

An Overview of our Metaethical Exploration
PHIL 3100 — Ethical Theory — Spring 2015

Do moral statements make claims (or assert propositions)?

YES: Cognitivism

Problem: Motivational Judgment Internalism

NO: Non-Cognitivism

Problems:

- Linguistic Evidence;
- Embedding Problem;
- Frege-Geach Problem

Do moral claims purport to attribute objective or subjective properties?

Subjectivism

(a.k.a. Constructivism)

Problems:

- Moore's Argument from Disagreement
- Euthyphro/Arbitrariness

Do moral claims purport to attribute irreducible or reducible properties?

Reductionism / Reductive Naturalism

Problem for Analytic/*A Priori* Reductionism:

- Open Question Argument (Moore, Ayer)¹

Given that moral claims purport to attribute objective, irreducible, moral properties to things,
does anything ever actually have these properties?

YES: Non-Naturalism

(a.k.a. Intuitionism)

Problems:

- Moral Knowledge
- Moral Supervenience
- Moral Disagreement²

NO: Nihilism

(a.k.a. the Error Theory)

Problems:

- Too implausible on its face?
- G.E. Moore shift (Huemer §5.5)

¹ Note: up until now, investigation is largely semantic, or about the meaning of moral terms, or what moral statements are saying or doing. It's not about the way extra-linguistic reality is.)

² This overview contains important omissions: Synthetic/*A Posteriori* Reductionism (see Huemer §4.4); and Non-Reductive Naturalism