

## THE ETHICS OF AYER'S EMOTIVISM IN A POSSIBLE MORAL WORLD

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### **Abstract**

*The sense of a possible moral world projects some developmental and social monitoring of human activities through the languages the individuals employ to express them. Such activities demand to be good in constituting social order, justice, and peace. This is possible when human freedom is put under the operation and application of the ethics of living for the realization of integral human development. This is against the notation of human development inherent in Ayer's emotivism as a moral theory. In emotivism, human freedom is erroneously and adequately maximized without recourse to the necessity of common social and moral facts that exist in a possible moral world. Such possible moral facts in the moral world help to checkmate human activities and some unguided exercises of freedom. This paper aims at critiquing Ayer's emotivism as a moral theory by recognizing that there are moral facts that can be socially and linguistically expressed to establish and sustain moral order. At such, it posits that no society can be ordered, just, and peaceful when every human individual is allowed to exercise his or her freedom or carry out any activity at will, based on personal moral conviction and directive as Ayer's emotivistic theory*

*suggests, without recourse to common moral and ethical facts or principles inherent in a possible moral world. The paper concludes that proper moral development of the human person cannot be achieved in a human society that so desires social order and probity, due to the moral relativistic tendencies it presents to the human society.*

**Keywords:** Possible Moral World, Human Freedom, Emotivism, Moral Facts, Development

### **Introduction**

Understandably, the relations between language and emotions can be viewed from two angles. First, a language in a broad sense can be viewed as “being done” (performed) emotive. That is, considering the roles and effects of language in the expression of emotion. Second, in a narrow sense, language as a mere tool for making one express him/herself without reference to the meaning of such expressions. Put simply, man has the ability to make assertions with languages to express, most especially what he feels within. This is a rational ability or gift from nature that defines, most especially, his social identity, personality, dependence, dynamism, integration and participation. Though man is an animal, he has a unique form of animal communication, expressed in different languages such as morality, religiosity, cultural heritages, medicine, technologies, socialization, sexuality, civilization, and so on. All these contents of languages situate some level of moral contextualism of the individual in a society of diverse and conflicting moral and social interests and desires.

Language, whether vocal and symbolic, has been with the human person as a subject of lived experiences. From time immemorial, philosophers have preoccupied themselves with the quests of solving in life. Ayer on his part, defines, explains, and argues for the verification principle of logical positivism, and he explains how this principle may be applied to the problems of philosophy. The term 'emotivism' is derived from the word emotion. Emotion is a strong human feeling, for instance, love, hate, anger, etc. Emotivism

as a philosophical doctrine; is a meta-ethical view that claims that ethical sentences do not express propositions but emotional attitudes or feelings.<sup>1</sup> It posits that ethical languages and expressions are nothing but mere expressions of one's emotional dispositions, sentiments, and feelings towards a given situation and as such is meaningless. It opines that ethical principles and values are not factual therefore, meaningless. The emotivists' view get round the Logical Positivists who argue that moral statements are not factual but expressions of the feelings of the person who makes them. For instance, if you like something, you call it good, if you dislike it, you call it bad. More also, two people can consider exactly the same facts and come to quite different conclusions. In these cases, the emotivists claim that one cannot say one is right and the other wrong, because fact are separating them. That one can only accept that each is using moral language or judgment to express his or her emotional response to the set of facts.

Employing human language and other means of social communication for the ordering of human actions and development, the conceptualization of ethics becomes inevitable and indispensable. In all, ethics seeks to device reasons for approving or condemning human acts as right or wrong, good or bas, and as worthy or unworthy of a rational being.<sup>2</sup> Ethics though, many ethical theories have come up, like naturalism, which states that ethical statements are made base on natural law, but ethics remains what it is, the oughtness of living and actions. Emotivism is a meta-ethical view that claims that ethical sentences do not express propositions, but emotional attitudes. Prominent in this school of thought is A. J. Ayer who was a logical positivist. The emotive theory was vividly discussed by Ayer in his book: *Language, Truth, and Logic*, and its development is strongly attributed to Charles Stevenson in his book:

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<sup>1</sup>R. Gaardner, *Moral Philosophy: A Systematic Introduction to Normative and Meta-Ethics*. NY: Macmillan, 1967, 18.

