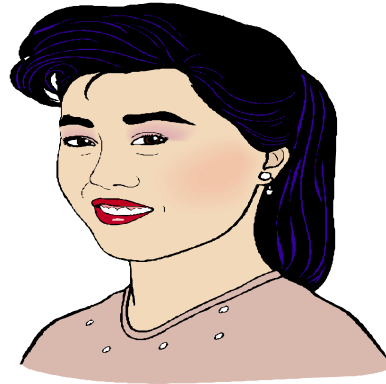


Ima
Emotivist
(EM)



- “X is good” means “Hurrah for X!”
- Moral judgments aren’t true or false.
- We can’t reason about basic moral principles.

Don't confuse these two views

Emotivism

“X is good” means
“Hurrah for X!”

expresses
feelings

Subjectivism

“X is good” means
“I like X.”

truth-claim
about feelings



A.J. Ayer

Logical positivism (LP):
All genuine truth claims are
either *empirically testable*
or *true-by-definition*.

empirically testable

“It’s snowing outside.”

“The other side of the
moon has mountains.”

“This battery has 1.4 volts.”

true-by-definition

“All bachelors are single.”

“All single men are single.”

“ $2 + 2 = 4$ ”

“ $1+1 + 1+1 = 1+1+1+1$ ”



Logical positivism (LP):
All genuine truth claims are
either *empirically testable*
or *true-by-definition*.

Do these make truth claims?

“There’s an invisible angel sitting on my shoulder.”

“There’s a God.”

“Racist actions are wrong.”

EM's *logical
positivism*
argument

All genuine truth claims are empirically testable or true-by-definition. (LP)

No moral statements are empirically testable or true-by-definition.

∴ No moral statements are genuine truth claims. (And so moral statements can only express feelings.)

- Premise 1, logical positivism, expresses the scientific attitude, and this leads to emotivism.
- Premise 2 uses how intuitionism refutes definitions of “good.”

EM's
simplicity
argument

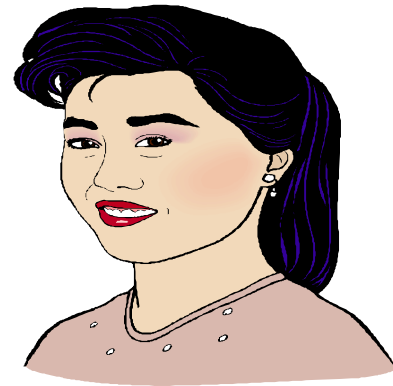
Any view that's simpler and explains more of the facts is a better view.

Emotivism is a view that's simpler and explains more of the facts. (see below)

∴ Emotivism is a better view.

- EM doesn't appeal to mysterious entities.
- EM explains why we can't define "good" descriptively, why we can't prove moral beliefs, and why people disagree about morality.
- EM fits how we speak.

We can't reason
about basic moral
principles.



We can reason about morality if
we assume a shared system of values.
But we can't establish the correctness
of any system of values.

Apply emotivism to



racism



global
warming



moral
education

EM's *logical
positivism
argument*

All genuine truth claims are empirically testable or true-by-definition. (LP)

No moral statements are empirically testable or true-by-definition.

∴ No moral statements are genuine truth claims.

Logical positivism is self-contradictory,
has clear exceptions, and is vague.

“Philosophers who worship science often contradict themselves. They make claims, which can't be based on science, about science being the only path to the truth. Such philosophers violate our first duty as rational beings, which isn't the impossible demand that we prove all our claims, but the humble demand that our claims be consistent with each other.” (§5.5)

EM's
simplicity
argument

Any view that's simpler and explains more of the facts is a *better* view.

Emotivism is a view that's simpler and explains more of the facts.

∴ Emotivism is a *better* view.

- Premise 1 is self-defeating, since EM sees “better” as expressing feelings instead of making a truth claim.
- Against premise 2, EM explains morality poorly:
 - Moral judgments aren't necessarily emotional.
 - Emotivism *explains away* commonsense ideas of moral truths and moral knowledge. A view of morality would be better if it explained how to arrive at moral truths and moral knowledge.

- Often “good” and “bad” don’t translate well into exclamations – as in these sentences:

“Do what is good.”

“Hurrah for good people!”

“If lying is bad, then getting your brother to lie is bad.”

“Either it’s good to go or it’s bad to go.”

“This is neutral (neither good nor bad).”

Emotivism says we can't reason about basic moral principles.

- If this were true, it would be dreadful; the emotivist model of moral thinking would lead to social chaos and propaganda wars.
- It isn't true: we *can* reason about basic moral principles – as we'll see from further views.

Three offshoots of emotivism

- **Moderate emotivism**, while still seeing moral judgments as expressing feelings instead of truths, claims that moral feelings can be rationally appraised (perhaps on the basis of being informed and having impartial concern).
- **The error theory** sees moral judgments as asserting facts about an objective realm of values; but, since there are no such moral facts, moral judgments only express feelings.
- **Quasi-realism** proposes that thinkers who deny moral truths and moral knowledge can still talk about morality in the usual way; such thinkers just need to water down what they mean by “moral truth” and “moral knowledge.”

Academia (including science and philosophy) is friendlier to belief in God *now* than in the decades just prior to the 1960s

- Logical positivism has died.
- Freud's negative ideas about religion were rejected.
- Science now believes that the universe began about 14 billion years ago. What started it?
- Science now believes in the universe's "fine tuning" (that the basic physical constants are precisely in the narrow range of what's required for life to be possible). What explains this? (For more on this, see <http://www.harrycola.com/reason.pdf>.)