

Specification

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The mind–body problem: What is the relationship between the mental and the physical?

Dualism: the mind is distinct from the physical

The **indivisibility** argument for substance dualism (Descartes)

Issues, including:

- the mental is divisible in some sense
- not everything thought of as physical is divisible.

The **conceivability** argument for substance dualism: the logical possibility of mental substance existing without the physical (Descartes).

Issues, including:

- mind without body is not conceivable
- what is conceivable may not be possible
- what is logically possible tells us nothing about reality.

The issues of causal interaction for versions of dualism:

- the problems facing interactionist dualism, including conceptual and empirical causation issues
- the problems facing epiphenomenalist dualism, including the causal redundancy of the mental, the argument from introspection and issues relating to free will and responsibility.

The problem of other minds for dualism:

- some forms of dualism make it impossible to know other minds
- threat of solipsism.
- **Response:** the argument from analogy (eg Mill).

Introduction

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What is the Mind ?

How does it relate to the Body ?

What is the relationship between the mental and the physical ?

Substance is an entity with ontological independence, it doesn't not depend upon another entity for its continued existence.

Dualism - The mind is distinct from the physical. there are two kinds of substance, mental and physical. The mind's existence does not depend upon the body's. Life after death and eternal existence is possible

Materialism - The mind is physical. The only type of substance is physical. Everything that exists is either a material thing, or depends upon a material thing for its existence. The mind is a collection of mental properties including mental states (beliefs) and mental events (feeling pain).

Dualism.

Arguments for:

- Rationalism and Innate ideas; Kant's knowledge of the self through **transcendental unity of apperception**. Knowledge of your own thought being yours isn't something derived from experience. **The unity that apprehends my point of view is not a conclusion from experience but a presupposition.**
- Distinct from the mind
- Free will
- Logically possible

- Arguments against:
The relationship between the mind and the body
- Existence of other minds
- What is the mind/consciousness
- If the soul is perfect and immutable, how do we learn new things

Potential Consequences: Theism

Materialism.

Arguments for:

- Simpler/Ockham's Razor
- Evolution
- Physical substances having an effect on the mind I.e Brain Damage, drugs etc.

- Arguments against:
Free will
- Evidence of reincarnation
- If you lose all your senses, are you still you ?

Potential consequences: No life after death, determinism.

My view is that the mind and body both one substance and the dualist inferences to the existence of another substance is based on fallacious assumptions. Although materialism goes against the long

held belief in the soul and the after life - it's unable to substantiate strong enough evidence to explain the relationship between the mind and the body and how the physical can affect mental states, both temporarily and permanently. Talking about the mind is just talking about the body's ability to do certain things, if you use the example of a smile - we all know and understand the concept of a smile, however, it isn't something that is directly part of the physical make up of the body. This therefore doesn't a smile has it's own sort of external existence and it relates with the body in some way, talk of a smile is simply talk of the body's ability to smile. Henceforth, talk of the mind or thoughts, feeling and emotions is simply talking about the body's ability to think and feel, there is no need for an additional external substance. The possible consequences of determinism and no life after death is one we may have to accept instead of relying on falsely held beliefs.

My alternate view is that the mind and body are two distinct substances as has been believed for many years. The existence of the mind as a distinct object can be proved using the ideas of Descartes, Kant and Leibniz (rationalists). Descartes in his cogito argument proves the existence of a thinking being through reason, 'I think, therefore I am' - the notion of I is then rationalised using Leibniz's theory of the 'Transcendental Unity of Apperception'. Following these thoughts, Descartes was then able to establish many analytical truths including the existence of God, maths and geometry through pure understanding. However, all these ideas also exist in our minds beyond our understanding as we are able to imagine their existence as a priori synthetic concepts. An idea rationalised by Kant in his Critique's of Pure Reason. A priori synthetic concepts as described by Kant are concepts which presuppose our experiences in the world, from this he defined 12 categories which constitute our experience of the world through space and time.

Descartes Substance Dualism

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Descartes Dualism in short.

Descartes began from his cogito argument of doubting everything but his ability to doubt which helped him establish the existence of his mind. He then follows on from Leibniz's law of indiscernibles 'if two things are exactly identical then they must be the same thing, and if they don't they must be separate'. He can doubt the existence of his body, but not the existence of his mind, therefore they have different properties so they must be separate. The mind and the body must be 2 logically distinct things, if they are really underline metaphysically the same things, then you can't have one without the other. For example it's logically impossible to think of this piece of paper as existing and not existing at the same time. If I can tell a story where A exists and B doesn't exist, it's got to follow that A and B are not the same things.

However Descartes falls guilty of the masked man fallacy here - his doubt of his body is not a property of his body but of him so he has therefore not proved the existence of a physical object outside his mind. Even if Descartes does prove the existence of the body, we know that physical changes in our body have some effect on our non-physical mind and we know the mind and the brain have some sort of intermediate relationship. How does Res Cogitans wrap itself around a Res Extensia brain.

The Meditations

So far Descartes has

- Doubted everything systematically
- Proved 'I' exists
- Proved analytical truths (triangles have 3 sides, existence of God).

His philosophy goes from "Nothing > I > Maths and Geometry > God > Physical Objects > Mind Body Relationship.

Indivisibility Argument

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In the sixth mediation, Descartes begins by differentiating between his conceptions of imagination and understanding. **Imagination is not a property of 'I' or the thinking being as he can think of 'I' existing without imagination.** He has the faculty of imagination but believes it depends on something other than himself.

- When he understands he reflects on ideas in his mind (**introspection**)
- When he imagines he's required to look outside of himself.

The argument from imagination attempts to prove physical objects exist.

- 1) **Imagination and understanding are different**
- 2) Imagination is not essential to live
- 3) **Understanding is purely mental, but imagination depends upon the body/senses**
- 4) It is possible that the body exists.

Descartes divisibility argument is as follows..

- The **body is extended in space; it has literal parts**
- The **mind has no literal parts**
- Leibniz's law of the indiscernibility of identical; If x and y are the same thing then they have the same properties, therefore **if x and y have different properties they are not the same thing.**
- Therefore the **mind and body are different**

Small objections to Descartes is the fact that **mental illness and theories of unconsciousness suggest that the mind does have 'parts'**. However, Descartes can quickly respond saying **bodies are spatially divisible but minds are only functionally divisible.**

- **Some physical objects are not divisible (smallest particles), if not all physical objects are divisible, then the fact that the mind isn't divisible doesn't show that it isn't physical.**
- **Descartes hasn't proved the existence of a continued 'I' yet, yes there are thoughts but how do they exist from one thought to the next.**

Conceivability Argument

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The Conceivability Argument

1. I have a clear and distinct idea of myself as something that thinks and isn't extended
2. I have a clear and distinct idea of body as something that is extended and does not think
3. If I have a clear and distinct thought of something, God can create it in a way that corresponds to my thought
4. Therefore, God (as in a measure of all that is logically possible) can create mind as something that thinks and isn't extended and body as something that is extended and does not think
5. Therefore, mind and body can exist independently of one another
6. Therefore, mind and body are two distinct substances

Simple version:

- It is conceivable that the mind can exist without the body
- Therefore, it is possible that the mind can exist without the body
- Therefore, mind and body are distinct substances

Descartes relies on his notion of clear and distinct ideas as logical possibilities to develop from the conceivable to the possible to reality. If I can tell a story where A exists and B doesn't exist, it's got to follow that A and B are not the same things.

- What is conceivable may not always be possible; the **masked man fallacy**: I think the Masked Man robbed the bank; I don't think my father robbed the bank; therefore my father isn't the Masked Man. In one sense, it is possible that my father is not the Masked Man. But if, unknown to me, my father is the masked man, then it is impossible that my father is not the masked man.

According to the fallacy, from conceiving that 'two' people are distinct we can't infer that they are distinct and perhaps this applies to the mind and body. However, Descartes would reply saying when we clearly and distinctly conceive of two things as distinct then we can infer that they are distinct, the Masked Man is not a clear and distinct idea. However Descartes response is defined as circular as he first defines reality, goes back to the possibility which he then uses to infer the reality.

- What is possible tells us nothing about reality, logical possibility doesn't entail physical possibility.

The unity of mind and body

If the mind and body are two distinct things, how are they related. Descartes is famous for saying '*I (a thinking thing) am not merely in my body as a sailor is in his ship. Rather, I am closely joined to it - intermingled with it, so to speak - so that it and I form a unit.*' (Meditation VI)

Our bodily appetites, sensations, emotions have their origin in the body. If it were not intermingled then I wouldn't feel pain when the body was hurt but I would perceive the damage in an intellectual way, like a sailor seeing his ship is damaged. It seems to Descartes that the human mind cannot conceive the soul's distinctness from the body and its union with the body clearly at the same time. That is because this requires one to conceive them as one single thing and at the same time as two things, which is contradictory.

The idea of the union between the mind and body for Descartes is a third 'basic notion' alongside the ideas of the mind and body. However, it feels like Descartes has invented a third substance called the human being.

Criticisms of Substance Dualism Summary

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Descartes Substance Dualism Critiques

1. **What is conceivable isn't necessarily possible**; masked man fallacy
2. Descartes does not clearly explain the **relationship between the mind and body**
3. **Materialism is also logically possible** and therefore also can be true, Descartes doesn't provide strong enough evidence to show that it isn't
4. 'I think therefore I am' **doesn't prove the existence of a continued 'I'** (counter; **Leibniz's theory of apperception**)
5. **Mind cannot be proved empirically**, although Descartes thinks through his reason in the cogito he has formed a proof of the existence of the mind. **Pythagoras showed you can find truths in mathematics** (logic and reason) **that can't be shown in reality.**
6. **Some physical things can't be divided**

Substance Dualism and Mental Causation

How can a non-physical thing affect a physical thing.

Descartes claims the mind is just thought, not in space; matter is just extension, in space, which raises the question of **how mental causation** (thoughts, desires and other psychological states) **cause both other mental states and changes in the body** (e.g. movement).

Princess Elisabeth's Objection.

1. **Physical things only move if they are pushed**
2. **Only something that is extended** and can touch the thing that is moved **can exert such a force**
3. But **the mind has no extension**, so it can't touch the body
4. Therefore, the **mind cannot move the body**

The movement of physical force is only initiated by some physical force, exerted at some point in space. **If dualism is true, then the mind is not in space and cannot exert any physical force.**

Therefore, either dualism is false or the mind cannot cause (any part of) the body to move. **The mind can cause the body to move. Therefore, dualism is false.**

- **Descartes reply was it is a mistake to try understand the mind's power to act on objects in the same way that physical objects act upon each other.**

Conservation of energy

The law of the conservation of states **in any closed system, the total amount of energy in that system remains unchanged.**

- The universe is a closed system
- Therefore, total amount of energy in the universe remains unchanged

If the mind, as a non-physical substance, could move the body, the total amount of energy in the universe would increase. Therefore if the mind could move the body, the law of the conservation of energy would not apply to the universe, and the universe is not a closed system. Therefore, because what is changing the physical energy in the universe is not itself physical, physics cannot give us the complete, correct account of physical energy in the universe.

- **Descartes response would be to claim, physics is wrong to think that physical movement can only be caused by physical force. You can't use physics to explain a non-physical thing, there is a certain epistemic distance between us and our understanding of the mind.**

However, **neuroscience also shows us that movement of the body are caused by physical events in the brain.** We have no evidence of the mind changing what happens in the brain. However, we have

no evidence that the mind does not change what happens in the brain, if dualism is true, then some brain events have no physical cause. The empirical evidence is not against dualism, or for dualism. Perhaps they are incompatible.

Epiphenomenalist Dualism

We could accept that the objections above show that mental causation is impossible. But this doesn't undermine substance dualism if we accept epiphenomenalism, the view that **the mind has no causal powers**. (An 'epiphenomenon' is a **by-product**, something that is an effect of some process, but with **no causal influence**.) On this view, the mind does not cause any physical events.

Huxley likens **conscious experience** to the **whistle on a steam train and the body and brain to the train itself**. The steam that drives the whistle is produced by the engine which drives the train forward, but the **whistle doesn't affect the forward motion**, it is just a by-product and the train would move as well without it. The whistle, like consciousness, is a '**collateral product**' or '**epiphenomenon**', meaning it is **produced by underlying process but has no causal impact on those processes**.

Epiphenomenalism also holds that the **mind causes no mental events either** – **mental events are all caused by physical events**, e.g. in the brain. For this reason, it is very unusual for substance dualists to be epiphenomenalists. Substance dualists generally maintain that **mental events cause other mental events** since the mind is ontologically independent of the body. It is more common for property dualists to accept epiphenomenalism

- **The causal redundancy of the mental** - The most influential objection to epiphenomenalism is that it is obviously false. It is obvious that, e.g. whether I feel pain makes a difference both to what I think (e.g. that I'm in pain) and to what I do (e.g. jump around shouting). **To say that the mind is 'causally redundant', i.e. does not work as a cause, is highly counterintuitive.**
- **The argument from introspection** - suppose I am in pain. How do I know that I am in pain? The obvious answer is that my belief that I am in pain is caused by my pain itself. I can tell that I am in pain just from introspection. But epiphenomenalism must deny this, because, **as a mental state, pain doesn't cause anything**. Likewise, it seems that **when I say what I think, what I say is caused by what I think**. But epiphenomenalism must deny this. **Both my belief that I feel pain and saying what I think are caused by physical processes and not pain or thought themselves.** According to epiphenomenalism, it is physical processes that cause my beliefs about my mind. **So as long as the same physical processes occur in my brain, my beliefs about my own mind will be the same whatever mental states I have.** **My beliefs about my mind, therefore, are unjustified and unreliable.** So I can't know my own mind.
- **Free will and responsibility** - we **need mental causation in order to be free and take responsibility for our actions**. In order to be free and responsible for what you do, you need to be able to choose what to do, and to do it because you choose to do it. Therefore, we might say, your **choice needs to cause what you do**. If what you do is not caused by your choice, but by something physical over which you have no influence, then you are not free in what you do, anymore than you are free in what you do when you are blown over by a strong wind. **Choices are mental events**. Epiphenomenalist dualism must therefore say that **your choices have no causal powers and do not cause what you do**. Instead, your **choice is simply an effect of some process in the brain**, as is your action. It is **hard to see how 'you' have chosen what to do**.

