

Status and justification of normative judgements in light of the theory of naturalistic fallacy. The good as a subject of practical philosophy - summary

The dissertation at hand attempts to address the problem of the so-called naturalistic fallacy. This fallacy is a key issue both in defining the good and determining the status and justification of normative judgements.

The first chapter reconstructs and critically analyses George Edward Moore's position on the naturalistic fallacy, as presented in *Principia Ethica*, and the so-called *is-ought gap* derived from David Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature*. The conducted analyses allowed for the formulation of a research hypothesis regarding the nature of the naturalistic fallacy. It is possible that the problem expressed in the theory of naturalistic fallacy – namely, the difficulty in defining the good and providing satisfactory justification for normative judgements – stems from an attempt to define the good and the first axiological premise exclusively from a theoretical perspective (the fallacy of theoreticism). The proposed interpretation of the naturalistic fallacy as a kind of category mistake (where the subject matter of practical philosophy is explained through theoretical philosophy), draws on the distinction between practical and theoretical philosophy, which stretches back to the antiquity. Therefore, conducting historical analyses was necessary in order to find a plausible solution.

The second chapter provides such a historical analysis, while also attempting to apply, to a limited extent, the concept of studying the history of problems postulated by Nicolai Hartmann. The chapter analyses the positions of three thinkers who – at least declaratively – maintain what could be considered the classical division between practical and theoretical philosophy: Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, and Immanuel Kant. These positions are reconstructed to the extent necessary to determine how each of them defines the concept of the good, and thus whether they can be subject to the charge of the naturalistic fallacy. Aristotle's position, which grounds the concept of the good in nature that can be theoretically apprehended, seems vulnerable to the charge of the naturalistic fallacy, as it remains within the bounds of the theoretical concept of the good. St. Thomas Aquinas's view, which considers God as the source of the good, goes beyond theory, since God is unknowable and thus not comprehensible in terms of theory. Nonetheless, explaining the good in terms of *ignotum per ignotum* is not a satisfactory solution. In both cases, the division into practical and

theoretical philosophy is more organizational in nature, and if, as in the case of Thomas Aquinas where it transcends the theory of being, it does so in the form of an unresolved and irresolvable puzzle. Only Immanuel Kant points to the perspective of freedom, which allows for the formulation of a normative sphere independent of empirical reality. Kant's insights and the arguments he provided constitute a justification for the theory of naturalistic fallacy (which is weakly substantiated in Moore's writings). Kant also proposed a view of faith as one of the three ways of accepting something as true, which, for our purposes, could serve as a practical analogon to theoretical knowledge. Despite these valuable insights, Kant's position remains unsatisfactory due to its strict formalism, which prevents defining a particular good (or a particular action consistent with the categorical imperative). Furthermore, the postulates of practical reason, such as the immortality of the soul and the existence of God – which are intended to guarantee the *summum bonum* – are also questionable.

The historical analysis in the spirit of Hartmann allowed for the extraction of valuable elements from past philosophical systems and the recognition of their lasting contributions to philosophy. Each of the analysed positions contains insights that may be used to outline the foundations of practical philosophy. Only a few are mentioned: Aristotle's valuable contribution was the very introduction of the discussed distinction, whereas in Aquinas, we find the concept of the identity of the good and being, and the conceptual, rather than material, difference between them, along with the notion of free will. Kant's perspective on freedom and his argument against grounding normativity in a posteriori judgements about the phenomenal world, which is governed by causality, were also recognized as valuable contributions. Nevertheless, none of the analysed positions offers a fully satisfactory solution to the problem of the naturalistic fallacy. While Kant's position avoids the fallacy, it remains unsatisfactory due to other shortcomings identified in this chapter.

Chapter three reconstructs contemporary positions in a similar manner. Two of these – those of Jan Woleński and John R. Searle – aspired to resolve the problem of the naturalistic fallacy. Woleński proposes a naturalistic concept of norms, aiming to derive norms from facts. Searle, in his concept of institutional facts, sees a way to overcome the problem of deriving normative statements from descriptive ones. The third analysed position, though not directly addressing the issue of the naturalistic fallacy, was that of Thomas Nagel. Nagel puts forward a modern account of the two perspectives available to humans: the first-person perspective and the "view from nowhere". A detailed analysis of the phenomena provided by Nagel allows for asserting that his position could constitute a valuable contribution to solving the problem of naturalistic fallacy.