<sup>2</sup>See, A. Echekwube, What is Ethics?. In P. Iroegbu and A. Echekwube (eds). *Kpim of Morality*. Ibadan: Heinemann, 2005, 29.

*Ethics and Language*.<sup>3</sup> In emotivism as a moral theory, Ayer thought that the meaning of statements are specifiable in terms of the conditions in which they could be verified. In this light, when we make assertions like 'good' and 'bad', it is made based on our emotions.

The objective of this study is centred on the needs to understand the ethical implications of Ayer's emotivism if adopted in our contemporary society, and to ascertain that the indispensability of the moral facts in possible moral world. Methodologically, for the purpose to achieve the objective of this study, within the thrust of its limitations, we will discuss the following headings such as: Ayer's emotivism as a moral linguistic theory in relativistic socio-cultural context; the epistemology of moral facts in a possible moral world; the ethics of Ayer's emotivism in a possible moral world, and concluding remarks. All these, are to foster the understanding of relativistic nature of Ayer's emotivism and its contemporary moral implications, and to maintain or sustain the thesis that morality is placed on the contents of moral facts in our possible moral world.

### **Ayer's Emotivism as a Moral Linguistic Theory in Relativistic Socio-cultural Context**

In knowing the moral contents of the languages used in expressing our feelings, many moral, analytic, and linguistic philosophers have reacted to, and are still reacting to such human development.<sup>4</sup> Here, many people besides the professional philosophers share the opinion that ethics is fundamentally about feelings or emotions. This view is called emotivism. According to the emotivists, when people respond to the ethical question by making moral pronouncements, what they are doing is simply expressing their feelings about something and

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<sup>3</sup>A. Afolami and M. M. Uzomah, "Emotivism and Upbringing of Children in the Contemporary Era". In M. A. Izibili, et al. (eds). *Study in Philosophy and Society*. Kagoma: Albertine Institute, 2018, 400.

<sup>4</sup>E. Imafidon, The Popular/Rationalist Image of Science: An Overview of the Positivist View of Science. *Ekpoma Review*, Vol. 2, pp. 101-119, see, 111.

trying to impose such feelings on others.<sup>5</sup> Emotive judgments are unverifiable because they are pure expressions of feelings and as such do not come under the category of truth and falsehood. Such an ethical judgment is not fit to nurture our young ones.<sup>6</sup> Thereby, “morality will have an essentially communal dimension and cannot simply be a question of an individual matter.”<sup>7</sup> Language is the ability to produce and comprehend both the spoken and written (and in the case of sign language, signed) words. Understanding how language works means reaching across many branches of psychology—everything from the basic neurological functioning to high-level cognitive processing. Language shapes our social interactions and brings order to our lives.<sup>8</sup> Complex language is one of the defining factors that make us human.

The linguistic importance for the analysis of moral actions and decisions can be considered the basis of Ayer's emotivist philosophy of human moral development. Emotivism, as laid out in Ayer's *Language, Truth and Logic*, presents a different understanding how it is generally understood ethical statements. In emotivism, ethical statements are not statements of truth or fact, but statements that reveal a person's feelings towards a certain situation and the responses that they expect from others. Ayer divides “the ordinary system of ethics” into four classes:

1. *Propositions that express definitions of ethical terms, or judgments about the legitimacy or possibility of certain definition:* Here, linguistic classifications of objects and events are defined to know their cognitive relevance in order to situate their social placement for the valuation of the human individual.
2. *Propositions describing the phenomena of moral experience, and their causes:* Translating moral judgments into non-ethical intuitionist propositions, then assessing their social

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<sup>5</sup>E. A. Afolami and M. M. Uzomah, “Emotivism and Upbringing of Children in the Contemporary Era”, 391.

<sup>6</sup>N. Preston, *Understanding Ethics*, Sydney: The Federation Press, 2001.

<sup>7</sup>L. Richard, *Is there a Christian Ethics?* New York: Paulist Press, 1988, 76.