The Threat of Solipsism

We each experience our own minds directly, from 'within'. We can each **apprehend our sensations and emotions in a way that is 'felt'**. We can know what we want or believe through introspection. But our knowledge of other people's minds is very different, it seems. **We cannot experience other people's mental states**. It seems that all we have to go on is other people's behaviour, what is expressed through their bodies. **If minds and bodies are entirely independent, then how can I infer from seeing a body that there is a mind 'attached'?** The challenge to substance dualism is, how do we know that other minds exist and solipsism is false?

Argument from analogy.

The argument from analogy claims that **we can use the behaviour of other people to infer that they have minds too.** It was first presented by **John Stuart Mill.** (The first form is often attributed to Mill, but the second form is a better interpretation.)

1. I have a mind.
2. **I know from experience that my mental states cause my behaviour.**
3. Other people have bodies similar to mine and behave similarly to me in similar situations.
4. **Therefore, by analogy, their behaviour has the same type of cause as my behaviour,** namely mental states.
5. Therefore, other people have minds.
 - **Argument is perhaps the 'common-sense' position on how to solve the problem of other minds. But we can object to its use of induction. The conclusion that other people have minds is based on a single case – mine. This is like saying 'that dog has three legs; therefore, all dogs have three legs'. You can't generalize from one case, because it could be a special case. Perhaps I am the only person to have a mind.**

We can therefore formulate the argument to cite many instances of behaviour which we know to have a mental cause.

1. This behaviour has a mental cause.
2. That behaviour has a mental cause.
3. That third behaviour has a mental cause.
4. Etc.
5. Therefore, **many behaviours have a mental cause** (I know this from my own experience).
6. Other people exhibit the same types of behaviour as cited above.
7. Therefore, **those behaviours also have mental causes.**
8. Therefore, other people have minds.
 - **Even if behaviour in my case is caused by (my) mental states, that doesn't mean that the behaviour of other people could not be caused by something entirely different (say, brain states without mental states).**

The behaviour picked out in the first premises of the argument is not picked out as mine, but as a type of behaviour, e.g. raising an arm, walking to the shops, etc. **The claim is that we have experience of many instances of such behaviour being caused by mental states.** In science, we generalize from the cases we have observed. We can do the same with behaviour. On this understanding, **the argument is not from analogy at all. It is simply a causal inference/the best explanation.**

- **The belief that other people have minds isn't a hypothesis at all**

Ascribing mental states

Descartes and solipsists assume that we can ascribe mental states to ourselves, to say of oneself that one is thinking, or that one wants to understand, or that one is frustrated. We can argue that, for instance, **a child cannot learn that it is angry, that what it feels is 'anger', without also learning what it means to say, of someone else, that they are angry.** After all, it learns that it is angry because its parents (and others) help it understand this.

The **ability to ascribe mental states to oneself is learned,** and is interdependent with the ability to ascribe mental states to other people. To learn the meaning of 'anger', 'pain', thinking' is to learn their correct application to both oneself and others, simultaneously. In that case, **to understand a mental property, I have to be able to attribute it to other people.** I have to be able to say 'he is in pain' or 'she is thinking'.

This has a number of important implications.

1. If there can be no knowledge of oneself as a mind without presupposing that there are other minds, the problem of other minds does not arise.
2. Our knowledge of other minds is not inferred from knowledge of our own behaviour and its causes. We don't have one without the other.
3. It raises a distinct challenge to substance dualism. Substance dualism claims that mental properties are attributed to minds, while physical properties are attributed to bodies. But in that case, **how can we identify other minds so as to attribute mental properties to them? We have no**

experience of 'minds' on their own. So we have to attribute mental properties to something that also has physical properties. Mental and physical properties have to be attributed to the same thing for us to attribute mental characteristics to anything at all. This threatens the claim that the mind is a separate substance from the body.

4. It raises a challenge to the substance dualist's concept of mind. We don't know what a mind is unless we already know what a person – an 'embodied mind' – is. We can only understand the idea of a mind by abstracting from the idea of a person; a mind is a disembodied person. In other words, the concept of the 'union' of mind and body is a more basic concept than the concept of mind.

Specification

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The **'philosophical zombies'** argument for property dualism: the logical possibility of a physical duplicate of this world but without consciousness/qualia (Chalmers).

Issues, including:

- a 'zombie' world is not conceivable
- what is conceivable is not possible
- what is logically possible tells us nothing about reality.

The **'knowledge'/Mary** argument for property dualism based on qualia (Frank Jackson).

Qualia as introspectively accessible subjective/phenomenal features of mental states (the properties of 'what it is like' to undergo the mental state in question) – for many qualia would be defined as the intrinsic/non-representational properties of mental states.

Issues, including:

- Mary gains no new propositional knowledge (but gains acquaintance knowledge or ability knowledge)
- all physical knowledge would include knowledge of qualia
- there is more than one way of knowing the same physical fact
- qualia (as defined) do not exist and so Mary gains no propositional knowledge.

Philosophical Zombies

17 March 2016 19:56

Property Dualism

Property dualism claims that the brain has a special set of non-physical properties alongside its ordinary physical properties; properties possessed by no other kind of physical objects. So consciousness is a real phenomenon, but it is not substantial, that is, it cannot exist alone without a living brain to produce it. Experiences are held to appear or emerge when the developing brain reaches a certain level of complexity.

Examples of properties that are emergent would be that of being coloured or living. All these require matter to be suitably organised before they appear. But the property dualist is arguing that mental properties are a special sort of emergent property in the sense that they are irreducible to matter. Mental properties are essentially non-physical in the sense that they cannot be reduced to physical properties and so cannot be explained by the physical sciences.

Philosophical Zombies – Chalmers.

There is something it is like to see a vivid green, to feel a sharp pain, to visualise the Eiffel tower etc. What Chalmers is keen to emphasise here is what he calls the 'phenomenal character' of these conscious states, that is, what it is like to be in such state or how they appear in my mind. These properties are known as qualia. Qualia are the intrinsic qualities that our sensations of pain, smell, colour have, they are what we are immediately conscious of when we experience such sensations and it is claimed that we are directly aware of them through introspection.

Chalmers asks us to imagine a human that lacks qualia and other mental states; a human with no conscious experiences at all. He calls such being a philosophical zombie. The zombie is physically identical to a normal human, it is indistinguishable from that of the rest of us, and it behaves just like you and me. The only difference is that it has no subjective awareness. There is nothing that it is like to be the zombie. Chalmers thinks it is conceivable that there exist philosophical zombies. He doesn't think they actually exist. Indeed, he thinks it is very likely that they are physically impossible given the laws of nature which operate in this universe. But the fact that we can conceive of such being shows, he argues that they are possible in other possible universes.

- P1. Physicalism claims that consciousness is ultimately physical in nature
 - P2. It follows that any world which is physically identical to this world must contain consciousness
 - P3. But we can conceive of a world which is physically identical to this one but in which there is not conscious experience. (Metaphysically possible)
- C. Therefore, physicalism is false.
- **A zombie world is not conceivable** – Step 3 in Chalmers's argue seems quite dubious. Chalmers defends the conceivability of zombies by pointing out that there is no obvious contradiction involved. Dennett has argued that Chalmers's zombies are not actually conceivable.
Is it really conceivable that a zombie would be able to respond intelligibly to you in conversation without having any understanding of what it was talking about? Can we make proper sense of the idea of a human describing their experiences of qualia which they don't have? Wittgenstein suggests that reflection on the zombie possibility involves using words in ways that make them lose their sense. For Dennett, it is like 'supposing that by an act of stipulative imagination, you can remove health while leaving all bodily functions and powers intact...health isn't that sort of thing, and neither is consciousness'.
So in sum, it seems that we are being asked either to imagine something that can't be imagined, or something which is very easy to imagine but which doesn't differ from everyday experience. Because the zombie hypothesis cannot be distinguished from the world we live in by any empirical test, that it is actually a hypothesis empty of meaning. For if utterances get

their meaning from what they tell us about the world, then any which cannot be shown to be true or false by reference to experience would appear not to be telling us anything.

- **What is conceivable is not possible** – A zombie world may not be logically contradictory, yet zombies may nonetheless not be genuine metaphysical possibilities. *It is conceivable that water not be H₂O*. However, given that water is actually H₂O, any liquid with a different composition, no matter how similarly it might behave to real water is not actually water. So it seems that it is not possible in any world for water not to be H₂O. In the same way, it can be argued that philosophical zombies may be conceivable, but are nonetheless not metaphysically possible. Any possible world where the people are physically identical to us would have to be conscious.

The Knowledge/Mary Argument

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Like Chalmers, *Jackson* argues that the **intrinsic nature of certain mental states – qualia – is irreducible**. The knowledge argument begins with a thought experiment about a brilliant neuroscientist named Mary who has been confined her whole life to a black and white room. The point of this is that **we must suppose that she has never seen any colours herself**. Despite this handicap, she has studied the science of vision and come to know everything there is to know about what happens physically when someone sees and talks about colours. Next, suppose that **one day Mary leaves the confines of the black and white room** and is able for the first time to look directly at the sky, the grass etc. and so to experience colours. **Does she learn something she didn't know already?**

- Mary **knows everything about the physical processes involved in colour vision**
- But she **learns something new when she experiences colour vision herself**.
- Therefore there is **more to know about colour vision** than what is given in a complete physical account of it.
- So physicalism is false.
- **Mary gains no new propositional knowledge** – Propositional knowledge is knowledge of facts and can be expressed in propositions; it is knowledge that such and such is the case. Acquaintance knowledge is the kind you get from encountering something, as when we speak of knowing a person or a place or a type of object. Now, **to say that Mary knows everything there is to know about colour vision is to say that she knows every physical fact about it**. When she leaves the room she does indeed learn something new, but it is not new propositional knowledge and so **she learns no new facts**. **Rather, she becomes acquainted with the phenomenal character of colours**. According to this objection, the **plausibility of the knowledge argument rests on an equivocation on the word 'know'** and if we **use it just in the sense of propositional or factual knowledge, the argument fails**.

Jackson's response is she also **acquires some propositional knowledge in the process**. For now she is **able to know facts about what it is like for human beings to see colours**. Before, she knew everything physical about human colour vision, on her release she knows something more about it, so **her new knowledge isn't confined to mere acquaintance with colours itself**.

- Others have argued **Mary acquires instead a practical ability or practical knowledge**. On this account, what she acquires are new abilities or skills. By becoming acquainted with colours **she acquires the capacity to remember and to imagine the colour of ripe tomatoes**, to recognise objects of similar colours by sight. They are **not knowledge of new facts about what is the case** and so therefore **does not undermine physicalism**.

Jackson's response she also **acquires factual beliefs about the mental life of others**. She now knows what others have been experiencing all along when they see ripe tomatoes. To force this point home he asks us to **imagine Mary debating with herself over whether other people really do have the same sorts of experiences as she does when they see red tomatoes**. In order to work about the problem, she has to be **asking herself a factual question: 'Is it the case that other have the same experiences as me?'** Whatever the answer, her question concerns whether she has sufficient evidence to accept **a factual claim, a belief she only acquires after her release can count as knowledge**.

- **All physical knowledge would include knowledge of qualia** – If Mary did indeed know all the physical facts about colour vision, then she would be able to work out what colours would look like, and so, even in the black and white room, could imagine what it is like to look at the sky. *Dennett* **urges us to recognise just how hard it really is to imagine Mary knowing absolutely everything about colour vision**. We will be unable to imagine how she could come to know

qualia, but this just shows our imaginations here may be limited. Here we may be guilty of what Dennett calls 'Philosophers Syndrome': Mistaking a failure of imagination for an insight to necessity.

Jackson himself changed his mind about the knowledge argument. He later went on to argue that it may seem to us that Mary would have to learn something new on first seeing red, but this may just be because we have only a very confused idea of what knowing all the physical information would involve. In reality, qualia may represent complex internal states, so that if Mary genuinely knew everything about such states, she might well be able to work out what colours would look like before seeing them herself.

Despite this, in practice, knowing 'everything' physical about colour vision is likely to be beyond us, so that nobody could ever actually have a complete neuroscientific understanding of how colour vision works. But this just shows how the limitations of our understanding of neuroscience and so it remains true that if Mary knew everything then she wouldn't learn anything new when she first sees red.

The blue banana trick – would she be able to recognise the banana was the wrong colour? If Jackson's original argument is right, then she would not. However, Dennett whose example this is, argues that this conclusion is based purely on intuitions generated by a bad thought experiment and asks us to imagine Mary's complete knowledge of colour vision enabling her to spot the trick.

- **There is more than one way of knowing the same physical fact** – Mary acquires a new set of concepts based on her experience of colours. Before her release Mary knew all about the physical facts from the third person point of view; after her release she comes to know them from the subjective, first person, perspective.

Suppose that Mary goes to a party and meets Bruce Wayne and learns that he is a billionaire. Never having heard of Batman, she could not claim to know Batman is a billionaire. But suppose that later she meets Batman and learns that he is a billionaire. Would she be learning a new fact? The fact that Batman is a billionaire and the fact that Bruce Wayne is a billionaire are not two facts, but one. It is the same item of knowledge, but under a different description.

In the same way, Mary may know all the physical facts, and when she sees red for herself she learns that the experience of seeing red things involves a certain 'red-like' qualitative feel and she acquires a phenomenal concept from this experience. She is able to represent the same physical facts going on in her brain under two different descriptions.

