Moral Vagueness: Does Mathematics Have a Practical Solution?

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Abstract

If one favors Moral Intuitivism in order to deal with Skeptical argument, then thinking by analogy with mathematical knowledge is of use. A major objection to the mathematical analogy in Moral epistemology is the threat of moral relativism in practical applications of moral pluralism if we employ mathematical pluralism as a vector to proceed. Thus, the advocacy for moral pluralism faces an obstacle which should be addressed: a problem of moral «vague» predicates. This article addresses moral vagueness and considers objections toward several treatments of related Sorties series through possibility of deepening a proper mathematical intuition. However, the issue of human moral competency cannot be erased from the picture. It is a critical question for morality which very likely falls beyond the scope of Moral epistemology.

Keywords: Moral epistemology, vagueness, vague predicate, repression, mass repressions.

Preliminary remarks: acknowledgement of biases

I have been thinking about the problem of vague predicates in moral epistemology for several years. One could encounter a persistent question over the last ten years in Russian media: are we already living in «1937»? In other words, can we agree that political repressions in Russia have reached their climax somewhat equivalent to Stalin's repressions? For a moral epistemologist, the question may be reformulated in terms of Sorties paradox (Hyde and Raffman, 2018). Is the «heap» of murders, unlawful prosecutions, and terror big enough to call it a really big «heap» of mass repressions?

The decision to put my thoughts on paper was triggered by an interview, a conversation between a well known, very successful contemporary Russian writer Chihartishvily (aka Boris Akunin) and an independent journalist Osetinskaia (RussiansAreOkay, 2024). Both interlocutors are quite intelligent and have an ambition to dig deep into social and political matters. There was just a couple of minutes in the interview that caught my attention. The interviewer, Osetinskaia, presented the above question related to «1937». As a result, both of the interlocutors expressed their irritation by the cowardice of Russian «folk» because «merely» about a thousand of political prisoners are behind the bars at the moment.

The interview was recorded in the safety of comfortable European scenery. For this no one can mock them since each of them had been assigned the status of a «foreign agent» by the Russian government. Also, Chihartishvily was prosecuted by Russian criminal law, in absentia. Yet, I wonder what is a proper epistemological attitude for moral judgments in such context. It should be noted that the above interview took place when the war between Russia and Ukraine was already going on for more than two years but the oppositionist Aleksey Navalny was not yet killed in Russian prison (NavalnyRu, 2024). Today, people might draw different opinions on the matter of the level of repressions in Russia.

Surely, this article concerns epistemological matters mostly; it is not a political essay. Yet, as a Russian, the author is closely related to the society where the disgusting «heap» of oppression is continuously shoveled into a much bigger entity by some of author's countrymen. Thus, it is unavoidable to exhibit some biases while applying a theory to the real case: we know that Plato's eidos is distorted in the process of descending to this sinful material world (Williamson, 1985).

Introduction

I have been arguing in favor of Moral Intuitivism by thinking analogously with mathematical knowledge in order to deal with Skeptical argument (Korchevoi, 2023a). Further, I considered the major objection to the mathematical analogy in Moral epistemology which is a threat moral relativism poses in practical applications of moral pluralism if we employ mathematical pluralism as a natural development of the mathematical analogy (Korchevoi, 2023b). However, the advocacy for moral pluralism has a big obstacle which should be addressed: the problem of «vague» predicates. Indeed, one can appeal to common sense by describing the following situation. Consider a person in everyday normal life. Assume that the person is not extremely ideologically or religiously indoctrinated or does not exhibit features of sociopathic behavior. It is most likely that whichever ethical reasoning the person uses, she eventually builds some sort of utility function aiming to obtain as much good as possible while causing as little harm as possible. In our daily routine when everything is «business as usual», we make compromises considering our own interests as well as interests of our social surroundings; we exploit a utilitarian practical approach. Yet, there are moments when we feel that something is off. For example, one's neighbor is misbehaving by violating norms of the level of permissible noise. At the beginning it is nothing too big: just a loud voice. So, the person approaches her neighbor by starting a polite conversation resulting in a compromise: she does not file a complaint, the neighbor takes measures to comply with the norms. It goes like this for a while in a very steady pace. Not often, only once in a couple of months, the neighbor causes a noise, one tenth of decibel louder each time. As a result of several conversations, the tension increases. Finally, the person calls the police. A policemen finds that a disgusting case of abuse and domestic violence takes place in the neighbor's household. When should the person stop to seek compromises and take actions? Was it too late already? It is an example of «vague» moral predicate. In particular, «this behavior is permissible/impermissible». As we go about our day, we tend to hold a position that such and such behavior is still permissible but it should be mitigated to better fit our or/and social interests. It is an area of utilitarian thinking. Yet, there is a moment when a switch takes place and we make judgment that the behavior or its cumulative effect is impermissible anymore. In this moment, we leap into realm of deontological ethics even if we may not consciously admit it. It is a form of practical moral pluralism. Whatever reasoning underlies our moral judgments, it

