Do evolutionary and psychological explanations for the origin of our morality undermine moral realism?

Masaki Chiba, University of Tokyo

Moral realism is the view that there are objective moral values and duties that exist independently of human mind. This view has been repeatedly challenged by a number of philosophers endorsing moral skepticism as well as moral antirealism. In the contemporary context, some philosophers such as Joyce (2006), Street (2006), Kahane (2011), and Nichols (2015) have recently suggested several forms of genealogical debunking arguments of our morality. According to these genealogical debunking arguments, if the origin of our moral beliefs and intuitions can be explained by some evolutionary or psychological processes, and if these processes are epistemically unreliable processes to track moral truths (if there are any such truths), then it follows that our moral beliefs and intuitions are epistemically unjustified. Although the precise forms of genealogical debunking arguments differ in some important ways, in some instances disagreeing with one another, they now pose a serious challenge to our understanding of morality in many areas of contemporary philosophy, including ethics, philosophy of biology, and philosophy of religion (e.g., Linville 2009, Shafer-Landau 2012, Wilkins and Griffiths 2012, FitzPatrick 2015).

In this talk, I mainly focus on the genealogical debunking argument targeting moral realism, as opposed to those targeting specific normative ethical theories or individual moral judgments. The goal of this talk is twofold. First, I briefly introduce the current state of the debate and formulate the genealogical debunking argument targeting moral realism in the best possible way. Second, I critically assess the plausibility of the genealogical debunking argument and defend moral realism from its challenge. The conclusion of this talk is that the argument still lacks grounding solid enough for us to support it, given that there are several serious conceptual, methodological, and empirical issues concerning whether laypeople and metaethicists have genuine belief in moral realism.

Benevolence and Self-Defense

Christina Chuang, Nanyang Technological University

In this paper I make a connection between benevolence and the use of physical force in self-defense. I refer to Francis Hutcheson’s conception of benevolence both as a virtue and a natural disposition in human beings. I argue that one has a duty to learn fighting techniques (namely those commonly practiced in martial arts), because our physical body is the medium through which we learn to adopt the standpoint of the “disinterested” observer who, in turn, has the capacity for exercising benevolence. Hutcheson argues that human nature is motivated by two different two principles: self-love and benevolence. These two principles do not necessarily oppose each other since some of our actions are motivated by a mixture of both. It is unclear to what extent self-love includes the basic instinct for self-preservation. The martial arts expert, I will argue, is in a better position to introspect the different levels of
self-love because physical training is one of the most affective ways in which we can strengthen benevolence. The decision to fight (or not to fight) must be made from the correct set of moral sentiments in order to justify the use of physical force in self-defense.

**Phenomenal consciousness and personhood**

*Yoshiyuki Hayashi, University of Tokyo*

The moral importance of specific kinds of consciousness has been debated. Consciousness is a murky concept, which covers at least two sorts: phenomenal and access (Block 1995). Some have emphasized that it is rather access consciousness that plays an important role in ethics (Levy and Savulescu 2009). According to them, although phenomenal consciousness is sufficient for being moral patients, it is not enough for having moral personhood and full moral status. This might justify killing patients only with phenomenal consciousness, given they cannot avoid chronic pain (Wilkinson et al. 2008). Levy (2014) goes further, claiming that access consciousness carries almost all the importance that is attributed to our folk concept of consciousness. Thus, even a zombie (or non-conscious robots) could have full moral status. In a similar vain, Sinnott-Armstrong and Miller (2013) argue that what makes killing wrong is to deprive one of abilities, not of phenomenal consciousness (or life itself). Therefore, one could conclude that it is abilities (including access consciousness) that carry moral significance but not phenomenal consciousness.

It is still unclear what kind of importance phenomenal consciousness has. I argue that phenomenal consciousness ensures our existence as a person. It is a necessary condition for a person. Thus, phenomenal consciousness and access consciousness are both important for our moral practice. I mainly focus on the case of artificial consciousness; what if there was artificial intelligence that would not have sentience (phenomenal consciousness) but sapience (access consciousness) (Bostrom and Yudkowsky 2011)? Do they also have full moral status? Further, what if their sapience is greater than that of human beings? I deny that they will have full moral status. At the same time, I argue that they cannot be responsible for their actions. I conclude that phenomenal consciousness is necessary for both moral agency and patiency.

