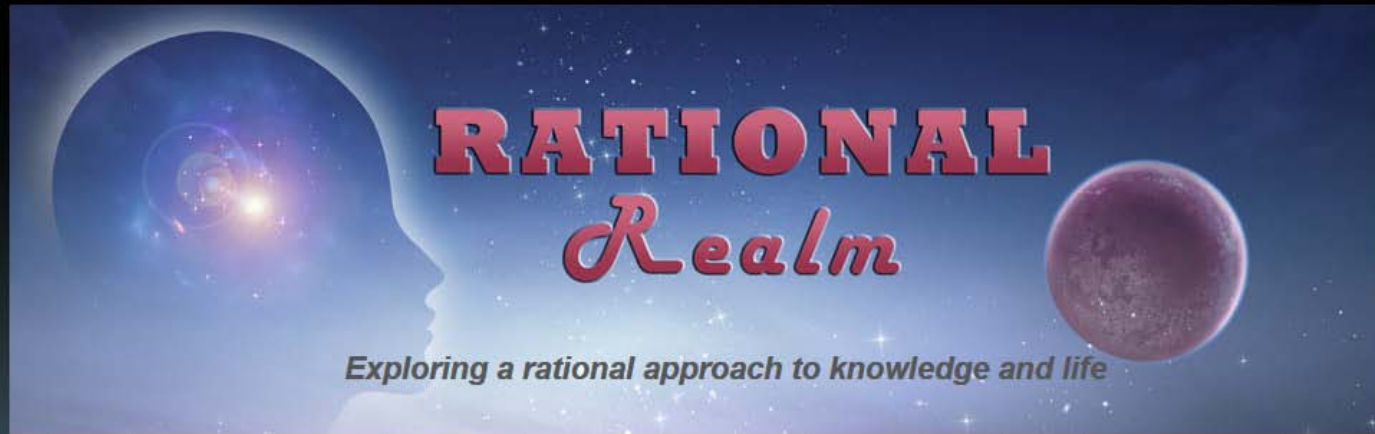


Is Morality Objective?

