

ring natural phenomenon in Japan. How can the survivors be supported without feeling burdened or overwhelmed by strong feelings of helplessness, dependence and indebtedness? The link between ethics and business is examined in this book by looking at consumer behaviour: to what extent, for example, is "ethical consumption", a trend in many countries, taking root in Japan? Finally, one of the pieces focuses on the role of ethics in business management. This article sheds some light by looking at the case of China and serves as a good basis for comparison with other countries.

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Frank Rövekamp  
East Asia Institute,  
Ludwigshafen

Friederike Bosse  
Japanese-German Center,  
Berlin

Raji C. Steineck

## Ethics, Morality, Rinri: Notes on the terminologies and taxonomies of "doing / being good"

### Abstract

*In the following, Steineck illustrates possible models and languages of morality, as well as the kinds of values, legitimations and classifications that are connected to them. He reflects on the terminologies and taxonomies of doing or being good, both from a logical and semantical point of view, including Asian and European perspectives. He highlights that people may be talking about very different things when they talk about the good, or about ethics, morality, or, in Japanese, rinri and he points out how much an awareness of these differences could help moral discussion. He also distinguishes between different dimensions regarding ethics and morality, namely the dimension of specific moral articulations, that of moral codes, and that of moral legitimation which he exemplifies, likening them to the linguistic dimensions of parole, langue, and meta-linguistic language.*

### 1. Introduction

In his *Principia Ethica*, G.E. Moore defined ethics by its concern with two questions: "What kind of things ought to exist for their own sakes?" and: "What kind of actions ought we to perform?" (Preface, §2) (Moore 1999). Both questions have often been merged (Moore would say: conflated) into the single one: "What is good?".

Now, the following reflections are based on the observation that in many instances, ethical disputes are not so much driven by *insecurities* about what ought to be or ought to be done, but by a clash of convictions about these questions. To put it more simply, our ethical problems are very often of one of the following two kinds: firstly, we think we know what is morally good but others don't agree. Secondly, we know that something may be in some sense "morally required", but we prefer to apply another standard of goodness, be it that of pleasure, or economical viability, or technological efficiency – and we

firmly believe we have a right to do so. The by now endemic inhibition on "passing moral judgement" – in German: "ach seien Sie doch nicht so moralisch" – is a case in point. It is usually overlooked that this is a moral statement in its own right.

In this paper, I will mainly deal with the first problem. My aim is not to resolve it, as so many philosophers have attempted to do. Instead, I want to assist the ensuing conversations on ethics by offering some logical and semantical reflections on the terminologies and taxonomies of doing or being good. The idea behind this approach is that reflecting on the logical and semantical properties of the various kinds of "moral talk" may not resolve moral issues in themselves, but it does help in developing strategies for successful moral communication.

Thus, the following reflections intend to give an idea about the possible models and languages of morality, and the kinds of values, legitimations and classifications that are connected to them. Having a map of moralities will help to identify, and thereby better understand, divergent moral positions. This firstly helps to make moral disputes less frustrating, since moral disagreement is less unbearable once we understand why the position we disagree with may still be a moral position. Secondly, it may enable more successful communication about moral issues, since one can better couch one's moral intuitions in terms others can understand if one is aware of the logical and semantical properties of both one's own and their moral thinking.

## 2. Illustration of the problem

Some initial clarifications may be gained by looking more closely at the problems mentioned above. In semantical terms, the fact that moral goodness is not without competition points to the polysemic character of the word "good". This feature holds true for its equivalents in many languages, including Japanese. In an article on "the good" in a volume entitled *Rinri towa nani ka*, or "What is ethics?", the Japanese philosopher Arifuku Kōgaku makes the following observation:

In general, we tend to think that "good" is a moral or ethical term, but if we look at the pertinent adjectives, be it the German "gut", English "good" or even the Japanese "yoi", the moral or ethical meaning is only just one part of their manifold meanings (Arifuku 1989: 116).

