

A CRITICAL OVERVIEW OF CONTEMPORARY ANARCHISM: A SOLUTION TO REMODELING THE SOCIETY.

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Abstract

The problem of individual freedom, the authority of state and the obligation of citizens to the state have been the point of focus and debate over the years. This enigma has led many political philosophers and political gladiators within the political arena to proffer certain theories with the assurance that if logically monitored will lead to social nirvana. Within this thinking, many philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes and Lock are of the opinion that individuals will attain the highest potentials of their personality under the state and its apparatus. In contrast to this view is the traditional problem of the liberalist political theory- the anarchists who rather deny the supremacy of authority over the individual. The anarchist believe in the individual's authority over the state as both the Alpha and Omega. It is within these extremes that this research seeks to investigate backdrops of anarchist caveats, expose their political philosophy, state their attack on state property and law, its attainment to the demise of the state and recommend the anarchists model for remodelling the society using the critical, analytic and explanatory methods as research methodology.

Introduction

There has been various allegations against some philosophical conventionalist on the commission of this Naturalist fallacy. This is about the most famous in all other fallacies. The practitioners of certain kinds of Ethical theory, like objectivists non naturalists or institutionalists have always charged their opponents with committing the naturalistic fallacy. Some of these opponents have opposed their commitment of this fallacy. Others have at least commented on it in passing and so the notion of a naturalistic fallacy have had a considerable currency in ethical literature.

In moral philosophy, the prominence in the concept of naturalistic fallacy is the Cambridge Philosopher called G.E. Moore made manifest in his book "Principia Ethics", Mr. Taylor could have preferred him to call it "vulgar Mistake". Moore coined the notion of the naturalistic fallacy in his polemic against naturalist and metaphysical systems of Ethics. For him, the naturalistic fallacy is a fallacy and must not be committed. Indeed, the pivotal point in Moore's theory holds that the fundamental entity of ethics cannot be defined at all.

In this paper then, a critical study on what Moore means by Naturalistic fallacy and when it is committed shall be undertaken. In the first place, we shall evaluate the fact that Good is indefinable, what naturalistic fallacy means and Moore's criticisms against his predecessor, over the commitment of this fallacy; lastly, then a critical evaluation and conclusion shall be drawn.

The Indefinability of Good

Moore's analysis on the indefinability of good opens with the posing of the question "how is good to be defined" (Foot, 1979, p.55) as Moore observed, when asked what is good? The answer will be that good is good and that ends the matter "Foot, 1979, p.56). However, let us note that the definition of this sort does not mean the expression of one-word meaning in other words. In another way, when asked how is good to be defined, his answer will simply be that it cannot be defined and that is all he has to say about it. It is basically on this beclouded answer that the British philosopher G.E. Moore attacked naturalism in his book *Principia Ethica*. For him then, moral goodness cannot be defined in terms of any natural property like pleasure (Moore, 1903, p.105).

Though a good thing might be pleasant, it does not necessarily imply that what is pleasant is good. In fact Moore holds that the word good in its essence is indefinable and so any attempt to define it leads to what he called "Naturalistic fallacy". Reason from Moore's perspective being that there is something more to moral goodness than can be perceived or explained economically. "Good" is just a simple notion neither defined nor analysed.

To further buttress his point, Moore exemplified the undesirability of good by comparing it to the colour "yellow". Moore explains thus: yellow cannot be defined because it is a simple property like good (Moore, 1903, p.110). The question then to be asked here is that why do we see yellow in objects and still recognize it since it is a simple, undefinable thing, also true of goodness? To answer this question, Moore posits the use of intuition power to know that certain things are good and some are bad. They do not rest on external evidence, so this fact celebrates Moore a prominent intuitionist. Arguing further on the indefinability of the word "good", Moore re-emphasized the fact that since the most important sense of definition is such that the definition states the parts which invariably compose a certain whole and in this sense good has no definition because it is simple and has no parts (Edwards, 1969). Good thus, is one of the innumerable objects of thought incapable of definition and so it denotes an indefinable quality.

