

Extended Abstract

A Comparison between Constructional Ethics of Allameh Tabatabai and Emotionalism of Ethical Theory of Ayer

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Abstract- According to some theories about the nature of moral concepts, these concepts can be included into four categories: objective (external), philosophical, emotional (affective) and constructional (contractual). To solve some of the philosophical problems, Allameh Tabatabai suggests the new theory of constructional perceptions. Dividing the constructions, he considers ethics as a part of the constructional concepts. Some of the features he considers for moral conventions such as relativity, originating from the feelings and needs, the lack of truth and falsifiability, etc., puts this theory in close similarity with the theory of moral emotionalism from Ayer, contemporary positivist philosopher. Aside from the commonalities of the two theories, there are fundamental differences between them that should not be ignored, including that by suggesting this view, Ayer seeks to reject the metaphysics, but by suggesting conventions theory (as a whole), Allameh seeks the consolidation of rationalization and philosophical principles.

Keywords: ethics, constructional, emotionalism, Allameh Tabatabai, Ayer.

1. Introduction

What this paper has discussed in the comparison between the constructional ethics theory of Allameh Tabatabai and Ayer's moral emotivism, as there are similarities between these two theories. The most important similarities of them are the relativity of morality, being compositional and non-existence of truth and falsehood and thus the lack of logical value of morality, the emergence of morality from the needs and emotions of individuals, and their connection with social sciences and psychology fields.

2. Allameh Tabatabai

Allameh Seyyed Mohammad Hossein Tabatabai is of the contemporary philosophers in Islamic philosophy with new attitudes in some philosophical issues. He proposed a new philosophical theory called constructional ethics to defeat some of the problems and misunderstandings formed in connection with philosophy. In classifying different forms of these perceptions, he considers ethics as a part of constructions. Constructional ethics are the assumptions made by the human mind to meet their essential needs; in fact, they have contractual nature and do not deal with reality. These perceptions have no logical value and are subject to natural and environmental conditions are unstable and relative [1].

One of the most significant criticisms against Allameh Tabatabai's constructional ethics theory is from his student, Motahari[2] - he believes that accepting constructional ethics theory leads to moral relativism.

On the other hand, in his Tafsir al-Mizan, Seyyed Mohammad Hossein Tabatabai proposes ethical perspectives that are the opposite of constructional ethics and strongly reject any moral relativism. In explaining his moral views, one should note that apart from constructional ethics theory, Allameh has at least three other ethical theories including:

- Greek Ethics: By seeking out worldly interests and effects, he tries to create moral refinement.
- Religious Ethics: modification of morality is sought through focusing on the hereafter outcomes, which are real perfections.

Quranic ethics: this tries to train humans to develop such sciences and teachings in his existence to leave no room for vices with their existence.

It seems that Mohammad Hossein Tabatabai has proposed constructional ethics theory in line with the Greek ethics theory. In other words, he proposes constructional ethics only in the domain of Greek ethics, where moral acts are based on worldly acts and good and bad based on the public view and social utility. He introduces a different look on religious and Quranic ethics from that of constructional ethics.

2. Ayer

Ayer is of the positivist philosophers of contemporary times, whose philosophical thinking is based on experientialism. He has opinions in ethics. In this regard, he introduces the theory of emotivism to the contemporary world rooted in Hume's Empiricism and Russell's philosophy. This theory introduces ethical concepts as emotional and affective concepts.

Affected by Hume, Ayer divides all real theorems into two categories: analytic and hybrid theorems [3]. Analytic theorems encompass mathematical theorems with a logical aspect, and combine theorems of empirical theorems based on observation and experiment. He considers the problems related to metaphysics, theology, or ethics as semi-predicate rather than predicate, which does not fit into any of the two categories mentioned above. In fact, metaphysical and ethical issues are semi-predicates that express emotions and feelings of the individual, so in terms of truth and falsehood, they are nonsense and meaningless. Ayer criticizes the ethics being among the branches of theoretical sciences and believes that sentences that have value aspects have no real meaning.

According to Ayer, we can claim having moral knowledge only when we bring moral experiences into theorems demonstrably empirical, whereas this is not possible in moral terms [3].

The strongest objection to Ayer and Stevenson's emotivism shown by Toulmin in this example: Assume that I ask two people, "Should I get the contents of a wallet to myself or return it to the owner?" Which one of these two actions should we follow?" Someone tells me to follow the first path and not the second. Another tells me that I have to follow the second path and not the first. Toulmin says that both of these cannot be true, as if they were the case, then I would be morally obligated to do something unwise (i.e., to do two mutually exclusive actions). However, it seems that emotivism considers both answers as correct because each respondent has only different feelings about the options available [4].

Among the important points on Ayer's ethical theory is that he remained at this theory until the end of his life and believes that the moral analysis presented in this work is correct and valid.

3. Conclusion

Although these two theories have many similarities, it should be noted that these two theories have fundamental differences that must be considered in their analysis and comparison. The relativism of Mohammad Hossein Tabatabai in constructional ethics is a form of cultural relativism where he accepts ethical differences from one culture to another. However, moral emotivism of Ayer is an extreme form of ethics, where morality is a completely personal thing, and there is essentially no common ground called morality.

Ayer expresses himself to explicitly belong to the authenticity of experience, which is the most obvious characteristic of the authenticity of which is the passage of metaphysics, whereas Mohammad Hossein Tabatabai is a pious philosopher that tries to consolidate the position of rational principles and reject any relativism in philosophical principles by dividing perceptions into truth and constructional.

Ayer remained loyal to logical positivism until the end of his life and announced his adherence to analysis of his ethics. He has only one ethical theory, by presenting which he began moral emotivism in contemporary times.

However, Mohammad Hossein Tabatabai's constructional ethics theory is one of his moral theories. In his Tafsir al-Mizan, related to his period of perfection, while rejecting any moral relativism, he proposes the Quranic ethics theory which is his desirable view.

References

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