Leslie Allan

Philosophy Matters

4 May, 2024



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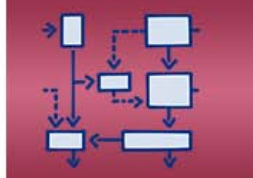
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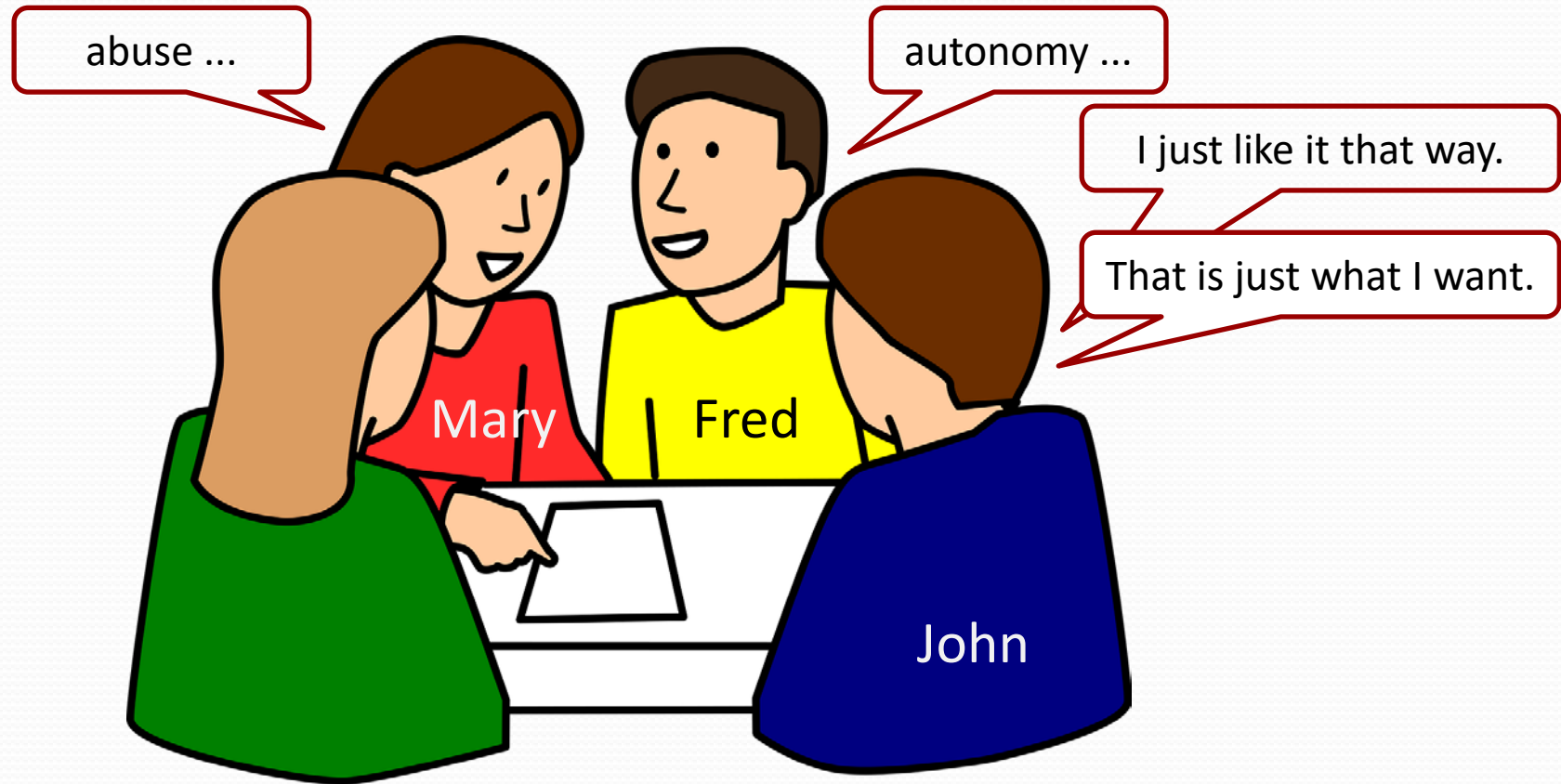


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What's New

Discussion Over Voluntary Euthanasia



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Objective: mind- or human-independent

Intuitionists



G. E. Moore

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Kantian Rationalists



Immanuel Kant

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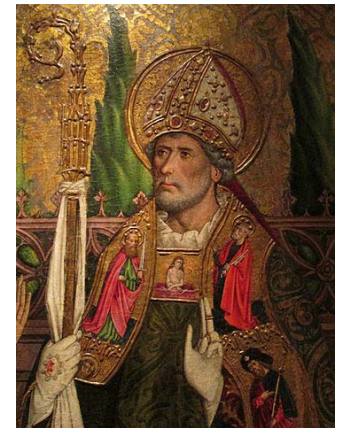
Natural Law Theorists



Thomas Aquinas

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Divine Command Theorists



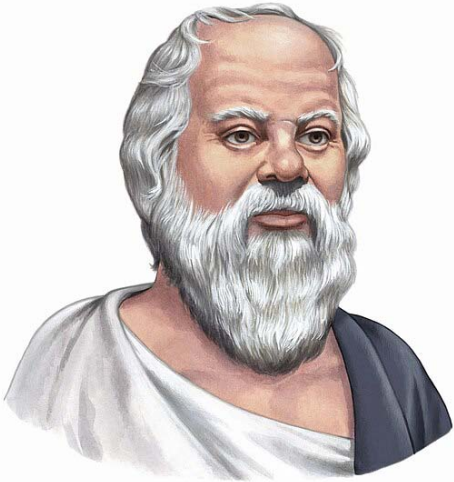
Augustine of Hippo

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Divine Command Theory

EUTHYPHRO DILEMMA

Socrates' question to Euthyphro:



“Is the pious loved by the gods because it is pious? Or is it pious because it is loved by the gods?”

