ARTÍCULOS

NORMS AND VALUES

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1. *An idealized moral language*

The purpose of the present paper is to investigate to what extent norm predicates (expressed with words such as "ought", "permitted' and "wrong") can be defined in terms of value predicates (expressed with words such as "good", "bad", and "better").

Not even those words of natural language that are paradigmatically logical (such as "not", "or", and "all") correspond exactly to symbols or expressions in logical language. Therefore, a logical analysis of concepts that occur in natural language will have to involve an idealization of the language.

In everyday moral discourse there are a few moral predicates, such as "(morally) desirable" and "(morally) acceptable", that are difficult to categorize unequivocally as either norm predicates or value predicates. These predicates are not commonly referred to in moral philosophy. Following philosophical practice, it will be assumed that all moral predicates of the idealized language are either norm predicates or value predicates.

There are there major groups of *norm predicates*, namely

prescriptive, prohibitive, and permissive predicates.[1] The norm predicates of natural language differ both in connotation of natural language and in strength.[2] Differences in connotation will not be expressible in the idealized language. On the other hand, it will allow for norm predicates of different strengths, corresponding to differences in natural language such as between "must", "ought to" and "is advisable".

Prohibitative predicates are usually assumed to correspond to prescriptive predicates followed by a negation. Thus, "it is wrong to do X" has been equated with "X ought not to be done", and "X is forbidden" with "not-X is obligatory".[3] Similarly, permissive predicates are assumed to correspond to prescriptive predicates, in such a way that an action may be done (is permitted) if and only if it is not morally required not to do it.[4] These relationships will hold in the idealized language. More formally, each norm predicate will be interdefinable with norm predicates of the two other categories, in the following sense:

[1] In ordinary language, "when saying that an action is permitted we mean that one is at liberty to perform it, that one may either perform the action or refrain from performing it". (Joseph Raz, "Permissions and Supererogation", *American Philosophical Quarterly* 12, pp. 161–168 (1975), p. 161.) In formal philosophy, however, "being permitted to perform an action is compatible with having to perform it" (*ibid*). The permissive predicates referred to here conform with the latter usage.

[2] On differences in connotation, see: Richard B. Brandt, "The concepts of obligation and duty", *Mind* 73, pp. 374–393 (1965). James K. Mish'alani, " 'Duty', 'Obligation' and 'Ought' ", *Analysis* 30, pp. 33–40 (1969). Mary Forrester, "Some Remarks On Obligation, Permission, and Supererogation", *Ethics* 85, pp. 219–226 (1975).

On differences in strength, see: John Ladd, *The Structure of a Moral Code* (1957), p. 125. Aaron Sloman, " 'Ought' and 'better' ", *Mind* 79, pp. 385–394 (1970), p. 391. Gilbert Harman, *The nature of morality* (1977), pp. 117–118. Andrew J. I. Jones and Ingmar Pörn, "Ideality, Sub-Ideality and Deontic Logic", *Synthese* 65. pp. 275–290 (1985).

[3] George Edward Moore, *Ethics* (1912), pp. 85–86. Charles L. Stevenson, *Ethics and language* (1944), pp. 99–100. Georg Henrik von Wright, "Deontic Logic", *Mind* 60, pp. 1–15 (1951), p. 3.

[4] von Wright, *op. cit.*, p. 3

Definition D1: A prescriptive predicate O and a prohibitive predicate F are *interdefinable* if and only if for all arguments A, $F(A)$ holds if and only if O(not-A) holds.

A prescriptive predicate O and a permissive predicate P are interdefinable if and only if for all arguments A, $P(A)$ holds if and only if O(not-A) does not hold.

A prohibitive predicate F and a permissive predicate P are interdefinable if and only if for all arguments A, $P(A)$ holds if and only if $F(A)$ does not hold.

A *dyadic value predicate* for "better than or equal in value to" (or "at least as good as") will be included in the idealized language. If needed, defined dyadic predicates for "better than" and "equal in value to" may be introduced in the standard manner.

