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Rationalist and Sentimentalist Realism: A Re-examination of the Types of Metaethical Realism and Their Implications

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ABSTRACT

SUBJECT & OBJECTIVES: Ontological inquiry constitutes one of the central concerns of metaethics. Within this field, theories are commonly divided into two main categories: realist and non-realist. While this primary distinction is well established, the secondary classifications and internal variations within realism have received comparatively little attention. Many of the enduring ambiguities in moral philosophy arise from the lack of a precise differentiation among realist positions. This study aims to address that gap by re-examining the ontological foundations and typological distinctions within moral realism.

METHOD & FINDING: Using an analytical–descriptive method, this study differentiates between two distinct forms of moral realism—rationalist realism and sentimentalist realism—and explicates their respective implications. Representative approaches of sentimentalist realism include hedonism, Isaiah Berlin's notion of negative liberty, Karl Popper's reduction of suffering, and Benthamite utilitarianism. In contrast, MacIntyre's virtue ethics, scientism, and perfectionism exemplify rationalist realism. The implications of rationalist realism can be summarized as follows: 1. The possibility of rational justification for moral judgments; 2. The dependence of moral values on ontological realities; 3. The possibility of moral preference in cases of ethical conflict based purely on ontological grounds; 4. The capacity to identify and prioritize the virtuous individual; 5. The derivability of "ought" from "is" on rational premises alone; 6. Monism is grounded in a single rational proposition; 7. Absolutism grounded in an absolute rational principle.

CONCLUSION: While sentimentalist realism shares certain structural features with other realist frameworks, it diverges from rationalist realism in several essential respects, particularly regarding the role of sentiment, taste, and individual inclination in grounding moral value. This distinction underscores the need for a more nuanced typology of moral realism within contemporary metaethical discourse.

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Introduction

Ethical philosophy is generally divided into two main branches: metaethics and normative ethics. Metaethics, as a second-order discipline, investigates the nature of ethics itself (Jawādī, 1996, p. 194). In other words, metaethics discusses the conceptual and propositional foundations of ethical knowledge (Miṣbāḥ Yazdī, 1994, p. 10).

Among the many metaethical issues, ontological discussions of moral propositions—that is, whether moral statements correspond to any external reality—occupy a prominent place. Ethical theories, in one general classification, may be divided into realist and unrealistic approaches.

The essential distinction between Realism and Unrealism can be expressed as follows: Realism considers the content of moral propositions to correspond to an objective, mind-independent reality, whereas Unrealism denies the existence of any moral facts beyond human feelings or attitudes (Craig, 1998; Qalʿeh Bahman, 2004, pp. 20–21).

According to McNaughton's definition, moral realism asserts that moral facts exist independently of our moral beliefs and determine whether those beliefs are true or false. Moral properties are genuine attributes of things or actions (McNaughton, 2007, p. 25). Realists thus reject the idea that moral propositions merely express emotions or social customs (Miller, 2001, pp. 847–848).

Every normative school of ethics requires a criterion for moral evaluation—a standard by which moral judgments are assessed. Some of these schools are realist in the sense that they posit an independent reality for moral values beyond human desire, command, or social convention. Others are unrealistic, viewing moral values as dependent on individual preference, social contract, or human volition (Miṣbāḥ Yazdī, 2008, pp. 29–32).

From the foregoing, it becomes evident that the distinction between Realism and Unrealism has a long intellectual history, with numerous positions articulated under each heading. The implications of these two general approaches have likewise been widely debated, and we will address some of their details below. Yet certain ambiguities persist—particularly regarding whether some ethical theories, such as hedonism, qualify as realist or not.

We maintain that these ambiguities arise because all realist theories have been treated under a single undifferentiated framework, and philosophers have not adequately delineated their internal kinds. Although some attempts have been made in this direction, they remain insufficient.