Naturalistic Fallacy

The naturalistic fallacy consists in the contention that good means nothing but some simple complex notion that can be defined in terms of nature qualities. "The fact that good is indefinable and that to deny this involves a fallacy is a point capable of strict proof" (Moore, 1903, p.121). This means that the fallaciousness of the naturalists is just the issue at matter in the controversy between the intuitionists and their opponents the naturalists.

Here then, the notion of naturalistic fallacy has been connected with the notion of a division between the "ought" and the "is", between value and fact and between the normative and the descriptive. In this regard, Mr. D.C. Williams says that "some moralists have thought it appropriate to chastise as the naturalistic fallacy states, the attempt to derive the "ought" from

the “is” (Williams, 2021) . One may ask what has the division of the ‘ought’ and the ‘is’ got to do with the naturalistic fallacy” (Omogegbe, 1991).

The connection is based on the fact that many naturalistic and metaphysical moralists proceed as if ethical conclusions can be deduced from premises all which are non ethical. Examples of those who hold such views are Mill and Spencer. This is what Moore refers to as naturalistic fallacy. For Moore, Mill committed a fallacy by drawing an analogy between visibility and desirability in his argument for Hedonism. This Moore argues, it naturalistic fallacy”.

But the question is: is it a fallacy to deduce ethical conclusions from non-ethical premises?. It is worthwhile to answer this question by looking at the epicurean argument which Mill tried to develop. The Epicureans however believe that pleasure is good since it is sought by all. In this argument, the ethical conclusion is being derived from a non ethical premise.

This argument viewed just as it is fallacious. Nevertheless, it is wise to note that it is not fallacious because an ethical term occurs in the conclusion which does not occur in the premises, it is rather fallacious because any argument of the form A is B, therefore A is C is invalid is taken strictly as it stands. For instance, it is invalid to argue that Dantata is rich because he is wealthy. Such arguments are not be taken strictly as it stands. They are valid and involve no logical fallacy. Thus the Epicurean inference from psychological to ethical hedonism is valid when the suppressed premise is added to the effect that what is sought by all men is good. What we are now left to consider is whether the premises are taken or not.

However, it is now clear that the naturalistic fallacy is not a logical fallacy since it may be committed even when the argument is valid. If the premise to be supplied is a definition as it probably was for the epicureans, then the argument while still valid, involves the naturalistic fallacy and will run thus:

- a. Pleasure is sought by all men
- b. What is sought by all men is good (by definition)
- c. Therefore pleasure is good.

It thus involves the identification of goodness with being sought by all men and to make this or any other such identification is to commit the naturalistic fallacy. Based on this perspective, G.E. Moore argued in his “*Principia Ethica*” that:

For many philosophers have thought that when they named those other properties (belonging to all things which are good). They were actually defining good: that these properties, in fact were simply not “others” but absolutely and entirely the same with goodness. This view I propose to call the Naturalistic fallacy” (Moore,1903, p.161).

However, it is observed that Moore should have added that when one confuses “good” which is not a metaphysical object or quality with any metaphysical object or quality as metaphysical moralists do, then the fallacy should be called the metaphysical fallacy. But he (Moore) calls it naturalistic though he recognizes that the case is different since metaphysical properties are non natural. And so even if goodness were a natural object, that would not alter the nature of the fallacy nor diminish its importance at all. From all the foregoing arguments, it becomes clear that the fallaciousness of the procedure Mr. Moore calls the naturalistic fallacy is not due to the fact that it is applied to good or to an ethical or non natural characteristics alone. The problem is more of a generic one.

Moore Against His Predecessors

Owing to the commission of this naturalistic fallacy, Moore stated that the moralists like Bentham, Mill, Spencer, and Green have often made a move that is self defeating and have been influenced by it.

Moore has accused his predecessors mainly, the moral philosophers of being guilty of this naturalistic fallacy. He gave a remarkable explanation that it was only Henry Sigwick who has anticipated him in his arguments for the indefinability of good and against the naturalistic fallacy. Though upon class examination at least some of whom Moore attributed naturalistic fallacy were not guilty of it, even though he was particular about Mills Thesis.