<sup>8</sup>N. Preston, *Understanding Ethics*, Sydney: The Federation Press, 2001.

conditionings and interests, dependable on the capacity of which the individual employs them.

3. *Exhortation to moral virtue*: Here, moral terms can be used in arguments in which the moral terms appear in a conditional, and so, not rarely conditioning to the valuations- of the statements made.
4. *Actual ethical judgments*: Examining that, in appearance, moral arguments retain their validity, but very illogical, since they cannot be verified.<sup>9</sup>

According to Ayer, moral philosophers have misconstrued the meaning of ethics. Ethical philosophy is based on a series of emotions, opinions, and sentiment, but rarely on empirical fact. He asserts that what we understand as ethical philosophy is truly psychology. He highlights the commonly referred distinction between “right” and “wrong” as a difference in sentiment rather than fact. He explains that even if an act is unanimously agreed upon as “good “or “bad”, we can never treat this consensus as a fact.<sup>10</sup> Hence, Ayer disregards ethical philosophy as a self-contracting practice and thus, non-existent. He stated his mission on emotivism thus:

A question which is often discussed by ethical philosophers is whether it is possible to find a definition which would reduce all ethical terms to one or two fundamentals. But this question though it undeniably belongs to ethical philosophy, is not relevant to our inquiry. We are not now concerned to discover which term, within the sphere of ethical term, is to be taken as fundamental, whether for example 'good', can be defined in terms of 'right' or 'right' in terms of 'good' or both in terms of 'value'. What we are interested in is the possibility of reducing the whole sphere of ethical terms

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<sup>9</sup>A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*, New York: Dover Publication Inc, 103.

<sup>10</sup>R. Bradt, “Noncognitivism: The Job of Ethical Sentences is not to State Facts.” In *Ethical Theory*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 145,

to non-ethical terms. We are enquiring whether statements of ethical value can be translated into a statement of empirical fact.<sup>11</sup>

Simply put, using the positivist tool, he indicated that statements or judgments can either be verified in principle or in practice. And since moral judgments according to him could not pass this judgment, he discarded them.<sup>12</sup> Although; the terms “right” or “wrong” are incredibly subjective, we should acknowledge them as facts in extreme situations in order to establish common moral guidelines. He makes a valid point that philosophers tend to treat matters of opinion as fact. Nevertheless, if we were to treat all of these matters only in terms of sentiment, it would be impossible to condemn an act as “immoral” since it may very well be moral by another's standard. Ayer applied the verification principle of logical positivism to moral terms, and as a result, developed the emotivist meta-ethical theory. For him, moral judgments are meaningless, therefore, they not truth-aptness, because; they are neither analytic nor empirically verifiable. Moral judgments are used not to describe something but to express emotions, so they have emotive meaning. They are cognitively meaningless; but emotively meaningful (non-descriptivism). Therefore, there is neither moral truth and moral facts or moral disagreement (moral anti-realism thesis, so there is no proceeding rational argument over moral values). For him, moral statements have no meaning on them. Meaning that, if we take moral statements, especially not to have any factual content, then there will be no point in the ethical debate regarding the ways the human individual should behave.

Ayer maintained that ethical statements are the expressions of feelings or sentiments; they also arouse and stimulate feelings only. Hence, sentences which simply express moral judgments that do not say anything; they are pure expressions of feelings and such do not

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<sup>11</sup> A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*, 40.

<sup>12</sup> See, D. Ilodigwe, “Ayer's Critique of Metaphysics. *Ekpoma Review*, Vol. 2, pp. 35-55. Cf, 45.

say anything: "If I make a statement and say for instance, 'Stealing money is wrong,' I produce a sentence which has no factual meaning – that is, expresses no proposition which can be either true or false."<sup>13</sup> It means that, for someone to express that 'stealing money is wrong' remains a personal opinion, and he or she does not imply it as a general rule, only makes meaning to him or her only since it is mere personal statement, not as a general fact. Ayer goes further to assert that, "It is as if I had written 'Stealing money!' - where the shape and thickness of the exclamation marks show, by a suitable convention, that a special sort of moral disapproval is the feeling which is being expressed."<sup>14</sup>