- **Qualia do not exist and so Mary gains no new propositional knowledge** – Paul and Patricia Churchland's central claim is that the whole range of mental state terms which are part of our common sense picture of the nature of our minds, such as qualia, should be eliminated from a human understanding of human mentality. There is nothing in reality that corresponds to terms such as 'qualia', 'beliefs' or 'desires'.

The response would be to argue things are not the same with qualia. We are directly aware of them and so it seems implausible to suggest we could ever jettison them completely from our theory of mind.

- However, this response can be resisted using the example of the 'Caloric' which was thought to be responsible for making things hot. Now suppose that someone were to defend the existence of caloric by pointing out that it must exist because we can directly feel it when we touch objects. The reason this fails is that the caloric's reality is being presupposed in the concepts they use to interpret the experience of heat. In the same way, it may be that we are so in thrall to the theoretical framework of folk psychology that we have to interpret the data of introspection in terms of theoretical entities such as qualia. If qualia are part of a theory, then we change the theory we may have no need for qualia at all.
- Dennett argues that the idea of qualia is ultimately incoherent and so the concept is hopelessly

confused. There is nothing that could have the properties given to qualia. The **standard picture of qualia** according to Dennett is:

- Qualia **have an intrinsic nature which is unanalysable**
- Qualia are **directly accessible by introspection**
- Qualia cannot be communicated to others (are **ineffable**)
- Qualia are **private**
- Our apprehension of qualia is **infallible** (we cannot be mistaken about what our qualia are like)

Reactive Disassociation - a phenomenon brought on by the use of morphine to control pain. Some patients report being in pain, but not finding the pain unpleasant. **Either we have to say the patient is mistaken about being in pain or that it is possible to subtract the horribleness from the pain they experience.** Either way, we violate the standard picture as we are **either saying someone can be mistaken about what qualia they are experiencing which means introspection is not infallible.** Or we **have to say that qualia are not, unanalysable and can be broken down into parts.**

A thought experiment *Dennett* employs uses the example of **acquiring the taste of beer in order to argue we appear not to be able clearly to identify the supposedly intrinsic nature of qualia.** What happens when you acquire a taste. One is to say that the taste itself changes but this seems to **imply that taste doesn't have an intrinsic nature but one at least partly constituted by one's past experiences.** On the other hand, one could argue the taste hasn't changed but your reaction to it has but this is also problematic as it becomes **puzzling how you could come to enjoy a taste if its horribleness is an intrinsic part of the taste.** Surely **if tastes have an intrinsic nature, we cannot experience them differently from how they are.** Either way you look at it, we seem to be saying **we experience a taste and the taste itself are not identical which contradicts the idea of qualia having an intrinsic nature.**

Consider finally the **inverted spectrum**. If two people behave in exactly the same way when it comes to their use of colour terms, and there is **no way of checking whether their qualia are inverted because they are private and ineffable.** *Wittgenstein* famously likened the situation to each of us having a beetle in a box that no one else could see. In such a situation, the **intrinsic nature of our respective beetles cannot be compared, and without such intersubjective comparison, their natures cannot meaningfully be spoken about.** Perhaps then, we are talking nonsense when we speak of the **intrinsic nature of qualia, precisely because linguistic meaning must be connected to what is publicly verifiable.**

Specification

01 September 2015 13:23

Materialism: the mind is not ontologically distinct from the physical.

Logical/analytical behaviourism: all statements about mental states can be analytically reduced without loss of meaning to statements about behaviour (an 'analytic' reduction).

Issues, including:

- dualist arguments (above)
- issues defining mental states satisfactorily (circularity and the multiple realisability of mental states in behaviour)
- the conceivability of mental states without associated behaviour (Putnam's super-Spartans)
- the asymmetry between self knowledge and knowledge of other people's mental states.

Context and Technical Terms

20 September 2015 08:44

Meta = beyond/above, metaphysics seeks general principles which applying to everything and searches also for what is ultimately real.

Ontology is the study of existence.

A substance is an entity with ontological independence. It does not depend upon any other entity for its continued existence. Contingent objects are still substances. Ontological independence is best understood with properties. Substances possess properties, and properties cannot exist without them. Substances persist through changes in properties.

Substance Dualism is the belief that there are two kinds of substance, mental and physical. The mind's existence does not depend upon the body's. Life after death and eternal existence of the mind are both possible. Belief in the notion of the self is justifiable through the transcendental unity of apperception.

- Ockham's Razor
- Mind Body Relationship
- Problems with Cartesian Dualism
- Problems with Plato's soul theory
- When did it evolve into existence ?
- Do baby's have a mind before or after birth.

Idealism is the belief that there is one type of substance, the mind. Whatever exists is either a mind, or depends upon a mind.

- Problems with idealism
- Counter-intuitive; goes against every single empirical evidence we've ever had for everything.

Materialism is the belief that the only type of substance is physical. Everything that exists is either a material thing, or depends upon a material thing. The mind is a collection of mental properties, including mental states (beliefs) and mental events (feeling pain).

Materialism

01 September 2015 16:21

Mind Brain Type Identity Theory is the belief that mental properties are identical to certain physical properties, and are nothing more. Mind and brain are identical so are therefore the same thing. Leibniz's law of indiscernibles states, if two things are identical in the same way, they are exactly the same thing.

- Too reductive/simplistic
- Discounts the afterlife and soul

Property Dualism is the belief that mental properties are possessed by physical substances (Human Brain), but mental properties are not physical properties. There is one kind of substance but two very different types of property. Mental properties = emotions, sensations. Physical properties = squiddy yellow, old.

- Inventing a new type of property, why stop at one
- When did we develop these alternate properties.

Logical Behaviorism is the belief that mental properties should be understood in terms of behavior. If I say that you have a belief, I am not saying that you have a particular mental state, but that you are likely to behave in a certain way. This is a type of non-reductive physicalism, a middle ground between brain-type and identity theory and property dualism.

- Too restrictive; we don't behave a certain way depending on what we see/touch/smell/taste
- We take in things subconsciously without it altering our behavior

Functionalism is the belief that we should understand our mental properties in terms of their relationship to how the brain functions. This includes, but is not limited to behavior and so is therefore another type of non-reductive physicalism. We can understand behavior through your behavior through your brain functions, this includes scans, behaviors, feelings, emotions.

- Open to interpretation and is therefore not going to provide a clear enough answer

Eliminative materialism is the belief that there are no mental substances and no mental properties. Our (mistaken) concepts of mental properties do not refer to anything that exists. We are not thinking, feeling e.t.c.

Logical/Analytical Behaviourism

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Analytical behaviourism claims that minds are just what people say and do. Thus all statements concerning mental states or processes are not really as dualists claim, concerned with a private world. Rather, talk about minds is completely reducible without remainder to talk about people's behaviour. This is an 'analytic reduction', meaning that statements about minds mean the same as statements about behaviour in the same way that 'mother' means the same as 'female parent'. Such statements are rather a shorthand way of talking about publically observable actual and potential patterns of behaviour.

We only have access to the behaviour of others, consequently that behaviour must be the basis for all our language about other people. Talk of things that which the existence cannot be verified is meaningless. Behaviourism, by equating mind with what is observable, eliminates the problem. Secondly, it overcomes the problem of interaction. For if the mind is not a distinct substance mysteriously linked to the body, then there is no causal interaction to account for. Thirdly, if words acquire their meaning from the public context in which they are used, then there must be rules governing their use. Must be possible to determine whether they are being used correctly by reference to what is publicly observable. So, given that we can talk about minds, and generally have little difficulty ascribing mental states to people, we must be talking about what is publicly observable, namely behaviour.

Hard Behaviourism

Hempel was a member of the Vienna Circle. As a logical positivist, he insists that meaningful propositions must have empirical content. Since other mind cannot be observed, talk about them is either meaningless or reducible to what can be observed. If we are to talk meaning fully about human beings' minds, we have to be able to show just how our claims about them can be reduced to behavioural descriptions. E.g. *Pain is not a private experience causing behaviour, it just is the behaviour.*

- **Issue with defining mental states adequately;** Hempel's behaviourism cannot be satisfied with expressions like '*Beatrice punches air*' or '*Candice kicks ball*', such expressions make implicit reference to human agency, that is, to the notion that the person acted intentionally, that he or she willed this action. To say that someone acted intentionally is to make implicit reference to a mental state. Thus, '*Candice kicked the ball*' would need to be rendered as something like '*Candice's foot lifted from the ground, the knee flexed and her leg swung forward causing the foot to impact the ball*'. In this way all reference to supposedly hidden mental-state terms can be eliminated and we have a scientifically respectable and verifiable description of what's happened.
- **Circularity and multiple realisability;** A particular mental state need not always lead to a specific type of action. Furthermore, when it comes to my holding of certain abstract beliefs, such as that philosophy is hard, the range of ways such mental states might manifest themselves is bewildering. But if the analysis cannot be completed, not even in principle, then the project of reducing mental states to pure behaviour must fail. A mental state, such as a desire to drink beer, would only lead one to drink a beer, if you didn't have the belief that you had to drive later or that the beer was poisoned or that this pun doesn't keep it's beer properly and so forth. But if our analysis of 'desires a beer' needs to take account of this, then it needs to translate these mental states into behavioural language as well. But attempts to analyse 'beliefs' in terms of its behavioural manifestations will also have to reintroduce mental state terminology. This means that the reduction cannot be completed without circularity; that is without reintroducing at each level of the analysis. Precisely what the analysis is supposed to be eliminating.

Ryle's Project.

Ryle's version of behaviourism is less ambitious as it doesn't think a reduction of the language of the mind to pure bodily movements is possible. His intention is to 'explode the myth' of Cartesian dualism which generates the various problems we've been grappling with. Ryle likens the Cartesian philosopher to *a foreigner in England who watches a cricket match for the first time, he is taught to recognise who is responsible for the batting, the bowling, the wicket-keeping but then asks who is responsible for the team spirit.*

The point is that team spirit is not another cricketing task but rather a way of talking about the way the team performs, that is to say, a manner of talking about the players' tendency to play well together, he/she misunderstands how the term 'team spirit' functions. Its function is not to refer to a specific operation performed in the game, but to how well all of them are performed. Ryle calls a misunderstanding of this kind a 'category mistake'.

For Ryle, Descartes noted that people walk, talk, eat and sleep and all these actions were performed physically so were easy for us to see. But we also talk a great deal about people thinking, imagining, sensing and so on. Descartes couldn't find any obvious behaviours our talk referred to, which led him to wonder what kind of thing the mind could be if it cannot be seen or touched and doesn't exist in space. His answer was that it must be a very special kind of thing, one that has none of the characteristics of the normal. The mistake here is that Descartes held on to the idea that the mind is a kind of thing. For the mind is not a weird type of substance; it is not a substance at all. Rather it is a way of talking about the capacities, of human being to perform a whole range of actions. For Ryle, mental concepts are not of the same category as those of material bodies. So the difference between deliberate and non-deliberate behaviour is not to be explained in terms of the one being caused by the mind and the latter by bodies, but rather in terms of publicly observable behavioural differences.

Ryle's dispositional analysis.

Sarah sits in the pub for hours, nursing one glass of orange juice. She turns down several offers for a pint. So her behaviour gives no indication of any desire for a stout. Despite this, there is nothing she would enjoy more than a pint of Winter Wobbler, and it is only because she knows she must drive that she chooses not to satisfy her desire. So how can her mental states be reduced to behaviour.

For Ryle, analysis of mental terms is not conducted in terms of current behaviour but in terms of dispositions to behave. A dispositional property of something is its liability, or proneness to act or react in a certain way. *For example, the property of being soluble is a liability or proneness to dissolve if placed in water.* Dispositions are to be contrasted with occurrences, that is processes and events which are identified as actually happening. So *to say that a sugar cube is soluble is not to say that the sugar cube enjoys some current but ghostly inner state of solubility*, but that certain hypothetical propositions about its non-actual behaviour are true of it – a similar analysis hold for mental states.

A belief is not a state of mind hidden from view, causing behaviours, but signifies someone's tendency to do certain things. Mental states, in other words, are ultimately dispositions to behave in certain ways and sentences expressing dispositional properties are always, in the final analysis, hypothetical in form. Because dispositions are behaviour patterns, people do not possess them as a state of themselves but rather display them through what they do in various situations. This being the case, mental concepts behave differently from the way the dualist model supposes, i.e. they are not 'occult causes and effects' but what Ryle calls 'inference tickets', ways of inferring future behaviour or of forming hypothesis about persons' likely behaviour based on their past behaviour.

Issues, Including:

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Evidence of introspection

Intuitively, behaviourism involves denying what appears evident in my own case, namely the reality of any 'inner' aspect of my mental states, or the reality of qualia. To have a pain, for example seems not to be a matter of being inclined to moan. Pains have an intrinsic qualitative nature that is revealed in introspection, any theory of mind that ignores or denies qualia fails to do justice to our knowledge of our own mental life. There is more to my mind than outward behaviour.

Asymmetry between self knowledge and knowledge of others

The subject of experience has no need of behavioural evidence in their own case in order to discover the contents of their mind. I can know I'm in pain without having to check by examining my behaviour. It is doubtless true that I have to observe the behaviour of others in order to know what they are thinking or feeling, I can know similar things about myself without taking any notice of my behaviour. One absurd consequence of behaviourism would seem to be that others would have a better idea than I do of what I am thinking and feeling. There is an 'asymmetry' between my knowledge of my own mind and my knowledge of other people's minds.

In defence of interaction

By denying that beliefs, desires and sensations causally interact with our behaviour, Ryle seems to fly in the face of common sense. Surely it is because I want a cup of tea that I make one. It is because of the pain in my foot, that I jump about screaming. I don't remove the nail from my foot simply to change my behaviour, but because it hurts!

Circularity.