Arguing further, it is often said that it was not only Sigwick that anticipated Moore in his arguments. If Moore had read the book titled “A review of the Principal Questions in Morals”, by the eighteenth century rational intuitionists Richard Price he would have found out Price distinction between a significant ethical generalization and the definition of an ethical term which price clearly stated in the pages of his book and which Moore reiterated in his *principia*.

Prince also dwelt on the doctrine that basic ethical terms are simple and undefinable similar to Moore’s Thesis. Though Price used “right” instead of “good”, it shows he was aware of Moore’s contention on the commitment of the naturalistic fallacy. Thus Prince argues: “As to the schemes which found morality on self have on positive laws and compacts or the divine will, they must either mean that moral good and end are only words for advantageous and disadvantageous, willed or forbidden” (Price,1974, p.201).

Consequently, other moral philosophers besides price also hold unto the fact that what is morally good right or obligatory is undefined, as reflected in the works of Shaftesbury Hutcheson on moral considerations. On that same footing we see the rational intuitionist view (Cudworth) when he maintained that: “It moral terms are defined as meaning willed or commanded, then by any agencies, human or divine, then they become mere names without any significance or names for nothing else...” (Cudworth, (ed),(1995), in Stanford Encyclopaedia, p.2501).

As we earlier stated Moore levelled his criticisms on the commitment of this fallacy against Mill's utilitarianism and for Moore, this provides artless use of the naturalistic fallacy as anybody could discuss. According to Moore, the offending passage in Mill's utilitarianism runs thus:

“the only proof capable of being given that a thing is visible, is that people actually see it... in like manner I apprehend to produce that anything is desirable, is that people do actually desire it.... that happiness is a good and that each person's happiness is a good to that person and the general happiness therefore, a good to the aggregate of all persons (Wadson,1972, p.74).

Based on this passage, Moore and other critics of Mill have argued that the words of Mill contain a mass of confusion. Mill should have realized that “desirable” does not mean able to be desired by “ought to be desired” or deserves to be desired”.

However, Mill's greatest error as Moore pointed out lies in the fact that he defined “desirable” as “desired” or rendered “x is good” equivalent in meaning to “x” is desired. If this fact is admitted, then Moore view that good is indefinable can be used against Mill's utilitarianism.

Evaluation and Conclusion

Considering the forgoing arguments, we are now left with deciding whether the case which Moore made out for the indefinability of good is convincing or not. He has already stated, that there are only two alternatives to his own view, and both of them are untenable.

The first of these alternatives being that “good denotes a complex object, and the second that men do not have a unique object before their minds when they think or speak of good. We wish to stick More to Moore's open question that in the ordinary discourse, there are contexts where no definitions will serve as a substitute for “good” without loss of change of meaning. If for the evaluative question was his action good”. We substitute “did his action produce pleasure, then we change the meaning of the question. In view, Moore pointed out that used in this evaluative sense and any such naturalistic description as produce pleasure. Many other moral philosophers have been concerned with this gap between.

Naturalistic or supernaturalistic description and moral evolution. In another development, I wish here to point out that the ethical naturalistic cannot content to the attack levelled against them by Moore. They has already rejected the view by the ethical naturalists that “good” refers to a complex object on grounds that if it is so then some analytic proposition about good will be true but the “open question” argument given by Moore and pointed out that this not not so. In other words, nothing is true by definition is “good”.

In reply to this, the ethical naturalists maintained that certain propositions about good are true analytically or by definition which by close examination is simulative sense of definition, all

he is saying is that any one who repudiate a definition of good is opting out of the ordinary use to which “good” is put.

In conclusion therefore, I would categorically wish to state that Moore’s criticism and attack on his predecessors over the commitment of the naturalistic fallacy is overwhelming. Though his work is not at that original as some thinkers had already anticipated him, his work was influential in ethical considerations. Some have criticized Moore on the fact that his criticisms and attack were as a result of misunderstanding he had with the doctrine of this predecessors especially Mill’s utilitarianism. Moore also raised thought provoking problems that reflects on commission of this fallacy by some ethical naturalists.

However commendable his views and contributions are, there are some irregularities laden in his argument which cannot be overlooked. One thing stands clear, namely that the naturalistic fallacy is not a logical fallacy, it transcends all other things.

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