

Introduction

It has been the tradition in philosophy to develop a concept of the good with the hope that it might serve as a guide to solve the problems of practical life. What if the strategy were, instead, to forego a notion of the good in favor of looking to the problems themselves for such guidance? After all, problems tell us what needs fixing and solutions tell us what is better. In this way, they play a normative role comparable to any notion of the good. Serious problems have urgent clarity, but the good remains that obscure object of desire. Aristotle states the obvious “. . . [T]he removal of bad things must be good” (*Rhetoric*, 1362a30–35). The case made here is for a pragmatist ethics, one that looks for moral guidance from the troubles in the works and days of practical life.

Advocates for various concepts of the good—such as pleasure, happiness, utility, flourishing, virtue—assume they can serve as a criterion to measure against the current state-of-affairs. Simply put, the more the difference between the outcomes of actions, and the outcomes envisioned by the particular concept of the good, the less morally satisfactory the current state of affairs. Problem-based ethics works on a different measure. It focuses on progress from previous states of affairs rather than progress toward an ideal good. In *The Ethical Project*, Philip Kitcher emphasizes that moral progress is not measured by decreasing the distance to a fixed goal of the good, but there is progress *from* as well as progress *to* (2011, p. 288). Progress can be measured in terms of the distance from a starting point—rather than progressing toward an ideal. *Pragmatic* progress, as he calls it, is a type of progress that focuses on overcoming problems in the current state (2015, p. 478). Colin Koopman echoes this thought: “. . . [I]nstead of talking about certain practices as true or good, we should instead talk about them as truer and better. Instead of focusing on . . . moral rightness, we should

instead focus on . . . moral melioration, improvement, development, and growth” (2015, pp. 11–12). “For better or for worse? Isn’t that the crucial thing?” (2015, p. 13).

In the pragmatist approach, problems act like the stones a traveler feels for when crossing the river. A problem makes it patently clear what is undesirable and, thereby, points to an improvement when solved. Thinkers in this tradition, such as John Dewey, are puzzled as to why people think a concept of the good is necessary in order for people to want to improve their lives when, as he writes in *Human Nature and Conduct*, problems confront them daily, motivating them to fix things (1922, *MW* 14, p. 195). After all, as Dewey notes, a doctor rarely attempts to bring a patient to an ideal state of health but focuses rather on improving a poor health condition. Does the medication stop the infection or not, does it reduce the fever?

Problems are strong motivators because people are directly affected by them and, if not directly, then affected by those who are. Serious problems are like a sharp stick in the foot and need addressing one way or another. Sidney Hook noted that “a problematic moral situation . . . expresses a special concern or urgency” and “has a quasi-imperative force” (1950, p. 198). Just as doubt is a subcutaneous irritation, so problems call for resolution. When things are working with a minimum of problems, there’s no cry for change, as Dewey says in the *Theory of Valuation* (1939, *LW* 13, p. 220). If things are not working, there’s obviously something lacking in the existing situation that drives a change, and hopefully a solution to the problem. Think of the manifold problems of the day: climate change, famine, the COVID-19 pandemic, abortion, war, racism, pollution, wealth distribution, mass killings, terrorism, discrimination, domestic violence, the opioid crisis, corruption, policing, immigration, sustainability, fracking, food insecurity, child labor, LBGQT rights, genetic enhancement, consumerism, treatment of animals, ethical eating, the death penalty, sexism, euthanasia, health care access and affordability, vaping, suicide, media issues, privacy, mass incarceration, bullying—and the list goes on. The ill in these situations is not something general, but existent in the situation. It has to be discovered and repaired on the basis of the exact defect, something that a general notion of the good cannot do.

