

Lecture 2: Reflective Endorsement

- **Problem:** Human beings, due to their reflective nature, can question their moral beliefs and motivations.
 - A solution would show that morality *might* survive reflection.
- **Solution:** If we reflect on the true moral theory and still endorse the claims of morality, then morality is normative.

The Reflective Endorsement Method

- Typically found in theories that reject realism and ground morality in human nature.
- **18th-century sentimentalists:** Rejected rationalism and argued that moral value is a projection of human sentiments.
 - **David Hume:** Actions are not disapproved because they are inherently vicious, but rather they are vicious because we disapprove of them.
 - **Normative Question:** Whether we have reason to endorse and be governed by our moral sentiments.

David Hume:

- Theoretical vs. Practical Philosophy:
 - Theoretical philosophy is like an anatomist, explaining the cause of our approval of virtue.
 - Practical philosophy is like a painter, making virtue appealing.
 - Normativity emerges from the interaction between these two sides of philosophy.
- **Hume's Account of Moral Judgments:**
 - Taking a "general point of view" regulates our sentiments through sympathy with others and judgment according to general rules.
 - This leads to an ideal of good character, associated with being useful and agreeable to oneself and others.
 - The normative question is whether we have reason to endorse and cultivate these virtuous qualities.
- **Hume's Argument for the Harmony of Morality and Self-Interest:**
 - Being virtuous is conducive to happiness.
 - Even in cases where a person lacks a natural virtuous motive, they may act from a sense of duty to avoid self-hatred or to cultivate that virtue.
 - This sense of duty is crucial for the "artificial virtues" like justice, where the connection between individual actions and self-interest is less direct.
- **Normativity as Reflexivity:**
 - A faculty's verdicts are normative if the faculty approves of itself upon reflection.
 - The understanding, according to Hume, subverts itself upon reflection, while the moral sense approves of itself.
 - There is no external standpoint from which to judge the moral sense.

- **Addressing the Realist Objection:**

- The realist objection that reflective endorsement only shows extrinsic normativity is addressed by the addition of the reflexivity test.
- Human nature, including moral government, is intrinsically normative because there is no intelligible external challenge to its claims.
- Morality can meet the internal challenge from self-interest and also approves of itself.

- **Conclusion:**

- Human nature, including morality, is normative and has authority for us because it is in our nature to be governed by it.
- This can be seen as a negative version of the ancient Greek view that virtue is the realization of our true nature.