[Euthyphro 10a]

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Divine Command Theory

EUTHYPHRO DILEMMA

1st horn



The Good

God loves ***The Good***
BECAUSE
it is good.

then

Morality is
independent of
God.

2nd horn



The Good

The Good is good
BECAUSE
God loves it.

then

Morality is
arbitrary.

Objective: mind- or human-independent

Intuitionists



G. E. Moore

Attribution: Ray Strachey, born Rachel Pearsall Conn Costelloe (4 June 1887 London – 16 July 1940) [Public domain]

Kantian Rationalists



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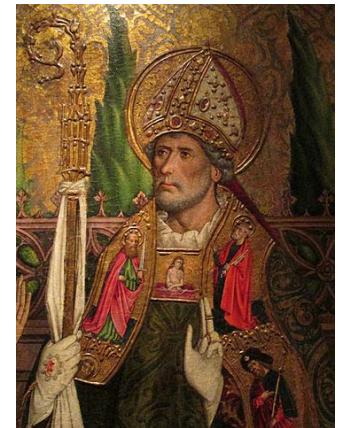
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Divine Command Theorists



Augustine of Hippo

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Moral Evaluations Express Attitude

Charity is good
... but I don't really care for
it one way or the other.



Torturing innocent children
for fun is abominably bad
... but I'm not really fussed
about it.



Expressive Meaning

hero

villain

chaste

patriot

prude

traitor



Approach 1 – Human-independent

Objective versus Subjective



e.g. 'John is bad.' vs 'John is mad.'

OBJECTIVE

recognize human-independent facts

e.g. 'Yay, Collingwood!'

SUBJECTIVE ✓

express human attitudes/preferences



Approach 2 – Impartiality

Objective versus Subjective



e.g. 'That tax policy is fair.'

OBJECTIVE ✓

impartially consider others' interests

e.g. 'That tax policy benefits me.'

SUBJECTIVE

hold parochial/self-serving bias



Approaches 1 and 2

Objective versus Subjective



OBJECTIVE

recognize human-independent facts



SUBJECTIVE ✓

express human attitudes/preferences



OBJECTIVE ✓

impartially consider others' interests



SUBJECTIVE

hold parochial/self-serving bias

Subjective Dimension in Ethics

1. evolution of altruism



**Grooming behaviour in
green monkeys**

Attribution: Image by Sa Wi from Pixabay

2. social customs/norms



**Magna Carta 1215 CE
(Charter of Liberties)**

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Objective Dimension in Ethics

1. appeal to reason



**Warren J. Argue Courtroom
on Kleber Kaserne**

Attribution: Brandon Beach / Public domain

2. bar parochial interests



**Eleanor Roosevelt – Universal
Declaration of Human Rights**

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Definitions of 'Objective'

“FAIR, JUST, EQUITABLE, IMPARTIAL, UNBIASED, DISPASSIONATE, OBJECTIVE mean free from favor toward either or any side. . . . OBJECTIVE stresses a tendency to view events or persons as apart from oneself and one’s own interest or feelings <I can’t be objective about my own child>.”

[Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary: Synonym Discussion of objective]

Lady Justice

“The blindfold represents objectivity, in that justice is or should be meted out objectively, without fear or favour, regardless of money, wealth, fame, power, or identity; blind justice and impartiality.”

