

Philosophy Notes

4th 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 a 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)