Every serious problem solved situates people and communities in a better place on their normative landscape. It may be a tautology, but the more adept a community is at solving its problems—the more effective its problem-solving ability—the more likely the community will become a better one. People want a just society as a goal, but justice is often nominally con-

ceived and indeterminate. In the long run, justice attained is what remains when justice practices become minimally problematic. Kitcher argues that ethical progress is found in the ability to solve normative problems more thoroughly, reliably, and with less costly effort (2011, p. 221). Communities that are good at solving their problems will, perforce, tend to work better than those that do not. If problems are not solved, they tend to accumulate and intensify until a change is welcomed, demanded, or forced. Practices and institutions that work have a tendency to persist or, at least, adapt to changing conditions. The better solutions become indurated as habits, practices, and institutions that manage the problems to various degrees of effectiveness. Like it or not, things will continue to work themselves out until something works out. So long as there is substantial dissatisfaction with the human condition, there will be efforts to improve its lot. Under this view, it is not so much the desirability for the good that drives human effort, as the intolerability of serious problems widely felt and endured.

The effort here is to make a case for a pragmatism-inspired, problem-based ethics—to demonstrate its logic and normative force. It begins in the first chapter with a contrast between Plato's quest for the good, and James's reaction to 2300 years of philosophers following in his footsteps. Plato's failed projects with the elder and younger Dionysios at Syracuse demonstrate the futility of imposing a ready-made ethical ideal on an imperfect community. In "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life" (1891), James promotes two radically new theses. First, the role of moral philosophers is not to be the arbiter of what is good. This is a collective, ongoing project. It is worked out through the trial and error of living together over time. Dewey sees eye-to-eye with James. In "The Need for Recovery in Philosophy" (1917), he argues for a new role for the moral philosopher as facilitator, engaged in the moral problems of practical life, rather than an arbiter or law giver wrestling with abstract concepts of the good. Plato failed to prove that in knowing the good people would do the good. Instead, the pragmatists argued that in doing good, people come to know it. As people implement norms and rules in their communities to guide their lives, the lessons of practical life teach which norms are better and which are worse by means of the problems they solve or create. Over time, human condition progresses through experiments of life.

James's second thesis is that there is no one good "to rule them all," that there is a plurality of goods that people seek. But this creates a tragic sense of life, in that no political, social, and normative organization of practical life can in principle accommodate them all. This creates a pattern

of disruption and accommodation, disequilibrium and equilibrium that characterizes human history in people's efforts to get their goods recognized and realized. The best that can be hoped for to solve this problem of sociality, of living well together, is by maximizing the number of goods while minimizing the number of problems in doing so. This sets the stage for a problem-solving ethic.

If the original pragmatists were not the first thinkers to see the matter of ethics in practical, functional, problem-solving terms, they were its strongest advocates. The second chapter explores five pragmatist themes that flow together to serve as a platform for problem-based ethics. The first, based on Charles Peirce's pragmatic maxim, is that concepts, including concepts of truth and goodness, can be best understood functionally. True beliefs and good things, as William James interprets the matter, can be understood in terms of what they *do* in practical life, rather than what they are. The second lesson of the pragmatic maxim is that theory can be transposed to practice, theoretical reasoning transposed into practical reasoning. Moreover, the truth of practical hypotheses depends on the truth of their corresponding theoretical or empirical hypotheses. Third, the road to the avoidance of error and true belief was through inquiry done rightly. Fourth, as both Peirce and Dewey argue, successful inquiries into matters of truth and goodness required a community of inquiry with certain norms, and practitioners with certain virtues. Fifth, progress in such inquiries was made through the detection of error in hypotheses, and through the solution to social problems. Progress was indicated by convergence to the truth for Peirce and by growth for Dewey. All-in-all, the triumvirate of Peirce, James, and Dewey provides the platforms for a pragmatist, problem-based ethics.

The goal of the remainder of the book is to show how this platform is built up by a number of thinkers who are sympathetic to the pragmatist tradition and to organize those efforts into a coherent account of a problem-based approach to ethics.