Ayer's emotivism is a radical theory that thoroughly rejects fundamental presuppositions like cognitivism, moral realism, and rationalism, on which traditional ethical theories were based. Ayer's emotivism contributed to the development of meta-ethics, in that, it directed our attention toward non-naturalist, anti-intuitionist, ethics and non-descriptivist ethics, and in that, it found out the practicality of moral judgments by showing their emotive meaning. He put it thus: "it is worth mentioning that ethical terms do not only serve to express feelings, they are calculated to arouse feelings and stimulate action."<sup>15</sup> By saying this, he modified the positivist's position that; ethical statements are only but mere expressions of the speaker's feelings. Furthermore, Ayer argued that if ethical statements were simply statements about the speaker's feelings, it would be impossible to argue about questions of value. Instead, he claimed that it should be obvious that we discuss questions of value and that the particularly subjective.<sup>16</sup>

### **The Epistemology of Moral Facts in a Possible Moral World**

The issues of morality are always within the projects of human experience. What is known to humanity is what the same humanity

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<sup>13</sup> A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*, 40

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Cf, M. John. *The Logical Positivist and Morality*, London: University Press 2000, 50.

uses as a hinge of morality. It is a naturalised ethical projection of human experience, which formed an epistemic foundation of human moral development. With the expression of human lived experiences, the possibility of moral facts inherent in human actions becomes very inevitable and indispensable in sustaining human relations and development. Socially, the human person is a being of experiences that are rationally, ethically, and intellectually classified.

The necessity for such classification is epistemologically justified on the fact, as Robert O'Donnell asserts that “animals never become scientists. Only people do. And that is because they combine their universal ideas into sentences (propositions) which increase our human knowledge.”<sup>17</sup> The concept of “people’ employed by O'Donnell indicates or presupposes the establishment of knowledge that is socially or communally based. The individual is ethically situated within the moral consciousness of the society where he or she belongs to what the moral society directs him or her to do. It is about trying to establish what is good or bad, or works with the society in maintaining the ethics that promote social order and peace. In the moral sphere, such development of statements out of human experiences, help the human individual and his society to develop some ethical statements for the guidance or regulation of human actions and events, and they remain products of human intelligibility and rational capacities and capabilities, as aspects of human beingness that differentiate the human person from other creatures.<sup>18</sup>

The agitation for the insitutionalization of the culture of peace and social order presuppose the interdependency of human lived experiences. It is about the social epistemology of the human lived experiences which is indispensably hinged on the possibilities of moral facts in expression of human actions. For Paulo Valori analyzing the moral contextualism of human actions in a world of nihilistic and relativistic conceptualization of development, asserts

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<sup>17</sup>R. A. O'Donnell, *Hooked on Philosophy: Thomas Aquinas Made Easy*. NY: St Pauls, 1995, 2.

<sup>18</sup>E. A. Afolami and M. M. Uzomah, *Emotivism and Upbringing of Children in the Contemporary Era* 395.

that, “it is the task of moral philosophy to try understand in-depth this (sometimes dramatic) *life* and to become *moral science*. The difference between moral life and moral science consists of the fact that the former establishes, while the latter understands and explains.”<sup>19</sup> With the authenticity and subjectivity of one's life being expressed among other lives presupposes the morality of freedom and character associated one's lived experiences. According to Valori, “the former (moral science) observes phenomena as personal or social facts in their freedom, subjectivity, legality, utility, and in their absolute or relative character. The latter examines the spiritual value, the ideal, the objectivity, and the universality of these same phenomena, as well as their rapport with the happiness of the person or of society, etc.”<sup>20</sup> the human person develops along his or her moral provity and sensibility, a culture he or she projects through the expression of freedom and character of conscience in pursiunce of social order and peace.