At least two classes of *monadic value predicates* will be represented in the idealized language, namely *positive* predicates, such as "good", "best", "not worst", "very good", "excellent", and "not very bad", and *negative* predicates, such as "bad", "worst", "not best", etc.[5] The properties of positivity and negativity are defined as follows:

Definition D2:[6] A monadic predicate T satisfies *positivity* if and only if for all arguments A and B, if $T(A)$ holds, and B is better than or equal in value to A, then $T(B)$ holds.

Further, T satisfies *negativity* if and only if for all arguments A and B, is $T(A)$ holds, and A is better than or equal in value to B, then $T(B)$ holds.

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[5] Ordinary language contains a third class of monadic value predicates, namely predicates with both an upper and a lower bound, such as "neutral in value", "fairly good", etc. Such predicates may, or may not, be included in the idealized language.

[6] Sven Ove Hansson, "Defining 'good' and 'bad' in terms of 'better' ", *Notre Dame Journal of Formal Logic*, in print.

2. *Is there a connection?*

The concept of *moral consistency* will be used to express relationships between moral statements. A set of moral statements is morally consistent if and only if all its elements can, according to ordinary intuitions, simultaneously be adhered to by a rational moral agent. Moral consistency implies, but is not implied by, logical consistency.

The following notion of connectedness will be used to give precision to the question whether there is any connection at all between norm predicates and value predicates.

> *Definition D3*: Let R_1 and R_2 be two sets of expressions in the idealized moral language. Let R'_1 and R'_2 be their closures under negation. Then R_1 and R_2 are *unconnected* if and only if for all subset S_1 of R'_1 and all subset S_2 of R'_2, if each of S_1 and S_2 is morally consistent, then so is the union of S_1 and S_2.
>
> Further, R_1 and R_2 are *connected* if and only if they are not unconnected.

The following two examples should be sufficient to show that the class of norm statements and the class of value statements are connected in the sense of this definition:

(1) It would be bad if you did X, and it would be good if you did not do X. You ought to do X.

(2) It is very bad to do X. It is not at all wrong to do X.

Both examples contradict ordinary intuitions about moral consistency.

> *Proposal P1*: In any moral language that reasonably well reflects common intuitive concepts of norms and values, the set of norm expression is connected to the set of value expressions.

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3. *Two types of equivalence*

If proposal P1 is accepted, the next step should be to investigate whether or not a norm predicate and a value predicate can be equivalent.

As was noted by Moore, such equivalence may be taken in either an extensional or an intensional sense.[7] Two monadic predicates T_1 and T_2 are *extensionally equivalent* if and only for all arguments A, $T_1(A)$ holds if and only if $T_2(A)$ holds. They are *intensionally equivalent* if and only if for all arguments A, the statement that $T_1(A)$ holds has the same meaning as the statement that $T_2(A)$ holds.

Norm statements differ from value statements in being action-guiding. This dissimilarity prevents norm predicates and value predicates from being intensionally equivalent. It does not, however, prevent them from the same extension.

> *Proposal P2*: A norm predicate and a value predicate cannot be intensionally equivalent.

4. *The non-positivity of prescriptive predicates*

The most common proposal for a connection between norm predicates and value predicates is to identify what ought to be done with the best. This view may be called the *best-ought connection*. It prevails among utilitarians. Moore, in a *locus classicus*, identified the assertion "I am morally bound to perform this action" with the assertion "This action will produce the greatest possible amount of good in the Universe".[8]

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[7] Moore, *op. cit.*, pp. 172–173.

[8] George Edward Moore, *Principia Ethica* (1903), p. 147. *Cf.* also: Lars Bergström, *The alternatives and consequences of actions* (1966), p. 91. Aaron Sloman, " 'Ought' and 'better' ". *Mind* 79, pp. 385–394 (1970), p. 388.

Gupta and von Kutschera claim that "good" and "ought" coincide.[9] This may be called the *good-ought connection*.

The best-ought and good-ought connections both equate a prescriptive predicate with a positive value predicate.[10] All proposals of this kind are threatened by counter-examples with the following structure:

> *Structure of examples S1*: Let O be a prescriptive predicate. Further, let A and B be two elements of its domain, such that:

(1) A and B are mutually exclusive.

(2) O (A-or-B).

