

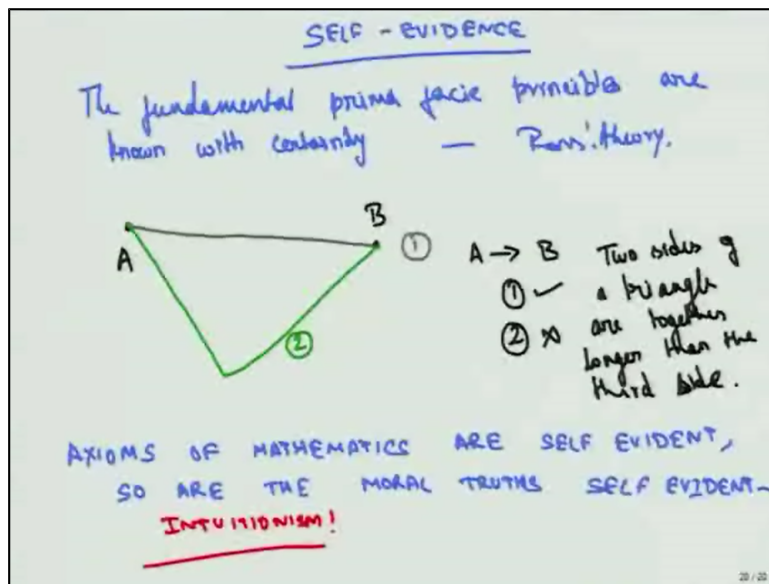
Ethics
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Non-Cognitive or Non-Descriptivist Theories Intuitionism

We will talk about, Intuitionism as a theory. And, in our conversation, in our little talk about Intuitionism, we came across this notion of Self-Evidence. Now, what is Self-Evidence. We briefly recapitulate, what we meant by Intuitionism is that well, there are objective moral truths, and these truths are self-evident. It is definitely not to be understood as, it being mysteriously intuited by individuals, but that it is self-evident.

Now, we will dwell a little bit, on this notion of Self-Evidence. How does this notion of Self-Evidence, make Intuitionism a sound Moral Theory, not a mysterious justification for moral truths? Now, what is meant by Self-Evidence. Well.

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If you take a look at the slide, the fundamental Prima Facie Principles, are known with certainty. Now, if this is to be taken, with Ross Theory. Well, if we quickly recapitulate, what Ross meant, that well. Ross proposed, a group of Prima Facie Duties. Duties, that were clearly evident. But, how to choose among these duties, was the discretion of the agent, or of the individual. Now,

these duties are self-evident, according to Ross.

But, how do we choose between these duties. Or, if there is a conflict between duties, or if there is a hierarchy, that has to be maintained, or brought about, how is that to be done. That, has to be done by the agent. Now, moral truths being self-evident, meaning that, we have an intuitive. Or, if I may drop the use of the term, for its association with mysterious unscientific thinking, what we mean by this, intuitive ability, or Self-Evidence. Let us take an example.

And, this example is from, Plato's dialogue. And, Plato postulates, asks a slave, a slave of the time, who was supposed to be very low on knowledge, and was perhaps mostly doing manual work, to go from Point-A to Point-B. Right. Let us take a look at the slide, what briefly was the position? Now say, this is Point-A, and this is Point-B. Now, the slave was given two options. He takes this. This is Route-1. And, he takes, this is Route-2.

Now, slave is given the task, to go from A to B. Which route, should he take? 1 or 2. Now, slave in that dialogue, choose the Route-1, instead of 2. Now, this also collaborates the mathematical axiom, that two sides of a triangle are together, longer than the third side. Now, this is what the Plato try to show, that well. This slave, who has not been trained in mathematics, arithmetic, or geometry of that time, still chose the first route, the route which is shorter.

Thereby, indicating that well, he does have implicitly the knowledge, that well, two sides of a triangle are longer, then the third side of a triangle. So, that is why, he chose a shorter route. Now, this seems to be pretty obvious. And, the profundity of this claim, can be understood, if he is look a little deeper. Now, what Plato is trying to proof, or demonstrate by this is that, well, these fundamental truths of geometry of knowledge, are there implicitly in the human framework, in the human mind.

It is only through the education, that these are made aware, consciously. In fact, I am reminded of Vivekananda's quote, which said that well, education is the manifestation of perfection, already present in man. So, well, this went ahead to talk about, that well, knowledge already resides, or we have certain framework, for our knowledge, we are pre-equipped with it. And, this

is only made conscious, by the process of education.

Now, this went ahead further to, demarcate two schools of two dominants, or major schools of philosophy between, Rationalism and Empiricism. One claiming that well, experience is the source of knowledge, Empiricism. And, Rationalism claiming that well, most of our knowledge comes as a part of our framework. Now, without getting into that debate, why we talk about this example now, is in context of this claim of Self-Evidence.

