

Buddhist ethics and emotivism

[Science](#), [Social Science](#)



Ethics 17th Nov. Buddhist Ethics and Emotivism Question Answer. A look at Buddha's journey of ethical and spiritual development shows that the development of a particular ethical view point in life is a process that is mainly influenced by the events and circumstances in our lives (Mahathera, Chapter 1). Every person who holds a particular ethical worldview has a story to tell about how they developed the particular moral view point that guides them in all their actions. The following is a brief description of my journey in the development of my ethical viewpoint.

As a child, I grew up in a family with strict and somewhat conservative ethical worldview. I was introduced to the dos and don'ts of the family at a very tender age and; by the time I went to grade one, I was aware of the acceptable forms of behaviour in the family and I had embraced my family's ethical viewpoint. In the school, our teachers also orientated us to the school's code of conduct which prohibited any form of indiscipline. So, throughout my primary school study years, I had never doubted the rationality of the ethics that I had been introduced to by my parents and my teachers. The turning point in the journey of the development of my ethical viewpoint came when I went to High School.

In High school, I met students who had completely different moral view points from the one I had. For instance, while as a child I had been taught that stealing is unethical under all circumstances. In High School, however, I met some students who believed that stealing is morally justifiable under some circumstance. These students made me to rethink my moral worldview and to ask myself some hard questions. For instance, I asked myself whether stealing really is unethical under all circumstances. As I was reflecting on

these questions, all my pens were stolen most probably by my fellow classmates who did not see anything wrong with stealing; I had carelessly left my pens on the table when they were stolen. This event presented a real moral dilemma to me. This is because before going to High School, my parents had strictly warned me against losing any of the stationery that they had bought me; my parents had warned me that if I lose the stationery, through carelessness, they wouldn't buy me any other. So, I was faced with the moral dilemma of whether to steal another pen from my classmates, or to lie to my parents that it was not through carelessness that I had lost the pens so that they could buy me other pens. Eventually, I chose the lesser evil, i. e. to lie to my parents so that they could buy me other pens. This event made me to develop a new ethical viewpoint that takes into account the circumstances under which a given action is performed in the determination of the morality of the action. In my current moral view point, therefore, the prevailing circumstance(s) under which an action is performed is an important element in the determination of the morality of the action.

Question 2 Answer. The emotivism claim that our moral precepts are merely a representation of our feelings about a given situation, and not any sort of fact that could lead to moral criticism is a flawed claim. This is because our experience has shown us that moral expressions are not mere expressions about a given situation, but they rather denote moral facts that can be subjected to moral criticism. This is because the fact that the majority of people world over, and at all ages, are agreed that some actions are unethical while other actions are ethical shows that there must be a moral standard that people judge human actions on. This fact shows that morality

is actually based on facts and for that reason morality can be subjected to criticism.

If the claims of emotivism were true, ethics would be absolutely relative and subjective and for that reason it would not be possible to study or to teach ethics, it would not be possible to subject ethics to criticism because there would be no standard of judging the rightness or the wrongness of human actions. Also, if the claims of emotivism were true the rule of the jungle would rule human society, this is because every person would be the sole determinant of the morality of his/her actions. This kind of society would be chaotic and the strong and the powerful people would oppress and victimize the weak people.

Work Cited

Mahathera, N. Buddhism in a Nutshell. Sri Lanka: Narada Vajirarama, 1995.
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