**Revolutionary Moral Realism**

*Andrés Carlos Luco, Nanyang Technological University*

This paper introduces a new meta-ethical perspective called revolutionary moral realism. Traditional moral realism holds that (i) objective moral facts exist, (ii) that moral judgments purport to represent objective moral facts, (iii) that some moral propositions succeed in reliably tracking objective moral facts, and (iv) that, therefore, moral knowledge is possible. Revolutionary moral realism holds that traditional moral realism is strictly false, since moral propositions fail to reliably track objective moral facts. However, revolutionary moral realism also holds that through discursive activism, the truth-conditions of moral propositions can be changed so as to make them reliably track objective facts about actions, persons, and institutions. When these facts become tracked by moral propositions, they become moral
facts through a process I will call the real-ization of moral facts. Once moral facts come to be reliably tracked by moral propositions, moral knowledge becomes possible. According to revolutionary moral realism, then, moral knowledge and an objective moral reality are aspirations that can only be constituted by radically transforming the way moral language is currently used.

Revolutionary moral realism is a promising alternative to the dominant meta-ethical theories. It pre-empts challenges from non-cognitivist anti-realists by arguing that if moral language, as it’s now prevalently used, does not purport to represent any facts, then it can and should be changed to do so. It is consistent with the main thesis of error theory, which is that moral language is almost entirely false, because it is saturated with false existential commitments. But in rebuttal to the error theorist, the revolutionary moral realist maintains that moral language can be cleansed of any false existential commitments, if only the users of moral language would change the referential intentions by which they fix the referents of their moral terms. Finally, revolutionary moral realism offers theoretical advantages not shared by other versions of moral realism. It is not subject to “open question” objections usually lodged against naturalistic forms of realism, since it does not claim that existing moral language purports to represent natural facts. At the same time, revolutionary moral realism does allow for the possibility that moral language can be reconstructed to represent natural facts. This renders revolutionary realism immune to the major deficits of non-naturalistic realism—in particular, the challenge of providing a persuasive ontology of non-natural moral facts.

Perhaps the strongest considerations supporting revolutionary moral realism lie in its potential to reinforce moral motivation and to promote beneficial social arrangements. Some experimental philosophy studies find that people donate more to charity when they are primed to believe moral realism. The discursive activism prescribed by revolutionary moral realism aims to convince more people to accept moral realism. If the experimental philosophy findings are correct, we should expect more prosocial behavior to result from the proliferation of belief in moral realism. Furthermore, many theorists recognize the benefits moral thought and talk yield for facilitating greater cooperation, social equality, and peacemaking. Much like its anti-realist counterpart—revolutionary moral fictionalism—revolutionary realism urges us to continue using moral discourse and reaping its benefits. However, if the revolutionary realist project succeeds, moral discourse would not be a noble fiction propagated to dull the minds of the masses. Instead, moral discourse would be re-oriented to become fact-tracking, epistemically sound, and resilient in the face of critical scrutiny.
On Models and Representations in Seismology: The Seismic Mechanism Controversy and its Resolution

Teru Miyake, Nanyang Technological University

There are two aims of this talk: the first aim is simply to relate a scientific controversy and the way it got resolved. The resolution of this controversy is much more complicated than first appears, and I present it as a cautionary note against oversimplification in the philosophical analysis of science. The second aim is to try to understand the use(s) of a particular model in seismology, the double couple model of the seismic mechanism. I will argue for a pluralistic way of understanding its use.

The seismic mechanism controversy was a debate that started in the 1930's about the proper way to represent the mechanism of the seismic source. There were two competing models of the seismic mechanism: the single couple model and the double couple model, the single couple being the favored model of an American group and a Dutch group, the double couple being favored by a Japanese group. From the 1930's to the 1960's, all of these groups carried out observations of seismic waves to try to determine whether the seismic mechanism is a single couple or a double couple. By most accounts, the controversy was abruptly resolved in favor of the double couple in the 1960's. Perhaps surprisingly, the controversy was resolved not through observations of seismic waves at all, but through a series of mathematical results in the theory of elastic dislocations.