This article, therefore, seeks, through an analytical-descriptive approach, to distinguish between two forms of moral realism, rationalist realism and sentimentalist realism, and to articulate the implications of each. Recognizing these distinct versions of realism can

clarify many of the long-standing ambiguities in moral philosophy.

It should also be noted that this paper focuses exclusively on teleological theories and does not address deontological theories, owing to the conceptual difficulties inherent in the latter. Further elaboration will follow in the subsequent sections.

Conceptual Framework

1. Metaethics

Metaethics is a branch of moral philosophy that, instead of addressing *what is right or wrong* (as normative ethics does), focuses on the nature, meaning, and foundations of moral statements.

In brief, metaethics seeks to answer questions such as:

- What do moral concepts like "good," "bad," "duty," or "virtue" mean?
- Can moral statements, e.g., lying is wrong, be true or false?
- Are moral values objective and independent of human minds, or are they merely reflections of emotions, culture, or social conventions?
- Can we discover moral truths through reason and logical argument?

Thus, metaethics is considered a second-order discipline because it examines the nature and basis of ethics itself, rather than making specific moral judgments.

Three main areas commonly discussed in metaethics are distinguished as:

1. Moral Ontology – Do moral values actually exist?
2. Moral Semantics – What is the meaning of moral statements?
3. Moral Epistemology – How can we know or justify moral beliefs?

2. Moral Realism

Views in the field of ethics can be broadly divided into two groups: moral realism and moral unrealism. Regarding the difference between realism and unrealism, realism holds that the content of moral statements is actualized and objective, whereas unrealism denies the existence of any reality beyond human feelings and attitudes (Craig, 1998; Qalʿeh Bahman, 2004, pp. 20–21).

Defining moral realism, McNaughton said, “Moral facts exist independently of our moral beliefs and determine whether those beliefs are true or false. Moral properties are real attributes of things or actions” (McNaughton, 2007, p. 25). Realists reject the idea that moral statements merely reflect feelings or cultural customs shared among societies (Miller, 2001, pp. 847–848). Normative ethical schools inevitably require criteria or standards to evaluate moral judgments. Some ethical schools are realist in the sense that they assert moral values exist independently of individual desires, commands, or social conventions. Other schools are anti-

realist, meaning they see moral values as dependent on individual preferences, desires, or social agreements (Miṣbāḥ Yazdī, 2008, pp. 29–32).

3. Ethical Rationalism

Ethical rationalism is a philosophical approach that asserts moral principles and values can be discovered, justified, and grounded through rational inquiry and logical reasoning. According to this view, moral truths exist independently of individual feelings, desires, or social conventions, and they can be known through the proper use of human reason. Ethical rationalists argue that reason is the primary tool for identifying what is morally right or wrong, and that moral judgments should be based on objective criteria rather than subjective preferences.

This approach holds that ethical values have an objective status similar to facts about the world, making it possible to reach universal and absolute moral standards that apply regardless of personal biases or cultural differences. Ethical rationalism thus allows for rational debate and argumentation in ethics, providing a framework for resolving moral dilemmas and prioritizing moral conflicts in a coherent and consistent manner.

By emphasizing the role of intellect and reason, ethical rationalism contrasts with emotionalist theories, which ground morality in emotions and feelings, and with relativist theories, which see moral values as contingent upon cultural or individual perspectives. Overall, ethical rationalism promotes the idea that through reasoned reflection and analysis, humans can attain true moral knowledge and act in accordance with objective moral principles.

4. Ethical Emotionalism

Ethical Emotionalism is a metaethical theory that emphasizes the central role of human emotions in the formation and justification of moral judgments. According to this view, moral evaluations are fundamentally expressions of emotional responses rather than statements that can be objectively true or false. Ethical emotionalism posits that feelings such as approval, disapproval, empathy, and sympathy are the primary motivators and justifiers of ethical beliefs and actions.