Arifuku goes on to note that the meanings of the Western words *gut* and *good*, the Sinojapanese term *zen* and the Japanese term *yoi* overlap to a very large extent, and he quotes Japanese phrases from *aitsu wa ee koe shitoru* ("this guy

has a good voice") or "*are wa ii kao shitoru*" ("he has a good face") to *konnichi wa tenki ga yoi* ("today the weather is good") in order to exemplify uses of "good" that are far remote from moral or ethical meanings. He summarizes that *yoi* may refer to the quality of things, affairs and persons, to situations, functions, abilities, talents and states, generally denoting that they are comparatively superior, desirable or satisfactory (Arifuku 1989: 116–117).

From Aristotle to Arifuku, the classical philosophical strategy in dealing with this polysemy of "the good" has been to create a hierarchy of the good by relating it to the question of means and ends. The idea is that such a hierarchy must finally converge into a highest end, that is, that which is good in itself. In Aristotle's case, that would be *eudaimonia* or "human flourishing", characterised by the exercise of virtue (Aristotle 1984, Vol. 2).

The conflict between the affirmation that some particular moral action may be good (as in "morally required"), and the feeling that at the same time it is not good (as in "pleasant", "beautiful" or "efficient") would thus be deflated by the insight that in light of a higher good like *eudaimonia*, it may be necessary to do things that are physically unpleasant or aesthetically repulsive, or to sacrifice part of one's wealth, or to discontinue an otherwise efficient technology.

Semantically speaking, this strategy transforms the chaotic polysemy of the "good" into a taxonomy, a pyramid of superordinate and subordinate notions with one single term on the top, and Aristotle's hierarchy may be gleaned from the following figure.

This strategy has been endorsed in the East as well as in the West, and it may work to some extent, but it fails notoriously to universally convince in the identification of the highest end. Someone always seems to disagree on any given definition. In ancient Greece, the Hedonists famously begged to differ with Aristotle, putting personal well-being before the exercise of virtue, and later on, Christian religion introduced god into the picture, who may demand many things, not all of them conforming with Aristotelian *eudaimonia* or individual pleasure. Kant famously noted that nothing may be called good in itself than good will, that is, the will to act according to the demands of pure practical reason. The *Hagakure*, for a change, speaking to the feudal retainers, identifies "service to the lord" as the pre-eminent goal:

If one is devoted to service, forgetting reason and forgetting his own self, and places greatest importance on his lord without consideration for secondary or tertiary matters, everything will become clear and settled (Heisig 2011: 1108).

Apparently, the strategy of building taxonomies of the good has brought us back from problem 2 to problem 1: we think we know what is good, but others

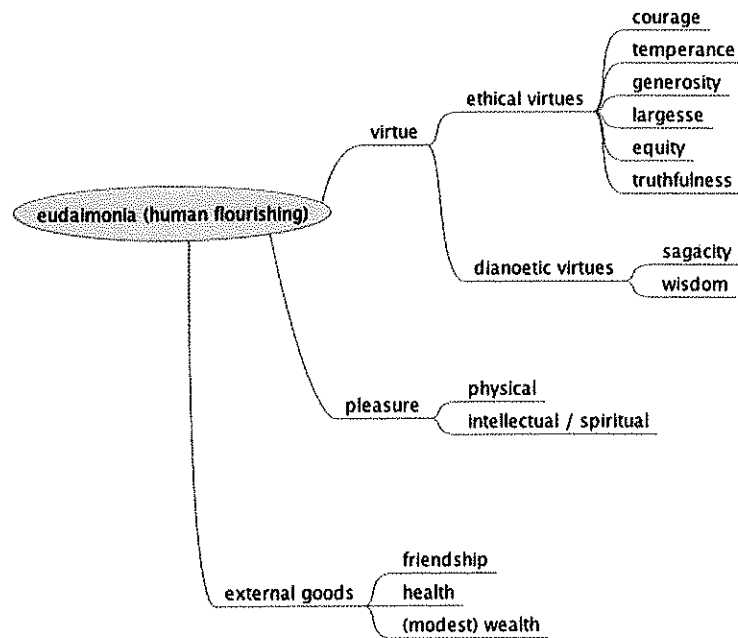


Figure 1: Aristotle's taxonomy of the good

don't agree. Obviously, there are not only plural kinds of the good, but also plural moralities.