seems that practically we are bound to moral pluralism. Without deontological borderline, we are doomed to moral relativism. However, forcing ourselves to jump into Kantian wagon whenever we encounter any social issue, we quickly end up an antisocial weirdo. The important question is how to make our moral agency better equipped to catch the moment of moral/immoral gestalt collapse.

What is moral vagueness?

The basic definition of vague predicates consists of the following conditions: a vague predicate has no sharp boundaries, at least known to us; the vague predicate contains borderline cases; the vague predicate is afflicted by Sorties reasoning (Dinis, 2017). Whether the last condition is necessary or sufficient is not clear. As one may argue, for some sort of vagueness, e.g. observational and/or phenomenological, the first two conditions plus the standard propositional logic will suffice to build a theoretical frame for the concept (Greenough, 2023).

Further, we shall cautiously proceed to assess what moral vague predicate is. First, it seems reasonable to restrict the scope of our endeavor to the realm of humans affairs. Thus, without a crucial necessity we won't wonder about an imaginary sentient creature making moral judgments. Even when further I allow myself to illustrate some thoughts with verses form the Bible, I do it using the Bible as a historical source of humans ethical considerations. What if humanity disappears from the Earth by some mass extinction event? Will there be unethical phenomena after that? Should we ponder whether it is ethical for a lion to devour a deer? We shouldn't for now. There are many more urgent moral issues.

Second, there are predicates that reflect on a person's inner milieu, such as 'being happy' (Hawthorne, 2022, p.215), being miserable, vicious, righteous, etc. Those predicates fall outside of the scope of Moral epistemology. A statement about someone's happiness bears information about that person's feelings but not a reflection about her objective inner constitution in any sense. Same goes for labeling one as being good, bad, vicious, righteous etc. with the difference that such labels show rather the observer's psychological projections. It does not mean that one cannot build a Sorties series related to such predicates but such a series should be studied rather in psychology, sociology, or theology. Moral epistemology strives for moral knowledge; it should not be concerned with the knowledge of psychological phenomena unless they contribute significantly to the context of moral judgment. I allow myself to draw a metaphorical line: if you feel guilty, see a therapist; if you are found guilty, go to prison. The difference resembles the situation when «one is tall» and «one looks tall», i.e. observational vs. phenomenological vague predicates (Greenough, 2023). Thus, it is not a surprise that Hawthorne (2022, p.220) proceeds in his reasoning, without noting it, from one's feelings to the consideration of such thought experiments as fictional Darryl, a father who took his 6-months daughter to a park. So, for how long is it permissible for Darryl to divert his attention away from his daughter? The ethical question related to predicate «permissible» is legitimate, yet it is a question of one's action, behavior, and deed. We do not care how Darryl feels. We are concerned with what he does.