Since the pragmatists insist that ethics is a collective effort done in experiments of practical life, what are the key features of practical life? Chapter 3 begins with an analysis of James Wallace's account in *Norms and Practices* (2009). Practical life is constituted by practices. He argues that practices have three core features: they originate and continue as solutions to practical problems; they are inherently normative, and their principal mode of reasoning is practical reasoning or practical knowledge. Practices are established to solve certain problems. If they persist that is because they continue to solve those problems fairly well. They are normative in the sense

that they prescribe the best ways to attain their ends. Practices integrate technical and ethical norms. To be a good carpenter is to be an honest one. Science cannot be done if data is falsified. They involve practical reasoning, which is essentially reasoning concerned with how to attain desirable ends.

Chapter 4 focuses on the matter of practical reasoning. Does it suffice as ethical reasoning? Practical reasoning is usually formulated as reasoning about the means most likely to attain desired ends. It is commonly based on David Hume's (1739) internalist, desire-belief model of human action: people are motivated to act on means that will attain what they desire. Such reasoning appears to be purely instrumental and, thus, ethically problematic. Practical reasoning, so understood, would prescribe the means likely to attain any end, good or bad; it would also prescribe any means that is likely to attain an end, whether those means are right or wrong. Moreover, it would seem subjective in that what is desirable is dependent on the desirer. Practical reasoning, so understood, could permit all sorts of villainy.

Can practical reasoning be reframed to solve these problems? Current debates in metaethics between internalists, such as Mark Schroeder (2013), and externalists, such as Christine Korsgaard (1999), Thomas Nagel (1970), T. M. Scanlon (1998), and Robert Brandom (2000) address that question. It would seem that internalists have to admit that the only reason to act ethically is if it is a means to something the agent desires, such as happiness, or that it is in one's best interest to do so. This, as the externalists claim, suggests that normative claims have very little normative force for people to do the right thing. Externalists argue that people can believe something is right to do and be motivated on the basis of that belief. This defines the divide in contemporary terms between consequentialists and deontologists. Since pragmatists favor practical reasoning, and consequentialism, generally speaking, is their ethical program in trouble?

Robert Brandom provides a way out of this situation by showing how practical reasoning is not necessarily based on a desire-belief model of motivation, but rather on an intention-belief basis. Brandom takes his theory of *normative pragmatics* (1994) and applies it to the matter of practical reasoning (2000). Normative pragmatics argues that speech practices contain norms concerning how it is correct to use speech, under what circumstance it is appropriate to perform those speech acts, and what appropriate consequences such performances entail (1994, p. xiii). When applied to the matter of practical reasoning, it has to be understood that desires are influencers of behavior, but intentions are the conduct-controlling aspect of action since they entail commitments to act. Desires for certain ends may, after all, be

simply wishful thinking, but intentions to act imply commitment to do so. If this is combined with Wallace's account of practices, it becomes clear that intentions to act are almost always in the context of some practice, so intentions to act are commitments to the ways and means by which the practice prescribes the pursuit of ends. As Brandom notes, a bank employee may not desire to wear a tie to work, but the intention to go to work is a commitment to the norms of the banking practice which, in this case, prescribes the proper way to dress for work.

In this way there can be objective norms for means to ends that moral agents recognize that trump their subjective desires. Much of the contemporary discussion of practical reasoning treats it as an ahistorical, asocial process, based on what an individual would reason as if individuals were free of any consideration of the practice in which the reasoning is taking place. Since practices are collectively developed and governed, then, to that extent, they are not subjective ways of doing things. People cannot do whatever they wish to do in a community constituted by those practices.

Since practices are collective forms of practical reasoning, there is a collective affirmation that the ends they attain are good and the means righteous. Of course, that does not mean that the collective is right, only that it is not subjective. Practical reasoning in this sense is a collective version of what Aristotle calls *phronesis*, reasoning concerned with doing the right thing in the right way for the right reason (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1140b 20–21). As such, practical reasoning contains three implicit norms that characterize the normative character of practices: a prudential norm that people ought to do what is likely to attain the ends they desire; a norm of good ends, and a norm of righteous means. Together, when properly ordered, they express an overarching norm of practical reasoning that is ethically conducive: *What ought to be done is what is right to do that is also likely to attain ends that are good to desire*. This makes explicit what Wallace claims to be the inherent normative character of practices, and it constitutes the core of what he calls practical knowledge.

