

Reflection Collection:

In response to Rachels' "The Elements of Moral Philosophy"

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Chapter 3: Subjectivism in Ethics

Subjectivism in Ethics is very important when it comes to diffusing largely disputed topics. Two sects that are included in subjectivism are simple subjectivism and emotivism, while both equate opinions and feelings, they differ in how we see the opinions and feelings. Take the widely heated topic of sexual orientation for example; in simple subjectivism, one could say, “Being gay is wrong, I disapprove of being gay,” as a matter of fact. There is no disputing this person, that fact is their reality and they will always be right, though there is a surprisingly large percent of humans that claim this “fact”, who turn out to be homosexual. Turning to emotivism, one could say, “Being gay is *wrong*,” and thusly presume to list reasons as to why they feel that way, as a means of expressing their attitude. Many would agree that the latter hypothetical human could be subject to change with the right brain on the other end of the conversation.

Chapter 4: Does Morality Depend on Religion?

While morality does not depend on religion per se, religion does institute morality in its commandments and sanctions. Christians define what is natural and unnatural by the word of God; in looking at the example previously stated, homosexuality, Christians believe it is “unnatural” in a sense that sex for pleasure does not fulfill the task that procreation ensues. Similarly to that of forms of birth control, it is not natural to stop the baby-making process merely to experience enjoyment, this argument is one of two in the main developments against abortion. Namely, abortion defeats the purpose of consummation as well as the “potential” the fetus carries, outweighing the wants of the mother, creates an unknown that cannot be found, that

is unless the life of the fetus is carried out to personhood. Do we play God in circumstances that involve variables that are unforeseeable, such as the future?

It is baffling that humans cling to ideologies of a higher power that determine the morals, values, and beliefs they live by. “Is the conduct right because the gods command it, or do the gods command it because it is right?” Socrates tries to define what is “right” in Plato’s *Euthyphro*. Does one fabricate good and evil, right and wrong, or does one merely recognize what is true; in the case of the Christian God, God is the origin of everything, therefore everything is right because God is all good and the source of all moral authority. Let us reverse Socrates’ challenge, “Is the conduct wrong because the gods forbid it, or do the gods forbid it because it is wrong?” Say your parents tell you not to drink soda, is drinking the soda wrong because your parents tell you not to? Or do your parents say not to drink soda because drinking it is wrong? Is breaking the rule wrong or is the soda what is actually bad? It turns out to be both, breaking a mutual agreement is morally wrong and soda will rot your teeth out, however one is based on values and the other is based on cavities.

Chapter 5: Ethical Egoism

The premise of Ethical Egoism claims that each person ought to follow their own self-interest, which does not directly imply what is right and wrong on a moral scale. That humans should best advocate all individuals’ interests and the optimal way to achieve everyone’s interests, is for them to be met by each individual exclusively. “Every man for himself,” a famously negative idiom that encapsulates that of Ethical Egoism. Other beings only manifest in one’s reality if it benefits the beholder of that reality, as if the being had no matter, in physicality

nor affair. What Ethical Egoism claims cannot be taken as a truth, for in actuality there are few who do not exclusively seek their own needs but do devote their time and even money to the less fortunate, who do not see it to be the best way for the world to function as a whole. As to be a collection of realities that intermingle with and be of service to others, not a planet full of separated persons in their own happy, shiny bubble of utopia.

Chapter 6: The Social Contract Theory

Concerning the Prisoner's Dilemma in relation to Egoism and Altruism, why can humans not be both? It is true that humans have a limited sense of altruism, and it may be true about egoism, but what I do not understand is that humans cannot seem to care for both themselves and others equally. In the scenario in which you are given four choices, that rely on the choice of another man, Smith, the choice you choose that option that benefits you the most. Say there is an option that benefits both you and Smith, you would want to pick it if it was a perfect world in which Smith would do the same. If everyone wants what benefits all, there would be no confusion on what choice is best for *you*, instincts would point in the right direction. If it were to be a social norm, and in the unwritten social contract, for humans to be kind to one another, both you and Smith would benefit, rather than one of the other.

