

THE VARIETIES OF MORAL NORMATIVITY: COURSE OUTLINE

-- The nature of moral obligation

It has been common to think of morality as forming a kind of law, presenting us with duties or obligations on action. We are responsible for how we act and so for fulfilling these obligations. To contravene these obligations is wrong; and unless we have some excuse we are blameworthy.

But is there such a thing as a moral law? Many modern philosophers, such as Schopenhauer and Anscombe, have argued that a secular moral theory which avoids the assumption that there is a divine moral lawgiver, has no room for the notion of a moral law, and of moral obligations or duties. Are they right to argue this?

So what is a moral law, and how are allegedly legal notions, such as the notion of wrongness, related to evaluative notions, such as the notion of badness?

-- Morality and action

State-made or positive laws generally concern the voluntary - actions we attempt or perform on the basis of wanting or deciding and intending how to act. If morality is conceived as a moral law, does that mean that it is concerned wholly with the voluntary?

But morality seems as much to do with non-voluntary character as with voluntary action, being especially concerned with motivation and emotion. Morality is about what kind of person to be, and not simply about our voluntary actions and omissions. Does that mean that to conceive of morality as a law is to exaggerate the importance in morality of the voluntary - and so to distort what morality is all about?

Or is the moral law distinct from positive laws precisely by being concerned with the non-voluntary as well as with the voluntary? Can the moral law require us to have the right motivations, as well as to perform the right voluntary actions? Can we be blamed and held responsible, not only for our voluntary actions, but also for our non-voluntary motivations?

General Reading

Virtue Ethics ed R. Crisp and M. Slote OUP 1997

The Theory of Morality A. Donagan, Chicago 1977

Responsibility, Character and the Emotions ed Schoeman CUP 1987

Free Will ed G. Watson OUP 1982

Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy B. Williams 1985

Agency and the voluntary

Summa Theologiae (1265-74) T. Aquinas: esp !a2ae, questions 6-17; see Vol 17 in the Blackfriars edition 1962- .

Essays on Actions and Events D. Davidson OUP 1980

'Of liberty and necessity' (1654) T. Hobbes - see in Vol 1 of British Moralists ed D. Raphael OUP 1991

Leviathan (1651) T. Hobbes - esp chapters 4-6.

'Reason and agency' T. Pink Aristotelian Society Proceedings May 1997

The Psychology of Freedom T. Pink CUP 1996

Moral worth

On Evil (1266-9) T. Aquinas - see edition by J. Oesterle, Notre Dame 1995

'Virtues and vices' P Foot in Virtues and Vices OUP 1978

Treatise of Human Nature (1739-40) D. Hume, esp in edition by Selby-Bigge and Nidditch OUP 1978

Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals (1751) D. Hume in edition by Selby-Bigge and Nidditch OUP 1975

Groundwork for a Metaphysic of Morals (1785) I. Kant in edition by Paton, New York 1964

Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone (1793) I. Kant in edition by Silber, Greene and Hudson, New York 1960

'Moral luck' T. Nagel in Mortal Questions , CUP 1979

'Moral luck' B. Williams in Moral Luck CUP 1981

The nature of law

Summa Theologiae (1265-74) T. Aquinas: esp !a2ae, questions 90-97; see Vol 28 in the Blackfriars edition 1962- .

The Concept of Law H. Hart OUP 1961

Leviathan (1651) T. Hobbes - see esp chapters 14-26

Natural Law and Natural Rights J. Finnis OUP 1980

Tractatus Theologico-Politicus (1670) B. Spinoza - see ed by Shirley, Brill 1991

De Legibus ac Deo Legislatore (1612) F. Suarez: tr as 'On Laws and God the Law-giver' - selections in ed. J.B. Schneewind vol 1 Moral Philosophy from Montaigne to Kant CUP 1990

Practical Reason and Norms J. Raz Princeton 1990

Law and moral worth

Ethics (1136-9) P. Abelard - see ed. D. Luscombe OUP 1971.