Unlike moral rationalism, which holds that reason alone can discover objective moral truths independent of human feelings, ethical emotionalism asserts that emotions provide the essential foundation for moral understanding. Moral emotions are seen as innate or socially cultivated responses that guide individuals in distinguishing right from wrong and motivate moral behavior.

Key proponents of emotionalist perspectives argue that moral discourse functions primarily as a way to express and communicate emotions rather than

to report factual states of the world. For example, when someone says, "Stealing is wrong," they are not stating an objective fact but rather expressing disapproval of stealing. This makes ethical statements subjective in nature but does not undermine their normative significance, as emotional reactions are crucial in shaping social norms and personal commitments.

Ethical emotionalism also addresses the challenge of moral motivation, explaining how emotions inherently connect moral judgments to action. By grounding morality in affective states, this theory overcomes the so-called "motivational problem" faced by purely cognitive or rationalist accounts of ethics, which struggle to explain why recognizing a moral truth necessarily motivates action.

However, ethical emotionalism faces critiques regarding its ability to account for moral disagreement and the apparent objectivity that many attribute to moral claims. Critics argue that if morality is purely emotional, it risks collapsing into mere subjectivism or relativism, where any moral standpoint is equally valid. Emotionalists respond by highlighting the social and cognitive components that shape and regulate emotions, allowing for shared moral understandings and critical reflection.

In sum, ethical emotionalism provides a nuanced perspective that integrates psychological realities of human affect with ethical theory, emphasizing that emotions are not mere irrational impulses but essential components of moral cognition and behavior.

Literature Review

The literature on metaethics is largely shaped by the distinction between moral realism and moral unrealism**.** Realists maintain that moral propositions correspond to objective, mind-independent facts, while anti-realists interpret moral judgments as expressions of subjective preferences or social conventions. Although this distinction is well known, existing scholarship often treats moral realism as a single, unified category, which has led to conceptual ambiguity —especially regarding theories such as hedonism, utilitarianism, and freedom-based ethics.

Teleological moral theories, which evaluate actions by their outcomes, diverge significantly in identifying the nature of the good. Some emphasize pleasure**,** utility**,** or desire satisfaction**,** aligning with hedonistic and utilitarian traditions. Others, influenced by Aristotelian and neo-Aristotelian perspectives, treat virtue**,** human flourishing**,** and perfection as objective and rational ends. Scholars such as MacIntyre argue that modern moral theories often collapse into emotivism due to their dependence on subjective choice.

Most philosophers claim that moral realism dates at least to Plato as a philosophical doctrine. Some notable

examples of robust moral realists include David Brink in: *Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics*, John McDowell in: Peter Railton in: *Moral Realism*, Geoffrey Sayre-McCord in: *Moral Realism*, Michael Smith, Terence Cuneo in: *The Normative Web: An Argument for Moral Realism* and G. E. Moore in: *Principia Ethica*. Most realists have tried to define it and argue for it. Miṣbāḥ Yazdī has mentioned the logical requirements of realism and introduced several requirements for it. At the same time, he has not mentioned the types of realism, and it is not clear whether it is possible to consider types of realism and to list requirements for each.

Despite extensive debate about rational justification, the relation between fact and value, and the universality of moral norms, prior literature does not clearly differentiate types of moral realism**.** Some theories affirm real values but base their instantiation on subjective feeling, while others ground value in objective human qualities. Therefore, the literature lacks a framework that explains why some realist theories are rationally universalizable while others remain partly dependent on sentiment. The reviewed scholarship indicates a theoretical gap that the present study addresses by introducing a dual classification of realism—Rationalist Realism and Sentimentalist Realism—to clarify the ontological foundations and evaluative implications of different teleological ethical theories.

Research Method

This study employs a qualitative, analytical–descriptive research method designed to examine the metaethical foundations of teleological moral theories and to develop a new typology of moral realism. The research relies on conceptual analysis, logical examination, and the analytical–descriptive method of philosophical texts.

