

DSC 152 PHILOSOPHY

DSC-152 PHILOSOPHY

UNIT : 4

(-G. E. Moore : Indefinibility of Good, -Naturalistic Fallacy

Ayer and Stevenson : Emotivism)

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1. What is the 'Indefinibility of Good'?

- Good is an undefinable, simple, and non-natural concept.

2. Who proposed the 'Indefinibility of Good'?

- G.E. Moore.

3. Can 'Good' be defined?

- No, according to Moore, it is undefinable.

4. What is the 'Open Question Argument'?

- It states that no definition of 'Good' can make the question "Is it good?" meaningless.

5. What is Moore's critique of naturalism?

- He rejects the idea that 'Good' can be defined by natural properties.

6. What is the 'Naturalistic Fallacy'?

- The error of defining moral terms like 'Good' by natural properties.

7. How does Moore describe 'Good'?

- As a simple, non-natural, and intuitive property.

8. Why is 'Good' considered non-natural?

- It cannot be reduced to natural properties like pleasure or happiness.

9. What is Moore's stance on empirical science and 'Good'?

- 'Good' cannot be explained by empirical science.

10. Does Moore believe moral terms can be scientifically verified?

- No, moral terms are not subject to scientific verification.

11. What is a naturalistic fallacy?

- Defining moral properties using natural properties.

12. Why is 'Good' indefinable?

- Because it is a basic, non-natural concept.

13. What does Moore argue about ethical naturalism?

- He argues that it commits the naturalistic fallacy.

14. Is 'Good' an objective concept for Moore?

- Yes, but it is indefinable.

15. What mistake does ethical naturalism make?

- It tries to define 'Good' in terms of natural properties.

16. What example does Moore use to illustrate the naturalistic fallacy?

- Defining 'Good' as pleasure or happiness.

17. Can 'Good' be reduced to physical or psychological properties?

- No, Moore rejects this idea.

18. Is Moore's view of 'Good' empirically verifiable?

- No, it is known intuitively, not empirically.

19. What kind of property is 'Good'?

- A simple, non-natural, and irreducible property.

20. Does Moore think moral properties can be described scientifically?

- No, because they are non-natural.

21. What is Emotivism?

- The view that moral statements express emotions, not facts.

22. Who is associated with Emotivism?

- A.J. Ayer and C.L. Stevenson.

23. What does Ayer claim about moral statements?

- They express emotional attitudes, not factual claims.

24. What is the role of emotions in Ayer's Emotivism?

- Emotions are the basis for moral judgments.

25. What does the Verification Principle state?

- A statement is meaningful only if it can be empirically verified.

26. What is the impact of the Verification Principle on ethics?

- It suggests moral statements are not meaningful because they cannot be verified.

27. What did Stevenson add to Ayer's Emotivism?

- He emphasized the persuasive function of moral language.

28. How does Emotivism view moral disagreements?

- Moral disagreements are expressions of differing emotional attitudes.

29. What does Emotivism say about moral objectivity?

- It denies moral objectivity, viewing ethics as subjective.

30. Is Emotivism a form of non-cognitivism?

- Yes, it holds that moral statements do not describe facts but express emotions.

1. What is G.E. Moore's concept of the 'Indefinability of Good'?

- G.E. Moore argued that "Good" is a simple, non-natural property that cannot be defined in terms of any other concept. This is because "Good" is a basic, unanalyzable concept that cannot be reduced to anything else.

2. Why does Moore argue that 'Good' cannot be defined?

- Moore argues that the concept of "Good" is intuitive and cannot be defined by any natural property. It is understood directly through moral intuition and is a simple, irreducible notion.

3. What is Moore's "Open Question Argument"?

- Moore's Open Question Argument states that no matter how one defines "Good," the question "Is this definition of 'Good' truly good?" always remains open, implying that "Good" cannot be defined by naturalistic terms.

4. What is the significance of Moore's claim that 'Good' is indefinable?

- It challenges naturalism by suggesting that moral properties cannot be reduced to natural properties, such as pleasure or evolutionary benefits. This idea was foundational in rejecting ethical naturalism.

5. How does Moore's view differ from ethical naturalism?

- Ethical naturalism argues that moral properties can be reduced to natural properties, while Moore holds that moral properties like 'Good' are indefinable and non-natural.

