



The main features of Naturalism

This means that ethical Naturalism proposes:

That moral terms can be understood by analysing the natural world (empirical)

In other words, ethical language can be understood by referring to, and closely analysing, what we experience from the natural world around us. For example, we all understand that to experience the kindness of another is a 'good' experience and that to experience cruelty from another is a 'bad' experience.

That ethical statements are cognitivist and can be verified or falsified (cognitivist)

Taken further, this then means that our experiences have meaning because we can verify, from our experiences, that kind acts are 'good' and cruel acts are 'bad' due to the happiness or suffering that these experiences produce. We can all verify this and it means the same for everyone.

That verified moral statements are objective truths and universal

If the ethical descriptions and statements about our world have meaning for everyone then it also follows that they are objective truths and universal. If the world around us is objective or real, that is it exists independently of us, then it can be used to establish knowledge and truth. We can then discuss ethics meaningfully and establish certain propositions about good and bad ethical behaviour, for example that kindness is good, because our experience of the world verifies this.

That objective features of the world make propositions true or false (moral realism)

If these experiences are mind-independent, uniform and universal then this also means



that the statements 'kindness is an ethically good act' and 'cruelty is an ethically bad act' are true because these experiences are grounded in the objective features of the world around us. That is, we can actually see how kindness works. From this, we all can agree that kindness is good because the experiences in the world around us establishes that this is true.

The classical example of Ethical Naturalism as an ethical theory is that of Utilitarianism as proposed by Mill. A Utilitarian approach is typically Naturalistic in that it applies ethical reasoning from the basis of the experience of happiness and that the most useful ethical action is seen as that which brings the maximum levels of 'happiness or pleasure'. Utilitarians argue that everyone should do the most useful thing. The most useful thing is seen as action or actions that result in maximum levels of happiness or pleasure. Therefore, actions that produce the most happiness are seen as good. However, Mill was very interested in establishing an ethical society, not just individual guidance, and therefore the most important contribution by Mill, then, can be argued to be his introduction of the idea of universalisability. This proposed that everyone ought to aim at the happiness of everyone, as increasing the general happiness will increase individual happiness. This argument then supports the idea that people should put the interests of the group before their own interests.

Answer

Ethical Naturalism argues that ethical language has cognitive meaning because it directly refers to what we experience and therefore can be verified. Therefore, ethical language is objective and mind-independent, or, corresponds to reality. For example, Utilitarianism argues that the most useful ethical action is seen as that which brings the maximum levels of 'happiness or pleasure'. Therefore, we can all see that 'cruelty is an ethically bad act' because we know that it brings suffering and unhappiness when we see this occur in the empirical world.



F. H. Bradley's development of Naturalism

Bradley's starting point with ethics, according to Mary Warnock is that he acknowledges a certain set of 'facts': 'the fact that we often feel ourselves to be under some obligation' or the fact that 'we have morally failed in some way'. This foundation, for Bradley, was the fact of 'moral consciousness' that united everyone and each goal of self-realisation served the end of what he calls the self as a whole, that is, society. Bradley's notion of self-realisation, according to Mary Warnock, is 'directed over a period of time to a way of life, a system of interconnected actions'. That is, a person's moral acts are judged over a period of time and as part of their actions overall. Morality becomes an act of self-assertion or self-expression.

For Bradley, a person's individual station of duty accomplishes a universal work; through self-sacrifice the self is restored. In other words through realising one's station and its duties within the whole moral organism we realise who we are and what behaving ethically is. This is achieved, not through biological predisposition alone, but influenced greatly by the environment around us as we grow and develop.

Therefore, in relation to the wording of the Specification:

Ethical sentences express propositions

Bradley's essay sees ethical sentences as cognitive (verifiable) and also meaningful because they relate to this world and are not part of some abstract, intuitive conscience. Ethical sentences depict interactions with our world and recognise that we are part of a whole. For Bradley, it is because an agent's 'station' and 'duty' are to be found within the empirical realm that the nature of ethical statements expressed are both verifiable (cognitive) and relate to the facts of the world in which we live (Bradley follows Hegel and refers to this as the 'concrete universal'). However, it is with the duty element that Bradley clearly sees as beyond the Kantian notion of 'a priori' knowledge, but grounded firmly in the experience of the real world. Our place and role in the historical community



provide us with a measurable observable basis for a satisfying life. Our goal is to realise our true self, which we learn (through observation) in the family and community, and adapt the values of our society – and those of other societies that offer sound criticisms of our society.

Objective features of the world make propositions true or false

Bradley's essay acknowledges that our knowledge of society around us can assert, confirm or deny the claims of ethical propositions in relation to realising and finding one's station in life in accord with the process of self-realisation.

Meta-ethical statements can be seen in scientific terms

An ethical judgment of value can be made within the parameters of the empirical world without any appeal beyond this. Ethical decisions are part of the process of self-realisation, of engaging with, and becoming part of the whole through embracing the 'concrete' reality by finding one's niche, place or station of duty within the organism as a whole. This socially interactive process is the crucial aspect for Bradley.