An Anthropological Analysis of *al-Maṭlūbt* (Desirable)

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to present an anthropological, i.e., human-centered, metaphysical analysis of how *al-Maṭlūb* operates within voluntary action. In analyzing voluntary action, at least three essential components can be identified:

1. The motivation or desire of the agent;
2. The voluntary act itself;
3. The effect or outcome of that act.

A hierarchical and causal relation connects these three components: the agent's desire constitutes part of the efficient cause of the voluntary act. Desire or motivation functions as the final cause of the act, without which no voluntary action can occur. The voluntary act, in turn, serves as the cause of its corresponding effect. This causal order may be schematically represented as follows:

From a metaethical perspective, various theories diverge in how they interpret the moral significance of these three factors, each taking one aspect of this process as the criterion of moral value.

unrealistic theories, for instance, regard the agent's will, desire, or motive—independent of any external reality—as the criterion of moral value. Because of their emphasis on subjective factors such as inclination, preference, or command, these are often termed subjectivist or mentalist approaches. Ethical subjectivism, in this sense, identifies the goal of moral action with the agent's mental attitude or emotional response (Selbie, 2015, p. 908).

It should be noted that non-realist schools differ: some emphasize individual subjectivity (subjectivism), while others emphasize inter-subjective mental constructs (inter-subjectivism). A full analysis of these distinctions, however, lies beyond the scope of this article.

By contrast, realist theories shift attention from subjective states to objective realities, though they themselves subdivide into two main groups.

A. One group regards the result or effect of an action as the criterion of moral value—these are the teleological theories.
B. Another group grounds moral value in certain intrinsic characteristics of the act itself, rather than in its consequences—these are the deontological theories.

From this clarification, it becomes apparent that among the three elements (desire–act–effect), non-realists consider desire to be the measure of value; deontologists emphasize the intrinsic quality of the act; and teleologists focus on the effect or outcome of the act.

The present study is concerned only with realist perspectives, and among them, we set aside deontological theories, since they disregard the evaluative role of the act's effect; critique of such theories must be left for another occasion. Accordingly, our analysis centers on those views that treat the effect and consequence of action as the basis of moral value, from which we derive two distinct forms of realism: rationalist realism and sentimentalist realism.

The effects of actions are objective phenomena, distinct from personal tastes or preferences. Although an effect occurs after the act in the order of realization, desire precedes the act as its final cause and remains tied solely to the individual. Teleological theories thus encompass a wide range, from self-oriented theories such as hedonism, scientism, power-centrism, and perfectionism to other-oriented and universalist theories such as utilitarianism. All share the premise that moral value depends upon the goal, consequence, or result of human action.

However, upon reflection, it becomes evident that not all effects are of the same

kind, nor do they stand in the same relation to reality, reason, and taste. Some outcomes are entirely independent of personal preference and maintain inter-subjective objectivity, while others remain partially conditioned by subjective inclination. For example, *ʿIlm* (knowledge) or *Kamāl* (perfection) are realities that exist independently of personal taste. Something that is "knowledge" or "perfection" in one individual cannot, under a different preference, be regarded as "ignorance" or "deficiency" in another. These are objective existential qualities, unaffected by variations in personal sentiment.

In contrast, other kinds of effects—such as pleasure or utility—though real phenomena, remain closely linked to individual dispositions and desires. One cannot identify a universal instance of "pleasurable" or "useful" independent of personal taste; what brings pleasure or benefit to one person may cause displeasure or harm to another. For instance, learning may be a source of delight for one and distress for another.

Having distinguished between these two categories of outcomes, we can now differentiate two corresponding kinds of realism:

I. Those theories that take as the criterion of moral value a reality independent of personal desire and sentiment;

II. Those theories that make taste-dependent effects the criterion of value.

For reasons that will be explained shortly, we refer to the first category as rationalist realism and the second as sentimentalist realism.

A variety of ethical positions can be classified under these two types of realism. A few examples will clarify the theoretical implications of this distinction.

