fact-value" distinction

1. Difference between beliefs and desires (in terms of being truth evaluable)

2. Morality beliefs: (against) fit external reality?

- (a) is there a “state of the world” about “what we ought to do”?
- (b) how to verify? Factual agreement, moral disagreement
- (c) even the idea that moral judgements are guided is also troublesome: what’s the nature of that which does the guiding?

3. Morality beliefs: (in favour) Children worked to death, enslaved; when argued against, we believe this view is wrong.

- (a) Are moral issues capable of being true, false, objectively correct etc.?
- (b) Are they closer to moral reality than others?

## Fact-Value distinction

### Background

1. Fact: eg. “Beth’s remark hurt Alice badly”; facts like these can be agreed upon, with reasonable people - facts exist even if all don’t agree.
2. Eg. “Greed is a vice”, “misery is bad” are neither (i) equivalent to facts nor (ii) deducible from facts; viz. we ought to alleviate pain doesn’t logically follow from knowing a person is in pain (in context of misery is bad).

### The distinction

1. Ought can’t be strictly entailed from facts about the case
2. Properties like “goodness” can’t be identical to natural properties possessed by actions or states of the world, eg. tendency to produce happiness or misery etc.

## Q3 Distinction b/w (a) cognitivism and non-cognitivism and (b) naturalism and non-naturalism

Consider: Judgement that murder is wrong.

Cognitivists := Such moral judgement is a belief - it is truth-apt

Non-cognitivists := Such judgements express emotions/desires - not truth-apt.

NB: True/false can be attributed to, whether or not I have some particular desire and not to the desire itself.

Strong cognitivism := one which holds that moral judgements are (a) truth evaluable (in terms of falsity) and (b) can be the result of cognitively accessing the facts which render them true.

There are two types of strong cognitivists:

- Naturalists (reductionist):= [A strong cognitivist that holds] a moral judgement is rendered true or false by a natural state of affairs  
(where ‘nature’ is the subject matter of natural sciences and also of psychology)  
Naturalists (reductionist) [alternate equivalent]:= moral properties are identical to (or reducible to) natural properties.

Examples of moral properties: (a) property of being conducive to the greatest happiness of the greatest numbers. (b) property of being conducive to the preservation of human species)

NB: Cornell Realists := Moral properties are irreducible natural properties in their own right

- Non-naturalists := moral properties are neither identical to, nor reducible to natural properties; they're irreducible ('sui generis').
  - Moore's Ethical Non-naturalism := moral goodness is non-natural, simple and unanalysable
  - Contemporary version by Joh McDowell & David Wiggins etc.

NB 2: {Natural reductionists, Cornell realists, and both non-naturalists}  $\in$  Moral Realists, where

Moral realists:= there really exist moral facts and properties and their existence is independent of human opinion.

## Q4 Naturalistic Fallacy and The Open Question Argument

1. "good" as an "object or idea" is indefinable. There're two questions
  - (a) Explain why "good" is indefinable
  - (b) On what grounds did he (Moore) say so
2. Why "good" is indefinable
  - (a) Three definitions exist. (a) Stipulative (b) Lexical (c) third kind
    - i. Anyone can logically/emperically, define (stipulate) the meaning of "good"
    - ii. The dictionary would have some rules to use the word "good"
    - iii. Third kind: describes the nature of the notion or object, denoted by the word; not merely what it's used to describe
  - (b) Definition type (c) is used for complex objects;
    - i. complex objects are those that have multiple properties/qualities. To define them, we reduce the object to the simplest terms. Simple terms will be those that others are familiar with already.
    - ii. Simple objects/notion: eg. yellow; it doesn't mean "producing certian vibration", viz. yellow doesn't make sense to a colourblind person.
  - (c) Claim: Good is a simple notion; just as yellow doesn't mean "producing a certain wavelength", good doesn't mean "producing pleasure".
  - (d) "the naturalistic fallacy": Ethics may have the goal of finding properties, besides being good, that good things have; That doesn't however define good. Philosophers (ethical naturalists) thought it does. This is termed as the naturalistic fallacy.
    - i. Synthetic and Analytic propositions: Synthetic "All bachelors are unmarried males", Analytic "All bachelor are unhappy". In the former, the meaning is contained the other half of the proposition. In the latter it's not.  
Moore's Claim: "Proposition about 'the good' are synthetic, never analytic" [not clear what's the point? Read the rest and then the bracket!]

- ii. Substantive “the good” and adjective “good”; “The good” are ‘objects’ to which the adjective “good” applies.

Observation/Objection: Enumerating all the things that produce pleasure (for example) and calling these “the good” doesn’t entail “good” itself is definable. Only means “the good” is defined.

Claim: There’s no point in saying that pleasure is good unless good is something different from pleasure.