If mental states are just actions, then there is nothing to explain them. If the desire and the sensation are translated into behaviour, then they cannot explain behaviour without circularity. We would be trying to explain behaviour in terms of behaviour.

The conceivability of mental states without associated behaviour.

Putnam argues we can conceive of cases where someone may be in a particular mental state but without there being any behavioural manifestation. He asks us to imagine a community of 'super-Spartans', who have trained themselves to suppress any outward signs of pains they endure. If analytical behaviourism were correct, then it would seem to follow that super Spartans don't experience pain.

- Ryle's response to this is that the super-Spartans may not display any actual pain behaviour, but they remain disposed to display the behaviour were it not for the fact that they have Putnam's 'important ideological reasons' for not doing so.

However, Putnam to deal with this then introduces the idea of super-super-Spartans, 'they have been Spartans for so long, that they have even begun to suppress talk of pain.. They do not even admit to having pains. They pretend not to know either the word or the phenomenon to which it refers.' Here we have a race who, according to the scenario we are imagining, are not even disposed to pain behaviour. Behaviourism confuses the evidence we use to ascribe mental states with the mental states themselves. Putnam uses the analogy of a disease, *someone may have the virus without displaying any symptoms; or they may display the symptoms without having the virus.* So while the symptoms are evidence of having the disease, they do not constitute having it. In the same way, we may identify people's pains by the symptoms – the pain behaviour. But this doesn't mean the symptoms exhaust the meaning of the word 'pain'; or that pain just is the behaviour. Pains are not equivalent in meaning to pain behaviour, but are the cause of pain behaviour.

Specification

01 September 2015 13:25

Functionalism: all mental states can be reduced to functional roles which can be multiply realised.

Issues, including:

- the possibility of a functional duplicate with different qualia (inverted qualia)
- the possibility of a functional duplicate with no qualia (Block's 'Chinese mind')
- the 'knowledge'/Mary argument can be applied to functional facts (no amount of facts about function suffices to explain qualia).

Functionalism

01 September 2015 16:23

Functionalists identify mental states with functional states. What makes something a can-opener is the fact that it opens cans. It is defined by its function, that is, by what it does or is used for, rather than in terms of the stuff of which it is made or the details of its design.

Functionalists believe that mental states are best understood as being functional entities like hearts or can-openers. The essential or defining feature of any type of mental state is the set of causal relations it bears to;

- Environmental effects on the body
- Other types of mental states
- Bodily behaviour

Functionalism explains mental phenomena in terms of the causal role it plays within a sequence of events. To be a particular sort of mental state is to have a particular sort of functional role. Pain should be defined in terms of the role it plays in mediating between sensory inputs, other mental states and behavioural outputs. So a functional definition of pain would treat it as that mental state which is produced by damage to the body and whose role is to trigger other mental states such as wanting to avoid the source of the pain as well as pain behaviour such as inspecting the damage. Any state that plays that exactly that functional role is pain.

If being minded is a matter of being organised in the right way, a great range of substances could realise minds. It is possible for a functionalist to be a dualist and claim that it is mind-stuff or spirit. In practice, functionalists are generally physicalists and view the brain as the material basis for consciousness. Functionalism holds that mental states depend upon physical states and their causal powers, and so mental properties supervene on states of the brain. Thus there can be no change in mental states without some change in the physical organisation of the brain. So functionalism allows for the multiple realisability of mental states.

Machine state functionalism is the term given to the view that minded human beings are to be understood as a complex system of inputs and outputs. Humans aren't deterministic but probabilistic. That is, our programming doesn't specify a determined reaction to a specific input, but instead the probability that we will change into certain states or produce certain outputs.

Advantages over behaviourism.

Obvious similarities with behaviourism but one fundamental difference is that functionalists deny the possibility of defining each mental state solely in terms of environmental input and behavioural output. An adequate characterisation of a mental state cannot be confined to what is observable on the outside, but must involve reference to a variety of other mental states with which it is causally connected. Functionalists recognise the role mental states have in causing behaviour and other mental states and this accords far better with our common understanding of the nature of the mind.

Advantages over identity theory.

Functionalists are able to deal with the problem of multiple realisability by allowing that an alien with physiology very different from ours might nonetheless be functionally equivalent to the extent that they insatiate a similar set of internal states. If its internal state is a functional parallel of a human pain state and since mental states are functional states, we can confidently assert the alien feels pain.

Issues, Including:

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Qualia are intrinsic, non-representational properties of experience

- Intrinsic: not relational; would the smell of coffee be the same smell if it wasn't caused by coffee?
- Representational properties: The mental state is 'about' the world – relational but not intrinsic

If phenomenal properties are qualia, then they cannot be completely understood in terms of functions, because functions are relational properties, not intrinsic properties. So if qualia exist, then functionalism cannot be true of phenomenal consciousness. There is more to pain than what causes it and what it causes.

Inverted Qualia.

Functionalism fails to account for the intrinsic qualitative nature of our mental states. The 'Inverted Spectrum' Thought Experiment. What if the spectrum of my private colour experience was inverted, compared to yours? When I see red, you see blue and vice-versa. We have both learnt to describe your red as 'red', so there is no change in behaviour. We are functionally equivalent, but not identical. So functionalism cannot explain the mind.

- Thought experiment is meaningless as it isn't verifiable or falsifiable (Flew & Ayer).

What if I was operated on at birth to reverse my colour qualia (eg by switching neural pathways). We now have good empirical reasons to believe that my colour spectrum is opposite of yours. If I exhibit the same behaviour as you, this disproves functionalism as you have systems with the same outputs but different inputs.

- If I have exactly the same reactions to stimuli (e.g. when I see 'your' red, I feel warm), then I am in the same mental state
- There are 'fine grained' differences in our reactions
- Qualia cannot be given a complete functional definition

The Knowledge Argument (Mary's Room) - Jackson

Mary knows all the physical facts (including all functional facts) about what happens when we experience colour. Then she experiences red for the first time, would she learn anything new?

- Qualia may be a short-cut for very complex information. Colour (or pain) represent such a wide variety of information it would be impossible to understand them without a shortcut. We feel as if experiencing Qualia is different to a function but it isn't. Mary would know about qualia.

Absent Qualia.

If we can find examples which are functionally equivalent to the human mind, but are not minds, then functionalism is false (or, too liberal in its willingness to ascribe minds).

1. *Homunculi Head*: Your brain has been replaced by tiny people, each performing a specific function. Would the system of tiny people have a mind?
2. *Block's Chinese Mind/Gym*: The population of China replicates the functioning of your brain using radios. Some of these hook up to the nerves of a body. Is there 'Chinese consciousness'. If they replicate my brain when I am in pain, then who is in pain?. Or if the body steps on a nail, where is the pain?

- Yes, evidence can be found in watching any human behave. If you find it doubtful that any of these systems can have emergent qualia, then why not doubt the brain can have them too.
- Functionalism can't account for phenomenal/qualia properties on its own. These are a result of functional properties + physical properties of a system. E.g. Pain depends on our physiology. So a physical/functional duplicate will have the same mental state.

The Turing Test

Scientist *Alan Turing* addressed the issue of artificial intelligence in a paper in 1950 titled '*Computing Machinery and Intelligence*'. In this paper, he developed a test which could measure a machine's ability to exhibit intelligent behaviour equivalent to, or indistinguishable from, that of a human. Put simply, if a machine could engage in a conversation with a human being through a text based medium, and at least 60% of the time the machine is able to trick the individual into thinking it is human, then that machine could be said to have consciousness.

The Chinese Room

The Chinese Room thought experiment creates a scenario whereby you have a system which passes the Turing test and is functionally equivalent to a human but doesn't necessarily have consciousness. In this thought experiment, a non-speaking Chinese person in the room is passed questions in Chinese from outside the room, and the he/she consults their boxes of Chinese characters and book of instructions in order to find the adequate response to the question received.

Searle's argument focuses on intentionality, the feature of our mental states to be about something. He distinguishes between two forms of intentionality, 'as-if' and intrinsic.

- **'as-if' intentionality:** Possessed by things like rivers as they flow towards the sea or plants growing towards the light. Here there is the appearance that they water 'wants' to flow downhill but in such cases most people would not say that the river truly desires or intends too as it is not capable of this type of thinking.
- **'intrinsic' intentionality:** Supposedly possessed by minds.

Searle calls rule following or grammar in language, 'syntax' and the meaning we construct from those rules, 'semantics'. In other words, a computer or the room does not deal with meanings (semantics) but simply follows the rules of syntax – therefore meaning a computer can only ever simulate consciousness but never duplicate it.

- The entire system understands Chinese

Searle's response – the human could internalise the system, and still not know Chinese.

- The person/system does not understand Chinese but the example is too simple. Nobody would be fooled. We may have systems in the future that do understand.
- If we deny that the machine (room) has a mind, then we should deny that other humans have minds. Our only measure for ascribing minds is the behavior of others. Can we even explain what intrinsic intentionality is?
- Nothing has intrinsic intentionality, there is only as-if intentionality. Some systems like humans are just more complex than others.
- What if the 'room' were in the head of a robot, who could experience the world and the objects the sentences are 'about'?

Searle's response – Even then, the robot would only be dealing in syntax. It would be taking in more information, but not understanding.

Specification

01 September 2015 13:24

Mind–brain type identity theory: all mental states are identical to brain states ('ontological' reduction) although 'mental state' and 'brain state' are not synonymous (so not an 'analytic' reduction).

Issues, including:

- dualist arguments (above)
- issues with providing the type identities (the multiple realizability of mental states)
- the location problem: brain states have precise spatial locations which thoughts lack.

Mind-Brain Type Identity Theory

01 September 2015 16:22

The central claim of the identity theory is that the mind is the brain, and so each mental state or process is literally one and the same thing as a state or process within the brain. At present we do not know enough about the intricate workings of the brain to be able to say exactly what all mental states are in neurological terms, but the identity theory is committed to the idea that research can eventually identify what each thought, feeling or desire is in the brain.

Numerical and qualitative identity

According to *Leibniz's Law*, if we come across what appear to be two things, but discover that they share literally all their qualities, then they must in fact be one thing. Identity theory claim that everything that is true of the brain, all of its qualities, are identical with the qualities of the mind and therefore that the terms 'brain' and 'mind' refer to the same thing.

Identity theorists are not saying talk of the mind means the same as our talk of the brain. It clearly does not. For when I say I am experiencing a certain sensation or that I hold a specific belief, I do not mean the same as when I say that certain neurons are firing in my brain. So to say 'the mind is the brain' is not to claim that the 'mind' and 'brain' are synonymous. Rather, what is being claimed is that the mind and the brain happen, as a matter of empirical fact, to be the same. In other words, it is a scientific hypothesis that these terms refer to the same object and so the truth of identity theory is to be established by empirical investigation, not by philosophical analysis.

Ontological reduction.

Ontological reductions involve showing that beings or entities of one kind are in reality the same as entities of another kind. *Water is identical to H₂O, lightning is identical with an electrical discharge.* In the same way, the identity theorist claims that what we call mental states will turn out to be identical with brain states and neuroscience will eventually be able to reduce our FP concepts to neurological phenomena.

The physicalist argues that we know the brain exists, what it is made of, something about its internal structure, how it is connected to the muscles and sense organs and so forth. This knowledge is unfavourably compared with the lack of detailed or precise information the dualist can provide about the nature and workings of spiritual substance.

It is increasingly evident that there is a precise and systematic correspondence between different types of mental process and processes in the brain. *Evidence of real-time imaging techniques shows that activities like mental arithmetic are correlated with specific areas of the brain becoming active.* If the identity theory is correct, this is exactly what we would expect to see. Smart says that if states of consciousness cannot be accommodated within the physicalist picture, they would be 'nomological danglers', meaning they would not fit into a system of laws which govern everything else in the universe and this offends against *Ockham's razor*. So if we can explain mental phenomena in terms of the physical brain, and dualism has no explanatory advantage, then a physicalist account should be preferred.

If identity theory is correct and the mental is the physical then clearly the difficulty disappears. Identity theory may also be regarded as preferable to behaviourism because it can allow for a causal role for our mental states. If the identity theory is right, then behaviour is caused and so can be explained by mental states and processes – just as our common sense suggests they are. Considerations support some form of physicalism, but not the precise claim that there is a one-to-one correspondence. However, the identity theorist argues that no conclusive philosophical arguments are to be expected. As far as philosophy is concerned, the mind could be any bodily organ, the liver, the heart or whatever. But there are good scientific reasons for thinking the brain is responsible for consciousness.

Issues, Including:

01 September 2015 16:23

Talk about the brain doesn't mean the same as talk about the mind

Putnam considers a common objection to the identity theory names that it is initially implausible since the words we use to talk about our mental states and processes do not mean the same as our vocabulary of physical states and processes occurring in the brain. *If I complain that my C-fibres are firing, even if we know that this always happens when someone has a headache, surely this is not the same thing as when I complain of a headache.*

Smart considers this objection and observes that someone who has no knowledge of the brain can still speak meaningfully about his or her mental states. Knowing the meanings of mental vocabulary doesn't involve knowing anything about the brain. Any reduction of folk-psychological talk to talk about brain states will change the meaning of the terms.

- **Meaning and reference** - To deal with this, identity theorist can draw on a philosophical distinction between 'meaning' and 'reference'. Meaning refers to the way an identified thing is presented to the mind. Reference on the other hand is the actual thing in the world to which the meaning refers. What is clear is that it is quite possible for two terms which have different meanings to have the same reference. *The terms Morning Star and Evening Star have different meanings but they refer to the same object, namely the planet Venus.*
The same thing is going on with our talk of minds and of brains, identity theorists accept that our vocabularies of mental and physical states have different meanings. However, their claim is that they nonetheless refer to the same things. To say that C-fibres are firing does not mean the same as to say that pain is occurring. It is an ontological reduction rather than an analytical reduction. Identity theorists claim that there is a contingent identity between mental states and brain states. As *Smart* puts it, the claim is that to report that you have a mental state such as pain is to report a process that happens to be a brain process, as a matter of empirical fact. It is for this reason that the identity theory can only be established empirically, by advances in our understanding of neurophysiology.