Epistemologically, what the human person knows about his very self is what he uses to guide his actions and with such knowledge, he deals with others. Then, human ethical or moral knowledge and development are not an exception to the content of his lived-experiences. So, “ethics are not necessarily unrealistic. Likewise, utopia does not only signify the impossible. There exists, it is true, a bad utopia, that of a perfect society, totally harmonious, without conflicts and contradiction. Good utopias are based on possibilities that are not yet realisable.”<sup>21</sup> Within the ethical evaluation of human living, both good and bad utopias exist. For Karol Wojtyla, “the question: What of morality? is more directly related to the experience of morality and more plainly aimed at the

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<sup>19</sup>P. Valori, *L'esperienza morale* (The Moral Experience). Brescia, 1971, as in Dario Composta, *Moral Philosophy and Social Ethics*. Bangalore: Theological Publ. in India, 2000, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup>P. Valori, *L'Esperienza Morale*, 1-2

<sup>21</sup>E. Morin, “Future Ethics and Politics” In J. Binde (ed). *The Future of Value: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Talks*. Paris: UNESCO, 2004, 242.

interpretation of it. Normally, when we come in contact with any reality, the first question we ask: What is it? This is also true in the case of morality.”<sup>22</sup>

For instance, Quine's project of naturalising ethics is an attempt to settle moral contextualism, in any way, affirms the methodological infirmity of ethics.<sup>23</sup> “It may even seem strange that we have ready questions that somehow presuppose that we know what morality is. What asked, “What makes human actions morally good or evil?” and in posing the question in this way.”<sup>24</sup> Such questions like: What is morality? What constitutes good or evil? are all epistemic altercations that demand some regular foundation of what constitutes the true human knowledge, and what Quine's account on the genealogy of moral values is established by human linguistic relevance of the contents of actions. It owes that moral value is generated in the same way as it is done in science and other naturalised discourses is further the reasons why such actions are carried out.<sup>25</sup>

Within naturalised discourses of human issues, the ethics is normatively regarded as a science, and the understanding of science is situated on the fact that it takes interest in all facts that concern the human understanding of lived-experience. The actual way of being ethical for the sake of human development is man being sincere to any action he undertakes. He can only be ethical to this very self for being human when he is aware of himself that knows. The knowledge man has about himself determines his goals and interest, phenomenological concern for authenticity, and individuality. The knowledge of man himself cannot be distant from what the society provides for him. The issues for the epistemic justification of

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<sup>22</sup>K. Wojtyła, “The Problem of the Theory of Morality.” In Karol Wojtyła, *Person and Community: selected essays*. Translated by Theresa Sandok. NY: Peter Lang, 1993, 132.

<sup>23</sup>See G. Fasiku, Moral Facts, Possible Moral Worlds and Naturalized Ethics. *West African Journal of Philosophical Studies*, Vol. 11, 2008, p. 83.

<sup>24</sup>K. Wojtyła, “The Problem of the Theory of Morality”, 132.

<sup>25</sup>G. Fasiku, Moral Facts, Possible Moral Worlds and Naturalised Ethics, 83.

morality are based on the affirmative understanding of whether moral issues are facts or not. If there are moral facts, then, one can phenomenologically assert that morality can be epistemologically justified. If there is a possible world where human actions are either judged to be right or wrong ethically, such rightness or wrongness of actions is possibly in the affirmative as a fact in a possible world.

Therefore, the existentiality of the human person as a rational agent and a subject of lived experiences suggests the possibility of moral facts since the actions of the human person must be checkmated. According to Wojtyla, "we assumed not only that morality was already experientially apprehended in its proper perspective, but also that it was intellectually objectified. Since the question asks about actions that are morally is."<sup>26</sup> In the words of Gbenga Fasiku;

What derives from this understanding of moral facts is that the actual wrongness of a morally wrong act is not an empirical entity; it is a fact because it is not corrigible in the present and any possible world. Though; the fact is not observable in the same sense in which natural facts are observed, they are observed by all the subjects concerned by searching through the entities in all possible worlds in order to see there is no fact that run contrary to the moral fact.<sup>27</sup>

In a possible world, knowledge is possibly claimed when facts are established in line with the subject of knowledge. In ethics, as a normative science, the subject of knowledge is the perpetrator of the act (whether moral or immoral), while the object of the moral fact is the victim, and the medium of the fact to be established is the act itself (determining the means and nature of the social and cultural acceptance of the act). We know the establishment of moral facts from the means and nature of the moral actions, even they may be mere moral assumptions. Man knowing what to do with ethical

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<sup>26</sup>K. Wojtyla, 132.