Now, Ross was an exist, who went ahead to claim, that well, the Self-Evidence that we talk about moral truths, comprises in the framework of human mentality. That is, just as the way, mathematical truths from a part of, what comprises of the human framework. Just as, we do not question, or it is obvious to us that, two sides of a triangle are together, longer than the third side.

Now, that this kind of an appeal, that is an arithmetic or geometric claim has, is the same kind of appeal, that a moral claim has. Looking for a justification, or an experiential empirical justification, for it is futile, or is irrelevant, or is not required to justify this. Just as, mathematics held as, one of the purest forms of knowledge. Because, it is mostly intuitively evident, in that sense, not a mysterious sense, that because, it is a part of our framework, of approaching the world, of the human mentality.

That needs, no further proof. It is self-evident, just as the truths of mathematics. If you take a look at, what I am trying to say is that, just as axioms of mathematics are self-evident, so are the moral truths, self-evident. And, this is the claim of Intuitionism. What it says is that, a truth is self-evident, if understanding it is sufficient, for being justified in believing it. One knows the Proposition provided, one believes it on the basis of understanding it. Such truths are self-evident, but that does not mean, they are obvious.

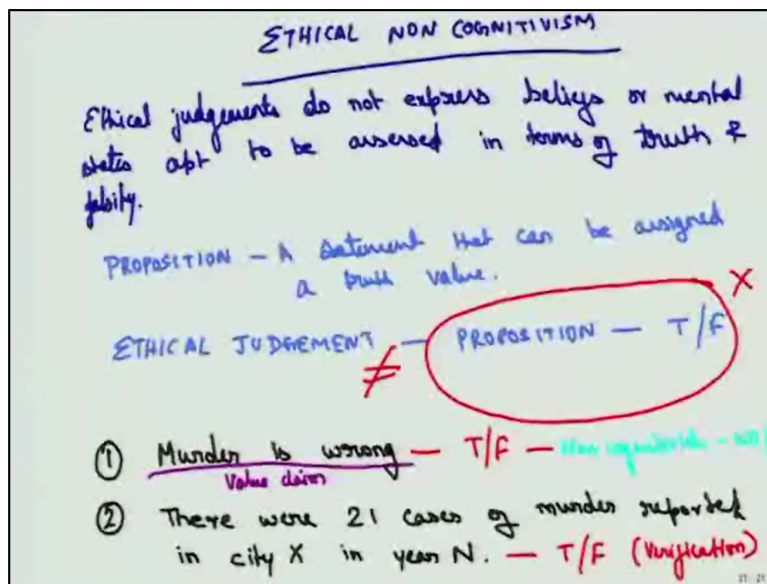
They are evident, to those with mental abilities and experience, who have reflected properly about them. Well. What this simply means. Is that, well, now these self-evident truths, that the Intuitionist talk about, and the mathematicians talk about, are not known by everybody. In the sense, that it is realised only by those, who have reflected, or who have grappled with it. So, this

axiom, that two sides of a triangle, are together longer than the first side, or that a line is the shortest distance between two points.

Now, these are self-evident, to the reflecting mind, or to the trained mind. So, we have the primitive ability to register this. But, it is only with reflection, or training, or education that, that is known to it. So, moral truths in the same sense, that well, we cannot expect that, somebody with an unrefined thinking, or a primitive way of instinctual thinking, will have the same level of knowledge of moral objectivity. According to Intuitionists, as someone with, a very refined way of thinking.

This happens only when, a reflection, and advanced thinking, takes place. So, this is, what the Intuitionists want to say by, Self-Evidence. That, this is reflection, that takes place only when, we find that the agent has reflected upon it, has been trained in it, and has consciously reached the realisation of the same. Well. Now, let us talk about, another Metaethical classification, that we talked about earlier, which is called, Ethical Non-Cognitivism.

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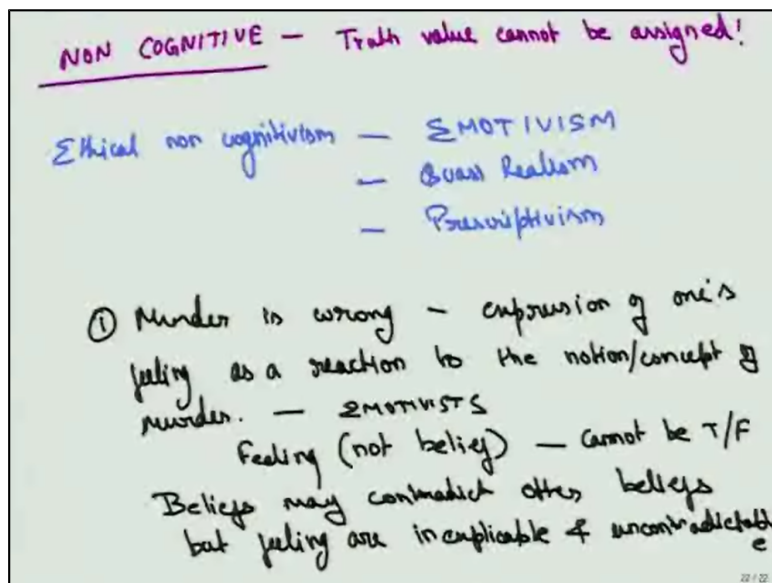
Now, Ethical Non-Cognitivism claims that, Ethical Judgements do not express, beliefs or mental states. Act to be assessed, in terms of, truth and falsity. Well. What is summoned here. Well. First, what is a Proposition? Let us say, a Proposition is a statement, or any sentence, that can be assigned a truth value. Now, what makes an ethical Proposition. An Ethical Judgement, is a