The spatial location problem.

We can identify a property of mental states that brain states other don't have, identity would be refuted. Since brain states must have some spatial location, identity theorists are committed to saying that mental states have the very same location, size and shape. However, it is nonsensical to say that my belief that rabbits have long ears is two centimetres to the right of my desire for spaghetti Bolognese. Mental states are just not the sorts things that have spatial location, size or shape.

- Identity theorists can defend themselves against this objection by saying the fact that it sounds strange to ascribe spatial properties to mental states is just because ordinary language lags behind the neuroscientific advances we are now making. It can be pointed out that just because it makes no sense to ascribe certain spatial properties to states of mind, doesn't establish that they are not physical states. *E.g. being wet, it makes no sense to say that being wet is square, but this doesn't make it not a physical state. Such states are conditions of physical beings, not physical objects in their own right. These mental states cannot be given precise shape and sizes, but they do take place where the person having them is, and so do have spatial characteristics on a par with other types of physical state.*

Dualist arguments: appeal to the evidence of introspection.

Introspection reveals to me a world of thoughts, not a domain of electrochemical impulses. Mental states and properties are radically unlike neurophysiological states and properties, therefore they cannot be the very same things. Irreducibility of subjectivity, *for example the subjective experience of*

pain is an essential part of our concept of pain. Any attempt to reduce this experience to purely objectively observable neurological processes inevitably leaves something out.

- Identity theorists can respond saying that it is quite possible for the same thing to appear in different ways. Just as when discussing the masked man fallacy as a response to Descartes, the fact that the mind appears radically unlike the brain doesn't show that it isn't in fact the brain. Introspection may reveal to us the goings on in our brains, but only in a rather confused way. And we may well be able to discriminate between a great variety of neural states by introspection, without being aware of the detailed nature of those states.

The irreducibility of intentionality.

Intentionality is the property of certain conscious states. States of mind are necessarily about something, and 'intentionality' denotes the quality these mental states have that enables them to be about. No purely physical system can represent, or be about something in this sense. Physical material can only ever be what is and cannot point beyond itself to something else. If this is right, then brain states cannot be intentional, and so mental states cannot be reduced to the brain.

- Identity theorists can argue explain intentionality in terms of resemblance. Perhaps my brain is able to represent the Moon because its inner workings are able to picture the Moon in some way. Even if we can make sense of the idea that a brain state could resemble something, it still doesn't seem enough to explain intentionality. Another account suggests that brain states can be about a feature of the world if they are caused in the right way by that feature.

The chauvinism of the type-token identity theory.

Physicalism is a chauvinist theory, it withholds mental properties from systems that in fact have them. In saying mental states are brain states, this excludes poor brainless creatures who nonetheless have minds – Ned Block.

A type is a general class, a token is a particular instance of that class. For example, the word 'oak', as it is printed here, is a particular instance or 'token' of the word and instances like this can be repeated. These instances are all members of a general class or 'type'. In relation to the mind, if I wish it were Friday on Thursday this week and wish it were Friday on Thursday last week, then these mental states would be different tokens of the same type of mental state. The type of mental state, called 'wishing it were Friday' can be instantiated in the same person at different times and each occasion would represent a different token of that same type.

What the type-token theory says is that every type of mental state is identical with a particular type of brain state. This means that *seeing red occurs if and only if the 'R-fibre' fires in the visual cortex.* This can seem plausible for mental events like seeing colours, as it has relatively straightforward neurophysiological basis. However it is less plausible for other states of mind. Consider someone driving home wishing it were Friday, and then gets into an accident which also damages the F-fibres in her brain responsible for the mental state. If the person then recovers, are we going to want to say that this person could never have this wish again as this is what is implied by type-token theory.

The recovery of stroke victims also suggests that the brain can regain all kinds of functions by using different parts of itself to do the work, so it seems unlikely that a particular type of wish or belief could be numerically identical with a particular type of brain state.

Another consequence of this is the status of the mental life of other species. So when an animal exhibits pain behaviour, the brain events will be different from the brain events that go on in humans. If pain is a human brain process, then it seems to follow that animals without human brains cannot be in pain. This would also be applicable to aliens. Type-token theory is overly chauvinistic as it singles out human beings as the only proper possessors of mental states and unfairly denies them to other species.

- Identity theorists may adopt the token-token approach. This amounts to saying that different

types of brain state can be the same type of mental state at different times. While each token mental state is identical with a particular token brain event, there is no type-type identity, therefore mental states are multiply realisable.

The idea that the mind is multiply realisable is closely linked to the concept of supervenience. Mental states are said to 'supervene' on brain states if they depend on brain states for their existence and if there can be no changes in mental states without corresponding changes in brain states. At the same time, though, there can be changes in brain states without changes in mental states. *For example, the relationship between an object and its shadow.* The shadow depends for its existence on the object and no changes can occur in the shadow without changes occurring in the object. However, it is possible for changes to occur in the object without there being any change in the shadow. Mental states are multiply realisable – but that something must go on in the brain for there to be mental states.

Specification

01 September 2015 13:25

Eliminative materialism: some or all mental states do not exist (folk-psychology is false or at least radically misleading).

Issues, including:

- the intuitive certainty of the existence of my mind takes priority over other considerations
- folk-psychology has good predictive and explanatory power
- the articulation of eliminative materialism as a theory is self-refuting.

Eliminative Materialism

01 September 2015 16:23

Water is composed of hydrogen and oxygen, this reduction, however, leaves the existence of water intact. We just now have a fuller grasp of what it is. Identity theory claims that mental states will be reduced to brain states, our vocabulary of mental states will remain intact and we will still be able to truthfully talk about our beliefs, desires and sensations. Eliminative materialism however is sceptical about the chances of the neuroscience of the future being able to account for our folk-psychological concepts in terms of the brain. There will, be no 'smooth reduction' of mental states to the physical – eliminativists believe that mental states as they are currently understood do not exist.

By explaining disease in terms of bacterium we have been able to eliminate bad air from our vocabulary and from our picture of what exists. In the same way, the eliminativist argues that our vocabulary of mental states will be eliminated once we have a more advanced understanding of what makes us tick. Folk psychology is considered to be the theoretical framework by which we interpret and predict human behaviour. Eliminativism is claiming that this theory is literally false. All essential talk about beliefs, sensations, memories etc. is fundamentally flawed and misleading as an account of the causes of human beings' behaviour and cognition and the nature of their internal states. What is needed is neuroscience which can explain what is really going on in human beings, with no reference to the terminology we currently use to talk about the mind.

Paul Churchland argued for example, *it used to be thought that the sky was a great sphere that turns daily, allowing the sun and other heavenly bodies to rise and set.* Now we know that it is the rotation of the earth that produces the appearance of a sun which 'rises' at dawn and 'sets' at dusk, and so this folk understanding has had to be abandoned. This is different from a reduction, rather, all talk of the sun has been eliminated because it posits the existence of an entity which does not in fact exist.

According to eliminativism, once neuroscience has advanced sufficiently, all our folk psychological concepts can be dispensed with, just as *caloric* and sound particles have been. Eliminativists point to the failure of folk psychology to accurately explain much of how we function. We don't understand *for example, how we learn things, nor how memory works, why we sleep, or what happiness is.* The concepts used even in *modern psychiatry are deeply inadequate as an account of what goes on in mental illness.* Folk psychology is a theory which hasn't developed for thousands of years which Churchland says *'is a very long period of stagnation and infertility for any theory to display'*. Folk psychology harmonises poorly with the rest of our scientific understanding of human beings, we seem to be as far as we have ever been from being able to explain intentionality in physicalists terms. If intentional states cannot be accommodated within the rest of science then this gives us good reason to jettison them.

Issues, Including:

01 September 2015 16:23

The intuitive certainty of the reality of mental states

I am directly aware of the existence of desires, thoughts and pains, and therefore any theory that denies their existence has to be false.

- This objection, however need not be fatal. E.g. *Could you doubt the existence of caloric when I can feel it with my own hands as I place them by the fire? Similarly a believer in bad air might insist that it is real on the grounds that they can directly see people dying of its effects. How can anyone deny the sun rises when we can see it doing so daily with our own eyes.* These arguments assume that observation can occur independently of a conceptual framework; that experience delivers to us in the nature of what we observe with no mediation from our theoretical expectations. What the eliminativists is saying is that we need to rethink the background assumptions within which we identify beliefs, pains and so forth. Once we have a more sophisticated way of theorising ourselves, our internal states and behaviour, the phenomena will be conceived in different ways. Churchland makes the point by saying that judgements about your own mind don't have any privileged status, it is an acquired habit which depends upon the conceptual framework with which one is operating.

Folk psychology has good predictive and explanatory power

Churchland admits that folk psychology does enjoy a substantial amount of explanatory and predictive success. While nonetheless arguing that it's shortcomings are so serious that we need to reject it. However, are these failings really as terrible as he suggests? Folk psychology is able to predict and explain a good deal of what we observe in our own and other behaviour in a range of circumstances yet neuroscience doesn't come anywhere near to giving us an alternative. Until that happens we have a right to be sceptical that elimination is a genuine possibility.

Moreover, folk psychology is a human universal, every culture employs the same basic concepts. What explains this if it provides so misleading an account of our inner life and actions. Even supposing, for the sake of argument that we do develop an alternative, would we ever actually give up talking about each other thoughts, feelings etc. *We still talk about the sun rising and setting even though we know that in reality the Earth is turning.* Similarly, we may continue to use folk psychology for everyday human social exchange no matter what the neuroscience of the future teaches.

Churchland's claim that it is a stagnating theory is also false. We can point to contemporary work in the area of clinical psychology which employs the basic framework of folk psychology. *Cognitive Behavioural Therapy is one of the most successful treatments for conditions such as anxiety and depression;* far more successful than drug treatments which concern themselves directly with neurological mechanisms. Yet it is founded in folk-psychological notions such as that thoughts, feeling and sensations are causally interconnected. It may be that our FP concepts are part of our evolutionary heritage such that we would be incapable of social intercourse without them.

Eliminative materialism as a theory is self-refuting

If it is true, then there are no such things as beliefs. If there are no beliefs, then the proponent of eliminativism cannot believe the theory to be true. On the other hand, if it is meaningful it must express a genuine belief. But, in this case, since it denies there are such things as beliefs, it must be false.

- Churchland responds by pointing out that this objection presupposes the truth of FP in order to claim that the proponent of eliminativism cannot be making sense. He gives an analogous argument to show the circularity in the reasoning. *Defence of vitalism (life spirit) presupposes*

the existence of vital spirit in order to say that someone who denies it's existence must be dead. But those who reject vital spirit are giving an alternative account of what it is to be alive.

In the same way, the denial that beliefs are real would involve an alternative account of humans' internal life and behaviour.

However, what would be needed for the analogy with vitalism to work would be some account of an alternative to intentional states in which to frame the theory, but without this we can't even make sense of the claim that folk psychology is false since making sense of the claim involves presupposing that it is true.

Specification

01 September 2015 12:13

Utilitarianism: the maximisation of utility, including:

- the question of what is meant by 'pleasure', including Mill's higher and lower pleasures
- how this might be calculated, including Bentham's utility calculus
- forms of utilitarianism: act and rule utilitarianism; preference utilitarianism.

Issues, including:

- individual liberty/rights
- problems with calculation
- the possible value of certain motives (eg the desire to do good) and character of the person doing the action
- the possible moral status of particular relationships (family/friendship) we may have with others.

Introduction

07 September 2015 19:22

Is there any objective moral truth.

NO - there is no objective moral truth; View taken by Emotivists, Prescriptivists and Relativists.

YES - There is a truth that is objective and knowable; Utilitarian, Deontology and Aristotle

- Moral truths are transcendent
- Moral truths are natural facts

Normative Ethics - Why might we call and action a good one

Applied Ethics - Applying answers from normative ethics to real moral dilemmas

Meta Ethics - Is morality a human construction and "Do moral words have meaning"

Moral Naturalists.

People who believe moral truths exist are called moral cognitivists and studying the branch that believe that moral truths are related to facts about the world are called moral naturalists.

My view - ?

Jeremy Bentham

01 September 2015 12:18

Bentham was born in the 18th Century and lived during the industrial revolutionary period. This allowed him to witness the vast inequalities, exploitations and human rights violations that occurred during that time period. This greatly influenced not only his philosophical thought but his political work as a Member of Parliament. Contrary to his time, Bentham and his cohort James Mill campaigned for things like the abolition of slavery, civil rights, gay rights, equal rights, prison reform and even animal reform. All his ideas were based on his principle of utilitarianism which he believed could be found in nature.

★ For Bentham - "*Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters; Pain and Pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do as well as to determine what we shall do.*"

- **Act consequentialism** is the view that all actions are morally right or wrong depending on their consequences. The only thing that is good is happiness and no one's happiness is more important than anyone else's.

The principle of utility (greatest happiness principle) - "*The principle which approves or disapproves of every action whatsoever, according to the tendency it appears to have augmented or diminished the happiness of the party whose happiness is in question.*"

In judging action to be right or wrong, we should only take into account the total amount of happiness the action may produce.

An action is right as long as out of all the actions you could have had, the one you took caused the greatest happiness (just a bit or some, isn't enough for it to be a morally right act). Greatest happiness is therefore a comparative term, we can know empirically how much happiness our various actions cause.

Act utilitarianism leads to happiness by;

- 1) Consider the consequences of the different actions you could take
- 2) Choose the action that leads to more happiness than any other
- 3) Your action is moral

Bentham is a **psychological hedonist**, which is all our actions are aimed at obtaining pleasure and avoiding pain. We should all therefore follow a moral code that forces us to maximise happiness and minimise pain. We can judge how our actions affect others as well as ourselves by seeing how much pleasure than pain it brings into the world. Morally good actions bring about more pleasure than pain.