<sup>27</sup>G. Fasiku, 95.

practices presupposes that the individual is aware that such moral practices remain facts that can be subjected to future references. According to David Lewis,

The possible worlds are real in some way. In this conception of a possible world, what makes worlds distinct is that they are spatio-temporally separated from one another. In other words, every way that a world could have been is a way that some existing physical world really is. So, possible worlds are real worlds and they actually exist in the same sense the real or concrete world we inhabit exists.<sup>28</sup>

Hence, we are asking about the contents of moral facts that are indispensable for human moral development, this conviction especially when our question takes the form of what still goes further and enters the realm of the basis of moral norms themselves, thus, not only do ethical question go beyond the simple question, “What is morality?” which must suggest itself to us in connection with the experience of morality, but they also, so to speak, “begin farther down the line.”<sup>29</sup> Moreover, “naturally, man is eager from birth to death to know and discover what is unknown to him to have adequate information and knowledge to live conveniently in human society.”<sup>30</sup> The establishment of this point should ordinarily provide a ground for accepting ethics as belonging to the naturalist family.<sup>31</sup> Still, science cannot ignore questions that are less pressing from a vital or existential point of view, but not for the reason any less important from a scientific point of view. This applies in a special way to question the essence of morality, and how it is applied to the contents

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<sup>28</sup>D. Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986, 2.

<sup>29</sup>K. Wojtyła, p. 132.

<sup>30</sup>W. O. Aso, *Rudiments of Philosophy for Undergraduates*. Lagos: Fropiel Int'l Ltd, 2018, 36.

<sup>31</sup>G. Fasiku, p. 90.

of social development.<sup>32</sup> To put it another way, the question of the essence of morality ensures that the questions concerning moral good and evil are posed homogeneously concerning the experience of morality.<sup>33</sup> The experience of morality allows us to come in contact with the essence of morality, and, in direct relation to this, the question arises, “what is morality?” In this question, we are seeking the intellectual objectification of that which is given in the experience of morality.<sup>34</sup>

Humanity as a whole can only use its natural heritage to the fullest; if it does not lose sight of the library of knowledge that has been left to it by generations past.<sup>35</sup> Thus the theory of morality arises by means of knowledge of morality as the factor that accounts for the homogeneity of ethical knowledge.<sup>36</sup> Like the human brain, it is only useful if it is integral and assessable exactly when it is needed.<sup>37</sup> Put simply, the epistemic justification of morality seats on the phenomenological affirmative of ethics as a normative science since moral actions can be epistemologically regarded as moral facts. This is because, experiences are facts, and since morality or moral action/event is an experience, then it can generate into a moral fact in order to affirm some level of social, cultural, and scientific justification of such act or event.

In all, many ethical questions are epistemologically raised to situate any such justification. Hence, thical questions – questions of the type, “What is morally good”, and what is morally evil in human actions? – Already in a way concern a subsequent issue. We are not asking in them about morality as such; we are not trying to understand the morality; rather, we are asking – based on some previous understanding of morality- about a distinction fundamental to

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<sup>32</sup>K. Wojtyla, p. 133.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup>T. Odhiambo, “The Future of Biodiversity” In J. Binde (ed). *The Future of Value: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Talks*. Paris: UNESCO, 2004, 209.

<sup>36</sup>K. Wojtyla, 133.

morality, the distinction between good and evil, and about the basis of this distinction.<sup>38</sup> Every moral question will be meaningfully answered when it corresponds with the moral facts available for such moral knowledge, and it is justifiable to be right or wrong in line with the content of such moral facts. This distinction (right or wrong, good or bad) is possible because the social status of morality is possible epistemologically, that is, the status of morality is possible when the moral facts are possibly established.

