

國立中正大學

哲學系學術演講

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講題：The Boydian Argument for Moral Realism
and the Debunking Argument

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摘要：

The debate between Gilbert Harman (1977) and Nicholas Sturgeon (1988, 2006) about the status of so called ‘moral explanations’ began in 1980s, and the issues concerning moral explanations are still live (e.g., Sinclair 2012, Miller 2014). The debate is about so called “the explanationist argument for moral realism” which has the following structure; there are certain non-moral facts such as people’s having certain moral beliefs or some social changes, and the best explanation of those non-moral facts requires the existence of moral facts. Although there have been many attempts to defend or refute this argument, it seems there is one particular argumentative strategy which is not yet well recognized and may be employed for the realist side in this debate. This strategy appeals to the success of first-order moral theory, and gives a realist explanation of such a success. The strategy is originally coined by Richard Boyd in his “How to be a Moral Realist”, and the strategy shares the same argumentative structure employed in arguments for scientific realism. Clarifying the difference between this Boydian strategy and other realists’ attempts to defend the explanationist argument, I shall argue that the Boydian strategy provides an interesting route for moral realists avoiding various anti-realists’ challenges to the argument though it has its own unique problems. A notable point we should make on the Boydian strategy is that it provides one way to avoid the recent debunking arguments against moral realism (Street 2006, Joyce 2016) due to its appeal to the success of moral theory as such, not our concrete moral judgements. A way the Boydian strategy provides against the debunkers of morality invites a real enemy for moral realists, namely the Nietzschean scepticism about moral theorizing (Leiter 2014), but I shall argue that we do not have to be persuaded by this Nietzschean scepticism given some reasons to be optimistic about the progress in moral theorizing.