Among sentimentalist realists, we may include:

- Hedonism
- Isaiah Berlin’s concept of negative liberty
- Karl Popper’s theory of the reduction of suffering
- Jeremy Bentham’s utilitarianism

In hedonism, pleasure possesses intrinsic value, and moral evaluation depends on the degree of pleasure produced for the individual. Yet there exist several forms of hedonism, differing in the kind and quality of pleasure they emphasize (Feldman, 2001, pp. 20–26).

Isaiah Berlin, in his opposition to what he calls monistic rationalism, rejects every form of positive liberty and defends negative liberty, defined as the absence of external constraint, limitation, or interference, while positive liberty refers to the presence of enabling conditions for conscious choice (Berlin, 2013, pp. 237–254). In his view,

freedom itself has intrinsic value, yet each person's understanding of freedom is self-referential, determined by their own outlook and will. Rational reasoning cannot, therefore, impose limits on the freedom of others.

In this respect, Berlin argued, "The completion of the self, according to some rational design, may not be rational at all. The ends chosen by rational men may not be my ends. What matters to me is that I am not ignored or overshadowed by anyone else. The desire for freedom in this sense is the desire for respect for my own will" (Berlin, 2013, p. 282). This position clearly exemplifies sentimentalist realism.

Karl Popper, likewise, in his critique of doctrines he deems hostile to the open society, views many religious, moral, and cultural theories as non-scientific, precisely because they are non-falsifiable. He wrote, "I do not deny that to think of moral laws as human inventions is incompatible with the religious belief that God has given them to us. … I merely maintain that the responsibility for accepting or rejecting proposed moral laws lies with us and with us alone" (Popper, 1990, pp. 113–114).

Distinguishing his critical rationalism from utopian rationalism, Popper classifies teleological and religious ideals as utopian and therefore unsuitable as standards for political or ethical governance (Popper, 1984, pp. 441–451). The form of rationalism Popper endorses corresponds, in our typology, to sentimentalist realism, for it anchors moral value in individual perception and preference while excluding ethical valuation from the domain of objective knowledge.

Bentham's utilitarianism also belongs to this category. Although John Stuart Mill, influenced by perfectionist thinking, ranked intellectual pleasures above purely sensory ones, Bentham held that the pleasure of playing with a pin is equal to the pleasure of reading poetry. For Bentham, no rational criterion can justify the preference of one pleasure over another (Driver, 2015, p. 52).

Turning to rationalist realism, several significant views may be mentioned. Alasdair MacIntyre, as a neo-virtue ethicist, belongs to this group. A critic of modern moral theories, he accuses them of emotivism, arguing that their foundational principles ultimately depend upon individual choice and preference (MacIntyre, 2011, p. 52). He reconstructs Aristotelian moral philosophy, identifying three essential premises:

1. The human being begins as an undeveloped and imperfect creature;
2. Certain actions lead him toward development and his ultimate end;
3. The final telos of human striving is happiness.

MacIntyre defined virtue as "an acquired human quality the possession

and exercise of which enable one to achieve the internal goods associated with practices, and the lack of which prevents one from achieving them" (MacIntyre, 2011, p. 323). This definition demonstrates that virtue is an objective and real quality, independent of individual desire, though it is inwardly rooted in human capability and excellence.

Perfectionism likewise exemplifies rationalist realism. Perfection is defined as an existential attribute signifying a being's genuine richness or fullness in comparison with others (Miṣbāḥ Yazdī, 2005, p. 35).

In philosophical terms, Perfection refers to a real ontological quality, not a matter of personal preference or subjective projection. Muslim philosophers, recognizing the existential nature of perfection, have offered ontological analyses of the Perfect Human in relation to the Absolute Perfect.

As Mullā Ṣadrā, a contemporary Islamic philosopher, explicated: "The cause of nobility and perfection is proximity to the Exalted Truth" (Mullā Ṣadrā, 1981, p. 180).

