

Philosophy & Religious Studies Department

Moral Realism versus the Myth of the Fact-Value Distinction

Oscar Clemotte

**Friday, March 30 1:00 - 2:30
Building 356, Theatre 109**

In 1981 contemporary moral philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre wrote in his book *After Virtue* that “We possess indeed simulacra of morality, we continue to use many of the key expressions. But we have—very largely, if not entirely—lost our comprehension, both theoretical and practical, of morality.” There is nowadays a widespread skepticism about the possibility of objective knowledge when it comes to moral claims. For many people, morality is a personal (subjective) matter; what is right or wrong, ultimately, are nothing but expressions of their individual (subjective) feelings of approval or disapproval or attitudes. The root of this skepticism and subjectivism in moral philosophy is rooted in the *fact-value distinction* found in the empiricist tradition. According to this view, the foundations of objective knowledge are wholly dependent on empirical evidence. And given moral claims are not based on empirical evidence, then they cannot have a claim to objectivity. I will argue that this view of morality is incorrect. From the point of view of Virtue Ethics, a form of ethical naturalism, I will argue that moral claims and evaluations can be -and need to be- justified on factual (objective) statements only, thus making an argument for the truth of moral realism and objectivity in ethics.

Oscar Clemotte joined the Philosophy Department at Vancouver Island University (VIU) in the fall of 2000. Before taking this position, he served as a teaching assistant in the Philosophy Department at the University of Victoria, B.C. (Canada). He earned his BA (*cum laude*) in philosophy in 1992 from the Catholic University of Asuncion, in his native Paraguay. He obtained his Ph.D. (*Philosophiae Doctor*) degree from the University of Oviedo (Spain) in 1998, working on overlapping issues related to philosophical anthropology, metaphysics and the philosophy of religion. His doctoral dissertation, which he completed under the supervision and guidance of renowned Spanish philosopher Gustavo Bueno, received the academic honour of *summa cum laude*. Professor Clemotte mainly focuses his scholarship on subjects such as philosophical anthropology, moral philosophy, the philosophy of mind and the philosophy of religion. His other areas of competence include medieval philosophy, contemporary moral theory, the theory of knowledge and informal logic.

