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Morality as hypothetical imperative: Two sorts of moral judgments in Philippa Foot's middle works

Tatsuhiko GOMI

In this paper we examine how Philippa Foot defends the objectivity of morality in her middle periods. We can identify three main points. First, moral judgment is divided into two sorts. One is moral judgment about good and bad, and the other is about reasons for action. Whereas the latter depends on agents' desires and purposes, the former is made by the criteria that are not arbitrary. Second, moral judgment about reasons for action is not categorical. There is no distinction between moral judgments and other judgments that involve a non-hypothetical "ought," so moral judgments give reasons for action only hypothetically. Third, moral judgment about good and bad is objective. We can judge that an agent is morally good when he has a morally good purpose and it is his only reason for action. Since his purpose has nothing to do with our subjective feelings or attitudes, we can judge his goodness and badness only according to the facts.

In the middle Foot's theory, there may be a crucial problem in that there are no implications for moral judgment even if it is objective. We cannot infer from a kind of judgment like "acting A is morally good" that "we should do A" because they are classified as different judgments. However, we should think of this result as starting point to discuss the relation between morality and reasons for action.