Utility/Hedonic Calculus

Bentham offers a guide as to how we are supposed to apply the principle of utility, in other words measure how much pain or pleasure an action brings so to maximise pleasure.

Each action must be measured by the amount of pleasure/pain brought to the person most directly affected by your action, to do this the calculus requires us to measure 4 things.

1. The **intensity** of the pleasure/pain
2. The **duration** of the pleasure/pain
3. The **certainty** of the pleasure/pain
4. The **remoteness** of the pleasure/pain

Then we must measure the effects of the pleasure or pain

5. The **fecundity** of the pleasure/pain; meaning how likely is it to reproduce more pleasure or pain

6. The **purity** of the pleasure/pain; meaning its tendency to only produce pleasure or pain
Then we consider the **effects on other individuals**

7. The **extent** of the pleasure or pain; how many people are affected by the action
You then calculate the total utility by using 1-7 to work out the amount of pain units and action brings and the amount of pleasure units it causes. If you have a range of actions available to you you must repeat steps 1-4 for all these actions, and choose the action which bring forward the most pleasure or pain.

- **It is impossible to compare pleasures;** different actions give different pleasures and there is no common currency of pleasure that which we could compare them with.
- **Quantity shouldn't be the only factor;** Bentham doesn't make the same distinctions as Mill between higher and lower pleasures, he thought only quantity mattered. He famously claimed *'the game of push-pin is of equal value with the arts and sciences of music and poetry'*.

Note: Bentham wasn't writing his philosophy for individuals but rather for governments and law makers as individual act utilitarianism could be used to justify people getting drunk on a every night as it would provide them with more pleasure. Bentham instead would have proposed the governments criminalises acts like being drunk as it would reduce the pleasure gained for the individual (by increasing the pain of going to prison) which would therefore form a general rule in society that all individuals would adhere too.

John Stuart Mill

01 September 2015 12:18

Mill wanted to move away from Bentham's act utilitarianism as it was counter-intuitive, difficult to measure and took too much time to work out. In act utilitarianism there are no general rules about how to behave, everything is relative to the scenario so there are no constant/universal good or bad acts. Mill first begins by differentiating between pleasures, creating what he called higher and lower pleasures. He then formulates a developed theory of utilitarianism called rule utilitarianism where he begins to develop rules which can be formed for the benefit of society as a whole. Following the rules of society gives an act its moral value.

Mill's Proof of Utilitarianism

Mill believed you couldn't deductively prove that something is good or not, you had to rely on inductive reasoning based on empirical evidence. Mill believed every action was aimed at the ultimate end of being happy, lots of observational evidence shows this so for Mill only happiness is desirable. Mill's argument is that happiness is good in three parts:

1. Sole evidence that happiness is desirable is that people actually desire it.
2. No reason can be given towards why people generally seek happiness aside from the fact that each person seeks their own happiness.
3. Each person's happiness is good for themselves, so the general happiness must be good for everyone. - "general happiness a good to the aggregate of all persons".

Objection to P1 and P2.

- G.E. Moore claims Mill commits the fallacy of equivocation, the word desirable could have two different meanings; one being what is 'worthy of being desired' (as shown in 2); and the other 'capable of being desired' (as shown in one). What people actually desire is not the same as what is worthy of being desired (what is good), Mill has assumed what people desire just is what is good; he hasn't spotted that these are distinct meanings of desirable.

Moore's objections misinterpret Mill as he is asking for evidence to show that something is worthy of being desired. He argues people in general desire happiness and unless we think we all desire what is not worth desiring then it looks like good evidence for utilitarianism. Everyone wants happiness, so it is reasonable to infer that happiness is desirable (good).

Objection to P3.

- Other philosophers have objected that Mill commits the fallacy of composition in 3, just because each person desires their own happiness, it does not necessarily follow that everybody desires everybody's happiness.

However, this is also a misinterpretation of what Mill has said as ethics is concerned with what is good in general, he is not trying to infer that we ought to be concerned for others' happiness. Having argued that happiness is good, it then follows from his assumption that ethics is impartial that we should be concerned with the general happiness as we should not favour anyone else's happiness over another's.

Other objections.

- It is controversial to claim that happiness is the only good, Mill has to argue that everything of value - truth, beauty, freedom etc. - derives its value from happiness. People desire many different things, many things we may desire as a means to happiness like buying a nice house or having a good job. But it isn't obvious that everything we desire is a means to happiness, e.g. truth. So going by the evidence, many different things, and not only happiness, are good.
- People do not generally always seek pleasure, i.e. Nozick's pleasure machine

Mill's response is to clarify further what happiness is, happiness has many ingredients such as truth and freedom, and each ingredient is desirable in itself. He explains this in terms of a distinction between 'external means' and 'constitutive means' to an end. Some means have an instrumental relation to their end, which means performing the means achieves the further, independent end.

Other means have a **constitutive relation**, this means the means and the end are sort of 'conflated'. Performing the means doesn't lead to a further independent end, but rather the end is in the action itself, e.g. laying down on a beach during your holiday. It is '*physically and metaphysically*' impossible to desire something that you don't think is a pleasure. As pleasure is happiness we only desire happiness, and therefore **happiness is the only good**.

Higher and Lower Pleasures

Mill believed the quantity only approach was not really necessary for utilitarianism, Bentham saw all pleasures (physical pleasures of the body and pleasures of the mind) as equal and a good act is simply one that maximises the overall quantity of pleasure. Mill however, argued that humans would prefer pleasures of the mind over those of the body, even if the pleasures of the body were more pleasurable. He called the pleasures of the mind **higher pleasures**, and the ones of the body **lower pleasures** - '*some kinds of pleasure are more desirable and more valuable than others*'. Although not every human would prefer higher pleasures, he claimed those who experienced both would always choose the higher pleasures over the lower ones - even if they were not as pleasant. Being able to experience both kinds is better than only being able to experience the lower kind - '*better to be a human dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied.*'

- This theory pushes Mill away from hedonistic utilitarianism, an act can be said to be better than another act even though it creates a lower amount of pleasure.
- Utilitarianism loses its simplicity and practicality by introducing the notion of quality. The quality distinction makes the application of the hedonistic calculus even harder still.
- Mill's philosophy can also be accused of cultural snobbery as it favours the likes and wants of things Mill and his friends over that of the general masses.

In Mill's defence, you can argue higher pleasures are most pleasant than the lower when you take into account their duration and 'quality'. Mill is also not claiming one is less pleasant than the other, but rather that they are different from each other. As red differs from blue, higher pleasures differ from lower pleasures and he claims we can't really compare the two side by side - instead we have to ask someone who has experienced both, which is better or worse. Mill refers to these individuals as **competent judges** as they have experienced both pleasures - '*what means are there of determining which is the acutest of the two...except the general suffrage of those who are familiar with both*'.

- However, if we are reliant on competent judges to say which of two options they prefer, then perhaps we should be aiming to maximise people preferences, rather than guess what will give them pleasure.

Mill on Conscience and Justice

For Mill, the essence of conscience is doing one's duty whatever that is, just because it is one's duty, without regard to any other interests. Doing so avoids the pain we feel when we neglect said duties. Our conscience doesn't encourage us to maximise happiness as much as it does to follow certain duties like avoiding murder or theft. However, Mill believes this is due to how we have been raised. Human psychology is highly flexible and we could cultivate our conscience to be associated just as strongly with the greatest happiness. If all forces that shape our conscience - internal and external - were directed towards achieving the greatest happiness, then our feelings of duty would apply just as strongly as promoting the general happiness.

Mill calls giving an account of justice '*the only real difficulty in the utilitarian theory of morals*'. We think of each action as a violation of justice

1. Violating someone's legal rights
2. Violating someone's moral rights
3. Not giving someone what they deserve, particularly failing to return good for good and evil for evil
4. Breaking a contract or a promise
5. Failing to be impartial when required

6. Treating people unequally

The distinct thing about the nature of justice is that it relates to actions which cause harm to a specific individual, who has the right that we do not harm them. Duties of justice are 'perfect' duties, we must always fulfil them regardless of the situation as other individuals have the right that we act morally. Other cases of wrong doing like not giving to charity in which no specific person can demand this of us are 'imperfect' duties - we have some choice in how we fulfil the obligation to help others. According to Mill, we have the rights that we have because the rules that prohibit harm and protect our freedom are more vital to our interests and the general happiness than any others. On Mill's view, we only have a right if our having that right contributes to the greatest happiness in the long run. We should thus establish that system of rights that would bring the most happiness, and then defend these rights.

- What if society would be more happy if people had less freedom in some cases
- In some occasions, violating my rights could create more happiness than not. Mill's theory doesn't offer enough protection in these scenarios. If my rights are justified by general utility, then doesn't the happiness created by overriding my rights justify violating them?
- Departs from act utilitarianism

'[j]ustice is a name for certain classes of moral rules, which concern the essentials of human well-being more nearly, and are therefore of more absolute obligation, than any other rules for the guidance of life; and the notion which we have found to be the essence of the idea of justice, that of a right residing in an individual, implies and testifies to this more binding obligation'

Act and Rule Utilitarianism

01 September 2015 12:19

Act Utilitarianism

Other *Bentham* was writing primarily for law makers, others took his theory to be an ethics that can be used by all. In other words, we should all appeal directly to the 'principle of utility' in order to judge what is right in any particular situations. **We must calculate the effects of each potential action, or 'act', on its own merits.** An action is right according to *'the tendency which it appears to have'* to maximise happiness. Bentham also says that the felicific calculus needs not be *'strictly pursued'* before each decision or moral judgment. It just needs to be 'kept in view'.

- Act utilitarianism has **counter-intuitive implications**, the morality of an act is based purely on the consequences instead of the nature of the act itself. In this way the ends can justify the means, as long as the end result is happiness. This goes against our intuition that the nature of the act itself (the means) is also important in the moral calculation.
- **Calculus is very difficult to follow** as it's often impossible to work out how much happiness something brings, even if it were, using the calculus would take too long when in fact some actions are made spontaneously. **Some aspects of the calculator are also unclear like remoteness and fecundity.**
- **You can never always know the consequences**
- Everyone's happiness isn't protected as act utilitarianism can justify the violation of **individual rights if 2 or more people gain happiness from it**
- Happiness and pleasure can be two different things
- No examination of **motive**; no recognition of the moral value of our motives for acting as we do. Utilitarianism fails to consider the fact that we talk about 'good people'; it doesn't recognise that our characters also have moral value.
- Doesn't take into account the moral status of particular relationships, utilitarianism is too idealistic it expects people to give priority to needy strangers over those they know and love. In the abstract, each person is equal, but to individuals, each person does not and should not count equally.

Rule Utilitarianism

Mill introduces the idea of **secondary principles** which are **rules which have been shown by experience to tend to produce the greatest happiness.** However, in some cases deviating from these secondary principles would create more pleasure in general, rule utilitarianism therefore offers a **two-level account of the rights and wrongs of actions.** He recommends we should all adhere to the secondary principle (rule) and only in times of a clash between two or more secondary principles should we revert back to the first principle (act utilitarianism) - *'Happiness is to complex and indefinite as a standard to apply to individual actions'*. Mill is a weak rule utilitarian.

Strong rule utilitarianism claims **we ought to keep to a rule no matter what the consequences may be of breaking it in a particular circumstance.** It is following the rule that gives an act its moral value, not the act in itself.

- Always following the rule may lead to **counter-intuitive** situations as it can lead to claiming that particular acts that had harmful consequences were the right thing to do
- **Formulated through experience so it's therefore not universal**

Weak rule utilitarian's say **it's the principle of utility that gives an act its moral value.**

- The **rules break down to act because of the exception**, if you have to keep checking if an act is in conflict then there's no need for the rule in the first instance
- The **rules don't have any moral significance if they can always be undermined** by a consideration of whether or not they are fit for purpose.

Positives.

- Simplicity
- Appeal to reason
- Makes us think of the happiness of others as calculating binds each person's actions to everyone else's
- Makes everyone's happiness equal

Positives.

- Based on past experiences rather than the use of calculator for individual acts
- Can change rules, improve them or make them better

Preference Utilitarianism

01 September 2015 12:22

Bentham and *Mill* argue that only happiness, understood in terms of pleasure, is valuable. But we can question whether this claim is correct. For example, **Bentham says that 'pleasure', 'interest' and 'happiness' come to the same thing.**

- **Something can be in my interest without my taking any pleasure in it**
- Bentham and Mill understand morality to require us to both produce happiness and decrease pain.
- **But are these morally equal? Is it more important not to cause harm than it is to cause pleasure?**

Robert Nozick asks us to imagine being faced with the chance of plugging into a virtual reality machine. This machine will produce the experience of a very happy life, with many and various pleasures and few pains. If we plug in, we will not know that we are in a virtual reality machine. We will believe that what we experience is reality. However, we must agree to plug in for life or not at all.

Nozick argues that **most of us would not plug in. We value being in contact with reality, even if that makes us less happy. We can't understand this in terms of the 'pleasure' of being in touch with reality,** because if we were in the machine, we would still experience this pleasure (we would believe we were in touch with reality). So we **cannot argue, with Mill, that being in touch with reality is a 'higher' pleasure.** It isn't a pleasure at all; it is a relation to something outside our minds. Nozick concludes that **pleasure cannot be the only thing of value.**

A different form of utilitarianism claims to be able to avoid these problems. **Preference utilitarianism** argues that what we should maximise is not pleasure, but the satisfaction of people's preferences. An action should be judged by the extent to which it conforms to the preferences of all those affected by the action.

