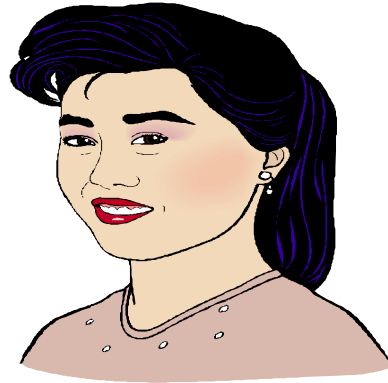


Ima  
Emotivist  
(EM)



- “X is good” means “Hurrah for X!”
- Moral judgments aren’t true or false.
- We can’t reason about basic moral principles.

# Don't confuse these two views

Emotivism

“X is good” means  
“Hurrah for X!”

expresses  
feelings

Subjectivism

“X is good” means  
“I like X.”

truth-claim  
about feelings



A.J. Ayer

Logical positivism (LP):  
All genuine truth claims are  
either *empirically testable*  
or *true-by-definition*.

*empirically testable*

---

“It’s snowing outside.”

“The other side of the  
moon has mountains.”

“This battery has 1.4 volts.”

*true-by-definition*

---

“All bachelors are single.”

“All single men are single.”

“ $2 + 2 = 4$ ”

“ $1+1 + 1+1 = 1+1+1+1$ ”



Logical positivism (LP):  
All genuine truth claims are  
either *empirically testable*  
or *true-by-definition*.

Do these make truth claims?

“There’s an invisible angel sitting on my shoulder.”

“There’s a God.”

“Racist actions are wrong.”

EM's *logical  
positivism*  
argument

All genuine truth claims are empirically testable or true-by-definition. (LP)

No moral statements are empirically testable or true-by-definition.

∴ No moral statements are genuine truth claims. (And so moral statements can only express feelings.)

- Premise 1, logical positivism, expresses the scientific attitude, and this leads to emotivism.
- Premise 2 uses how intuitionism refutes definitions of “good.”

EM's  
*simplicity*  
argument

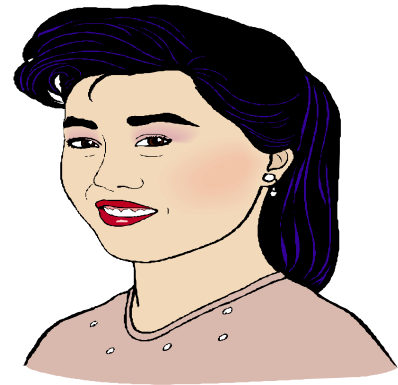
Any view that's simpler and explains more of the facts is a better view.

Emotivism is a view that's simpler and explains more of the facts. (see below)

∴ Emotivism is a better view.

- EM doesn't appeal to mysterious entities.
- EM explains why we can't define "good" descriptively, why we can't prove moral beliefs, and why people disagree about morality.
- EM fits how we speak.

We can't reason  
about basic moral  
principles.



We can reason about morality if  
we assume a shared system of values.  
But we can't establish the correctness  
of any system of values.

# Apply emotivism to



racism



global  
warming



moral  
education



EM's *logical  
positivism  
argument*

**All genuine truth claims are empirically testable or true-by-definition. (LP)**

No moral statements are empirically testable or true-by-definition.

∴ No moral statements are genuine truth claims.

Logical positivism is self-contradictory,  
has clear exceptions, and is vague.

“Philosophers who worship science often contradict themselves. They make claims, which can't be based on science, about science being the only path to the truth. Such philosophers violate our first duty as rational beings, which isn't the impossible demand that we prove all our claims, but the humble demand that our claims be consistent with each other.” (§5.5)

EM's  
*simplicity*  
argument

Any view that's simpler and explains more of the facts is a *better* view.

Emotivism is a view that's simpler and explains more of the facts.

∴ Emotivism is a *better* view.

- Premise 1 can't be true on EM (which sees "better" as expressing feelings and not making a truth claim).
- Against premise 2, EM explains morality poorly:
  - Moral judgments aren't necessarily emotional.
  - Emotivism denies (instead of explaining) common-sense ideas of moral truths and knowledge.
  - "Good" often doesn't translate well into "Hurrah!" – as in "Do what is *good*," "Hurrah for *good* people!" and "If lying is *bad*, then getting your brother to lie is *bad*."

Emotivism says we can't reason about basic moral principles.

- If this were true, it would be dreadful; the emotivist model of moral thinking would lead to social chaos and propaganda wars.
- It isn't true: we *can* reason about basic moral principles – as we'll see from further views.

# Three offshoots of emotivism

- **Moderate emotivism**, while still seeing moral judgments as expressing feelings instead of truths, claims that moral feelings can be rationally appraised (perhaps on the basis of being informed and having impartial concern).
- **The error theory** sees moral judgments as asserting facts about an objective realm of values; but, since there are no such moral facts, moral judgments only express feelings.
- **Quasi-realism** proposes that thinkers who deny moral truths and moral knowledge can still talk about morality in the usual way; such thinkers just need to water down what they mean by “moral truth” and “moral knowledge.”

Academia (including science and philosophy) is friendlier to belief in God *now* than in the decades just prior to the 1960s

- Logical positivism has died.
- Freud's negative ideas about religion were rejected.
- Science now believes that the universe began about 14 billion years ago. What started it?
- Science now believes in the universe's "fine tuning" (that the basic physical constants are precisely in the narrow range of what's required for life to be possible). What explains this? (For more on this, see <http://www.harrycola.com/reason.pdf>.)