Third, there is an issue of continuous predicates because 'the choice between continuity and anti-continuity for various moral scales is an intriguing one' (Hawthorne, 2022, p.240). Since we allowed ourselves to worry about the behavior of a

person or a group only, we can realize that one's actions may be related either to continuous physical scales or to sets of physical phenomena. The example of the former is Darryl's case where the situation develops along the time scale. The supposition that time, length, volume, etc. are continuous phenomena serves our epistemological concerns properly. Of course, for the purpose to navigate our daily life, we have introduced different scales for the above entities; we make measurements. Yet, all those measurement tools are artificial. What measurement units are better: inches or centimeters? Are we sure about the existence of quants of time? Even if we are sure, do we need to go down this rabbit hole? Despite us performing measurements using some sort of idealized templates, the reality of those physical scales is best described by continuous functions. Yet, we surely can build Sorties series using an arbitrary measurement scale. The question of Darryl's permissibility of attention diversion or proper distance from his daughter will rightly worry us. While Sorties «heap» is worrisome, the competition between Achilles and the tortoise is out of the scope of this article. Now, what can we say about moral predicates linked to sets of phenomena in the physical world, e.g. «being a doctor who saved five lives» or «being a serial killer who strangled six victims»? Those predicates look much simpler at first glance. They can be described by a discrete function and, therefore, they entail countability. Thus, an analogue of classic countable series of a «heap of wheat» can be built. It can be the case that continuous and discrete predicates demand different kinds of treatments for corresponding Sorties series. If such different treatments shall be found, the only problem will be that such schema lacks simplicity. If so, I am not ready to pursue aesthetical goals at the expense of the ethical.

The last proper note should be made here. In the above definition of continuous and discrete moral vague predicates, the properties of «being continuous and discrete» are related to physical realities which serve as variables for a moral «function» - the predicate. There could be other independent variables, e.g. contextual, epistemic, moral, etc., the characteristics of which are yet unknown to us. Also, the continuity/discontinuity of the moral outcome of the predicates (dependent variable) is not defined by the set of independent variables.

A brief analysis of possible treatments for Sorties paradox

There is a list of approaches to solving the paradox: epistemicism, contextualism, several kinds of supervaluationism and subvaluationism, many-valued logic, including fuzzy logic, and nonstandard analysis proposal (Dinis, 2017). The goal of this analysis is to present maximally practical algorithm to deal with moral Sorties series. I will not argue for the pro and contra of theoretical merits of the above approaches; I will critique them from a practical point of view.

Epistemicism, contextualism, supervaluationism, and subvaluationism are all afflicted by a particular shortcoming: it is very difficult to tailor those approaches into an algorithm for moral decision making. Epistemicism says that there is a sharp borderline in the series of propositions: «the n-th grain of wheat does/does not make a heap». Unfortunately we do not know which one it is due to our weak ability to discriminate phenomena. Contextualism is even less certain saying that while all of the above propositions may be true separately, yet (n+1)-th proposition is false given that n previous propositions are uttered already. The question remains what the number n is. Supervaluationism (subvaluationism) proposes only coarse-grained solutions of the sort that n-th proposition in the series is true for sure and (n+k)-th proposition is false for sure (sometimes true and false for subvaluationism) with the borderline cases in between. Still, it is

not entirely clear how to find those numbers n and k in the practical situations and why the search for those numbers does not create another Sorties paradox or at least the same degree of puzzlement. Thus, if Darryl asks a proponent of the above treatments for practical advice, he is likely to get the following answer: «You are ok diverting your attention from your daughter for a couple of seconds and you fail to fulfill your duty by doing it for 10 seconds. What is in between? Danger. Be cautious». It is better then nothing, yet Darryl might say that the adviser has made his life even more miserable because now he must figure out the rationality of two points of moral bifurcation instead of one: where the dangerous area starts and where it ends. The shortcoming of the above treatments is the flip side of their advantage. They all keep the standard propositional logic untouched. Further, we investigate the two remaining treatments which sacrifice, at least to some degree, the beauty and simplicity of propositional logic: many-valued logic and nonstandard analysis approaches.