1. The **satisfaction of many of these preferences will bring us pleasure,** but many will not. For instance, if people more strongly prefer not to suffer pain than to be brought pleasure, then that would explain the thought that it is more important not to cause harm.
2. If Nozick is right, **we prefer to be in touch with reality, but not because it brings us pleasure. Having this preference satisfied is valuable.**
3. We can also argue that **people have preferences about what happens after their death, e.g. to their possessions, and it is important to satisfy these as well, even though this cannot bring them any pleasure.**
4. We can also **appeal to preferences to explain Mill's claims about higher and lower pleasures.** He defends the distinction in terms of what people prefer. However, rather than talk about the value of types of pleasure, we could argue that **whatever people prefer is of more value to them** – whether or not most people would prefer pleasures related to thought, feeling and imagination.

Preference utilitarianism would argue lying is wrong not because it often leads to unhappiness, but because it goes against the preference we have to know the truth.

Peter Singer

Singer argues the basis for moral equality among humans cannot be derived from any specific talents as not all humans share them. The basis for our moral equality is our sentience, our ability to feel pain and pleasure – animals are also sentient. To not take into account their preferences would be an example of speciesism.

However, animals don't have conscious preferences so eating meat isn't always wrong as animals do not hold specific hopes about the future. What makes killing humans morally wrong is, killing goes against the specific preference of the victim. Staying alive is generally the strongest preference that anyone has. Animals do not have a conscious preference to stay alive so the painless killing of an

animal does not go against its preference. If someone killed your family pet then this would go against the preferences of the family so it would be a wrong act. Controversially, Singer extends this thinking to unborn babies saying they do not have conscious preferences.

- It would be wrong to try satisfy some bad or crazy preferences in some scenarios. E.g. Tas wants to drink the wine in her glass (she doesn't know it's poisoned).

Preference utilitarianism makes the distinction between a person's manifest preference (to drink the wine) and their true or idealized preference (to not drink the wine, if they knew it were poisoned). In such cases we should seek to fulfill their true preference. In some cases, young people, or people with severe mental restrictions, will lack sufficient understanding of the world to reach their true or idealized preference. As such, adults should sometimes seek to act in their interest.

- Preferences from a distance: James is now dead. He told his son to scatter his ashes on his favorite football club's pitch. The club charge £10,000 for this. Or Sammy would prefer that indigenous Amazonian tribes stay in the rainforest and avoid modern life. Should a preference utilitarian take account of these preferences when making decisions.

In the first example, an act utilitarian would argue the son could probably spend the money maximising happiness in better ways. A rule utilitarian might say that Bobby should keep his promise as promise keep in general will maximise happiness. A preference utilitarian would say we should try to fulfill the preference, as fulfilling preferences is the right thing to do. In the second example, Sammy simply just has a preference about how he wants the world to be. It seems a bit odd that we should take into account someone's preference about things when they have no direct causal connection to the people involved.

- Weighing up of preferences; Bentham as the calculus to quantify different pleasures and pains to help facilitate moral decision-making - preference utilitarianism lacks this. Does one person's preference override the thousands? Rule preference utilitarianism can find solutions, although the question of weighing preferences still remains.

In sum, **preference utilitarians can argue that they offer a more unified account of what is valuable than hedonist utilitarianism.** Pleasure is important, when it is, because **it results from satisfying people's preferences.**

Applied Ethics

18 February 2016 17:45

Crime and punishment.

Laws are only justified if they maximise utility. For SRU's it is always wrong to break a rule/law as the moral value of an act comes from the observance of the rule. For example, in 1930 Mahatma Gandhi encouraged thousands to march with him in India and extract salt directly from the sea, without paying salt tax to the British, which he thought unjust. For a weak rule utilitarian, you should follow just laws, but on those few occasions when happiness will clearly be gained by breaking the law, then it is morally right to break it.

For a utilitarian, punishment, because it brings about displeasure is a bad thing. Because all pain is bad, it has to be carefully justified. Bentham thought that it can only be justified if it prevents future harm. Bentham's works on punishment have been very influential and his was one of the first attempts to outline a system of punishment that had a rational basis. Punishment cannot be administered in the name of retribution for Bentham, they should be weighted so as to change people's motivations. All punishments should 'cost' more in pain than you could gain from the crime.

For a utilitarian, there is no intrinsic 'right to life': all rights serve to maximise happiness, so we can only justify the idea of right on the basis of utility and it may be the case that 'you have a right to life, unless you kill others' is the rule that best does this.

War.

In general, war is likely to be a bad thing, as it will lead to suffering. In Bentham's words: 'War is mischief upon the largest scale'. For an AU, a just war is one that is likely to lead to more overall happiness than if it were not fought. An act utilitarian cannot easily use the justification of 'national interest', as it is general happiness rather than nation-specific happiness that should be maximised.

Some claim that discussing a just war on utilitarian grounds, in practice, becomes an exercise in advocacy (justifying a specific outcome) rather than in reason. For example, is the world happier after the second Iraq War than it would have been without the war. A RU may argue that countries should collectively work out rules for when war is just, then subsequent decisions to go to war should be based on these rules.

A just war is one that is engaged in for reasons agreed by the rules, and the rules are just if they maximise utility. This is a close approximation to what happens in practice. The UN defines legitimate war as being restricted to legitimate defence and measures taken by the Security Council to maintain peace, and many countries will abide by these rules. In terms of fair warfare, an act utilitarian cannot view any method as being intrinsically immoral, so no act of war is ruled out absolutely. Any act can be justified as long as it maximises happiness. For an AU, the end justifies the means, it would be morally wrong to play by the 'fair rules' if this was likely to significantly lengthen the war and cause more suffering in the long term. However, decisions to 'fight dirty' should not be taken lightly as this has long lasting implications in terms of revenge, bad will, and repeated wars. So an AU could equally argue that winning a longer war by methods that are viewed as fair will prove to be better in the long term.

A SRU would again take the two-tier approach. Principles of conduct should be decided beforehand. Actions in any specific wars are then right or wrong, in accordance with the rules (and not the principles of utility). A WRU would argue that rules should be followed but in clear-cut cases the rules should be broken.

Simulated Killing.

For a utilitarian, there is something paradoxical in the 'pleasure' gained from watching people being

killed. All pleasures are equal for the AU. The pleasure of watching a fake killing is of the same worth as that gained from listening to opera or that gained from watching a real killing. What determines whether it is a good or bad thing overall, is whether the sum total of pleasure outweighs the pain. For Mill, the sorts of pleasure produced by violent films and video games may well be the wrong sorts of pleasure. Mill wanted utility to be about physical pleasure but 'utility in the largest sense, grounded on the permanent interests of man as a progressive being'.

Many people are offended by the existence of violent video games, should their displeasure be taken into account? The problem with taking into account offence of others is that this approach places too much power in the moral sentiments of the majority. Mill argued passionately that the secondary principle (rules) of liberty should play a central role in utilitarianism. We should all be free to pursue our own pleasures, as long as we do not harm others.

In summary, for a utilitarian, simulated killing is morally good as long as the pleasure outweighs the harm. Simulated killing is a clear source of happiness for millions: for a utilitarian, such things are morally good.

The Treatment of Animals.

Singer claims that the equality of interest can only be based on sentience, which is also shared with animals.

- P1. If only humans have full and equal moral status, there must be some special quality that all humans share that enables this
- P2. All human-specific candidates for such a quality, will be a quality that some human being lack.
- P3. The only candidates will be qualities that other animals have too.
- C. Therefore, we cannot argue that only human beings deserve moral status.

Singer sees our treatment of animals as akin to racism calling it speciesism. Singer, though does not argue that animals should have all of the same rights as humans, e.g. the right to vote etc. In the same way men do not have the right to an abortion as it is irrelevant to their bodies.

So, for a utilitarian, all pleasure/pain is equally worth counting whether it is a victim's, a criminal's or an animal's.

Deception and Lying.

Lying is completely morally acceptable if it maximises happiness/minimises harm. In fact, in such instances not only would lying be morally acceptable, but it is the right thing to do – we ought to lie.

For rule utilitarian's, lying has a default position of being wrong. We can conclude from these that, in general, lying will cause more harm than good. The rule 'Tell the truth' is one that will maximise utility. So, for a strong rule utilitarian, it is always wrong to tell a lie as the moral value of the act depends on whether it is in accordance with the rule. A weak rule utilitarian would, in general, tell the truth but occasionally lie if it was clear that lying would maximise happiness.

Preference utilitarian's argue rather than focusing on whether a lie would bring more happiness, the theory suggests we should focus on whether a lie would satisfy more preferences. This is significant as most people have a preference to be told the truth, which further justifies the default position of truth telling.

Specification

01 September 2015 12:14

Kantian deontological ethics: what maxims can be universalised without contradiction, including:

- the categorical and hypothetical imperatives
- the categorical imperative – first and second formulations.

Issues, including:

- the intuition that consequences of actions determine their moral value (independent of considerations of universalisability)
- problems with application of the principle
- the possible value of certain motives (eg the desire to do good) and commitments (eg those we have to family and friends)
- clashing/competing duties.

Deontology

16 December 2015 14:05

Deontology is simply the belief that morality is a matter of duty. Whether something is right or wrong doesn't depend on its consequences. Actions are right or wrong in themselves. We have general duties towards anyone and special duties resulting from personal relationships. So *for example, do not lie, do not murder or helping people in time of need are general duties*. Whilst *being a parent comes with the duty of having to care for your children*.

We each have duties regarding our own actions rather than the actions of other, so I have a *duty to keep my promises not make sure promises are kept*. Deontologists think out duties are quite limited, there are a limited number of things that which we are prohibited from doing, otherwise we are free to act as we please. For many deontologists, the moral worth of an action is on the basis of the intention of the agent. Actions are the result of choices, and so should be understood in terms of choices.

Kant's Deontological Ethics

Three key terms.

Maxim: Personal principle that guides decisions (intention) *e.g. 'to have as much fun as possible', 'to only marry someone I truly love'*.

Morality: A set of principles that are the same for everyone and that apply to everyone

The Will: Our ability to make choices and decisions. We can make choices on the basis of reasons, so our wills are rational.

The Good Will.

The Good Will according to Kant is the only thing that is morally good 'without qualification'. Other things we presume to be good can be in some cases bad, even happiness which according to utilitarianism is the highest good needs to be qualified with morality. *If someone is being made happy by hurting others, then their happiness is morally bad* which means having a morally good will is a precondition to deserving happiness.

What is good about the Good Will is not what it achieves, rather that it is good 'in itself'. If someone tries their hardest to do what is morally right but they don't succeed, then we should still praise their efforts as morally good.

Duty.

Kant's conception of duty simplified is to do one's duty (what is morally right) because it is one's duty (because it is morally right). So *for example a shop-keeper who only gives the correct change to his customers so not to attain a bad reputation is not motivated by duty*. It is possible to act in accordance with duty and do what is morally right, but our actions have no moral worth unless they are motivated by duty.

The Categorical Imperative is in accordance with the Good Will as it doesn't specify any particular end or goals such as happiness. It only mention the idea of a principle for everyone, a universal law in which people can choose to follow.

Kant's Moral Philosophy Simplified.

- The good will is the source of moral worth
- A good will is one which acts for the sake of duty
- Moral duty is the necessity of acting out of reverence for the moral law (We experience duty as a feeling of obligation)

- Moral laws must be **universal**
- As rational beings we are **morally obliged** to '*Act according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law without contradiction*'. (The CI, Universal law formulation).
- To use the categorical imperative you **work out the underlying maxim**
- Can you **conceive** of a world with this maxim as a law (Acting on this maxim is always wrong, you have a perfect duty not to act on it).
- Can you **rationaly will** that this be a universal moral law (Acting on this maxim is sometimes wrong, you have an imperfect duty not to act on it)
- If action passes both tests, the action is morally permissible.

"Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never merely as a means to an end, but always at the same time as an end". (The humanity formulation).

Imperatives

01 September 2015 12:20

An 'imperative' is a command.

Hypothetical Imperatives.

Hypothetical imperatives are statements about what you ought to do, on the assumption of some desire or goal. They specify a means to an end. So *if you want to see the show, you ought to get to the theatre at least 15 minutes early*. Hypothetical Imperatives (HI) are conditional with the desire describes in the antecedent (you want to see the show), and the command the consequent (get to the theatre at least 15 minutes early).

Kant argues willing the end entails willing the means. It is an analytic truth that someone who wills the end will will the means. To will an end is to will an effect, but the concept of an effect contains the concept of a cause. Hence, to will an effect, you must will the cause. The cause is the means. It is important that you don't merely want the end, but actually will it.

HI's can be avoided by simply giving up the assumed desire or goal. Suppose I don't want to see the show - then I don't need to get to the theatre early.

Categorical Imperatives.

It is possible to 'opt out' of a hypothetical imperative. However the same isn't true of morality. Moral duties are not hypothetical, They are what we ought to do, full stop. They are 'categorical'. Kant also argued that moral duties aren't means to some further end, because what makes an action good is that it is willed by the good will - which is good in and of itself.

All categorical imperatives - our moral duties - are derived from one, the Categorical Imperative. 'Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law'.

The First Formulation of the Categorical Imperative

01 September 2015 12:23

There are two different ways in which we could fail to be able to will our maxim to become a universal law.

Contradiction in Conception.

The first test simply asks if a situation in which everyone acted on that maxim would create contradictions. So for example, if you steal something because you can't afford it, your maxim would be 'to something I want if I can't afford it'. However, this can only be the right thing to do if everyone could do it. If we could all just help ourselves to whatever we wanted then the idea of owning things would disappear.

Stealing presupposes that people own things, and people can only own things if they don't go around helping themselves to whatever they want. So it is logically impossible for everyone to steal things, therefore the intent to steal is morally wrong as it involves making an exception for yourself that cannot be willed for others.

Contradiction in Will.