To make matters worse in talking about moral issues, moralities do not just differ in their identification of the highest good, and in the taxonomical positions they consequently allocate to the various instances of the intermediate good. They also differ in the legitimation they seek or are willing to accept for moral claims. *Religious* morality often conceives of itself as ordained by some higher form of insight and revelation that is beyond ordinary human dispute. *Humanist* morality quite to the contrary is not willing to accept any reference to the holy or transcendent and demands a grounding for moral claims in the nature of human existence. *Communitarian* morality may ultimately shun any request for legitimation that would go beyond established practice of a given, limited group. And an anarchical individualist may only accept her own intuition as source of moral judgements. The latter position, however, borders on the denial of morality: if what is good purely depended on individual preference, there would, by definition, neither be anything intrinsically good, nor anything that ought to be done. In other words, the very existence of morality

hinges on the acceptance of a conflict between valorizations that is resolved by giving general prevalence to a given set of universalized rules. This conforms to the formal definition of morality given by R. M. Hare, namely that those rules or prescriptions that are both couched in universal terms and assume general precedence over other rules function as moral rules (Gert 2011).

In moral discourse, it is important to be aware not only of the fact that different moralities exist, but also that they are supported by different forms of legitimation. Conflicts concerning moral claims may be exacerbated by conflicts concerning the accepted forms of moral legitimation. If this conflict remains unreflected and unmediated, the attempt at reasoned dispute may end not only in disagreement (which might still involve mutual understanding), but in frustration and possibly, bitterness.

A practical example from Japan was the attempt by the Council for Science and Technology's Bioethics Committee to clarify the fundamental thinking on human embryo research. The Council for Science and Technology is a supra-ministerial government institution, and the objective of the Committee in this case was to formulate the basis for new guidelines on human embryo research. The Committee comprised representatives of the administration, scientists and the humanities. Since its members failed to achieve consensus, the recommendations of the final report were based on a majority vote, a fact that drew criticism from all major Japanese newspapers. As one can learn from reading the Committee's interim report and the minority votes that are attached to the final report, it was not just disagreement on specific moral claims that made the discussion difficult. There were also different notions of morality at play that motivated incompatible definitions of the Committee's agenda: the administrators, apparently working from a notion of morality or *rinri* as an established code of conduct, were screening various extant positions for the existence of a possible moral consensus (Sōgō Kagaku Gijutsu Kaigi 2003: 14, 42; Horres et al. 2006: 34–37). In contrast, the representatives from the humanities were set to probe moral arguments in order to construct a principled moral doctrine on the issue. Accordingly, the interim report, written by the administrators, made light of the statements by philosophers and religious experts, just because of the fact that they were offering diverging opinions. In contrast, Ida Ryūichi or Shimazono Susumu in their opinion statements criticized that the committee did not take its time to carefully probe the various arguments brought forth in favor and against the positions in question (Sōgō Kagaku Gijutsu Kaigi 2003: 46, 51). It seems that the administrators were frustrated with what appeared to them as a purely academic arguing of positions with no backing by community consensus, while the academics found that the committee did not live up to the task of building a sound position based on carefully reflected moral reasoning. It is ironic that while the administrators pre-

vailed in the committee, its report met with criticism. Comments from the conservative to liberal press insisted that the regulation of fundamental moral issues such as research involving the destruction of human embryos should be based on careful moral reasoning, and not on manufactured consent (Nihon keizai shinbun 2004; Mainichi shinbun 2004; Sankei shinbun 2004). As a result, the revised guidelines are much stricter than envisioned in the final report, and this may have further encouraged research on technologies circumventing the issue, which eventually led to the development of induced pluripotent stem cells by Kyoto University's Yamanaka Shin'ya.

This example not only speaks against simplistic accounts of a Japanese morality based on community consent, as opposed to a Western morality based on moral reasoning. More importantly for the purposes of this paper, it shows that people may be talking about very different things when they talk about the good, or about ethics, morality, or, in Japanese, *rinri*.