The butterfly effect

Let us consider the nonstandard analysis approach. Nonstandard analysis utilizes a concept of infinitesimal and infinitely big numbers as entities which celebrate the same degree of rigor and reality as, for example, natural numbers. The theory was developed as an alternative for the Theory of limits and standard epsilon-delta procedure toward Differential and Integral Calculus. Dinis (2017) sees the nonstandard analysis as the most promising approach to solving the Sorties paradox. 'The heap arises when one has a nonstandard number $\omega \sim +\infty$ of grains of wheat' (Dinis, 2017, p.14). Yet, there is a crucial objection toward this solution: 'a million grains of wheat should form a heap and yet that is clearly a standard number of grains' (Dinis, 2017, p.15). In the area of Moral epistemology, the solution looks even more bizarre, e.g. we should not call a serial killer names because the total sum of his victims is a natural number. I think that the reason of the unsatisfactory application of the approach rests in the situation that Dinis (2017) does not discriminate continuous and discrete predicates. Let us restrict the consideration to a set of continuous predicates for now. Those predicates have, as a variable, some sort of continuous physical entity. The mathematical intuition says that in such case, if one wants to get an idea on how the function looks, she should make some calculus, take some derivatives, find extremes, etc. Thus, the scheme utilizing the notion of infinitesimals seems to be sound. For example, it solves immediately the issue of proportionality of moral response which concerns Hawthorne (2022). There will be no proportionality and it is not even an issue. A lot of social and physical situations look like complex systems, therefore, an infinitesimal change in one variable can cause a bifurcation in the system moving it into a new state. Note that even a description of a complex system resembles a Sorties series; complex system is a system with threshold behavior. A driver on the road diverts his attention from the road for more than (n+1) seconds and accidentally kills a pedestrian. The driver is guilty; it is very likely he will go to prison. Yet, his behavior is impermissible even if he did not kill anyone because he has substantially raised the probability of an accident. How do we know it? We calculated it, literally. Given the speed of a car, road conditions, time of reaction of an average person, etc. we know well enough the maximum of permissible time of attention diversion for one to drive safely, e.g. (n+ infinitesimal number). Thus, one rightly gets a ticket for speaking on the phone while driving.

We may see that in the situation of moral vagueness involving continuous physical scales, the mathematical reasoning

does not seem to be off of its limits as we must calculate a lot about our reality in order to navigate it. Yet, it is unclear why we should prefer the nonstandard calculus; the standard Differential and Integral Calculus will be sufficient in many cases of proper Sorties series. Thus, Dinis's (2017) intuition about the usage of the concept of infinitesimal numbers is insightful but his move to nonstandard analysis can overcomplicate the matter. Of course, some cases remain unresolved. Probably they will be for a long while. When is abortion permissible? This case involves not only time scale but many undefined and unknown variables such as consciousness, the beginning of life, context of conception, and even modal reasoning of one's life possibilities. Nevertheless, many cases are resolved or can be resolved using calculus as a way between Scylla and Charybdis of Sorties and Zeno's paradoxes.

Is fuzzy logic certain enough to catch moral vagueness?

In this section I will consider the last approach to the Sorties series: many-valued logic. It will be applied to the discrete vague moral predicates such as «how many people should be discriminated against because of their race in order to call the society racist?» or «how many people can we remove form a heap of vicious population of Sodom and Gomorrah in order to spare them collective guilt and/ or responsibility?» (King James Bible, 1984, Genesis 18: 16-33). As we see, the issue has a long history. The major characteristic of the discrete vague moral predicates is that they are countable even if their limits can be infinite. Thus, they resemble the classic case of observational vague predicate of «how many grains of wheat make a heap». Also note that in Moral epistemology, the majority of Sorties series is likely to display particular numbers for the first and the last propositions. For example, it is not enough to kill one person to call the event «a mass murder». It is obvious that killing a million can be called «a mass murder». If one is dissatisfied with the numbers, she can imagine the killing of the whole Earth's population. Thus, the set of propositions of the «killing n people is a mass murder» kind is not only countable but finite in many, if not all, cases.