### **The Ethics of Ayer's Emotivism in a Possible Moral World**

We have engaged in an expository analysis of an infamous ethical theory called emotivism. Our expose brought to the fore the concomitant moral sleaze associated with this notorious doctrine. In an unequivocal language, it debunked the fallacious belief that ethical or moral statements are not reasonable statements but statements based on one's emotional whims and caprices.<sup>39</sup> We argue that the precepts of morality have their root in the moral laws of nature and as such not within the limit of science. Hence the test for meaningfulness, wrongness, or goodness, licit or illicitness, would only be; if it conforms to the moral laws of nature which Immanuel Kant calls 'categorical imperatives' because it applies to man directly and it prescribes norms for human conduct. This can only be done by metaphysicians and ethicists.<sup>40</sup> According to Research, Ayer faced a particular difficulty in defending this brand of non-cognitivism;<sup>41</sup> the combination of affirming a redundancy theory of truth with the denial that moral claims can be true; looks suspicious. Though; looking at the views critically, one would discover that the views are not incompatible, the tension between the views is symptomatic of the worry that moral claims have so many of the features of truth-evaluable assertions that one has to be unjustifiably revisionistic in

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<sup>37</sup>T. Odhiambo, "The Future of Biodiversity", 209.

<sup>38</sup>K. Wojtyla, 132.

<sup>39</sup>R. M. Hare, *The Language of Morals*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955.

<sup>40</sup>E. A. Afolami and M. M. Uzomah, 401.

<sup>41</sup>R. M. Hare, *The Language of Morals*, 14

construing them as non-meaningful. They are, after all, typically expressed in indicative sentences, and people appear to dispute moral claims.<sup>42</sup> However, there emerged a more troubling point about the role of moral terms and how it is being used in arguments. Moral terms can be used in arguments in which the moral term appears in a conditional, and it is not their contributing to the expressive force of the utterance, not expressing an emotion of the speaker.<sup>43</sup>

Ayer's defense is that all ethical disputes are about facts regarding the proper applications of a value system to a specific case, not about the value systems themselves; because any dispute about values can only be resolved by judging that one value system is superior to another, and this judgment itself presupposes a shared values system. With indispensability of shared values system in human society, we accept the conception of the good in monitoring human actions. Here George Edward Moore's Indefinable good becomes very meaningful in understanding Ayer's conception of moral emotivism in relation to the usage of human languages for the expressing moral facts. For Moore, "if I am asked 'what is good?' my answer is that good is good, and that is the end of the matter. Or if I am asked 'How is good to be defined?' my answer is that it cannot be defined and that is all I have to say about it."<sup>44</sup> If Moore is wrong in saying that there are actual disagreements of value, we are left with the claim that there are actual disagreements of fact, and Ayer accepts the position of Moore's possibility of shared values system without hesitations. Ayer sees good as an individual's approval of a particular thing and an attempt to arouse similar approval from other persons if they morally accept it as well.<sup>45</sup> Ayer agree with Moore that good is indefinable and non-natural, and at such, it cannot be denied by anyone not be relevance for one's moral development. But Ayer claim the he was misguided to think that it is cognitive, since good for his is

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<sup>42</sup>See, R. M. Hare, 15.

<sup>43</sup>See, R. M. Hare, 15.

<sup>44</sup>G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903, 7.

<sup>45</sup>See, Moritz Schlick, *The Problem of Ethics*. USA: Macmillan, 196, 91.

just an expressor or evoker of feelings, mere suggestion, a pseudo and indescribable concept which is neither true or false.<sup>46</sup>

In Ayer's emotivism fits into a naturalistic world view, and because of that, it appeals to many philosophers as an erotic philosophy. It does not posit the existence of any non-natural properties like goodness and love which cannot be empirically discovered. Emotivism helps explain the strong link between making a moral judgment and being motivated to act accordingly.<sup>47</sup> Looking at it from another angle, Ayer claims that when we make moral judgments, what we are doing is expressing our emotional reactions to the thing we are judging. In some indications, it seems possible to judge that something is morally wrong without having any emotional reaction to it, or even feeling positive about it. Two moral judgments cannot contradict each other if they are, in fact, just expressions of emotion.<sup>48</sup> Finally, our practice of making moral judgments treats such judgments as propositional in many ways. We use them in logical arguments and draw inferences from them. We employed them in other kinds of statements and use them in an un-asserted context. It is not clear whether the emotivist account of the nature of such judgments can explain why we can do these moral arguments.