Following this line, Miṣbāḥ Yazdī explained that, within the Islamic view of value, intrinsic worth is identified with nearness to God, and the consequences of this proximity include direct knowledge of God and mutual satisfaction between the servant and the Lord—both of which serve as the ultimate indicators of human felicity (Miṣbāḥ Yazdī, 2012, pp. 7–14).

The foregoing examples are merely illustrative of the two forms of moral realism—rationalist and sentimentalist—and are not intended as exhaustive expositions of their doctrines. Our purpose thus far has been twofold: first, to establish the distinction between these two types of realism, which has now been achieved; and second, to prepare for a discussion—undertaken in the following section—of the conceptual implications and theoretical consequences that arise from each form of moral realism.

Re-Examination of the Ontological Types of Moral Value Concepts

Given the preceding discussions, we may now re-examine mental concepts and distinguish their various kinds. Concepts are mental representations that signify something beyond themselves. Based on the nature of their referents, mental concepts may be classified into five categories:

1. Concepts denoting non-existent entities—those for which no real instance exists;
2. Concepts derived directly or indirectly from human feeling, desire, or inclination;
3. Concepts whose referents are entirely independent of human taste or will, and whose existence is external to human beings (e.g., mountain, fire);

4. Concepts independent of human preference but whose instances occur within the human being, such as knowledge or human perfection;
5. Concepts referring to real entities but whose instantiation is influenced by human emotion or taste, such as pleasure and pain.

These five categories may now be clarified more precisely, as follows:

1) Non-existent concepts. These have no real instance; nothing in reality corresponds to them. Concepts such as mythical giant, non-being, or contradiction fall into this group. If moral concepts were of this kind, the resulting position would be a non-realist view.
2) Concepts expressing mere feeling or preference. Propositions that convey only subjective sentiment are likewise non-real-referential. Theories grounding morality in individual or collective emotion ultimately rest upon taste and are therefore non-realist.
3) Concepts of realities wholly independent of humanity. Some existents or non-existents—such as mountains or the sun's source of heat—have no dependence upon human existence and would persist even were humanity to perish. Such concepts bear little relation to moral discourse, since ethics concerns human actions, choice, and well-being.
4) Concepts referring to real qualities instantiated within the human being but not reducible to feeling. These concepts have objective referents. For example, knowledge denotes an actual state in the human person, but one that is not dependent on sentiment or preference. It cannot be the case that what counts as knowledge for one person is ignorance for another. Thus, knowledge and analogous perfections represent objective realities in man. If moral concepts are taken to correspond to this kind of reality, the resulting view is realism.
5) Concepts referring to real phenomena whose instances vary with human inclination. Pleasure and pain are real states, yet their occurrence depends partly on subjective disposition. One person may take pleasure in learning, another may find it painful. Hence, pleasure and pain are ontologically real, but the determination of their instances differs among individuals and across time according to subjective factors.

From this analysis, it follows that the first two categories are non-real-referential, whereas the latter three are real-referential. No moral theory explicitly bases itself upon the third category (wholly external realities), but theories do exist grounded in the fourth and fifth. Consequently, the rationalist realist regards moral value

concepts as belonging to the fourth type, whereas the sentimentalist realist treats them as the fifth.

The Implications of the Two Types of Realism

We now distinguish the theoretical consequences of these two forms of realism. A brief reference to the implications of Unrealism will help to highlight what realists share before their own divergences are outlined.

1. Unrealistic Implications

In Unrealism, the determinants of moral value are purely mental or inter-mental phenomena—the individual's or community's desires. Thus, in the statement "Truth-telling is good," goodness depends only on the will or sentiment of agents; neither the act's intrinsic character nor its real effects contribute to value. Accordingly, moral propositions possess no truth-value and cannot be proven or refuted, nor can moral "oughts" to be logically derived from factual "is's." From this, relativism and pluralism of values naturally follow (Miṣbāḥ Yazdī, 2008).