### 3. Dimensions of moral language

The preceding reflections have revealed that when we disagree on a subject of morality or ethics, we can disagree on various levels or, in order to avoid hierarchization, in various dimensions. The first dimension is that of specific moral articulations, the second that of moral codes, and the third that of moral legitimation. These dimensions can be likened to the linguistic dimensions of *parole*, *langue*, and *meta-linguistic* language, as in the following figure:

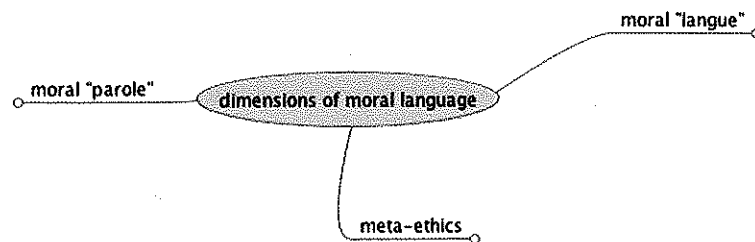


Figure 2: Dimensions of moral language:

It should be noted that disagreement in the dimension of moral "languages" or meta-ethics may or may not result in disagreement on the level of specific moral articulation: in Japan, a Christian, a Buddhist and a Kantian secularist

may all agree on the moral prescription not to take human life, and they may even all make the same mental reservation, namely that this rule does not hold for soldiers in combat, or authorized security or police personnel in situations of clear and imminent danger – an exception that is usually not made explicit. However, they will identify this rule as part of their specific moral code books – be it as the fifth or sixth commandment of the decalogue in Christianity, the first of the ten basic rules of the Buddhist devotee (*fusesshō* 不殺生 or "not taking life"), or a direct inference from Kant's categorical imperative, and they will give diverging legitimations for it.

### 3.1 Moral parole

That said, let us look a little bit closer on each dimension, starting with moral *parole*. Here I want to firstly highlight that like in colloquial speech, in moral *parole*, utterances are often made without systematic reflection and may be at variance with established moral codes, even with those the speaker usually endorses. Accordingly, there is a certain level of inconsistency and confusion, as well as exaggeration. Although inconsistency and confusion are usually professionally disliked by academics, they should not be seen solely as a deficiency, as they also express a dynamic of change in respect to moral concerns and can be the matrix for the formulation of new moral languages or codes of conduct – and not all new codes are bad.

In any case, a lot of moral *parole* attributes moral status to those parts of the semantic range of the "good" that are, in professional ethics, usually carefully distinguished from it: in class societies, social status may regularly take precedence over character or virtue, in so-called subculture, being "cool" may involve a conscious disregard for moral consideration, and some members of the corporate world and their administrative and academic retainers place "efficiency" or "profit" beyond any other consideration. Moral *parole* as such may take pride in avoiding "moral" terms. This is shown in the cloud in the following figure.

Secondly, in trying to communicate about moral issues, it may be helpful to find out which of the four categories above (quality, obligation, virtue, or relation) the people you are talking to emphasize, and what kinds of expressions they use. People who talk in terms of obligations may be hard to convince in terms of virtues. People who think in terms of relations can have difficulty to digest articulations of "objective" qualities – even though, in abstract terms, there may be no disagreement about moral content.

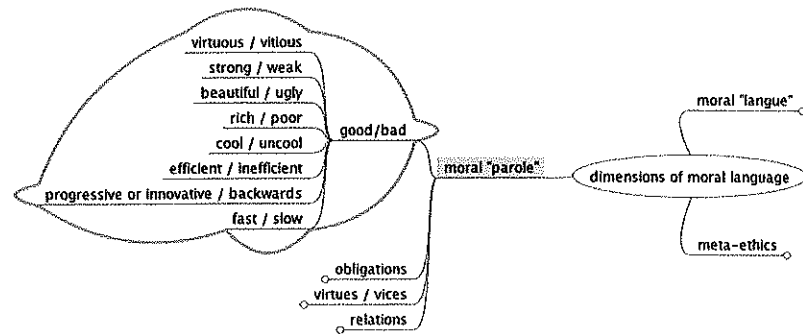


Figure 3: Moral "parole"

### 3.2 Moral langue

If actual moral statements and morally significant actions are the moral *parole*, moral *langues* provide for the rules that guide and give order to such moral expressions by creating sets of rules that form a coherent (if not necessarily consistent) whole. So far, so good. The problem, however, is that there are different ways to systematize and organize moral rules. Because of this, there is not only moral diversity – as in: diverging moral statements and rules – but also a diversity of *kinds of moral rule-sets*. This diversity of *kinds of sets of rules* and not only of *instances of rules* can create quite some terminological confusion, and it also, of necessity, creates its own brand of moral conflicts.