However, this overarching norm is purely formal since it doesn't define what counts as good ends and righteous means. It is argued that problems can serve as a proxy for each variant of good in the overarching norm. Problems do not define what is good, but they indicate where it is present and where it is absent. Since practices are developed and sustained as solutions to problems, then practices that are relatively problem-free are an indication that their means are righteous and their ends good. If they are problematic, then solutions to those problems are indications of what ends

to pursue and what means to correct. Both processes together help people converge toward the right sorts of practices. Since practical reasoning for Wallace is problem-solving, then practical reasoning is the means by which the formal aspects of its overarching norm can be specified.

The transposition of theory to practice, theoretical reasoning into practical reasoning is a principal theme of the pragmatists. It is part of the reason that Dewey in particular thought that ethics could be scientific and naturalistic. The pragmatic maxim, for example, argues that the meaning of the scratch-hardness of a diamond is whether it is scratched or scratches other materials, that is, the practical consequences that are observed from interventions in experience. But if the theoretical hypothesis is true, that diamonds scratch glass, then that can be transposed into a practical hypothesis; a hypothetical imperative, namely, if the end is to cut glass, then using diamonds is the best means. Theoretical reasoning can be transposed into practical reasoning, and the truth of a practical hypothesis or a hypothetical imperative gets its warrant from the truth of its corresponding theoretical or empirical hypothesis.

If practical reasoning gets its warrant from scientific reasoning, and if the reformulated version of practical reasoning is a viable form of ethical reasoning, then is it plausible to argue that ethics can be scientific and naturalistic? This is the subject of chapter 5.

Aristotle plainly said that *phronesis* could not be a science. He thought that, first, it dealt with particulars in varying situations, whereas science deals with generals that do not vary from situation to situation. Contemporary ethical particularists like Jonathan Dancy agree (2004). Second, he thought it was more of a skill than knowledge, requiring keen perception, good judgment, and experience. That was why young people could do science well but were not always good at ethical judgment. A third roadblock to a scientific ethics is the problem of normative naturalism, how are norms to be explained as natural properties.

Wallace addresses the particularist issue in a debate with Martha Nussbaum's work in *Love's Knowledge* (1990). Diana Heney (2016) debates with Jonathan Dancy (2004). Wallace thinks that moral situations always involve a kind of dialogue between generals and particulars. Good plumbers do not come to the job with a blank slate and muck around with the particulars of the situation until they figure out the problem. Heney argues the stronger point that, if the particularists are right, neither moral learning, nor collective practices would be possible. This clearly flies in the face of what can be readily observed in practical life.

There is a third way to address the problem of particularism as brought out by Frederick Will (1997). Particular moral situations do not involve deductive reasoning in the form of the subsumption of a case under a general rule, but they are more like Peirce's sense of abduction, where surprises or novelties in the situation lead to modifications of practical hypotheses acquired over time. Detection is a good example, where detectives come to a crime with a set of practical hypotheses about murders, but the discovery of certain pieces of evidence may cause them to modify or even reject those hypotheses in this particular case but not reject them outright for other cases yet to come. Detectives may have learned as a general rule to suspect the husband if the wife has been murdered, but there can always be clues that dispose of that hypothesis in a particular situation. However, that does not necessarily cause them to dismiss the practical hypothesis since it is statistically true. Since, according to Peirce, abduction is part of scientific reasoning, then explaining surprises or anomalies in observations of particular situations is as much a part of scientific reasoning as inductive reasoning.

The issue of whether practical knowledge is more of a skill than knowledge can be articulated in terms of Gilbert Ryle's distinction between know-that and know-how (1949). The received view of expertise is the Dreyfus model (2005), which insists on a distinction in kind between know-that and know-how. This is reframed in psychology as a distinction between declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge. If that's the case, if practical knowledge is more about skill than knowledge, and science about knowledge, then it seems unlikely that ethics can be scientific.