2. Distinguishing the Two Types of Realism

Differentiation between the types of realism is as follows:

a) Rational Argumentation

Because in sentimentalist realism, the instantiation of intrinsic value depends upon personal taste and feeling, rational justification is impossible. Pleasure may be real, but since pleasure is partly subjective, no purely rational proof can show that a pleasure-producing act is good. Preferences change; what once delighted may later displease.

By contrast, rationalist realism allows rational argument in moral evaluation. Variations of sentiment do not alter intrinsic value. Hence, the essence of intrinsic value can be defined rationally, and the necessary relation between act and result permits logical reasoning about moral worth.

A moral syllogism may be formulated as follows:

• Action A produces B.
• Whatever produces B is morally good.
• Therefore, action A is morally good.

Here, B represents the criterion of value. If B = pleasure, the reasoning is hedonistic; yet the first premise then depends on subjective perception. If B = perfection or knowledge, the premise can be established rationally and independently of taste.

b) Dependence of Value on Ontology

Wujūd (being) signifies reality as opposed to non-being. Existing entities differ in degree and quality; human existents likewise vary—learned/unlearned, powerful/weak. Such existential attributes are called *Kamālāt al-Wujūd* (perfections of being).

In rationalist realism, moral evaluation depends directly on ontological characteristics; without

ontology, values cannot be known. In sentimentalist realism, however, ontology does not lead to value knowledge, since value rests on feeling rather than being.

c) Preference in Moral Conflicts

When two desirable actions conflict, the one with greater value constitutes the replacement value. In rationalist realism, this preference is determined solely by the ontological features and effects of the acts. In sentimentalist realism, subjective inclination must also be consulted; thus, moral judgment in conflicts is partly emotional.

d) The Virtuous Individual

Within normative ethics, virtue ethics assigns moral worth through the behavior of the virtuous exemplar. According to sentimentalist realism, however, the notion of a stable exemplar collapses, since subjective factors make the desirable virtues differ across persons and times. One may delight in courage, another in caution; social trends may even invert virtue and vice.

Concerning modernity, Anthony Giddens stated, “What was once deemed vice in religious morality becomes virtue in the modern age. Self-interest, ostentation, and extravagance—formerly condemned—are now validated as necessary to economic balance. If asceticism prevailed universally, social life would stagnate. Thus, in the modern world, reason has become subordinate to desire, and vices sit beside virtues” (Giddens, 1998, pp. 44–48).

e) Deriving The ‘Ought’ From The ‘Is’

A major metaethical issue is whether moral "ought" propositions can be derived from factual "is" propositions. Since moral judgments describe real states of affairs, realism denies any absolute logical gap between fact and value. Value statements, describing real properties, are thus logically connected to existence itself. Only if moral realities were of a wholly different order—as intuitionists suppose (cf. Frankena, 2004, p. 215)—would such derivation be impossible. Even among realists, however, sentimentalist and rationalist types diverge. For sentimentalists, although the reality of pleasure allows some factual grounding, the instantiation of pleasure remains subjective, and therefore the inference lacks rational necessity. For example, A finds worship pleasurable; hence, by hedonism, worship is good. Yet this reasoning is not rationally universal, since a change in taste would nullify it.

In rationalist realism, by contrast, the inference from "is" to "ought" can rest on rational premises. Under perfectionism, for instance, if worship leads A to perfection, then the goodness of worship follows from an ontological fact, and the premises are rational, not taste-dependent.

f) Unity of Truth

Another corollary of realism is ethical monism, meaning that contradictory moral judgments about the same act cannot both be true. If "The earth moves" is true, "The earth is motionless" cannot be. Likewise, "Justice is good" and "Justice is not good" cannot both hold. Since realists consider both the ultimate goal and the means real, incompatible evaluations of one act under identical conditions cannot be simultaneously correct.