In the following, I would like to first attempt some terminological clarification and then to reflect on the respective legitimacy and necessity of each of these kinds. First of all, one way to organize moral rules is by addressing the moral consciousness of the individual agent. Another way is to organize moral rules as codes of conduct, consisting of generalized prescriptions. Yet another way is to organize moral rules by focussing on social roles and relationships in which the moral agent has to perform. Each of these ways formulates a compelling moral perspective.

In the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, discourse on moral rules that focusses on individual moral consciousness is called *ethics*, and discourse on moral rules that presents them as codes of conduct for individuals, communities or human society as a whole as *morality* (Gert; Hursthouse). Due to the impact of Kant and Hegel on German ethics, in the German language area, the usage is somewhat reversed: "Moralität" is related to individual moral con-

sciousness, and classically opposed to "Sittlichkeit" as the code of conduct of a given moral community (Bubner 1986), while "Ethik" is used as a generic term comprising both.

In the Japanese language the two terms *rinri* 倫理 and *dōtoku* 道德 can denote both ethics and morality. Ethics as an academic discipline is called *rinrigaku* 倫理学, while in primary education, the subject is called *dōtoku*. While this might suggest that *dōtoku* is more fixed and less reflexive than *rinri*, in academic terminology *dōtoku* or *dōtokusei* 道德性 are also used to denote Kantian "Moralität", as opposed to Hegelian "Sittlichkeit", which is translated as *jinrin* 人倫 (Hoshino 1999: 159; Hiromatsu 1998: 1166).

Furthermore, it should be noted that Watsuji Tetsurō, arguably the most influential ethicist of modern Japan, has defined social relationships as the essential core of *rinri*: moral prescriptions in his view are essentially tied to social roles and interpersonal relations, which are, at least in his perspective, typically reciprocal, but not symmetrical (Watsuji 1962: 7–13). This view consciously draws on the canonical typology of so-called Confucian role ethics, exemplified by the "five constants" listed under the heading of *rinri* in the chart below – a model which in Japanese modernity exerted influence e.g. via the injunctions of the "Imperial rescript on education" that contemporary conservatives want to revive. Independently from the culturalist assumption at play in Watsuji, Morioka Masahiro has exploited this approach successfully in relation to the issue of brain-death and organ transplantation in his *Nōshi no hito* 脳死の人 (Morioka 1991).



Figure 4: Moral langues

Ethics, morality and *rinri* in the sense indicated by the figure above are all important moral perspectives. They may compete and conflict with each other, but in a certain way they all belong to a full-fledged human morality. Codes of conduct need to be applied judiciously, calling for ethical reflection and individual responsibility. Individual morality has to confront itself with the "objective reason" of tried and tested moral strategies in order to avoid

deterioration into the pure rationalizations of egotistic preferences. Finally, there are many moral issues that arise in situations with an asymmetric distribution of power, knowledge, and resources, where moral requirements conform to converse roles. Needless to say, one can write rule books for parents, teachers, or doctors, and impose behavioral standards on children, students and patients – but it does make sense to allow for a distinct perspective that focusses on these relationships and their bearing on moral issues. On the other hand, there are moral questions and rules that can claim validity beyond social distinctions, and it does not do to hide individual moral agency and responsibility behind the shield of a role pattern.

What this amounts to is that no single *kind* of moral langue can demand a priori superiority over the others. At best, it is possible to argue that in a given situation, a certain kind of consideration is paramount.