### **Concluding Remarks**

From the foregrounding, there are moral facts in any possible moral world since there are communities of persons that need to be guided in achieving social order and justice. We recognize here that any formation of the human person by the theory of emotivism would have the animalistic instinct and inclination and passions as his governing propensity. And instead of acting under the precepts of morality guided by reason, he would act under passion where there is no law, there is no sin. Where there is no morality, no immoral acts, everything would be right. If all is neutrally neutral, then one will be

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<sup>46</sup>V. C. Anuniru, *A Critique of G. E. Moore's Indefinable Good*. Unpublished B. A Long Essay, Department of Philosophy, Seminary of All Saints, Ekpoma, 2010, 49.

<sup>47</sup>See, E. A. Afolami and M. M. Uzomah, 391.

<sup>48</sup>See, D. Ilodigwe, *Ayer's Critique of Metaphysics*, 50.

able, *ad libitum*, to do whatever his or her whim and caprice urges. If putting on clothes is a mere matter of interest, like or dislike, convenience, those with emotivist' formation of minds may go on naked if they so wish.<sup>49</sup> For Fasiku;

A moral judgment is tested against a moral fact that exists in all possible worlds; it is a fact because it is found in possible worlds, and there is no world in which its contrary is found. If, however, there is a possible world where it is justifiably shown that the moral fact does not exist, then the moral judgment would not correspond to any moral fact. Such a judgment is therefore false.<sup>50</sup>

Arguably, for an integral genuine and authentic formation of the human person, ethical relativism and emotivism should be carefully looked at and possibly pushed for its repudiation in its entity. The human family, the civil society, all agents of socialization, and indeed all those directly and indirectly concerned with the training, the formation of character, good conscience and personality of the child, should jettison emotivism and its doctrine.<sup>51</sup> We can described the end effect of emotivism as oral annihilation, and any human individual brought up by this doctrine will end up being individualistic, anti-social, corrupt public morality, and embrace vices instead of virtues. According to Eligabeth Afolami and Michael Uzomah, man is a moral animal, because, he possesses distinctive quality and rationality, which makes him a moral agent. He is capable of moral evaluation/approbation and disapprobation. Hence, obstinately denying man's rational ability to appraise social affairs, thereby, making man an amoral being is incredibly absurd and despicable.<sup>52</sup>

One may be tempted to conclude that the theory of emotivism is so obscure and untenable that even the emotivists cannot attempt to

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<sup>49</sup>E. A. Afolami and M. M. Uzomah, 402.

<sup>50</sup>G. Fasiku, 99.

<sup>51</sup>See, M. Lacewing, *Metaethics, Intuitionism, Emotivism and Prescriptivism*, <http://www.alevephilosophy/socialphil.com>.

<sup>52</sup>E. A. Afolami and M. M. Uzomah, p. 404.

rear their children in an a moral emotivistic and relativistic world. It is because of its grave consequences on the formation of the characters and personalities of such children. At best, emotivism can only build a foundation of a social and moral disordered society. For Williams Aso, “there is no society; in which her own appreciated cultural values and practices that often served as the ontological basis of the worldview and approach to issues by the members of the social group. There is no iota of equivocation to say that these cultural values and practices, no matter how imperfect they may be, are not just from the blues.”<sup>53</sup> This is on the thrust that, given the conclusion that Ayer's emotivism is unable to explain the meaning of all ethical terms used in moral discourse, and erroneous purpose of development and civilization in promoting relativistic society, only on the basis of personal conviction of what is right or wrong, it is reasonable to question whether emotivism should be abandoned as a meta-ethical theory. Anyway, we believe that emotivism still offers one valuable insight that can potentially explain important features of our moral experience, and thus, should not be given up entirely, simply based on one's exercise of freedom and responsibility.

<sup>53</sup>W. O. Aso, *Rudiments of Philosophy for Undergraduates*, 36.