For the sake of brevity, I will omit the consideration of the applications of three-valued systems such as Kleene's and Lukasiewicz's. Those systems exhibit some shortcomings which standard propositional logic does not, e.g. absence of tautologies. Yet, they seem to possess less explanatory power for the purpose of practical application in comparison with fuzzy logic. Thus, further we consider a system with the truth degree set [0,1], in particular, a finite set of rational numbers within the interval. It was noted that fuzzy logic already has had interesting practical applications for a complex task solving, e.g. traffic problems (Dinis, 2017). The major objection to fuzzy logic application to Sorties paradox solutions is an arbitrary assignment of truth values to propositions, i.e. why the n-th proposition in the Sorties series has truth value 0. 971 rather than 0.972 or any other f(n) for this matter? Further I will try to overcome this problem by proposing a voting procedure in the field of moral judgments.

Voting is not a ridiculous artificial proposal in moral matters. Our society uses such explicit procedures, e.g. jury trial. Also we have implicit surrogates, e.g. «public opinion» expressed by mass media. So, maybe we need to refine the procedure which we, actually, have used for millennia or at least, from time to time, since the trial of Socrates. Also, voting is a complex logical and mathematical problem studied by the social choice theory (Holliday, Kristoffersen, and Pacuit, 2024). Therefore, the further voting procedure does not claim to be an ideal solution for discrete moral vague predicates but an

example of how to shed light on a particular approach. Still, Athenians can kill a genius; however, we must know on whom the shame is.

Let us perform a thought experiment. Suppose that we wonder whether a particular political regime is abusing its power via «mass repressions» of its citizens. Suppose that we chose through an unknown, for the moment, procedure m competent moral speakers. This group of speakers has agreed that one repressed person does not comprise the term «mass repressions». They have agreed that, for example, Stalin's level of repression is a pure example of massiveness, i.e. 3.8 million people convicted by criminal law as «counter-revolutionary» persons in three decades comprise mass repressions (Zhukov and Talibova, 2018). Now we ask this group of competent moral speakers to vote consecutively on the truth-value of the proposition «the event of n repressed persons is called mass repressions». The voting goes for n from 1 to 3.8 million. All m voters count the proposition «the event of 1 repressed person is called mass repressions» as false. All m voters count the proposition «the event of 3.8 million repressed persons is called mass repressions» as true. Obviously, there is a number $1 < k < 3.8$ million such that r voters see the proposition «the event of k repressed persons is called mass repressions» as true, where $1 < r < m$. Of course, we expect a consistent voting, i.e. if a voter has decided that k-th proposition bears truth, then (k+1)-th proposition has the same value. Thus we assign to k-th proposition the degree of truth which is a ratio r/m. In such way, we obtain a clear procedure for truth values of corresponding propositions where the degree of truth is not an arbitrary number despite that the personal preferences of a particular voter could be quite subjective. For the sake of simplicity, we omit the consideration of how connectives should work with the fuzzy truth values of the above voting procedure. For example, one can consult the applications of proper mathematical and logical apparatus in the works where very similar proposals of voting in fuzzy logic were considered already (Gaines, 1976; Lawry, 1998). Thus, the above turn to voting is nothing new. I just wanted to illustrate that if we can function properly with a certain degree of contingency in the field of social choice, then fuzzy logic can be absolved from the sin of contingency in the field of moral vagueness in the same way. Yet, one may object that the concern here isn't about contingency but rather that of the subjectivity of the voters. It is true. Nevertheless, until we call for a moral authority of an omnipotent being in every possible situation, we are bound to multiple Kierkegaardian leaps of faith. Our best expectations are to refine our reflections in order to fulfill a shorter jump across the gap of doubts. One may say that even if we consult the omnipotent being, we are stuck to live with some taste of subjectivity related to moral vague predicates. Let's recall Abraham's negotiation with God again: it was not a passive obedience, but an active participation of Abraham having his own agenda and expectations. Now we shall speculate on the matter of who those competent moral speakers are. As I see it, this is the most important question not only for the above case but for the whole project of Moral epistemology.