There are two responses that could be made to this. One is to take the position of Jason Stanley (2011) that, contrary to the received view, know-how is really know-that; it is a specific form of what he calls *know-wh*, knowing when, where, why and how to do something. Knowing how to catch a fly ball must fit into a more general account of knowing when to catch a fly ball, where to position one's glove, and so forth, in order to catch the ball. But a second position takes the commonsense view that the practice of science like any practice requires skill. Doing science is not all about knowledge of facts and theories, but laboratory or field work, technical expertise, learning how to fix instruments. Scientists have to acquire skills in the lab, as much as the knowledge of chemistry in order to do chemistry right.

This leaves the bigger question of normative naturalism. It is thought that one of the strongest arguments against normative naturalism is the so-called naturalistic fallacy, the open question argument, proposed by G.

E. Moore. As he describes the fallacy, a claim that the good is a natural property, such as pleasure or happiness, still leaves an open question as to whether pleasure or happiness is a good end to pursue (1903: sect. 10). Non-naturalists such as Derek Parfit (2011) and Russ Shafer-Landau (2003) make variants of this argument.

Taking the lead from Larry Laudan (1987), it is argued that, whether or not normative properties can be reduced to natural ones, normative claims share the same epistemology as empirical ones. This by-passes the ontological question of whether norms are natural or non-natural entities and, so, avoids the naturalistic fallacy in that way. If the warrant for the three norms in practical reasoning lie in corresponding empirical claims, then this argues for the *plausibility* of a genuine normative science. Whether ethics can achieve the status of a science is another matter.

Consider the prudential norm that people ought to do what is likely to achieve the ends they desire. A prudential norm is a hypothetical imperative: If one desires X, then one ought to do Y. But that claim is true just in case doing X likely attains Y, which is an empirical claim. Although a reason for doing X is that the prudential norm commands people to do that which is likely to attain what they desire, that is only warranted if doing X likely attains Y. If doing X did not attain Y, then the prudential norm alone would not justify doing X. The normative force of the prudential norm lies in the truth of its corresponding empirical claim.

There is a somewhat more complicated case to be made for the norm of good ends. Good ends here have been characterized in terms of a proxy, that is, in terms of problems. The matter of good ends requires two interconnected arguments. The first concerns identifying something as a problem, which seems to be an evaluative, normative claim. Counting something as a problem seems to be counting something as bad, morally speaking, and, therefore, claiming that it is undesirable. The second concerns the norm of good ends translated to the matter of solving problems, namely, that people ought to pursue solutions to problems as good ends to pursue.

The first argument relies on the ethical supervenience thesis, which has wide support. It argues that normative properties supervene on natural ones. Something that is counted as good or bad supervenes on natural properties, such that a change in the natural properties results in a change in their evaluation, normatively speaking. If famine is bad, it is because it has certain natural properties and empirical markers, such as death or ill health as a result of starvation. If famine led to good health, and had no other ill effects, it would certainly not be counted as morally bad. Thus,

the warrant for claiming something bad is that it has certain natural properties and, since problems are counted as bad things, it would also hold for identifying something as a problem.

If the empirical markers of a situation are what warrants counting them as a problem, there is still the question of what warrants the norm that people ought to seek solutions to problems. To the extent that something is identified as a problem, it is also identified as bad, an undesirable state of affairs. Consequently, to the extent that something is considered to be a likely solution to a problem, then that is identified as a desirable state of affairs. Since, by the norm of prudential reasoning, people ought to do what is likely to attain what they desire, then people ought to do what is likely to solve their problems. But since the warrant for any prudential norm is an empirical one, then the normative force for pursuing the solution to a particular problem is also empirical, to the extent that the proposed solution is likely to solve the problem.

There is, finally, the norm of righteous means to consider. What warrants that norm? Given Wallace's claim that practices are inherently normative since they prescribe and proscribe right ways to attain the ends of the practice, it would follow that, assuming the ends good, the ways prescribed are not right if they tend to make the practice problematic. Since problems have empirical markers, the warrant for counting something as a righteous means would be based on the empirical markers associated with problems that the means of the practice create. Since the prudential norm claims that people ought to do what is likely to attain what they desire, and it is desirable to have relatively problem-free practices, then people ought to retain those practices that work and fix those that cause problems.

