

Moral realism

US275 Scientific Ethics
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Moral Realism

- Moral facts exist
 - part of the fabric of the universe
 - exist independently of our thoughts about them
- Three components of moral realism
 - objective, cognitive, and metaphysical



Galileo Galilei displaying his telescope to Leonardo Donato
19th century

Moral Realism: Objectivist Element

- Moral principles
 - have objective validity
 - do not need social approval



Woman Weighing Gold
Jan van Hemessen, c1530

Moral Realism: Cognitivist Element

- moral principles
 - involve assertions that can be evaluated as either true or false
 - through thinking about the situation you can determine “right” from “wrong”



Bojar Woman
Firs Sergeevich Zhuravlev, 1896

Moral Realism: Metaphysical Element

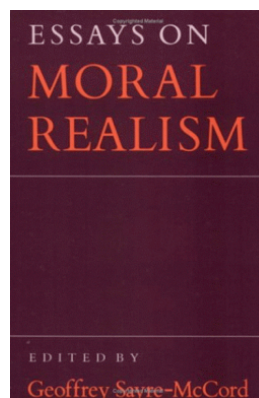
- Moral facts exist in reality
 - exist beyond what we can observe with our immediate senses.
 - logic-based on meaning of terms rather than perceptions or observations



The Absinthe Drinker
Viktor Oliva, 1901

3 categories of Moral Realists

- **Theistic** moral realists
- **Naturalistic** moral realists
- **Nonnaturalistic** moral realists



Theistic Moral Realists

- moral values exist within God
 - morality depends on God's will or reason
 - God's will is an objective fact within the universe
- examples
 - religious ethics



Naturalistic Moral Realists

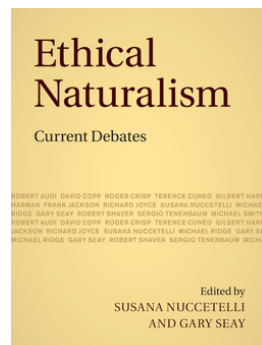
- moral values exist within the natural world
 - connected with specific properties such as pleasure and satisfaction
 - pleasure and satisfaction are objective facts in the world
- examples:
 - egoism
 - utilitarianism
 - virtue theory



Waterlilies pond
Claude Monet, 1904

Nonnaturalistic Moral Realists

- moral values exist
 - but grounded in nonnatural facts about the world
 - facts can't be detected or observed through scientific means



Nonnaturalism

- Plato viewed universe in two realms
- upper realm
 - perfect ideal forms
- lower realm
 - error and illusion
 - ever changing observations in the physical world



Plato's Allegory of the cave
Jan Saenredam, 1604

Any Questions?

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