Who is a competent moral speaker?

I do not dare to think that I am able to answer this question as the whole history of humanity seems to be an unsuccessful attempt to do so. Since human societies have developed beyond their mere survival, they introduced religions and religious speakers of many kinds. Those speakers have served as moral speakers, at least in some cases. Unfortunately,

since the agency of priesthood was robed of its moral authority due to industrial development, probably rightly so, we have an absence of moral authority. Psychology took the place of the priesthood, soothing feelings while communicating unjudgmentally. Morality judges by definition. Modern post-modernist realm of social media with a bunch of celebrities and influencers advising on everything fits the role even more poorly than a session with a good existential therapist. Yet, unable to provide the needed answer, we can formulate at least some necessary conditions for a competent moral speaker from an epistemological perspective.

We already noted that the situation with discrete moral vague predicates and countable, likely finite, Sorties series resembles classic vagueness with observational predicates, i.e. one sees that something is a heap of wheat. For observational predicates we have a necessary N-condition in order to be a competent observer: the observer functions normally by having proper cognitive and physiological abilities; no external barriers preclude an observer's ability to observe an object (Greenough, 2023). Thus, we can formulate analogous internal and external conditions for a moral speaker.

First, we consider the external condition: it is necessary for a moral speaker not to have a conflict of interests and personal negative consequences as a result of the speaker's utterances. For the above example of voting related to mass repressions «heap», it means that the speaker does not have hostages taken by oppressive power and lives in relative safety. Second, we turn to the internal speaker's moral abilities which is a much more puzzling matter. Just as we expect from an observer of a heap of wheat to have good eye sight, we expect a moral speaker to be a normally socializing person behaving more or less respectfully. So, the necessary condition isn't demonstration of a virtue, but rather an absence of an extreme vice, e.g. being a sociopath. Unfortunately, we are likely to stumble in the next step. We can describe a normal cognitive function for an observer of a heap of wheat. In the very least, the observer must understand what wheat and a grain of wheat are. What should a moral speaker understand while judging a «heap» of repressions? It is expected from the speaker to understand the term «repression». Here we meet another moral vagueness inserted in the previous one.

Let me illustrate the idea by turning to the example of contemporary Russian repressions. I stated at the beginning that I am probably biased, therefore, my further consideration aims to trigger my reader's thinking rather than to provide answers. When we talk about political repressions in today's Russia, what do we mean? Putin's regime is not ideological as opposed to that of Stalin. Attempts of Putin's bureaucracy to formulate an ideological consensus are yet clumsy. Putin's regime is somewhat opportunistic and very likely corporative. The corporation of law enforcement, in particular Federal Security Service of Russian Federation (aka former KGB), has successfully penetrated all strata of Russian society for more than two decades. Thus, can it be the case that repressions in Russia are not political at all in the sense of the XX century definition? Putin's regime represses people not for the sake of an idea but for the power per se. If this is the case, then every Russian citizen who is deprived of the opportunity to exercise her/his political, social, financial, intellectual, and spiritual power is repressed to some degree. Are dozens of imprisoned Jehovah's Witnesses political prisoners? Is a person who is prosecuted by law for drug possession because a corrupted officer has planted the drugs politically repressed in contemporary Russia (The Moscow Times, 2019)? Is a researcher repressed because she/he does not feel safe to present her/ his results publicly? Can we expect from a modern competent moral speaker to not be so

bloodthirsty counting only Stalin's prison terms? Thus, our imaginary group of competent moral speakers should probably vote aiming to minimize the vagueness of the term «repression» before they turn to considering its massiveness.