Proposition, only if it can be assigned, the value of truth or falsity.

Now, the Ethical Non-Cognitivist says, that well, this is incorrect. So, Ethical Judgement is not a Proposition. And, this value of truth and falsehood cannot be assigned, to an Ethical Judgement. Now, let us take a look at, two sentences. One, murder is wrong. There were, 21 cases of murder, reported in a city X, in year N. Pay attention, on the two sentences written. Now, the first is, murder is wrong. Two, there were 21 cases of murder, reported in city X, in year N.

Now, can we verify this. Now, how would you judge. Well. Can this be true or false. No matter, whether it is true or false, how would we perhaps verify it. We would go and check up with the police records, and find out that well, if this is true or not. So, this can be made true or false, on verification. But, what about, sentence one. Can this be given, truth or false value. Now, according to the Non-Cognitivist, no, this cannot be given, the truth value of true or false. So, that means, murder is wrong, is a value claim, but it is Non-Cognitive. What is meant by Non-Cognitive?

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Non-Cognitive, truth value cannot be assigned. So now, to start with. Well. Let us look at those two sentences, or think about those two sentences, again. Now, murder is wrong? Why can it not be treated as a moral fact? Well. The Non-Cognitivist say, that well, any moral judgement, is in

fact not a judgement, it is perhaps an expression of feeling, or whatever it be, it cannot be granted a truth value. Because, it is a fiction, it is a feeling, it does not have a correlate, to justify it as right and wrong.

Well. There are various forms of Ethical Non-Cognitivism. We have Emotivism, as we have talked about, in the earlier sessions. There is also, Quasi-Realism, Prescriptivism. These are all forms of, Ethical Non-Cognitivism. The third Metaethical position, that we talked about, that well, moral judgements are, cannot be falsified, are proved to be true. So, they cannot be a truth value assigned to them. So, this is what, Ethical Non-Cognitivism is trying to say. Now, let us take an example of the same sentence, that we talked about, that murder is wrong.

Now, as we said, murder is wrong, according to the Emotivist, is just an expression of one's feeling, or as a reaction to the notion, or concept of murder. This is according to the Emotivists. And because, it is a feeling, not a belief, cannot be marked true or false. Beliefs can differ, or beliefs may contradict each other, may contradict other beliefs. But, feelings are inexplicable and uncontradictable. In the sense, that well, feelings can differ from person to person.

And, there is no way of saying that well, these feelings contradict each other. The Propositions, that the feeling hint at, may contradict. But, feelings that way, are not contradictable, according to the Non-Cognitivists, particularly the Emotivist version of the Non-Cognitivist school. So, we see Ethical Non-Cognitivism as a third alternative, which is trying to take away, or which claims that, there is no objectivity to moral claims.

And, moral claims for whatever purpose, utility, they may have, maybe to exhort action, may be to bring people on one side. But, it is merely fictional, or psychological, and it is not true. So, we talked about, three versions of Ethics. We talked about Naturalistic Ethics, which based on, three Metaethical foundations of Ethics. Naturalism, which talked about, equating natural properties, with ethical properties. And, ethical properties were meaningful.

And, second was Non-Naturalism, or Intuitionism. That, ethical properties are meaningful, but only they cannot be equated to non-ethical properties. And therefore, grounding for the ethical

properties around Self-Evidence, or as Intuitionists say. The third is the Non-Cognitivist school, which still hold that well, there are Ethical Judgements. But, these judgements are, cannot be regarded as true or false, and they are Non-Cognitive.

The balance of it, if one denies, even the existence of moral judgements. Now, the Non-Cognitivists say that, there are ethical claims, but these claims cannot be verified, cannot be made true or false. But, there is a fourth foundation, which is Nihilism, or Moral Nihilism, that claims that well, there are no moral judgements. And, this belongs to the category of Amoralism. So, this is a denial of the, very ethical domain, that we have talked about.

So, this basically sums up, three of the Metaethical foundations, in classifying Metaethics, over which, various applied theories have been built. For example, Emotivism is built on Non-Cognitivism. Utilitarianism is built on Naturalism. So, this is the fundamental Metaethical positions that, come to prescribe these, or come to lay the foundation of, further Moral Theories.