[9] Rajender Kumar Gupta, "Good, Duty and Imperatives", *Methods* 11, pp. 161–167 (1959). Franz von Kutschera, "Semantic Analysis of Normative Concepts", *Erkenntnis* 9. pp. 195–218 (1975).

[10] At least two other proposals have been made that seem to belong to the same category. Michael Stocker claims that rightness and goodness are the same so far as ethical considerations are concerned. ("Rightness and goodness: Is there a difference?", *American Philosophical Quartely* 10, pp. 87–98 (1973).) This may be called the *good-right connection*. It is somewhat difficult to interpret, due to the ambiguity of the norm predicate "right" (as in "it is right that"). The most common standpoint is to identify "right" with "not wrong". However, some philosophers, notably William David Ross, have taken "right" to be close in meaning to "ought". (*The Right and the Good* (1930), pp. 3–4) Stocker seems to take this latter position (p. 96), so that his good-right connection is of the same type as the good-ought connection. If, on the other hand, the good-right connection is interpreted as a good-may connection, this does not make it less problematic. Such an interpretation denies the existence of morally neutral actions that are allowed but neither good nor bad.

Robert S. Hartman maintains that "ought" is equivalent to "it is better that". (*The Structure of Value* (1967), p. 165.) This may be called the *better-ought connection*. (It does not have the same structure as the worse-wrong connection that will be introduced below.) According to Hartman, "John ought to read *Ivanhoe*" is equivalent either to "it is better for John to read *Ivanhoe* than to read something else, say *Lady Killer Comics*", or to "it is better for John to read *Ivanhoe* than not to read it (or burn it, or eat it, or the like)". The exact meaning of this proposal is not evident, but it seems to equate "ought" with a positive value predicate.

(3) Not $O(A)$.

(4) Not $O(B)$.

(5) Either A is at least as good as A-or-B, or B is at least as good as A-or-B.

For any prescriptive predicate, if an example of the S1 type can be found, then this predicate cannot be equivalent to any positive value predicate.

Such examples can readily be found. One way to construct them is to let A and B represent two exhaustive ways to satisfy the same moral requirement, and such that the difference between A and B is morally irrelevant. For instance, A may signify that I pay my debt to Adam by letting John bring my money to him, and B may signify that I pay the debt in any other way.

Another way to construct an example of the S1 type is to let A and B represent two exhaustive ways to satisfy the same moral requirement, and such that A is a supererogatory variant of A-or-B. For instance, suppose someone is in danger at sea. Then A may signify that I try to save him at the peril of my own life, and B that I do all that I can to save him without risking my own life.

The best-ought connection has been criticized by numerous authors.[11] Most of the arguments that have been used against it are variants of S1. The general applicability of S1 makes it possible to draw a more general negative conclusion:

> *Proposal P3*: No prescriptive predicate has the property of positivity. Therefore, no prescriptive predicate is extensionally equivalent with any positive value predicate.

5. *The negativity of prohibitive predicates*

In this section, I will defend the following proposal:

[11] See, for example: Kurt Baier, *The Moral Point of View* (1958), pp. 203–204. L. M. Sumner, "The Good and the Right", *Canadian Journal of Philosophy Supplementary Volume* 5, pp. 99–114 (1979), p. 108.

Proposal P4: Prohibitive predicates have the property of negativity.

In other words: If X is Wrong (prohibited, etc.), and Y is at least as bad as X, then Y is wrong (prohibited, etc.). Due to the interdefinability of prohibitive and permissive predicates, proposal P4 is equivalent to the proposal that permissive predicates are positive.

A proposal such as P4 cannot be proven. It can only be corroborated by examples and by the lack of counter-examples. In particular, the examples that are used against equating prescriptive predicates with positive ones cannot be adapted to work against proposal P4.

To see why this is so, let us consider the analogue of S1:

Structure of examples S2: Let F be a prohibitive predicate. Further, let A and B be two elements of its domain, such that:

(1) A and B are mutually exclusive.

(2) F(A-or-B).

(3) Not F(A).

(4) Not F(B).

(5) Either A is at least as bad as A-or-B, or B is at least as bad as A-or-B

If an example with the structure of S2 could be found, it would disprove proposal P4. However, no such example seems to be available. To see why this is so, it should be observed that any such example would also be a counter-example against:

(3) If A and B are mutually exclusive, and F(A-or-B), then either F(A) or F(B).

