

Introduction to Ethics
Dr. Heather Salazar
Main Theses, Week 5

Williams: "The Amoralist"

1. It is not "a defeat for reason or rationality that it had no power against this man's state [who does not care about anything]." (4)
2. List the attributes of the amoralist, including what he cannot consistently do.
3. It is not the case that "the more moral citizens would be amoral if they could get away with it, or if they were not too frightened, or if they were not passively conditioned by society." (7)
4. It is not a good argument to say that people are not required to behave morally because "all moral motivation is the product of social influences, teaching, culture, etc." (8)
5. Neither is it a good argument to claim that people are not really moral since that is not their "basic impulses." (8-9)
6. "If he is a psychopath, the idea of arguing him into morality is surely idiotic, but the fact that it is idiotic has equally no tendency to undermine the basis of morality or of rationality." (10)
7. "[W]e do not have to ascribe to him [the amoralist] any fundamentally new kind of thought or experience to include him in the world of morality, but only what is recognizably an extension of what he already has." (12)

Williams: "Subjectivism: First Thoughts"

1. "Statement (a), first of all, is either false or harmless." (15-17)
2. "It [Statement (a)] is false if it claims that the moral judgements state their utterer's attitudes." (15-16)
3. That moral judgements "have the function of expressing the utterer's attitude...is incontestable and harmless." (16)
4. If it is claimed that moral judgements do no more than express a person's attitude, then that is false (16-17)
5. "To this [argument in (4)] it might be replied that the fact that moral attitudes can be called 'right' or 'wrong', and that the question of their rightness or wrongness is taken seriously, does not in any ultimate sense help to transcend subjectivism." (17)
6. But the subjectivist's account "seems inadequate to the facts...." (18)
7. The subjectivist may reply that "when we get outside the framework of agreed general attitudes, there is no further argument, and no way of showing any position to be right or wrong." (19)

Williams: "Interlude: Relativism"

1. Relativism is "clearly inconsistent." (20)
2. "In neither case can functionalist propositions in themselves provide any answers at all" (21-22)
3. "[T]here are inherent features of morality that tend to make it difficult to regard morality as applying only to a group." (23-24)
4. Explaining that people ought to mind their own business doesn't help the relativist nor is it consistent with relativism. (24)