Yet differences remain. A hedonist cannot affirm that "Suffering is good"; thus, only "Pleasure is good" stands. But because pleasure's instances vary with taste, no single act universally fulfills it. In rationalist realism (e.g., perfectionism), the proposition "Acquiring perfection is good" is singular and universally valid; actions producing perfection are valuable regardless of sentiment.

g) Absolutism

Moral absolutism holds that ethical principles are universal and exceptionless (Atkinson, 1991, p. 199). Both forms of realism imply some degree of absolutism: every act yielding the desirable effect is valuable. For hedonism, for example, the principle "Every act that produces pleasure is good" is absolute. Yet since pleasure differs among individuals, one cannot rationally claim that "Pursuit of knowledge is always good," for some may find it painful. Hence, sentimentalist realism cannot sustain a rational, taste-independent absolutism.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that while the distinction between moral realism and Unrealism has long been recognized, the subdivisions within realist theories and their corresponding implications have received relatively little scholarly attention. The widespread assumption that all realist theories share identical features and thus entail identical consequences is mistaken.

For example, both hedonism and perfectionism are classified as realist schools, yet their relation to reality and their susceptibility to individual inclination differ significantly. The present study has shown—through the introduction of two distinct forms of moral realism—that realist theories cannot be treated as a single homogeneous category. Their respective relations to mind and reality vary substantially. We have termed these two kinds rationalist realism and sentimentalist realism.

Examples of sentimentalist realism include hedonism, Isaiah Berlin’s negative liberty, Karl Popper’s reduction of suffering, and Bentham’s utilitarianism. Representative forms of rationalist realism include MacIntyre’s virtue ethics, scientism, and perfectionism.

Certain effects of human action are wholly independent of personal or intersubjective traits, while others are partly conditioned by individual disposition. For instance, knowledge and perfection are objective realities, unaffected by personal taste. What constitutes knowledge or perfection for one individual cannot, under a different preference, become ignorance or deficiency for another. By contrast, phenomena such as pleasure and utility, although real, remain partly dependent on subjective inclination; one cannot identify a universal instance of the pleasurable or the useful that is equally valid for all. One person may delight in learning, another may find it burdensome.

On this basis, we can distinguish two types of realism:

(1) views that take as the criterion of moral value a reality independent of personal desire and sentiment, and (2) views that ground value in taste-dependent outcomes. The former we have termed rationalist realism, and the latter sentimentalist realism.

The implications of these two types of moral realism may be summarized as follows:

1. Possibility of rational moral argumentation: In rationalist realism, moral reasoning can proceed on purely rational grounds; in sentimentalist realism, it cannot.
2. Dependence of value on ontological properties: Rationalist realism relates moral worth directly to existential qualities, whereas sentimentalist realism does not.
3. Preference in moral conflicts based on ontology: Rationalist realism allows resolution of moral conflicts through ontological analysis alone; sentimentalist realism remains affected by subjective factors.
4. Possibility of identifying the virtuous person: Rationalist realism enables the rational determination of moral exemplars, whereas sentimentalist realism does not.
5. Deriving the "ought" from the "is": Rationalist realism allows this derivation based on rational premises; sentimentalist realism does not.
6. Monism is grounded in a single rational proposition: Rationalist realism affirms the unity of moral truth through rational coherence; sentimentalist realism cannot do so consistently.
7. Absolutism is grounded in an absolute rational proposition: Rationalist realism maintains universal and exceptionless moral principles; sentimentalist realism, being influenced by taste, cannot sustain such universality. Hence, although sentimentalist realism shares certain features with other realist theories, it diverges from rationalist realism in all seven respects. Because its notion of "reality" remains partly conditioned by mental and affective factors, it cannot provide purely rational justification for

moral judgments independent of personal inclination. Thus, while sentimentalist realism remains within the realist camp, its dependence on affect renders it metaethically weaker, unable to ground universal moral knowledge through reason alone.

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