A community that solves their problems is better for it. If communities are to be successful in solving their problems, they must engage in inquiries for that purpose and use practical reasoning in solving those problems. The pragmatists insist that such inquiries must be a collective endeavor over time and, so, involve the community in such inquiries. Peirce, Dewey, and contemporary pragmatists such as Cheryl Misak (2000), Robert Talisse (2005), and Diana Heney (2016) argue that in order to be successful, such communities of inquiry require certain norms of practice, and demand certain virtues of their inquirers. Peirce recognized that scientific inquiry involved methodological and logical norms, as well as ethical ones, the latter counted among the "most vital factors" in the practice of inquiry (1902, *CP* 7.87). This is the subject of chapter 6.

The practice of inquiry, like any practice, is claimed to have good ends and righteous means that prescribe the most likely way to achieve that end. The end of moral inquiry, these thinkers argue, is truth. Relative to problem solving, this boils down to discovering true practical hypotheses, hypotheses that, if translated as interventions, will likely ameliorate the problem. To the extent that such hypotheses do ameliorate problems, this is a measure of what Larry Laudan calls their “problem-solving effectiveness” (1977, p. 5).

As to means, they must be both righteous and effective to satisfy the overarching norm of noninstrumental practical reasoning. The most effective means for inquires known to human beings is scientific methodology, generally understood. Since, by the prudential norm, people should employ means that are most likely to achieve their ends, then, to the extent possible, science should be employed to develop and test such practical hypotheses. Short of that, inquirers must use the next best means of inquiry.

As to the righteous norms of inquiry, Misak follows Peirce in articulating these as openness to inquiry, commitments to provide reasons and justifications to others, and the equality of roles in the inquiry, allowing others to make criticisms and counterclaims, to ask questions, to seek clarifications, and the like. Misak argues, like Karl-Otto Apel (1980), Jürgen Habermas (1990), and Robert Brandom (1994) that these norms are implicit in making assertions or claims, as inspired by Peirce as well.

Robert Talisse raises Dewey’s question of whether the norms of communities of inquiry should be the norms of communities as such. Since practices need practices of inquiry to right their wrongs, and communities are constituted by practices that have wider and narrower domains, then shouldn’t the community as a whole adopt the norms of inquiry? Misak thinks that the norms of inquiry are more or less the norms of democracy, equality, and freedom of speech in particular. So, in effect, the norms of inquiry more or less validate the basic norms of a democracy.

However, Talisse points out that if inquiries aim at truth, then adopting the norms of inquiry for a community as a whole might be more consistent with what he calls an “epistemarchy” than a democracy. If truth is the end of inquiry, shouldn’t those with expertise in inquiry, those who have the practical knowledge, have a greater share in the governance of the practices in which they have the expertise? After all, by analogy, why bother with amateurs when a cure for cancer is at stake. Yet this would seem to violate the basic norm of democracy, participation by the governed in their governance. Ironically, this calls up the position of Plato’s republic,

which the pragmatists had hoped to discredit. As David Estlund (1993) characterizes the problem, how can truth be a guiding factor in practices without privileging expertise?

Interestingly, John Dewey tackles this problem in his book *The Public and Its Problems* in 1927. It is a debate with Walter Lippmann who, in *The Phantom Public* (1927), argued for a rule by expertise as a way to cure some of the problems of modern democracy. Lippmann argued convincingly that it is an illusion to think that there is an omniscient public, who would have enough knowledge and information to meaningfully participate in the government agencies that govern it, as democratic principles dictate. This job must fall to experts in each of these areas. Thus, the role of the public is mostly to use whatever democratic means available to identify problems with expert governance and to use voting and other mechanisms to get rid of those who are causing the problems.