This controversy, and its resolution, does not fit easily into standard theories of scientific inference, such as the hypothetic-deductive method or inference to the best explanation. I argue that the best way to understand the rise of the double couple model is in terms of its use: first, in enabling the creation of a theoretically derived measure of magnitude, the seismic moment magnitude; and second, in enabling a form of inference in which deviations from a double couple seismic radiation pattern can be used to make further inferences about seismic mechanisms.

Emotion, Self-control and Moral Responsibility

Yu Nishitsutsumi, University of Tokyo

In many countries, there are judicial systems based on a principle that one has responsibility for all of her acts because she can act freely. Thus, if he or she commits an antisocial act, one deserves punishment. But in recent years, we have interesting findings that the brain of a criminal who repeatedly commits a crime has a defect in autonomous decision-making. In the case of such a criminal, our existing judicial systems do not help prevent a repeating offender, and thus some people suggest the necessity of adopting therapeutic interventions.

The process of the brain system underlying a behavioral choice is revealed, and one of the crucial brain areas related to decision-making is found out to be the ventromedial prefrontal cortex (VMPFC), which is indispensable for emotion. Particularly, it is interesting that emotion that seems to distort rational decision-making is essential for it. The somatic marker hypothesis proposed by A. R. Damasio emphasizes the importance of emotion in rational decision-making. According to the hypothesis, the formation of a preference, which is
associated with the development of somatic states triggered through the autonomic nervous system, is under way at the unconscious level before the behavioral choice at the conscious level. Then, signals of the somatic states are relayed back to the brain, and they work as a marker of values of objects to orient the choice. It is most important that the preference process is based on large-scale networks which involve the cerebral cortex and subcortical structures and reciprocally exchange the information of the somatic states. The defects in functions of this system are related to various disordered behaviors which make it difficult to apply the existing concept of “responsibility”.

In this presentation, I examine the necessity of emotion in moral responsibility. To this end, first I show self-control is a necessary condition for moral responsibility. Next I investigate the role of emotion in decision-making from the perspective of Damasio’s Somatic Marker Hypothesis to pursue a framework which is adequate for clarifying self-control. Finally I conclude that emotion is necessary for moral responsibility.

How can we explain both tenacity and restrictedness of delusions?

Yukihiro Nobuhara, University of Tokyo

Delusion (pathological one) is tenaciously maintained despite of rational persuasions from other people. It is also typically restricted to just a few false beliefs; patients do not similarly hold on to the vast majority of their false beliefs. I explore how we can explain both tenacity and restrictedness of delusion. Firstly, I examine whether the two-factor theory can explain both of them. This theory suggests that delusions are caused by two factors: an abnormality in belief formation process (typically an abnormal experience) and an abnormality in belief maintenance process (an abnormal belief evaluation). I argue that the theory may explain tenacity of delusion but has difficulty in explaining its restrictedness.

Secondly, I examine whether the one-factor theory can explain both tenacity and restrictedness. This theory suggests that delusion is caused by an abnormal experience alone. I argue that tenacity cannot be explained by the original version of the theory; it can be explained only by the causal version, which suggests that an anomalous experience causes an abnormal belief evaluation. However, the causal one-factor theory has difficulty in explaining restrictedness. I argue that there must be a division among abnormal experiences for it to explain restrictedness; those which cause abnormal belief evaluation and those which do not. Existential feelings seem to provide a promising division.

Thirdly, I examine whether the causal one-factor theory plus existential feelings can explain both tenacity and restrictedness. Existential feelings are feelings of things as related to oneself, such as familiarity/unfamiliarity, significance/insignificance, and so on. They can be divided into two types, the specific type proposed by McLaughlin and the general type by Ratcliffe. I argue that the causal one-factor theory plus the specific type of existential feelings can explain restrictedness but not tenacity while the theory plus the general type can explain tenacity but not restrictedness.

I conclude that we must return to the two-factor theory. To compensate for its defect, however, I argue that in delusion, abnormal experience is inescapable and abnormality in belief evaluation is small. An inescapable abnormal experience forces a patient continuously
to have a relevant false belief, but if s/he has no abnormality in belief evaluation, s/he can manage to reject the belief. Slight abnormality in belief evaluation is necessary for the belief to be tenacious. However, if the abnormality in belief evaluation is small, the patient can reject false beliefs based on escapable abnormal experiences, so the delusion is restricted to false beliefs based on inescapable abnormal experiences. Thus the two-factor theory which suggests that abnormality in experience is inescapable and abnormality in belief evaluation is slight can explain both tenacity and restrictedness of delusion.

