

Workshop: Naturalizing norms and values

Organizers: Christine Clavien and Julien Dutant

Participants: Nicolas Baumard ; Otto Bruun, Julien Deonna & Fabrice Teroni ;
Christine Clavien ; Julien Dutant

Contact : Julien Dutant, julien.dutant@lettres.unige.ch

Contemporary naturalism is a leading philosophical framework for reflecting upon (and defending) the unity of science. It advocates a view of sciences as being united by having a common object, nature, whose basic description is given by physics. It promotes ontological reductionism, though not necessarily theoretical reductionism nor methodological uniformity. Its most controversial claims are that cognition and evolution should be given a central role in human sciences and philosophy.

One of the most philosophically challenging developments of naturalism is the study of norms and values. Researchers in psychology, neuroscience, anthropology, and philosophy are increasingly investigating the mechanisms and origins of human attitudes towards social, moral, aesthetic, and epistemic norms and values. They have put into question traditional views about why humans cooperate or punish each other, whether moral judgements are based on reason, how values are balanced in decision, or the role of emotions in reasoning, for instance. Yet norms and values are commonly thought to be outside the scope of science proper.

We propose to investigate two issues. First, norms and values provide a test case for the naturalistic conception of the unity of science. We will discuss how the naturalistic project fares in some of those cases. Second, we want to assess the wider impact of that research. It is still unclear whether it can only teach us something about the underlying mechanisms of our attitudes towards values, or also something about what our attitudes actually are, or what the values themselves are, or what they should be. The latter options raise the question whether science should help, merge with, or replace philosophy.

Workshop Programme:

- Nicolas Baumard (EHESS, Institut Jean Nicod)
Norm: a Missing Concept in Naturalistic Theories of Morality
- Otto Bruun, Julien Déonna & Fabrice Téroni (Genève, CISA)
Self-reflexive Emotions, Morality and Naturalization
- Christine Clavien (Neuchâtel, Paris 1, IHPST)
The psychology of values
- Julien Dutant (Genève, Institut Jean Nicod)
The naturalization of epistemic norms

Norm: a missing concept in naturalistic theories of morality

Nicolas Baumard

The naturalistic theories of morality have been mainly put forward by evolutionary biologists (Wilson 1975; Ruse 1986; Hinde 2002). These theories have suggested some explanations for a range of behaviors related to morality, from altruism to policing or incest avoidance. However, norms are absent in the theories: to love one's kids (kin selection) is different than to be required by a moral norm to love one's kids (D'Arms 2000).

Here, I show how we need to bring into evolutionary theories some concepts from human sciences in order to fully naturalize morality (Baumard 2007). First, norms are metarepresentations. They require a metarepresentational ability, *i.e.* an ability to represent either mental representations (mindreading) or abstract representations (for example in explicit reasoning). Such an ability seems to be uniquely human (Tomasello, Carpenter et al. 2005). Metarepresentation is what distinguishes the *willing* to help by altruism (encountered among animals and humans) and the *duty* to help, to comply with a representation (*i.e.* a norm). Second, moral norms pose a collective action problem, a situation in which collective and individual interests are conflicting. It can be modeled by a *n*-player prisoner dilemma (Olson 1965). Non-human animals do not solve collective action problems, they do not enforce moral norms but only behave either in their direct self-interest, or the interest of their genes via their kin or their group.

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Self-reflexive Emotions, Morality and Naturalization

Otto Bruun, Julien Deonna et Fabrice Teroni
(abstract)

Evolutionary psychologists are fond to argue that many emotions have been selected by evolution in virtue of their role in cooperation. In the framework of evolutionary ethics, the study of cooperation, the norms governing it, and the relevant emotions holds the promise of allowing us to understand moral and immoral behaviours in naturalistic terms. Self-reflexive emotions such as shame and guilt have unsurprisingly been the focus of many of these discussions.

We start by presenting the way(s) in which evolutionary ethics explains these emotions and their relations to moral issues. According to most of these explanations, guilt is moral because it motivates altruistic behaviours, whereas shame is at best amoral since it motivates aggressiveness and self-oriented behaviours.

We then argue that these explanations have serious limitations. First, they do not fare well with respect to the complexity of these emotions, the variety of their elicitors and the multiple behaviours they motivate. Second, we explain why these limitations are due to evolutionary ethics studying these emotions from the exclusive perspective of organisms facing normative pressure from their social environments. In contrast, traditional ethics has typically studied morality from the point of view of persons, their values and goals. This shift of perspective is important, since it is at the root of the typical and limited stance taken by evolutionary ethics towards shame and guilt. We argue that the traditional perspective delivers a more promising account of these emotions, since it allows us to understand shame as responding to and protecting a person's values, and guilt as signalling that norms (which can stand in various relations with values) have been violated. We finally show that so analyzing these emotions and their relevance for morality does not imply that we should reject the naturalistic project underlying the evolutionary perspective.

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The psychology of values

Christine Clavien

(abstract)

Human beings seem to be the only creatures capable of discovering or assigning values and thus to be the origin of morality. Yet at the same time there are a simple product of natural selection. The apparent conflict between these two images of humans, as creators vs. creatures, leads to a paradox. A traditional answer, which goes at least back to Hume, is projectivism. On that view, we interpret the world in terms of values; we project them onto the world; and values and norms make sense insofar as *we* believe in them.

My aim is to show that recent empirical research both lends support and helps clarifying the projectivist approach. I will present a range of relevant data and theories from contemporary psychology, empirical economics, evolutionary anthropology, ethology and neuroscience. I will then sketch a projectivist picture of the way people form their values and norms and behave accordingly, that is congruent with the data.

The picture is roughly the following: a judgment of value is an “emotional reaction”, *i.e.* a primitive and non-reflective way of interpreting the world that depends on two factors, genetically inherited tendencies and past experiences. Emotional reactions have three effects. Firstly, they are associated with a desire to rationalize, that is to explain and justify one’s reaction. Secondly, during the rationalization process, they incite us to value positively or negatively classes of similar situations according to the type of feelings those situations provoke in us. Thirdly, they motivate us to act.

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The Naturalization of Epistemic Norms

Julien Dutant

(abstract)

Epistemology is packed with normative judgments, and knowledge itself is a value. That creates a *prima facie* problem for a naturalistic science of knowledge, since natural sciences are supposed to discover facts, not norms. My aim is to outline a way to overcome the difficulty.

Epistemology is a somewhat ambiguous discipline with two subject matters: knowledge and the concept of knowledge. Naturalistic versions of both projects have been put forward by Quine (1969) and Goldman (2002), respectively. The first might tell us what objective property knowledge is, but not that it is valuable (Kim, 1988). The second might tell us what epistemic states we value, but not that we *should* value them (Weinberg et al., 2001).

I suggest an answer by combining the two. Roughly, the idea is that normative epistemic intuitions (and thus the naive concept of knowledge) are evolved fallible detectors of some epistemic properties that mattered for reproductive success. Such a view provides a standpoint from which the epistemologist can evaluate our epistemic norms: first, by replacing the evolutionary aim (reproductive success) by the agent's actual aims, and second, by pointing out discrepancies between our intuitions and their intended target. Recent work can be seen in the light of the resulting Naturalized Normative Epistemology project (Bishop and Trout, 2005).

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