

The Limits of Immanent Critique

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The normative authority challenge. The critic appeals to a principle. But not all principles have normative authority. The critic must say what distinguishes principles with normative authority from those without.

The epistemic challenge. The critic must suppose not just that *some* principles have normative authority, but that *her* principles have normative authority.

The practical authority challenge. A standard has practical authority for an agent or group just so long as that agent or group takes the mere fact that some course of action would violate the standard to be a consideration which counts against that course of action.

Desiderata For Immanent Critique

Desideratum 1: No external standards.

'The phrase 'normativistic'...signifies that *external normative standards* are introduced against which reality is measured – it is measured against an abstract ought...[By contrast] the critique of ideology...generates the standards needed to overcome a particular reality from the given norms and the given reality' ([Jae09]).

Desideratum 2: Normative significance – the critique demonstrates that something is wrong.

Desideratum 3: Supra-individual. The critique targets patterns of collective life, rather than individual agents.

Immanent Critique vs Internal Critique

Internal Critique Our society is governed by a meritocratic ideal. We think that those with the most talent should 'rise to the top'. But we fail to live up to these ideals. In fact, birth determines one's prospects more than talent or hard work. So there is something wrong with our society.

Immanent Critique Our society is governed by a meritocratic ideal. A meritocratic ideal has two major components. First, there is the idea that work and talent, rather than birth, should determine one's life prospects. Second, there is a rejection of the idea that justice requires equality of outcome: inequalities are justified so

long as they are the result of talent. But a society which subscribes to such an ideal will invariably produce states of affairs which are unjust by their own lights. The meritocratically successful will pass advantage onto their children; eventually, inherited advantage will be a more powerful determinant of life prospects than talent, and the meritocratic ideal will be violated.

Structurally self-undermining. A norm N is structurally self-undermining (for A) if adopting/endorsing N impairs A 's ability to satisfy N .

SOME OTHER EXAMPLES...

[E]very form of capitalist society harbours a deep-seated social-reproductive 'crisis tendency' or contradiction: on the one hand, social reproduction is a condition of possibility for sustained capital accumulation; on the other, capitalism's orientation to unlimited accumulation tends to destabilize the very processes of social reproduction on which it relies ([Fra16]).

The bourgeois work-oriented society secures the livelihood and social integration of individuals by allowing them to participate in the (free) labour market. But the work-oriented society is also disposed to give rise to structural unemployment; hence the work-oriented is disposed to block agent's access to the very form of social integration it promises ([Jae18; Heg91]).

THE IMMANENT CRITIC....

- Can offer *transformative* rather than merely reparative critique.
- Connects their normative project with the diagnostic project of crisis diagnosis.

The Normative Significance of Practical Contradictions

Practical Coherence Imperative. Do not adopt/endorse structurally self-undermining norms.

Case 1: Expert Panel. An expert panel must to give advice on global warming. They seek to form judgments on the following propositions

Proposition P: Global carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuels are above 6500 million metric tons of carbon per annum.

Proposition P \rightarrow *Q:* If global carbon dioxide emissions are above this threshold, then the global temperature will increase by at least 1.5 degrees Celsius over the next three decades.

Proposition Q: The global temperature will increase by at least 1.5 degrees Celsius over the next three decades ([LP+11]).

The experts' (individually consistent) judgments are as shown in the table below:

	P	Proposition $P \rightarrow Q$	Q
Expert 1	T	T	T
Expert 2	T	F	F
Expert 3	F	T	F
Group	T	T	F

([LP+11])

Case 2: Opinion Poll. An opinion pollster asks everyday members of a society for their judgements on the same three propositions. Although every agent is individually coherent, their collective attitude is incoherent.

Outsourcing Strategies

Stability Norm. Societies ought to be stable.

Expectation Norm. Societies ought not give rise to (and depend on the production of) expectations which cannot be satisfied.

KEY QUESTION: why think *these* norms have normative authority?

Constitutivist Suggestion. The constitutive norms of a practice have a special kind of authority for those engaged in the practice:

'If someone is building a house and if sheltering from the weather is a constitutive standard of being a house, then she cannot sensibly ask: Why should I care if the house I'm building cannot – because of my shoddy work – shelter its inhabitants from the weather?' ([Eno06], drawing on [Kor09])

References

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