'Involuntary sins' R.M. Adams Philosophical Review 1985

Summa Theologiae (1265-74) T. Aquinas: esp !a2ae, questions 90-114; see Vols 28-30 in the Blackfriars edition 1962- .

On the Spirit and the Letter (412) Augustine - see in Augustine: Later Works ed Burnaby, Library of the Christian Classics, Philadelphia

A Treatise of the Laws of Nature (1672) R. Cumberland - selections in ed. J.B. Schneewind vol 1, Moral Philosophy from Montaigne to Kant CUP 1990.

The Metaphysics of Morals (1797) I. Kant - see in ed M. Gregor CUP 1991

Opinion on the Principles of Pufendorf (1706) G. Leibniz - see in ed. P. Riley Leibniz: Political Writings CUP 1972.

Law-scepticism in moral theory

'Modern moral philosophy' G.E.M. Anscombe in *Philosophy* 1958 and in *Virtue Ethics* eds R. Crisp and M. Slote OUP 1997

On the Basis of Morality (1840) A. Schopenhauer (tr E.J.F. Payne, Berghahn Books 1995)

Morality and rules

Moral Reasons J. Dancy Blackwell 1993

'Virtue and reason' J. McDowell *Monist* 1979

'Moral rules' R. Shafer-Landau *Ethics* July 1997

The nature of obligation

'A modified divine command theory of ethical wrongness' R.M. Adams in *The Virtue of Faith* Oxford 1987

Leviathan (1651) T. Hobbes - see esp chapters 14-26

Treatise of Human Nature (1739-40) D. Hume, esp Book 3, Part 2 'Of justice and injustice' in edition by Selby-Bigge and Nidditch OUP 1978

Groundwork for a Metaphysic of Morals (1785) I. Kant in edition by Paton, New York 1964

'Kant's analysis of obligation' C. Korsgaard in *Creating the Kingdom of Ends* CUP 1996

Utilitarianism (1863) J.S. Mill, see esp chapter 5.

'The definition of morality' J. Skorupski in *Ethics: Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 35 CUP 1993

The motivational role of obligation

On the Spirit and the Letter (412) Augustine - see in *Augustine: Later Works* ed Burnaby, Library of the Christian Classics, Philadelphia

Treatise of Human Nature (1739-40) D. Hume, esp Book 3, Part 2 'Of justice and injustice'

Groundwork for a Metaphysic of Morals (1785) I. Kant in edition by Paton, New York 1964

The Moral Problem M. Smith Blackwell 1994

Theologico-Political Treatise (1670) B. Spinoza

'Persons, character and morality' B. Williams in *Moral Luck* CUP 1981

Guilt and shame

Wise Choices, Apt Feelings A. Gibbard OUP 1990

Pride, Shame and Guilt G. Taylor OUP 1985

Shame and Necessity B. Williams California 1993

Morality, action and the voluntary

'Involuntary sins' R.M. Adams *Philosophical Review* 1985

The Act Itself J. Bennett OUP 1995

'Freedom of the will and the concept of a person' H. Frankfurt in *The Importance of What We Care About* CUP 1988

'Alternate possibilities and moral responsibility' H. Frankfurt in *The Importance of What We Care About*
Treatise of Human Nature (1739-40) D. Hume, esp Book 3, Part 3, Section 4 'Of natural abilities'
Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals (1751) D. Hume, esp Appendix 4 'Of some verbal disputes'
in edition by Selby-Bigge and Nidditch OUP 1975

The Right and the Good D. Ross OUP 1930

Freedom and Moral Sentiment, P. Russell, OUP 1996

What We Owe to Each Other, T. Scanlon Harvard 1999

'Freedom and Resentment' (1962) P. Strawson, in *Free Will* ed G. Watson OUP 1982

Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments, J. Wallace Princeton 1994

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