6. What is the difference between 'Good' and other properties like 'Pleasure' or 'Happiness'?

- "Good" is a unique, non-natural property, whereas properties like pleasure and happiness are natural properties that can be empirically observed and measured.

7. What role does intuition play in Moore's ethical theory?

- Moore believes that humans have an intuitive understanding of "Good," and that moral judgments are based on this direct, non-rational knowledge.

8. How does Moore criticize ethical naturalism in relation to the naturalistic fallacy?

- Moore argues that naturalistic theories make the mistake of defining moral properties like "Good" in terms of natural properties, which he considers a logical error—the "naturalistic fallacy."

9. What is the 'Naturalistic Fallacy' according to Moore?

- The Naturalistic Fallacy occurs when one tries to define "Good" using natural terms. Moore argues that this is a fallacy because it confuses non-natural properties with natural ones.

10. Can 'Good' be described using empirical science?

- No, Moore asserts that "Good" is a non-natural, indefinable property, and cannot be reduced to empirical, scientific observations.

11. What does the term 'Naturalistic Fallacy' refer to?

- The Naturalistic Fallacy refers to the error of defining moral properties (like "Good") using natural properties (like pleasure or desire), which Moore claims is logically incorrect.

12. Why is the Naturalistic Fallacy important in ethics?

- It challenges the idea that moral concepts can be explained or derived from natural science or empirical facts, supporting the idea that ethics is a separate realm of inquiry.

13. How did Moore argue against utilitarianism using the Naturalistic Fallacy?

- Moore argued that utilitarianism, which equates "Good" with pleasure or happiness, commits the Naturalistic Fallacy by reducing a non-natural property to a natural one.

14. Is Moore's argument against naturalism universally accepted?

- No, Moore's argument is controversial. Some philosophers accept the naturalistic view, while others agree with Moore that ethical terms cannot be reduced to natural terms.

15. How does Moore distinguish between 'good' and 'goodness'?

- Moore distinguishes between 'good' as a simple, indefinable property and 'goodness' as a quality that is attributed to specific actions, people, or objects.

16. What is the significance of Moore's argument for modern ethics?

- Moore's argument laid the foundation for anti-naturalistic approaches in ethics, influencing later ethical theories that separate moral and natural properties.

17. What is Emotivism according to A.J. Ayer?

- Emotivism, as proposed by Ayer, is the view that moral statements do not express propositions that can be true or false, but rather express the emotional attitudes of the speaker. For example, "Murder is wrong" is not a statement of fact but an expression of disapproval.

18. How does Ayer distinguish between cognitive and non-cognitive statements?

- Ayer distinguishes between cognitive statements, which are factual and verifiable, and non-cognitive statements, like moral judgments, which express feelings or attitudes and cannot be verified.

19. What does Ayer mean by the term "Verification Principle"?

- The Verification Principle states that a statement is meaningful only if it can be empirically verified or is analytically true. Moral statements, according to Ayer, cannot be verified and are therefore meaningless in a strict sense.

20. How does Ayer argue against moral realism?

- Ayer argues that moral realism is flawed because moral statements do not report facts about the world but instead express emotional responses, making them non-cognitive.

21. What role do emotions play in Ayer's Emotivism?

- In Ayer's view, moral statements express emotional responses, not beliefs about the world. For example, saying "Stealing is wrong" is an expression of disapproval rather than a claim about the nature of stealing.

22. What is the impact of Emotivism on moral language?

- Emotivism transforms moral language from descriptive language into expressive language. It emphasizes that moral statements are not about describing the world but about expressing personal attitudes.

23. How does Emotivism differ from traditional moral theories?

- Traditional moral theories, such as utilitarianism or deontology, claim that moral statements can be true or false based on facts or rules. Emotivism, in contrast, holds that moral statements are simply expressions of emotion and are not subject to truth or falsity.

24. What is C.L. Stevenson's contribution to Emotivism?

- C.L. Stevenson expanded on Ayer's Emotivism by emphasizing that moral language is used not only to express emotions but also to influence the attitudes and actions of others. He focused on the persuasive function of moral language.

25. How does Stevenson's view of Emotivism differ from Ayer's?

- While Ayer focused primarily on the emotive expression of moral judgments, Stevenson added the idea that moral language is also used to persuade or influence others, making it more action-oriented.