Chapter 7: The Utilitarian Approach

The Principle of Utility, conceived by Jeremy Bentham, argued one should promote of "most happiness" and the "least unhappiness" one can. This does not state who, be it one's self, others, or advocate for the general welfare of all. The principle can be used to challenge many

claims, for instance the scenario above, the Prisoner's Dilemma: had both you and Smith being following the Principle of Utility blindly, the outcome would benefit both. The Utilitarian stance on eating meat and slaughtering animals is quite similar to mine own, in that, animals suffer greatly in enclosed, confined spaces, with the slaughter as relief. Whereas, if farmers, and not manufacturers, treat their animals humanely and not cruelty then eating meat and slaughtering them is okay.

The Principle of Utility suggests a promotion of "most happiness" and a demotion of "least unhappiness." Produce more happiness and produce less happiness for all individuals, universal happiness. There cannot be universal happiness, nor local happiness, because what makes me happy may make someone else quite unhappy. Can Utilitarianism work on a smaller scale? Can we produce a sense of happiness, that actions are right if they are useful or benefit a majority, benefit in a sense of pleasure? Humans constantly do things that benefit the majority, while also not be pleasurable to the human, aka taxes. No one finds happiness in paying taxes, but it is useful and benefits the majority. So the Principle, of most happiness/least unhappiness, may not be directed in an individual and only a majority; an individual's pleasure and pain may be more surmountable than that of a majority, to the individual, and that is where we find Egoism and not Utilitarianism, because Utilitarianism is not about an individual's happiness.

Chapter 8: Debate Over Utilitarianism

My question is, is there equal consideration? Are each individuals amount of pleasure and suffering carefully equated to create the most satisfaction in the world? In the case of York v. Story, an example from the U.S Court of Appeals, we see a few cops satisfaction surpassed the

dissatisfaction and uncomfortability of Ms. Angelynn York. Strong suffering ought to exceed shameful pleasure; this may tie to how Utilitarianism conflicts with common sense. In looking at *equal consideration's* version of calculation suggests that there being more cops satisfied outweighs the unrighteousness of the situation. The consideration has a multitude of complicated variables that highly depend in the particular circumstances, this is true, this is why Utilitarianism should be a reminder to examine the possible consequences in the near future, as well as the distant future.

There are many ways in which we can analyze Utilitarianism but it has been since abandoned on an applied level and it is thought to be more of a guideline to particular situations rather than life instructions. One method to see Utilitarianism's fault is Professor Chen's example of an application (app) on your smartphone or smartwatch that examines and evaluated the users happiness as an "H" level. In which case, the H app lets the user know how many H's they will get from going to the movies versus a restaurant. A new movie they have not seen with poor reviews maybe a +5 H, while a restaurant they know they enjoy on multiple instances will be a possible +10 H. It is the fact that is a "maybe" and "possible" outcomes, when humans, nor technology, will ever be able to truly know what will happen in the future. Utilitarianism wants us to guess what will promote most happiness, the best possible outcome. When that movie could be to your exact liking, and not in accordance with the reviewer's, and the cook at your favorite restaurant maybe be not feeling up to making food as perfectly as they usually do, or you find yourself tiring of the same dish and thusly only a +3 H and not the +10 the app suggested.

Chapter 9: Are There Absolute Moral Rules?

Questioning the existence of absolute moral rules is similar to that of Utilitarianism, in that one cannot see nor justify actions for the future. While Rachels states universal morals do not exist, Immanuel Kant suggest there are absolute moral rules and conducts we should follow. Focusing on lying, one cannot lie because they think the consequences of lying will be less disastrous than telling the truth. This is basing a decision on something that is not truly foreseeable. Kant's theory involves following moral rules that are adopted universally, if you are not then you are following the wrong rule. If you do not follow the universals, then no one will, making society no longer relevant, for a society can only be beneficial if everyone is following the same rules. If you lie, then everyone will lie, then lying becomes useless, therefore do not lie. This logic can be applied on many universal rules that lead to only the benefit of society and must not hone on individuals themselves.

Kant believes an imperative, in judging moral rules and choices, is to look at the motives. In looking at Hypothetical and Categorical Imperatives, we see it is similar to limited altruism. If you want to look like a good person then drive a Prius, is Hypothetical Imperative. And owning and driving an hybrid car, like a Prius, is Categorical Imperative. We all want to be altruistic, but if no one can see it then what is the point? Kant argues that the Categorical Imperative is what we should live by. That we should drive an eco-friendly, hybrid car, whether or not our neighbors can see or tell. Good is good is good. Good is not good only if something something. Just as wrong is wrong, with no exceptions. Though when we reverse it, the argument of having to choose between two wrong with no other way out, shows that moral rules may not be fully absolute. The example given is a Polish man taking Jews out of a Nazi-struck country. The man was pulled over by Nazi officers and was asked if he was smuggling Jews. While lying is

“absolutely” morally wrong, so is being an accessory to murder. Would you lie to the officer? Or do you think yourself, as well as the assembly in your vehicle, could knock out this one or two officers and flee the scene without having to lie, kill, or be an accessory?