This is a weak and plausible deontic principle. In contrast, an example with the structure of S1 will only have to be a counter-example against:

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(4) If A and B are mutually exclusive, and O(A-or-B), either O(A) or O(B).

(4) is a strong and counter-intuitive deontic principle. Contrary to (3), it is not valid in standard deontic logic.[12] This asymmetry in logic between prohibitive and prescriptive predicates is closely connected to the asymmetry that follows from proposal P3 and P4, namely that prohibitive predicates are negative, it should be observed that we are concerned with an asymmetry between "at least as good as" and "at least as bad as". (I am not aware of any asymmetry of the latter type.)

A related asymmetry that supports proposition P4 is that there is no mirror-image of supererogatory actions at the other end of the value-scale. An action may be "too good" to be morally required, but it cannot be too bad to be wrong.

6. *The worse-wrong connection*

It does not follow from proposal P4 that all prohibitive predicates are extensionally equivalent with a negative value predicate. For that to be true must be, for each prohibitive predicate, a negative value predicate with exactly the corresponding strength.

The availability of suitable negative value predicates can be ensured by the following condition on the idealized language:

> *Definition D3*: There are *negative value predicates of all possible degrees of strength* if and only if for all A and B, if A is better than B, there is a negative predicate T_n such that T_n(B) holds but T_n(A) does not hold.

This definition paves the way for the following proposal:

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[12] To see the implausibility of (4), let A be any expression such that O(A). Then for any expression B, it follows by (4) that either O(A-and-B) or O(A-and-not-B). Thus, if I ought to visit my sick friend it is either the case that I ought to visit my sick friend and wear blue socks or that I ought to visit my sick friend and not wear blue socks.

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Proposal P5 (the *worse-wrong connection*): In an idealized moral language with negative value predicates of all possible strengths, for each prohibitive predicate there is a negative value predicate with which it is extensionally equivalent.

Due to the interdefinability of the three types of norm predicates, proposal P5 implies that all norm predicates, are coextensive with evaluative expression.

As an approximation of the worse-wrong connection, "wrong" may be equated with "bad" (the *bad-wrong connection*). Then an action is wrong if and only if it is bad. It ought to be performed if and only if it is bad not to perform it, and it is allowed if and only if it is not bad not to perform it.

It must be emphasized that the bad-wrong connection is only a very rough approximation. The words "bad", "wrong" and "allowed" do not necessarily have exactly the strengths necessary for interdefinability. As was pointed out in another context by Chisholm and Sosa, there are actions of "permissive all-doing", i.e. "minor acts of discourtesy which most of us feel we have a right to perform (e.g. taking too long in the restaurant when others are known to be waiting)".[13] Such acts may plausibly be said to be bad but not wrong.

The bad-wrong approximation is useful for the analysis of the ideal ought *Seinsollen*. To say that there ought to be more sunny days does not only mean that it would be a good thing if there were more sunny days. Rather, it means that it is a bad thing that there are not more sunny days. The ideal ought has, therefore, the same relation to negative value predicates as the normative ought.

[13] Roderick M. Chisholm and Ernest Sosa, "Intrinsic Perferability and The Problem of Supererogation". *Synthese* 16, pp. 321–331 (1966), p. 326.

RESUMEN

Si bien un predicado normativo y un predicado de valor moral no pueden ser idénticos en cuanto a su significado, sí pueden ser extensionalmente equivalentes. En este artículo se hace la propuesta de que, en un lenguaje moral idealizado, todos los predicados normativos deben ser extensionalmente equivalentes a una expresión de valor. Sin embargo, esta interrelación no puede lograrse mediante la identificación convencional de un predicado de valor positivo (como "bueno" o "mejor") con un predicado normativo prescriptivo (como "debe" o "deber"). En cambio, un predicado de valor negativo (como "malo") puede ser igualado a un predicado prohibitivo (como "incorrecto"). Los predicados normativos prescriptivos y permisivos pueden, a su vez, definirse en términos de predicados prohibitivos.

[*Traducción del resumen: Gabriela Castillo Espejel*]