26. Does Emotivism allow for moral disagreements?

- Yes, according to Emotivism, moral disagreements are a result of different emotional reactions and attitudes. Two people can disagree about a moral issue without one being objectively "right" or "wrong."

27. Can Emotivism provide a guide for moral behavior?

- Emotivism does not provide a direct guide for moral behavior in the traditional sense but encourages individuals to express and reflect on their emotional responses to moral issues.

28. What are some criticisms of Emotivism?

- Critics argue that Emotivism makes moral discourse meaningless, fails to account for moral reasoning, and reduces complex ethical debates to mere emotional expressions.

29. How does Emotivism relate to the idea of moral subjectivity?

- Emotivism supports moral subjectivity by suggesting that moral judgments are expressions of individual or collective emotional responses, not objective facts.

30. Can Emotivism be reconciled with moral objectivity?

- Emotivism is typically seen as incompatible with moral objectivity, as it denies that moral statements can be objectively true or false, instead emphasizing their subjective, emotional nature.

1. Explain G. E. Moore's theory of the Indefinability of Good and discuss its significance in moral philosophy.

Answer:

G. E. Moore's theory of the Indefinability of Good asserts that "Good" is a simple, non-natural property that cannot be defined in terms of any other concept or property. Moore's most influential argument for this position is the Open Question Argument. According to Moore, any attempt to define "Good" (e.g., "Good is pleasure") leads to an open question like "Is pleasure good?" which still makes sense, showing that the definition is incomplete. For Moore, this indicates that "Good" is a unique, indefinable concept, distinct from any natural property, such as happiness or pleasure.

This theory is significant because it challenges ethical naturalism—the view that moral properties can be reduced to natural properties, like pleasure or evolutionary advantage. Moore's position suggests that moral judgments are not reducible to empirical facts, preserving the autonomy and objectivity of moral philosophy.

2. How does G. E. Moore argue against ethical naturalism, and what is the naturalistic fallacy?

Answer:

Moore argues that ethical naturalism, which tries to define moral terms (e.g., "Good") in terms of natural properties like pleasure or happiness, commits the naturalistic fallacy. This fallacy occurs when one assumes that moral properties can be fully explained or defined by natural properties. Moore rejects this because moral properties, like "Good," are non-natural and irreducible.

The Naturalistic Fallacy occurs when one equates "Good" with a naturalistic concept, such as pleasure or societal benefit. Moore argues that reducing "Good" to such properties results in an incomplete or misleading moral theory. His critique emphasizes that moral terms have a different status from empirical descriptions and must not be confused with natural facts.

3. Discuss Moore's Open Question Argument and its impact on the debate over the nature of morality.

Answer:

The Open Question Argument is central to Moore's Indefinability of Good. Moore contends that if moral terms, like "Good," could be defined in terms of natural properties (e.g., "Good is pleasure"), then the question "Is pleasure good?" would be meaningless. However, since this question remains open and meaningful, it suggests that "Good" cannot be defined by any naturalistic terms.

The impact of this argument is profound in moral philosophy, as it challenges the naturalistic assumptions of moral theories. It forces ethicists to reconsider the nature of moral properties and the objectivity of ethical judgments. Moore's argument defends the view that moral facts are irreducible and non-empirical, promoting a form of moral realism.

4. What is the relationship between Moore's concept of the Indefinability of Good and moral realism?

Answer:

Moore's concept of the Indefinability of Good is foundational to his version of moral realism. According to Moore, "Good" is a simple, non-natural property that exists independently of human opinions and perceptions. This view is central to moral realism because it asserts that moral facts, such as "Good," are objective and exist in the world, independent of individual or societal beliefs.

In moral realism, moral statements are considered true or false based on objective facts about the world, not subjective human feelings. Moore's rejection of the naturalistic fallacy strengthens the case for moral realism by insisting that moral properties are irreducible to naturalistic explanations.

5. How does Moore's critique of the naturalistic fallacy challenge utilitarianism and other forms of ethical naturalism?

Answer:

Moore's critique of the naturalistic fallacy directly challenges utilitarianism, which tries to define "Good" in terms of pleasure or happiness. According to Moore, defining "Good" as pleasure commits the naturalistic fallacy because it reduces a non-natural property (Good) to a natural property (pleasure). Moore argues that such definitions fail to capture the true essence of "Good," which cannot be reduced to any naturalistic or empirical concept.