Chapter 10: Kant and Respect for Persons

From doing the reading, I have found Immanuel Kant may be the inventor of the beloved Golden Rule: treat others how you want to be treated. With his formulation of the Categorical Imperative that ends in, “always as an end and never as a means only.” Suggesting that one ought not to play nice with other humans if they play nice back. One ought to play nice. Period. With the ends of being a good person, and the means being only if the other person is nice too. You cannot assume everyone will be good, but if you are, then it may promote the general welfare of the majority. If you give to charity, only if someone is looking at you, then you will never do it. No one will. If everyone were to live by Kant’s version of the Golden Rule, then you may be able to assume that strangers are good, or play nice, because they will. Not in hopes you will be nice back, but in the nature that is goodness. To be good with no strings attached.

Immanuel Kant has the strangest notion that humans have more value than anything on earth and that humans’ morality ought to be universal and absolute. When it comes to the capitalist system of crime and punishment, Kant does not agree with some of the way we choose to deal with those who commit crimes. One way, deterrence, does not seem to actually work, if it did no one would be disobedient. Kant believes rehabilitating criminals, is taking away their autonomy. They chose to be criminals, we have to respect that; rehabilitating them is only using them as a means to an end. Meaning, making them a better person is bad, criminals are who they want to

be. The two forms of punishment Kant does agree with is for the same reason, respect what people want. So in incapacitation or retribution, and an eye for an eye is equal when the first eye is completely competent in their decision making. One question at hand is that when you have a gentleman on death row who thoroughly has made amends with their past and has created a new life as a good person. Would you take them off death row? A hypothetical, in which a man has truly turned over a new leaf, yet is still going to die a somewhat agonizing death? Maybe it is better to die a happy person, rather than an unhappy person. Kant would agree, respect their that person knew the consequences of their actions. A Utilitarian would disagree, suggesting that doing so would take away the overall happiness of a populace, maybe rather, put a disgruntled inmate on death row to forego their addition of unhappiness to the majority. Or just maybe in doing so, the disgruntled, unhappy inmate would then make peace instead. Using death as a deterrence against unhappiness.

Chapter 11: Feminism and Ethics of Care

In Kohlberg's scenario, concerning his Stages of Moral Development, Jake and Amy are eleven years olds who are posed with a moral dilemma. The dilemma presented, a Mr. Heinz has a dying wife and he does not have enough money to pay for the medicine, his pharmacist will not take have of what he is owed nor the other half at a later date. A drug that only costs \$200 to make, yet is \$2000 to buy. Though a thousand dollars is still a profit, it is not enough for the stingy pharmacist. "Should Heinz steal the drug?" Jake states, yes, life is more important than money. A cute argument of, the pharmacist can always make more money, while Heinz cannot get his wife back if she dies. Amy's position is this: she cannot die and he cannot steal, just talk it

out. This shows Amy's unwavering moral thoughts, you cannot break moral codes, even when someone's life is on the lines. Amy did give a multitude of reasons, he could go to jail then she would die, they could run out of medicine, or the medicine could not work at all, nonetheless, it would not be worth it. Kohlberg suggests Jake is viewing the scenario at a higher stage than Amy because she is only playing out the appropriate actions in our social roles. Though Amy's reasons could be directed to the first stage, "obeying authority, avoiding punishment." Her moral premise is the only bad thing to happen is to get caught because you could always steal more. Concluding that Kohlberg's "Stages" should just be concepts and a way of viewing situations. For him to state that a small number of people reach the fifth, out of his six-stage process, is not rightfully fair. Meaning an even smaller number reaches the sixth, "abiding by abstract, universal moral principles," which could exemplify mass religions. One could use one stage, while possibly another.