One more discussion should be facilitated among our prospective moral speakers in order to check their moral cognitive agencies. It is a challenge to reach an agreement on the issue of the minimal upper boundary n for the proposition «the event of n repressed persons is called mass repressions». There are data that show us death rates from violence in different countries. In particular, during the period 1900-1990 in Russia, we see about 150 deaths per 100 000 people per year (Roser, 2013). It seems to be too much despite all the wars, famines, and cruelty of the period. Contemporary data show the drastic drop of the rate to about 10 deaths per 100 000 in the last three decades. Taking into account all possible discrepancies in those estimations, can we suppose that the world, including Russia, is less tolerant towards violence in XXI century? Possibly, Russia following the world social and economical changes becomes a bit «kinder» along with the rest of the world. Let us say that Russian society is ten times less violent than previously despite all the atrocities of Putin's regime. Does it sound reasonable to assume that today, to reach the level of moral abomination of Stalin's regime, it is enough to unjustly prosecute only 300 000 people? Would 150 000 victims suffice the appetite of a competent moral speaker given that the population of modern Russia is two times smaller in comparison to that of the Soviet Union? Call it a moral abomination raising/reducing factor. Surely, with non zero probability, we may come to the nuclear war in the future which will ruin all the math but for now we are not there yet. The next question is, does anyone count all the people in Russia whose lives have been ruined by the contemporary Russian law enforcement and bureaucratic Leviathan? Fortunately, some people start to count: 'over the six years of Putin's recent term, more than 10 000 people were tried under repressive criminal articles, and more than 105 000 under administrative ones' (Reznikova and Korostelev, 2024, no page). Unfortunately, Reznikova and Korostelev (2024) count only such recently passed discriminative criminal and administrative articles as «incitement of hatred», «appeals for extremism», and «justification of terrorism». Therefore, they did not count a wide range of cases from the above noted «drug possession» to «economical crime» as one can see in Aleksey Navalny's case. Thus, it would not be wise to call a person competent morally if she draws straight, rigid, and dull historical comparisons whether consciously or unconsciously. If one draws historical analogies, she has to make sure that scales are adjusted for context sensitivity.

Surely, one may object that the toll of Stalin's repressions can reach 20 million (Markevich, 2016). Thus, the above arithmetic does not work. My goal is not to provide precise numbers - this task is for a historian. I would be satisfied if a speaker daring to have moral authority consults her consciousness every time she utters a proposition of the form F is M, where F is a non moral fact and M is a moral judgment. It is not even entirely clear if such utterance can be fulfilled in some cases. As in our case, the utterance of the fact that «such and such number of people is repressed» is contaminated with a particular moral attitude of the speaker even before it is uttered. Thus, for a competent moral speaker, it would be wise to bear in mind the following alternative imaginable version of Abraham's chat: «God, can You spare Sodom if there are 50 righteous? You can? Ok, let's count, guys! Ah, we only have 10… So, God, no deal then. I have got to go, You may kill them all».

Concluding remark

I noted that human moral competency is likely a pivotal issue for the project of Moral epistemology. Yet, this issue is rather a responsibility of humanity per se. I am convinced that to supply moral knowledge is not a handy task for an «armchair» epistemologist. As epistemologist ponders how and when an observer sees a heap not trying to substitute the observer's decision with epistemologist's one, moral epistemologist should not preach morality except for a very basic set of Wittgensteinian hinge propositions. Thus, I do not dare to present a final solution to the above case of repressions. Also, the above analysis of this case is neither exhaustive nor polished; it is rather an example of the toy theory aimed at triggering the thinking of the reader on the matter.

However, in the flow of the above arguments, one may find a contradiction: our world seems to get «kinder» having less morally proficient institutions. One can even be tempted to fall for moral skepticism seeing the kindness as a result of technological development, i.e. one has to cut fewer throats today in order to feed his family due to the growth of availability of food. So, there is no morality but psychological rationalizations. I do not agree with such interpretation. I am convinced that moral knowledge is deeply grounded in the human existence and supply of moral knowledge is in high demand today because we just have been lucky to have the technological development meeting our needs. If it happens that technology takes undesirable turn for us, the only vaccine in this case is moral knowledge.

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