Since this paper is presented in the context of a discussion in the social sciences, one more word is in place with respect to the individual moral agents that have been invoked above with respect to the *langue* type of ethics (“*Moralität*”). It seems natural to think that the “individuals” in question are human individuals, and only these. However, “individuality” is meant here not as a substantial, but as a functional term. Collective entities that act in their own right fall under this category as well, a fact that has in my opinion been most thoroughly reflected upon by Hermann Cohen in his *Ethics of the pure will* (Cohen 1921). In moral practice, this poses manifold problems that have especially been treated in the realm of the ethics of technology. The largest conceptual and practical questions arise in the dimension of ethics or “*Moralität*” proper: it may be possible to formulate codes of conduct for collective entities such as companies, and to define their roles within the fabric of society, but how does a collective entity as such achieve a consciousness of its moral agency? The invention of the “institutional review board” is one answer to this question, but certainly not the only or definite one.

### 3.3 Meta-ethics

The third dimension to be explored here is that in which we don’t engage moral issues directly, be it by constructing rules, or expressing convictions, but reflectively talk “about” morality or ethics. I have used the term “meta-ethics” to designate this dimension, and intend to use it in a very general way, analogous to Roman Jakobson’s use of the term “meta-linguistic”. As shown in the following figure, the dimension of meta-ethics comprises, but is not restricted to that part of contemporary philosophical theory that goes by the same name. Meta-ethical discourse can be concerned with the legitimation of moral claims, or with the logical and semantical analysis of ethical discourse and

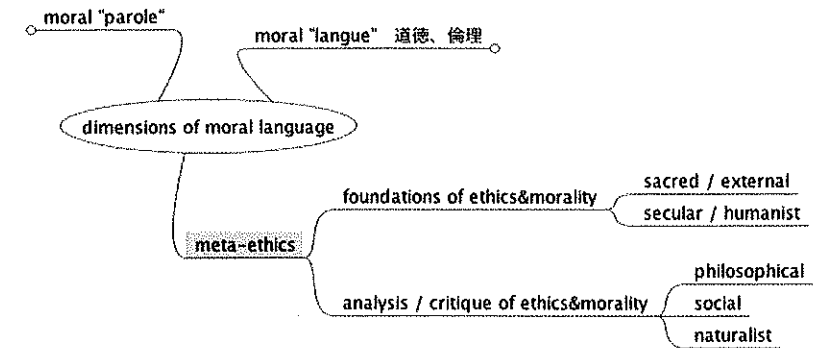


Figure 5: meta-ethics

terminology, or with the analysis of morality and ethics from the vantage point of some paradigm of objectification, such as sociology, biology, or psychology.

It is often assumed that meta-ethics as an academic program or discipline can, or should be, independent of and neutral towards specific moral rules or judgements. While a certain distance towards received moral convictions may be achieved through a methodological framework of objectification, it should be noted that even such an “objective meta-ethics” will remain inextricably tied to its object: like other elements of human culture such as art, religion, or science, ethics is a *culturally reflexive object* in the sense that all discourse “about” ethics will affect its object, and thereby, assume an aspect of moral *parole* or *langue* itself.

Secondly, the dimension of meta-ethics is not singularly occupied by such objectified discourse, but also part and parcel of moral doctrines and even pedestrian moral *parole*. Doctrines that formulate moral systems, be they “ethics-oriented”, “morality-oriented” or “*rinri*-oriented” usually put forth some ideas about their object, and take resort to certain strategies of legitimation. In fact, meta-ethical utterances more often than not result from, or come with a moral agenda. For example, Max Weber’s famous meta-ethical distinction between the ideal types of an ethics of conviction and an ethics of responsibility (Gane 1997; Enderle 2007) is more often than not brought up to disparage certain rule- or principle-based positions that opt against a desired action.

In any case, it is helpful to bear in mind a variety of meta-ethical mappings of the ethical “landscape”, if only because each mapping highlights different features of moral doctrines and positions. Typically, such mappings refer to moral *langue*, that is, systems of moral thought, but they can also be applied to moral *parole*, which can help to assess the possible ramifications of a given

moral expression. These maps can also assist in searching for alternative solutions in situations of stalemate or dilemma.

The following figures sketches out four different mappings of the moral landscape, or part of it. While they contrast in various ways, it is worth noting that each is organized as a taxonomy – that is a hierarchy in the form of a pyramid, were each position belongs to one, and only to one, path from top to bottom.