This critique extends to other forms of ethical naturalism, which attempt to define moral properties in terms of natural facts (e.g., happiness, social utility, or evolutionary success). Moore's theory asserts that moral properties are not reducible to such natural concepts, and this distinction weakens attempts to create an objective moral system based solely on empirical evidence or natural facts.

6. What are the implications of Moore's theory for moral objectivity and relativism?

Answer:

Moore's theory of the Indefinability of Good supports moral objectivity by asserting that moral facts, such as the property of "Good," exist independently of human opinions or cultural norms. Since "Good" cannot be reduced to subjective or relative concepts (such as pleasure or societal benefit), it follows that moral truths are objective and universally applicable.

This stands in contrast to moral relativism, which holds that moral truths are dependent on individual or cultural perspectives. Moore's position, in contrast, defends a form of moral realism, where moral facts are universal, objective, and independent of personal or societal views.

7. Explain Ayer's theory of Emotivism and its central claim about the nature of moral language.

Answer:

A.J. Ayer's Emotivism is a non-cognitive theory of ethics, which asserts that moral statements do not describe objective facts about the world but rather express the speaker's emotional attitudes. For Ayer, when someone says, "Stealing is wrong," they are not stating a fact but expressing disapproval of stealing, similar to saying "Boo to stealing!" Moral language, according to Ayer, functions to influence others' emotions and attitudes rather than to convey objective moral truths.

Ayer's theory challenges traditional views of ethics by denying that moral statements are factual. Instead, moral discourse is understood as a form of emotional expression and social influence.

8. How does Ayer's Verification Principle relate to Emotivism and the meaningfulness of moral statements?

Answer:

Ayer's Verification Principle asserts that a statement is meaningful only if it can be empirically verified or is analytically true. In the context of Emotivism, Ayer uses this principle to argue that moral statements are not meaningful in the same way as factual statements because they cannot be verified empirically. For example, the statement "Stealing is wrong" cannot be verified through observation or sensory experience, making it non-cognitive.

According to Ayer, moral statements are expressions of emotions rather than factual claims. Since they cannot be empirically verified, they are not meaningful in the same way as statements about physical objects or empirical phenomena.

9. Discuss Stevenson's extension of Ayer's Emotivism and his view on the persuasive function of moral language.

Answer:

Charles Stevenson, an American philosopher, extended and modified A.J. Ayer's emotivist theory, which held that moral statements are purely emotive and lack cognitive meaning. Stevenson's version of emotivism, as outlined in his book "Ethics and Language" (1944), emphasizes the role of moral language in influencing attitudes and behavior.

Key aspects of Stevenson's emotivism:

- 1. Emotive meaning: Stevenson agrees with Ayer that moral statements have emotive meaning, which is the power to evoke emotions and attitudes.**
- 2. Persuasive function: Stevenson emphasizes the persuasive function of moral language, arguing that moral statements are used to influence others' attitudes and behavior.**
- 3. Descriptive and emotive components: Stevenson distinguishes between the descriptive and emotive components of moral statements. The descriptive component provides factual information, while the emotive component expresses emotions and attitudes.**
- 4. Moral language as a tool: Stevenson views moral language as a tool for shaping attitudes and behavior, rather than simply expressing personal preferences.**

Stevenson's extension of Ayer's emotivism:

- 1. More nuanced view of moral language: Stevenson's theory provides a more nuanced view of moral language, recognizing that moral statements can have both descriptive and emotive components.**
- 2. Greater emphasis on persuasion: Stevenson places greater emphasis on the persuasive function of moral language, highlighting its role in shaping attitudes and behavior.**
- 3. More attention to context: Stevenson's theory takes into account the context in which moral statements are made, recognizing that the same statement can have different emotive meanings in different contexts.**

Implications of Stevenson's emotivism:

- 1. Moral relativism: Stevenson's theory implies that moral judgments are relative to the attitudes and values of the speaker.**

2. Subjectivism: Stevenson's emotivism is often seen as a form of subjectivism, which holds that moral judgments are based on personal feelings and attitudes.

3. Moral skepticism: Stevenson's theory can be seen as leading to moral skepticism, as it challenges the idea of objective moral truth.

In conclusion, Stevenson's extension of Ayer's emotivism provides a more nuanced and persuasive account of moral language, emphasizing its role in shaping attitudes and behavior. However, his theory also raises important questions about moral relativism, subjectivism, and skepticism.