[Wikipedia, Lady Justice, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lady_Justice>]



**Justitia blindfolded and holding
balance scales and a sword.**

Court of Final Appeal, Hong Kong

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'Impartiality' in History of Moral Philosophy



**David Hume's
Ideal Observer
(1711–76)**

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'Impartiality' in History of Moral Philosophy



**Immanuel Kant's
Categorical Imperative
(1724–1804)**

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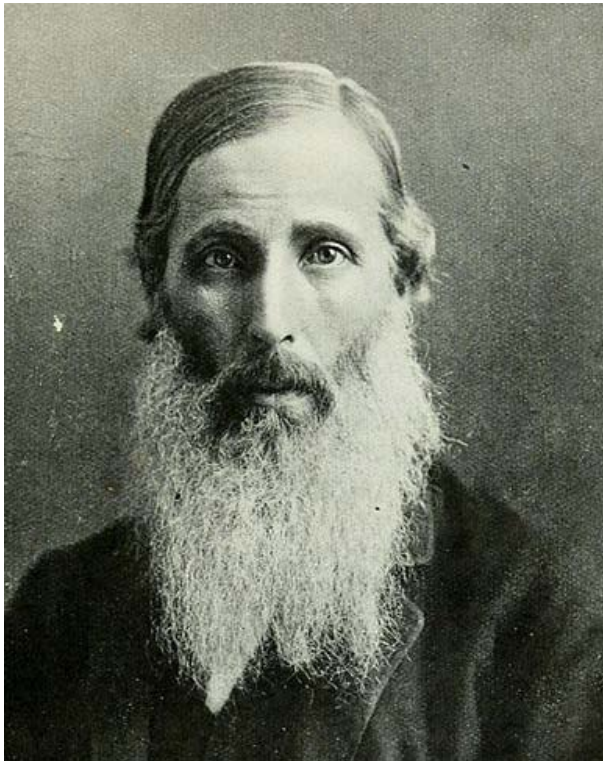
'Impartiality' in History of Moral Philosophy



Richard Hare's Prescriptivism (1919–2002)

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'Impartiality' in History of Moral Philosophy



Henry Sidgwick's Utilitarianism (1838–1900)

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'Impartiality' in History of Moral Philosophy



John Rawls' Social Contract (1921–2002)

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[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:John_Rawls.jpg]

Five Giants in Moral Philosophy

Ideal Observer



David Hume

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Categorical Imperative



Immanuel Kant

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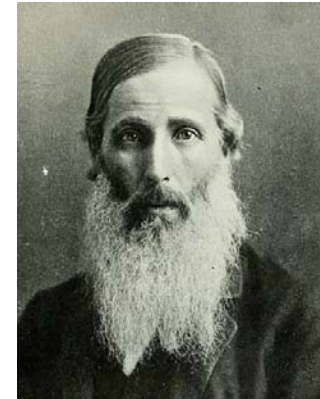
Prescriptivism



Richard Hare

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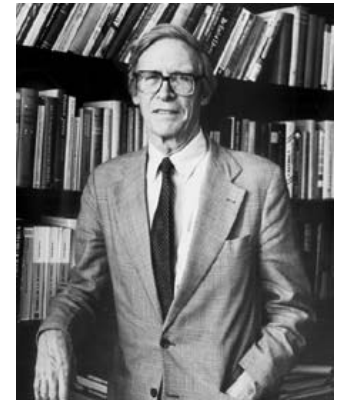
Utilitarianism



Henry Sidgwick

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Social Contract



John Rawls

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`Impartiality' in Ancient Civilizations

The Golden Rule

- ❖ **Ancient Egypt**
- ❖ **Ancient India [Mahābhārata Shānti-Parva 167:9]**
- ❖ **Ancient Greece [Thales, Sextus the Pythagorean, Isocrates]**
- ❖ **Hinduism [Brihaspati, Mahabharata (Anusasana Parva, Sec CXIII, V 8)]**
- ❖ **Taoism [T'ai Shang Kan Ying P'ien] and**
- ❖ **Confucianism [Analects XV.24]**

'Impartiality' in Religious Tradition

The Golden Rule

- ❖ Buddhism [Udanavarga 5:18]
- ❖ Bahá'í [Bahá'u'lláh]
- ❖ Judaism [Shabbath folio:31a, Babylonian Talmud]
- ❖ Christianity [Matthew 7:12] and
- ❖ Islam [Kitab al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 146]



McKenna, Paul 2001
Golden Rule Poster, Scarboro Missions

https://scarboromissions.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/item_34_lg.jpg

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