Norms and Normativity

Introductory course in the NoNo research School (Fall 2023)

A. The Nature of Norms

What should we do (believe, think, feel, etc)?

“When entering a Swedish home, you should take off your shoes”.

What should we do (believe, think, feel, etc)?

Hypotethical norms, **categorical** norms

What should we do (believe, think, feel, etc)?

Hypothetical norms, **categorical** norms

Duties, obligations

Prima facie duties and obligations

Reasons

Pro tanto reasons

What should we do (believe, think, feel, etc)?

Hypotethical norms, **categorical** norms

When is an outcome **better** than another?

Which things or states of affairs are (intrinsically) **good**?

What is it to act **virtuously**?

Which are the virtues?

Duties, obligations

Prima facie duties and obligations

Reasons

Pro tanto reasons

When are agents **blameworthy**, **praiseworthy**?

And so on…

Empirical questions about norms:

- Which norms define (or are generally accepted) in a certain culture or group?
- To what extent do norms (i.e., the norms which are accepted) vary or overlap between groups?
- How “do norms change” in a society or group? (Where a “norm change” is a case of when a norm which has been previously accepted is replaced by another norm.)
- *Why* have certain norms come to be accepted (in a certain society or group)?
- Why do people adopt norms in the first place? (Where do norms “come from”?)
- When is some pattern of behavior (in a society) best explained with reference to a norm?

Philosophers address meta-normative questions…

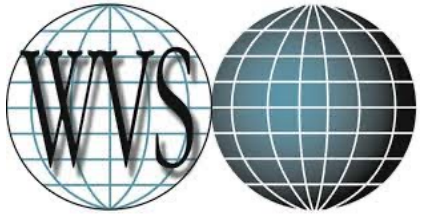
- What is a norm?
- What is it to accept a norm?
- Are there facts in virtue of which norms can be correct?
- What is the nature of those facts?
- How (if at all) can we determine whether a norm is correct (given that norms are the type of entities that can have the property of being correct)?
- Does the view that norms cannot be correct or incorrect rule out that there are meaningful ways to argue that some norms are more plausible than others?

How those questions are pursued will be considered in the **third** segment of this course.

…but they also try to answer normative questions.

- By formulating and evaluating general views or principles about what we should do (think, believe, feel, etc)?
- By formulating and evaluating views that are indirectly relevant to those principles and/or to we should do. Some such views are *axiological* (and concern, for example, the ranking of outcomes in terms of value). Others concern when agents are *blame*- or *praiseworthy*, what it is to act *virtuously*, etc.

How those questions are pursued will be considered in the **second** segment of this course.



World Values Survey
(https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs.jsp)

World Values Survey
(https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs.jsp)



Strimling, P., Vartanova, I., Jansson, F., and Eriksson, K., 2019, ”The connection between moral positions and moral arguments drives opinion change”, *Nature Human Behaviour* 3, 922-930.

Political philosophy

When is a distribution of resources *just*? When is coercive power used *legitimately*? Etc.

Political philosophy

When is a distribution of resources *just*? When is coercive power used *legitimately*? Etc.

Epistemology

When is a belief *justified*? When is it *warranted* by the evidence? Etc.

Political philosophy

When is a distribution of resources *just*? When is coercive power used *legitimately*? Etc.

Epistemology

When is a belief *justified*? When is it *warranted* by the evidence? Etc.

Philosophy of science

When does a theory provide a *better* explanation of the relevant data than a competitor? What is scientific *progress*? Etc.

Political philosophy

When is a distribution of resources *just*? When is coercive power used *legitimately*? Etc.

Epistemology

When is a belief *justified*? When is it *warranted* by the evidence? Etc.

Philosophy of science

When does a theory provide a *better* explanation of the data than a competitor? Etc.

Decision theory

When is a decision (under uncertainty) *rational*? Etc.

Aesthetics

When does an art-work have greater *artistic value* than another? Etc.

Aesthetics

When does an art-work have greater *artistic value* than another? Etc.

Philosophy of language

Do norms determine the meanings of linguistic expressions (and if so how)? Etc.

Aesthetics

When does an art-work have greater artistic value than another? Etc.

Philosophy of language

Do norms determine the meaning of linguistic expressions (and if so how)? Etc.

Logic

Are inference rules plausibly seen as ”norms of thought” or ”norms of rationality”? Etc.