One strong point of feminism is that not acting like a man is okay. Some misconceptions of equality is that women need to step to men's level, whereas men do not need to change at all. For instance, men are very competitive and women are less so, more thoughtful. Men's sense of competition is as instinctual as women's need to protect their young. The most Utilitarian perspective on equality is that women should not have to be as competitive as men, meaning men should be less competitive. This issue is highlighted in the workforce, almost enforcing the wage gap between sexes. They say women make 80 cents to the dollar men do on average. This statistic includes lower-wage sectors in which the gap is smaller due to minimum wage. In high fields, the gap can be seen to as little as 40 cents to the dollar. This is because men constantly strive for higher wages and higher positions, while women do, is not as common. If employers

spread their raises equally, and not only to those that ask for it, and offer more positions to women, rather than “the boys” who they go out for drinks with, then we would see a much smaller gap in wages between men and women.

Chapter 12: Virtue Ethics

Similar to that to the teachings of the Buddha, Aristotle states that “a virtue is a midpoint between extremes,” moderation between all things. Rachels gives the example of an auto mechanic and a teacher, situations in which one would want the mechanic to have traits such as skill, honesty, and conscientiousness, and one would want a teacher to have traits such as knowledge, articulation, and patience. Whereas in a perfect world both the mechanic and the teacher would carry all six listed virtues as well as practice all others. While every person is different, one ought not pick and choose their virtues. In looking at a long list of virtues and a short list of vices a few fall between—an example, courage in on a spectrum with cowardice and foolhardiness on either sides—if you follow one, you follow them all, and that is being a good person.

Aristotle’s notion is true, that if one has the right virtues, they would be incapable of doing bad things. Similar to Kant’s Hypothetical Imperative, do A, if B; an example being, be nice to grandma so she will give you more money on Christmas. Rather than his Categorical Imperative, do A; be nice to grandma. If one has the right virtues, there is no *if*. One does not worry about whether or not someone will be nice back, or if something good will happen in return for doing good. When the question of *if* does not exist, only good character exists. In Naturalism, Aristotle points out that happy people do not get as sad as often. This sounds

obvious but it is much more than that. Comparable to that of Taoism, follow your potential. That everything in natural has a purpose and that everyone needs to follow their individual purpose. In order to fulfill one's true potential, they do need the means and moderation in everything, including money. To be happy and dictate the correct reality, moderation is key, cannot be too poor or too rich, but even that is relative. Even poverty stricken countries, there is still higher and lower levels of socio-economic class, the ones who meet in the middle will always be less stressed than the extremes.

Chapter 13: What Would a Satisfactory Moral Theory be like?

A "satisfactory moral theory" does not necessarily exist. Given free will, autonomy, choice, and the human condition, people have grown to not purposefully grant themselves moral to live by, it comes by the fact the in order for societies to function, similar that of the Social Contract Theory. One question the resides is that of merit, if someone who helps you a lot, a friend maybe, asks you for help, do you have an obligation to help them? Do they "deserve" it? Say someone who you haves asked for help and refused, a neighbor, and then finally one day they ask you for help, what do you do? Do they "deserve" contempt? By the Golden Rule, one should be treated the way they treat you, neigh, treat other how you want to be treated. Help you friend because it is the good thing to do; help your neighbor because it is the good thing to do. There is no "deserve," no rewards, no grudges, there are good people and there are bad people.

Case Study: Race and Bioethics

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There are a number of ethical issues that come up in accordance with human cloning; one of which being, what I like to call, GMO bio-babies. Genetically modified organisms that are biological with their "twin." The National Bioethics Advisory Commission states one fear is that GMO bio-babies will be looked at as a means to an end or a commodity, one argument is that so are naturally born babies. Company to the parent, God's or society's will, heir to a throne. An heir can be broken down much further, an heir to a kingdom, such as England royal family, or an heir to a monopoly, like Nestle or the guy who owns Jimmy John's, Jimmy John. Jimmy John is a perfect example of someone who is rich, powerful, and mad enough to attempt to clone

himself, a man who hunts rhinos in his free time. Say Jimmy one day decides, I am going to raise a clone of himself to take over my sandwich legacy; studies of socialization suggest that Little Jimmy will never truly be Big Jimmy, that he may not be a terrible, immoral human and that being that identical twin to such a monster may haunt Little Jimmy. In conclusion, cloning does not produce clones unless they are raised at the same age and are given the same stimuli, as seen in natural-born identical twins, who are not, in the end, clones.