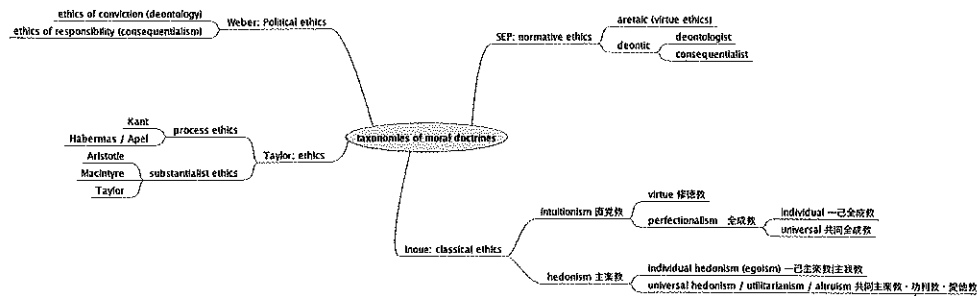


Figure 6: Taxonomies of moral doctrines

The intention of Weber’s influential distinction was not to map all moral doctrines. It was designed to refer to the ethics of political leadership, and to elucidate two different forms of rationality in political decision-making based on their guiding principles (Weber 2008). In the upper part of figure 7, its incompleteness is immediately obvious: The virtue-based approach, a prominent one in contemporary philosophical ethics and in the tradition doesn’t neatly fit into either of the two categories.

The Stanford Encyclopedia’s mapping, synthesized from various articles, furthermore highlights that while deontologism and consequentialism are both deontic ethics defined by questions of the type “what should we do”, virtue ethics belongs to a different kind, since it focusses on questions of the type “what should we be” (Hursthouse; Alexander & Moore).

Charles Taylor uses yet another principle of distinction in his taxonomy: he opposes “substantialist ethics” that operate from a content-rich idea of the good to “proceduralist ethics”, which claim to operate without reference to such a content, and to leave the determination of the good to a process that ensures the ethical quality of the decision (Taylor 1986). It deserves noticing that the option to replace substantialist codes by rulebooks on procedure has indeed had a profound impact on contemporary applied ethics. Proceduralist ethics seem better poised to negotiate moral issues in a pluralistic society

while at the same time embodying some of its core values, such as equality or human dignity. Taylor’s map therefore serves to take account of an important option in modern ethics; it also involves a re-grouping of positions well worth of critical attention.

The map on the lower right end mirrors a graph presented by the influential modern Japanese philosopher Inoue Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎 in his “New explanation of ethics” *Rinri shinsetsu* 倫理新説, one of the first formulation of a distinctly modern ethics in Japan (Inoue et al. 1967: 416). While Inoue presents it as a translation from a contemporary American source, and it directly refers only to classical European moral doctrines, he later goes on to identify East Asian doctrines by the same terms. This is backed up by a strong idea of convergence: the ultimate source of all ethics, Inoue says, is one and the same, namely the human search for “true pleasure”, and the particular doctrines are all manifestations of specific aspects of this higher principle (Inoue et al. 1967: 417). The “Western” taxonomy thus is combined with a classical East Asian strategy of negotiating diversity, namely to conceptualize divergent positions as twigs or leaves stemming from one tree (Ford Company 2003). Inoue firstly uses this taxonomy to treat Asian and European moral doctrines on a par. Secondly it serves to support his argument that pursuit of a greater good (including sacrifices of immediate individual interests) is ultimately the most favorable variant, promising both social progress and subjective satisfaction. “How pleasant is life, if one universally exerts oneself studiously, and continues to proceed by acting on one’s recognition of the good.” (Inoue 1967: 426)

Each of the “taxonomies” presented here is incomplete; either of them should therefore be taken as a map charting a limited moral territory for a given purpose. Whether a complete model is possible or even desirable is not at issue here. But the juxtaposition of these four mappings has shown that any model that aspires towards analytical comprehensiveness should better avoid the form of a semantical taxonomy that has dominated model-building so far. The complexity of the moral “landscape” defies the simplicity of such a two-dimensional sorting.