Dewey concedes Lippmann's account of the eclipse of the public in democracy but holds to the fundamental principle of a social democracy—the participation of the governed in the practices of governing. The remedy requires, so Dewey argues, more opportunities for dialogue, debate, and conversation, less political propaganda, and better dissemination of the results of scientific inquiries on matters of public concern. Most would say that's a tall order. The important point that can be garnered from this debate is that practices, both large and small, both wide-ranging and narrowly focused must devise the ways and means by which their problems can be remedied. They must be designed for self-correction. This involves the cooperation of expert practitioners and the publics that are affected by the problems. Practices must devise ways and means by which the publics affected can identify those problems and propose their remedies. Practices must establish the best scientific means to sort out the more plausible practical hypotheses for their solution, implement interventions, and use the best scientific methods to assess their effectiveness, particularly as gauged by the affected publics. Finally, practices must provide the ways and means by which failed practical hypotheses can be replaced or amended.

How do communities know that the solutions to their problems are making things better, that there is genuine progress? This is the subject of chapter 7. Philip Kitcher tackles this problem in his book *The Ethical Project* (2011). He argues that ethical progress is made to the extent that communities solve their altruism problems. He understands these, as James did, as problems of expanding the circle for the enjoyment of endorsable

ends and goods, while minimizing the problems that emerge in doing so. To the extent that ethical norms persist and continue to solve these sorts of problems, then they can be counted as right and true.

How do communities know that these corrections, proposed solutions to their problems are making things better, that there is genuine progress? This is the subject of chapter 7. It is argued here that Larry Laudan's notion of problem-solving effectiveness can provide a good understanding of what constitutes progress. It is thought that science makes progress, but what makes it so? Laudan argues that it is science's ability to solve problems, to detect error in hypotheses and to make corrections, that accounts for progress in science. Laudan identifies two important features of problem-solving effectiveness: saliency and efficacy. Saliency involves ranking, so that the progressive theory is one that solves the more important problems that its predecessor could not solve. Efficacy, on the other hand, is a feature of a theory such that it is able to create scaffolds for more solutions and solves other problems that emerge at a good rate, so that problems do not outpace solutions.

Although Laudan provides a good account of *scientific* progress, Philip Kitcher addresses the problem of *moral* progress in his book, *The Ethical Project* (2011). To make moral progress, a community must be able to solve the problems of sociality. Problem-solving requires solidarity and must avoid polarization. It must maximize cooperation and minimize conflict as people pursue their various ends. Kitcher sees the problems of sociality as mainly altruism problems, that is, failures to recognize and act on the good of others. Kitcher argues that moral progress is made to the extent that communities correct or change norms that solve their altruism problems better than those norms previously held. Moral progress occurs when, as James argued, norms are adopted that expand the circle of those who can attain collectively endorsable ends and goods, while minimizing the problems that emerge in doing so. To the extent that ethical norms persist and continue to solve these sorts of altruism problems, then they can be counted as right and true.

Laudan's notion of problem-solving effectiveness can provide more definition to Kitcher's notion of moral progress. If practices are designed to solve certain problems, then progress happens when changes to those practices solves their more salient problems more efficaciously than what was previously adopted. Changes to means, ends or the norms that govern those means and ends are progressive to the extent that they solve the

most critical, basic and common problems; and they do so in such a way so that more people enjoy more of the collectively endorsable goods that the community provides.

The human condition is rife with problems and is poorer for it. Rather than looking to a vague notion of the good for solutions, problem-based ethics focuses on solutions to problems as markers of moral progress. Although, certainly, people act on their concepts of the good, people are more motivated to solve problems directly, either because they are affected by them, or they are affected by those suffering the problems. Problems identify what is wrong in the world, and solutions to these problems tend to make the human condition better. The better solutions become indurated as habits, practices, and institutions that manage the problems to various degrees of effectiveness. On the other hand, when problems are not reasonably resolved or managed, things fall apart. Habits dissolve, and practices change as new problems arise, and old ways no longer work. To solve problems well, a community needs to strengthen its problem-solving effectiveness. The better the community is at solving its problems, the better the community.