Two interpretation of utilitarianism

Yoshiki Oida, Saitama Medical University

In this presentation, I would like to highlight Hayek’s argument as he is the one who clearly refused designing a society while seemingly accepting the concept of utilitarianism in some aspects. Going through this presentation, I would like to propose the following. (1) Utilitarianism has two concepts, one is utilitarianism as descriptive theory, and the other is one as design theory. (2) Hayek’s utilitarianism is based on a concept of human nature, rather than a deductive axiom of moral philosophy. I regard his utilitarianism as a variation of rule-utilitarianism. (3) In recent years, utilitarianism is believed to be a theory of designing, or a theory which determines the rules constraining our behavior, but there is a possibility to interpret utilitarianism as descriptive theory and this approach gives us an interesting notion.

Originally, utilitarianism was a theory to describe how reasonable and individualistic constituent form a society efficiently with following the social norms. But recent utilitarianism puts emphasis on its normative character and argue how we ought to behave in our society and our society should be morally designed. I try to propose the possibility of recalling the tradition of utilitarianism as descriptive theory by referring Hayek’s theory of currency. And I would like to argue that rule-utilitarianism can be interpreted as a theory which is rooted on Hume or Hayek version of utilitarianism. In other words, this version of utilitarianism is rather not a standpoint of ethics, but a variation of social science. Thus, we can describe how social norms function in our society and make it work efficiently from an objective viewpoint. In my opinion, this argument also enables us to express the reason why some certain social norms are not settled down in our society smoothly although they seem to be morally right. Without this insight, designing our society will mislead a society unexpected way and may cause destruction of social order.

This social scientific utilitarianism gives us interesting questions. First, how we, human beings, have sophisticated social norms in our history. Social norms are rooted on human nature and social efficiency in a long term. And history tells us our moral tendency, and the function of social norms.

Second, if we know how social norms function and the problems of current social norms, we may be able to find ethical propositions which are both reasonable and coordinated with current social norms, or shift current social norms more reasonable and desirable. Rule-utilitarianism opens to these kinds of social scientific arguments about social norms, and this should not be under evaluated. But if we want to push this argument forward, we need to make the model dynamic. The model I try to sketch in this presentation is static, not taking
chronological transition into consideration. From now on, the model should be elaborated in that direction to describe how social norms in our society shift as time elapses.

**Multiplexed stream of consciousness—specious present and predictive processing**

*Ryoji Sato, Monash University*

Temporal aspects of conscious experience are notoriously elusive and traditional philosophical approach does not seem to lead to any agreement. Philosophers have been discussing whether experience of motion is actually composed of series of snapshot-like experience or whether experience itself has temporal duration for centuries. Under this situation, one alternative is to appeal to work in empirical science. Philosophers in the field have been referring to pieces of empirical evidence but mainly relied on introspection on theorizing. In this talk, however, I will use an emerging theory of brain function to elucidate temporal aspects of consciousness: predictive processing.

Predictive processing is a theory of brain function, according to which what the brain does is Baysean inference or approximation to it. The theory has been used to account for varieties of mental phenomena including ordinary perception, emotion, attention, and mental disorders. In this talk, I will apply this theory to account for temporal aspects of perceptual consciousness. More specifically, I will explain Husserlian retention and protention in terms of hierarchical processing and the length of experienced specious present in terms hierarchical processing and precision expectation. In addition, I will argue predictive processing framework favors retentional model over extensional model.

**I believe that I believe**

*Winnie Sung, Nanyang Technological University*

This article raises a puzzle about self-ascribed belief and challenges the assumption that a self-ascribed belief necessarily has an embedded lower-order belief. I suggest the possibility for a subject to have the belief that she believes that $p$ ($BBp$) without having the belief that $p$ ($Bp$). The mere possibility of one’s having $BBp$ without $Bp$ raises difficult questions about first-personal knowledge of one’s own beliefs. Even if we assume that $Bp$ is embedded in $BBp$ in good cases, the possibility of $BBp$ and $Bp$ coming apart makes it unclear how a subject, from her first-person point of view, can tell whether her belief that she believes that $p$ is directed at the world or at her own mental state. I will discuss the implications of such a possibility on the transparency account and the way we think about Moore’s Paradox.