[so “the good” being defined synthetically only means that what constitutes good maybe defined as ‘objects that produce pleasure’. Infact he claims all definitions of “the good” are of this form. However, “the good” doesn’t define “good”. DOUBT: Why is it important for “the good” to be synthetically used? What if its used analytically?]

### 3. “Naturalistic Fallacy”: On what grounds did Moore say “good” is undefinable?

#### (a) Moore said there’re two and only two alternatives

- i. “good” denotes a complex whole, and there maybe disagreement about it’s correct analysis
- ii. “good” means nothing at all; there’s no such subject as Ethics

#### (b) Issues with (i):

- i. “The open question argument”: The definition used to define the complex object, that very definition maybe questioned to being good itself

A. Eg. Good is defined as “producing pleasure”. One may ask “Is what pleasure produces good?”. Ofcourse, given the definition, it is tautology: “Is what pleasure produces pleasure?”. The point that (equivalently)

(a) would a hedonist support his view by wondering whether “what pleasure produces is pleasure”

(b) no one - least of all a hedonist - would accept that “whatever prodgues pleasure is good” is an insignificant tautology, viz. “whatever produces pleasure produces pleasure”. However, if “good” means production of pleasure, then it infact *is* an insignificant tautology.

B. Philosophers (eg. Bentham, Mill, Spencer etc.) defended their views by saying “good” means X. The point is that both can’t be true. You can’t say that their definition is significant (in the aforesaid sense) and at the same time that it’s true by definition of “good”.

- (c) Issues with (2): Moore claimed that if any person attentively considers what’s before his/her mind when he/she asks the question “is pleasure after all good?” will satisfactorily find that she isn’t just wondering whether pleasure is pleasant. He said that if this is done for various definitions, the same “unique” object is compared to the suggested definition. Various distinct questions maybe asked in connection of these objects, eg. “is it good”, “is this desired or approved or pleasant?”. Thus he says that there must be some “unique object” before his mind and so there must be subject matter for ethics. [he admits that one needs to be alert for this, but he said the point of the analysis is to make her alert]

## Q5 Three Features of Stevenson’s emotivist theory

Stevenson claimed that any account of meaning of ethical terms must ahve the following features

1. The fact that genuine agreements and disagreements occur within it.



- (a) Disagreement in attitude and belief: Eg. Pope says contraceptive should be illicit. (a) Else this may become a new means to solving family problems. (b) This would cause “lowering of morality”. So the belief is (a), that the act in question will cause some effect. And then there’s an attitude towards/against (a). The attitude is (b).

The idea is simply that we may differ in our opinions about accuracy of the belief independent of our attitude towards it.

- (b) Genuine disagreement in attitude: Stevenson contrasts two attitudes, (a) I approve of this; do so as well (as in you also approve of this) & (b) I approve of this and I want you to do so as well (I want you to also approve of this). The distinction is that in (a), you have a genuine disagreement. A says “this is good, approve of this” and B says “this is not good, don’t approve of this”. However, in (b) A will say “this is good, I want you to approve of this” while B will say “this is not good, I don’t want you to approve of this”. Thus, in (b), disagreement is not necessary; each can acknowledge both to be true without self-contradiction.

2. The fact that moral terms have “magnetism” [basically have an imperative force: those who recognize X is good, are more likely to do it]
3. The fact that the scientific, or empirical, method of verification is not sufficient for ethics [uses the open question argument; eventually can ask if those properties are good: good is undefinable that way]

## Q6 Contractarian’s view and state of nature

Idea: Morality is a contract, constructed by rational people for mutual advantage.

Claims: (a) Contract theory is the only possible explanation for ‘moral commitments’. (b) Intrinsically action-guiding properties are denied.

### Hypothetical contracts and moral obligations

Contract (generically): (a) In law (discuss: 2 parties freely enter into an agreement, with a hope of a net gain, granted the other complies) then (b) “not always written”: the Restaurant example (discuss) [NB: A contract basically distributes benefits and burdens]

Moral obligations: Contract with qualification, viz. there’s not even an implicit agreement between the moral agents. (Reason: Assume there was, then it would have to be renewed each generation)

Defence: Their content of the theory is to describe what the agreement could be.

Illustrations: (1) Killing and stealing are forbidden and (2) Cooperation | benefits outweigh the burdens

Critics: Works from a self-interest point of view. What if there’s a self-sufficient, intelligent and strong enough individual. What has he to gain from the moral contract?

### Hobbes and the state of nature

“Why should I be moral” has been answered: self-interested people could agree, provided others also agree.

Hobbes:

- State of Nature (SON) := Fictional state where (a) there're no police or courts and everyone does as he/she pleases. (b) There's lack of sympathy, altruism. (c) resources are scarce.
- Assume SON: It'll result in "constant fear (of death etc.), life will be solitary, poor, short etc."
- Cause of conflict: Equality of strength of humans (brawn + wits combined); (discuss); Morality works if there're enough equals. (discuss)
- Solution: Everyone should agree to be governed by an absolute ruler, who enforces contracts