#### 4. Conclusion

Logical and semantical analysis of the various kinds and dimensions of moral expression reveals the complexity of moral diversity and provides for means to adequately identify and describe the quality of a given moral conflict. From such a classification, strategies may be derived for successful moral communication. The following points deserve special attention in the analysis and resolution of such situations:

1. Conflict can occur in the three dimensions of moral *parole* (expressions of moral content), moral *langue* (rules for moral or ethical conduct), and meta-ethical discourse (description and critical assessment of moral discourse). It can be one- or pluridimensional, and it is important to ascertain the dimensions that are pre-eminent for the resolution of a given moral task. For example, if the formulation of rules is at stake, conflict on their meta-ethical legitimation may be more or less academic. However, since meta-ethics do inform the moral language, attention should be paid that the expressions used do not favor a particular meta-ethical stance.

2. Once the dimensions of a moral conflict are assessed, the next step is to analyse the specific qualities of a given expression in terms of the dimensions involved. Conflicts of expression may sometimes be resolved by resorting to a different moral *language* – i.e. switching from talk about duties and obligations to talk about virtues. In any case, creating a clear picture of the quality of one's own as well as that of the positions one encounters, and their specific strengths and limitations, can open up paths towards integrating seemingly conflicting positions. In the final analysis, moral conflicts are conflicts about recognition. If a strategy can be found to integrate some part of an opposing viewpoint, the opponent is ensured that his status as a moral subject is being recognized, and moral entrenchment may be avoided.

3. While meta-ethical reflections are an important part of moral discourse, and can serve to clarify the issues at hand, one should not forget that they, too, come with an agenda, mostly one that assumes a moral quality of its own. Objectivist sorting of moral positions that takes the form of a taxonomy is especially prone to be instrumentalized. More often than not, it serves to rationalize patterns of domination. Meta-ethics should therefore not be conceived of as the vantage point of "objective" criticism. The critical attitude required by the reflexivity of moral issues is one that is willing to accept the moral involvement of any given standpoint, including its own.

Let me close with a final remark on the moral agenda behind the kind of meta-ethical analysis proposed here, and the maxims derived from it. This agenda consists in prioritizing moral communication in situations of moral conflict; by this I mean that I find it desirable that moral disputes are resolved by a mode of negotiation that respects the "Moralität", the ethical subjectivity of all parties involved, and that does not deflate the seriousness of moral concerns. I believe that such a communication is possible even on strongly conflicting moral views, and I hope that the analysis of the moral languages involved may foster mutual understanding and respect.

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Masahiro Morioka

## How a Japanese Philosopher Encountered Bioethics

### Abstract

*In the following, Morioka gives an insight in how he came to and experienced bioethics, what eventually led him to taking a new approach and what this new approach, namely the discipline of “life studies” entails. A focus is laid on the topics brain death and organ transplantation as his views on these issues differ from many others in the field. Regarding brain death he opposes the idea that natural science can determine what human death is and that, while self-consciousness and rationality are crucial for a human person, the essence of life of a human person should not be reduced to them. He describes the essence of the issue brain death itself as the human relationships surrounding a brain-dead patient. With regard to the fragment of personhood that sometimes lingers on brain-dead patients, he mentions and explicates the concept of the persona. Regarding the topic of organ transplantation, Morioka coins the concept of the “natural right to grow and die in the form of wholeness”. Having felt the method and content of bioethics lacking, Morioka also proposed “life studies”, in which both medical ethics and environmental ethics are to be simultaneously discussed, as a new field of study. He describes it as a way of studying the subjects of life and death by never dissociating oneself from the issue in question, something he felt most bioethical discussions were lacking. He also points out the need for a new discipline in addition to life studies, namely the “philosophy of life”.*

### 1. Philosophy, Ethics, and I

In this essay I will illustrate how a Japanese philosopher reacted to a newly imported discipline, “bioethics,” in the 1980s and then tried to create an alternative way of looking at “life” in the field of philosophy. This essay might serve as an interesting case study in which a contemporary “western” way of thinking succeeded in capturing, but finally failed to persuade, a then-young Japanese researcher’s mind.

I awoke to philosophy when I was first seized by the fear of death at the age of around ten to twelve. One night I came up with the idea that the whole