Woleński proposes understanding a norm as a decision made by a norm-giver. In the context of Woleński's naturalism, such a decision, understood as a fact, leads to the conclusion that, in essence, there are no norms other than those regarded as certain laws – whether traditional or more formalized. Such norms, however, do not pass Moore's open-question test, since one can always reasonably ask whether these norms should indeed be followed. Searle's error lies, among other things, in his failure to demonstrate how the transition occurs from what he calls a brute fact to an institutional fact, which he claimed was based on the former. Grounding institutional facts in brute facts is necessary to break the problematic regress of institutional facts, which in Searle's view, form a kind of hierarchy. Therefore, even if we agree with Searle that it is possible to infer an "ought" from an institutional "fact", it remains unclear how that first institutional fact emerges from a brute fact. Moreover, the analysis of Searle's concept reveals that the use of the term "fact" in relation to institutional facts is somewhat misleading. If we consider a conjunction between a descriptive statement and a normative statement, the resulting statement is difficult to classify as either descriptive or normative. It seems that Searle's institutional fact follows a similar structure. Nagel's position, while not providing a satisfactory solution, offers a very deep analysis of the underlying problem. His recognition of pain as something obviously bad (and pleasure as obviously good) – as Nagel does – fails to offer a satisfactory solution to the problem. However, his attempt to bypass the problem of value by asserting the intuitive recognition of the validity of reasons, understood as judgements, is intriguing. Nevertheless, such intuitive cognition can also be reasonably criticised. From the perspective of this dissertation, the most important aspect of Nagel's work is his accurate articulation of the difficulty inherent in the third-person perspective. Nagel points out that the world cannot be fully described from this perspective. Hence theoretical knowledge does not allow for a complete description of the world, which indicates the need for another perspective in the effort to fully describe it.

The fourth chapter presents a positive concept of the good and formulates the first axiological premise. It outlines preliminary characteristics of the practical perspective, in which a free subject perceives beings as valuable. The proposed conception is clearly rooted in historical philosophical positions. The conducted analysis provides additional support for Andrzej Niemczuk's concept of pre-decision as constitutive of the practical perspective. Pre-decision refers to the subject's decision to continue existing as a free subject. It serves as the condition for all other decisions, yet it does not have any other decision as its own condition. In this act, the logically first value (the existence of the subject as a subject) is established, and the world, as a prerequisite for the continuation of the subject's existence, is also recognized as valuable. Thus, the statement "I

want to continue my existence as a free subject” (equivalent to “I recognize the value of my own existence”) constitutes the content of the first axiological premise and enables the justification of normative judgements.

The chapter also discusses the concept of the natural attitude and proposes its modification, expanding it to incorporate the practical perspective. Given the value of the world, it was necessary to identify a criterion for the hierarchy of values, without which free choice would not be possible. To this end, happiness – understood in a non-hedonistic way following W. Tatarkiewicz – was identified as relatively enduring satisfaction with the entirety of one’s life. Finally, building on A. Niemczuk’s work, the good is defined as existence in the practical perspective, which modifies Aquinas’s statement *ens et bonum convertuntur*. Recognizing the existence of the practical perspective allows for:

1. Defining the good as the practical analogon of existence,
2. Formulating the first axiological premise: “the existence of one’s own subject is valuable”,
3. Establishing a criterion for evaluating the legitimacy of decisions (a decision cannot contradict the pre-decision),
4. Identifying happiness as the balance of life, which allows for determining the hierarchy of values.

The proposed approach to the practical perspective, although this dissertation covers only its foundations, allows for the assertion that practical philosophy – concerned with the actions of free subject – is the proper field for defining the good. It is within this perspective that normative judgements can be justified.

The naturalistic fallacy is avoided not by proving the possibility of justifying normative judgements or defining the good exclusively in terms of theory, but by identifying practical philosophy as the proper domain for determining the good and formulating justifications for normative judgements.

The dissertation concludes by summarizing the suggested findings and addressing some potential objections to the proposed concept.