Contradiction in will are maxims which aren't necessarily contradiction in conception, but are laws we cannot rationally will. So for example, a refusal to help other people, ever. This law is logically possible to universalise, but it would create an unpleasant world to live. However, this should not be a problem for deontologists as Kant does not claim an action is wrong because we wouldn't like the consequences. His test is whether we can rationally will that our maxim (not helping any one, ever) be a universal law, and according to Kant we can't.

1. A will, by definition, wills its ends (goals)
2. To truly will the ends, one must will the necessary means
3. Therefore, we cannot will a situation in which it would be impossible for us to achieve our ends
4. It is possible that the only available means to our ends, in some situations, involves the help of others
5. We cannot therefore will that this possibility is denied to us
6. Therefore, we cannot will a situation in which no one ever helps anyone else.

To do so is to cease to will the necessary means to one's ends, which is effectively to cease to will any ends at all. This contradicts the very act of willing.

Morality and Reason.

Kant argued that it is not just morally wrong to disobey the CI, it is also irrational as failing to obey the CI involves a self-contradiction. Through the CI, reason both determines what our duties are and it gives us the means to discover them. Morality is universal, the same for everyone, so is reason, says Kant. Morality and rationality are categorical; the demands to be rational and moral don't stop applying to you even if you don't care about them.

The Second Formulation of the Categorical Imperative

16 December 2015 14:52

Kant's second formulation of the Categorical Imperative (CI), is also known as the Formula of Humanity. It requires that we never treat others 'simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end'. Kant argues all individuals have 'intrinsic worth', which he identifies as 'dignity' by virtue of being rational being. By 'humanity', Kant means our ability to rationally determine which ends to adopt and pursue.

Kant says that because people are ends in themselves, we must always treat them as such, and never 'simply as a means. We can use people as means in some scenarios (in relation to the hypothetical imperative), but we must also respect them as ends (in relation to the categorical imperative).

To treat someone simply as a means, and not also as an end, is to treat the person in a way that undermines their power of making a rational choice themselves. Secondly, treating someone as an end allows them to freely pursue the ends that they adopt. This gives moral worth to their actions as morality lies in the agents choice/intention to act according to the Good Will rather than the action itself.

Thirdly, someone being an end in themselves means that they are an end for others. We should adopt their ends as our own, meaning we should help them pursue their ends, just as we pursue our ends. The second formulation requires that we help other people, this should be one of our ends in life.

Objections to Deontology

16 December 2015 14:14

Problems with the application of the principle

In some cases, any action can be justified as long as we phrase the maxim cleverly. In stealing the gift, I could claim that my maxim is *'To steal gifts from large shops and when there are three letters in my name (Bez)'*. Universalising this maxim would mean only people with three letters in their name would steal only gifts and only from large shops. The case would apply so rarely that there would be no general breakdown in the concept of private property. So it would be perfectly plausible for this law to apply to everyone.

- Kant's response is that his theory is concerned with my actual maxim, not a clever made up one. We have to be honest with ourselves about what our maxims are, which in this case is taking what I want when I can't afford it.

A second example is, say I am a hard-working shop-assistant, who hates the work. One day I win the lottery, and I vow *'never to sell anything to anyone again, but only ever to buy'*. This is perhaps eccentric, but it doesn't seem morally wrong. But it cannot be universalised as it creates a logical contradiction. So perhaps it not always wrong to do things which requires other people do something different.

The importance of consequences.

Utilitarians object that Kantian deontology is confused about moral value. If it is my duty not to murder for instance, this must be because there is something bad about murder. Because murder is bad, we should try to ensure that there are as few murders as possible even if this means murdering someone.

- Kant's response would be to say a good will is not to be analysed as a will that wills good ends.

However, utilitarianism understands all practical reasoning as means-end reasoning; it is rational to do whatever brings about a good end. They argue it's obvious that if something is good, more of it is better, and we ought to do what is better.

- Kant disagrees and offers an alternative theory of practical reasoning. Means-end reasoning is appropriate for hypothetical imperatives, but not everything else, as it would be irrational to act in a way that not everyone could act in. If rationality were only about means to an end reasoning, then we can't say that any ends - such as other people - are obligatory. Morality becomes hypothetical, making it similar to other desires and purposes we may or may not have.

Mill's response to this is that happiness is the only desirable end. But, once again, Kant has argued that happiness is not always good.

Personal relationships.

Kant makes the motive of duty, the only motive that has moral worth, and says that doing something good for someone else because you want to is morally right, but not morally good. *If you visit your friend at the hospital because you feel it's your duty, rather than because you felt the need too, the person then has every right to get upset.* We can object that putting duty above feelings in our motive is somehow inhuman and makes us almost robotic.

- Kant can respond by saying he is not trying to stop us from being motivated by our feelings, rather our feelings shouldn't be at the forefront of our moral decisions. Instead we should be motivated to do what is morally right because it is morally right.

However, suppose *a man is in a boating accident with both his wife and a stranger. Neither can swim and he can only rescue one.* If he thinks 'She's my wife and it is morally permissible that I rescue her', seems to miss the particular importance that being married has, including its moral importance. The man has 'one thought too many' and we can object to his way of thinking about what to do.

- Kant could reply by saying you don't actually need to have such a thought. His theory, after all is how we can tell whether something is right or wrong, not how we should actually think all the time. So being morally good only in a sense requires you to not be involved in doing something that is morally wrong.

Conflict of duties.

Kant argues that our moral duties are absolute. A duty is absolute if it permits no exceptions. Nothing can override a moral duty, because it is categorical. All other ends have their worth in relation to the good will. But the good will is motivated by duty. However, this causes problems in cases in which it seems that two absolute duties conflict with each other. *Should I break a promise or tell a lie? Should I betray a friend or save a life?* In situations like this, Kant's theory implies that whatever I do must be wrong.

- One response is to say that real conflict of duties can never occur. If there appears to be a conflict, we have misunderstood what at least one duty requires of us. If duties are absolute, we must formulate our duties very, very carefully to avoid them conflicting.

However, we can object and say it is more realistic simply to say that most duties are not absolute. *For instance, there is a duty not to lie, but it may be permissible to lie in order to save someone's life.* Less important duties can 'give way' to more important ones in cases of conflict.

- *Rachels* argues that Kant was right that we must be consistent in moral judgements. But Kant was wrong to think that consistency requires absolute rules, no exceptions. Instead, when we break a rule, we need a good reason to do so, a reason that we are willing to accept other people acting on as well.

However, this solution must reject the basis of Kant's theory of morality, his whole analysis of duty is that it is categorical. Making exceptions in some cases requires us to focus on the consequences of the action rather than the intention itself, this was precisely what Kant's ethical theory sort out to avoid in the first place.

Applied Ethics

18 February 2016 17:44

Crime and Punishment.

For Kant, freedom is gained internally, by being able to follow maxims and use reason and externally by being able to set and pursue our own ends without being impeded by the choices of others. In a state of nature, we lack external freedom as other people's choices may be imposed on us and there is no way to deal with this. Laws allow us each to have the maximum freedom that can co-exist with everyone else's freedom. Kant calls the idea of a civil society a 'rightful condition' and rational beings have a duty to enter into it.

A criminal hurts the state through her actions and by reversing the maxim back on her, the state heals itself and the law is restored. The government/state has a duty to carry out these punishments, as this is required by the definition of the state. So, according to Kant, whatever criminals do, we should do back to them. *If they steal property, they should lose property. If they kill, they should be killed.* Kant thinks this is justified by a principle of equality: if you are prepared to act on a maxim that breaks the law, you should expect that maxim to be used on yourself.

"Whatever undeserved evil you inflict upon another within the people, that, you inflict upon yourself".

Kant argues that the ancient system of an eye for an eye is the just system of punishment. He does however, acknowledge that sometimes the punishment may not be exactly the same as the crime. For Kant, the key purpose of punishment is retribution.

Kant was critical of a utilitarian approach to punishment. *Rachels* outlines how utilitarianism is in breach of the humanity formulation.

'If we imprison the criminal in order to secure the well-being of society we are merely using him for the benefit of others. This violates the fundamental rule that 'one man ought never be dealt with merely as a means subservient to the purpose of another.' Punishing for the purposes of retribution is to treat some as a person, as an end in themselves. For humans, to use punishment to train people is to treat them like animals that are incapable of reason. To punish someone for what they did as retribution, is to treat them as a rational person who is morally responsible for their actions.

For Kant, you cannot rationally will that the law should not function, as this would be to will a return to a state of nature, which itself does not allow for the full expression of the will/autonomy.

War.

Much as humans have a duty to leave the state of nature and enter a rightful condition, so do states. When states have a dispute. What they should do is enter a rightful condition and settle disputes by reason: with reference to an independent, third agency 'above them'. However, there is no state of states that can act as the law maker and settle the disputes between states. He believed that human rationality would lead eventually to a state of perpetual peace with some sort of league of states established. Just as humans have a duty to work towards the kingdom of ends, so states have a duty to work towards perpetual peace and the league of states.

For Kant, the only just war would be acting in self-defence and its purpose would be to return to peace. Much in the same way that an individual has a duty to protect his or her life, so a state has a duty to protect itself.

Simulated Killing.

For Kant the moral value of watching/playing simulated killing is not dependent on the

consequences of such activities, but on whether it is possible to consistently will that you should watch them, and whether watching them is consistent with treating others as rational autonomous beings.

Kant argues that morally we can treat non-human animals as a mere means to our ends, as animals lack the rationality required to have ends themselves. However, he does not think this gives us the licence to be cruel to animals.

Kant believes we have a duty to show our humanity towards mankind. Our moral nature is our ability to treat others as ends in themselves – see them as rational, autonomous beings. I cannot will that my ability to do this should diminish, as, when universalised, I would be willing that other people's ability to see me as an autonomous being should diminish.

This means we have a perfect duty to encourage our own ability to treat others as ends. For Kant, this involves an imperfect duty to sympathise with the suffering of other creatures and to '*cultivate the compassionate natural (aesthetic) feelings in us*'.

It could be suggested that watching people violently die on films, or killing them violently in video games, makes us less compassionate towards others. Such entertainment may encourage us to see other people as means to an end. If this were so, then we have a duty not to watch these films or play these games.

Treatment of animals.

For Kant, the only source of good is a good will. Freedom/autonomy is the supreme moral principle. For Kant, animals lack this autonomy. They are driven by instinct and do not have the ability to reason: to weigh up options and ask themselves what they should do. Because they do not have the ability to conceptualise what they should do, animals do not pursue ends. Because of this, we do not have to treat them as being with ends themselves but as beings with moral status.

- It would seem to require us to treat humans that cannot reason, that lack the ability to work out what they should do, as having moral no worth. For Kant, we also have no reason to treat them as autonomous being with ends in themselves.

As above, Kant believed we have an imperfect duty not to be cruel to animals, because we have a duty towards moral self-perfection.

Deception and lying.

As with promises, it would seem that you cannot universalise a maxim of telling lies. The whole concept of lying relies on the concept of truth-telling, if everyone lied, then lies would not deceive. Lying undermines the individuals ability to pursue their own ends, you're not treating them as rational people with their own ends. In telling the truth, we allow people to pursue their own ends, make up their own minds. In the *axeman scenario*, Kant claims you have a duty to tell the truth in that scenario which most people find odd, although there is also no moral requirement to speak at all in this scenario.

Many philosophers suggest that the universal law formulation of the categorical imperative does not require you to tell the truth at all times. It seems perfectly possible to rationally will that everyone should follow maxims such as '*I will always tell the truth, except if in telling the truth I put someone's life at risk*'. These do not seem to lead to any contradiction. Furthermore, we have an imperfect duty to help others, so not only is lying morally permissible, it may also be the right thing to do.

The humanity formulation however is less flexible, when we lie to someone, we are overriding that person's ability to make rational choices and therefore merely using them as a means to an end.

Specification

01 September 2015 12:15

Aristotle's virtue ethics: the development of a good character, including:

- 'the good': pleasure; the function argument and eudaimonia
- the role of education/habituation in developing a moral character
- voluntary and involuntary actions and moral responsibility
- the doctrine of the mean and Aristotle's account of vices and virtues.

Issues, including:

- can it give sufficiently clear guidance about how to act?
- clashing/competing virtues
- the possibility of circularity involved in defining virtuous acts and virtuous people in terms of each other.

Students must be able to critically apply the theories above to the following issues:

- crime and punishment
- war
- simulated killing (within computer games, plays, films, etc)
- the treatment of animals
- deception and the telling of lies.

"The Good" - Pleasure, The Function Argument and Eudaimonia

01 September 2015 12:20

Virtue ethics **focuses on the individual person**, rather than an individual course of action unlike other normative theories who agree the action carries the moral weight – Virtue theory in this sense is **agent centred**.

A virtue is a disposition possessed by good people. *So for example, we say someone is kind (has a kind disposition) when they tend to be kind to others.* A disposition is **not a one-off act**. Aristotle held the belief that **everything in the universe has a purpose or function**. Aristotle's claim is that **everything we do has a purpose or an end**, and that this end is itself also aimed at some further purpose or goal. *For example, a saddler makes bridles with the aim of controlling a horse, the aim of controlling horses is to develop the art of warfare which can be extended to having the further goal of leading to a safer Athens.*

Aristotle reiterates that **there is one end that we all aim at** and by ranking goals we eventually arrive at a goal that is the highest: **the supreme Good**.

Aristotle outline the criteria for the **supreme Good** as:

- It **must be an end**
- It **must be the final end**
- It **must be self-sufficient**
- It **must be a life that we all want**
- It **must be something that is related to us as human beings.**

Eudaimonia

Eudaimonia is identified with living well and doing well in life in the way that we would fare well if a benevolent spirit did guide each of us through it, it **basically means 'flourishing'**. It's a life that needs nothing added to it to make it more complete, one that is **the final end of all we do**.

Aristotle considers plausible candidates for the Good life including pleasure, wealth, honour and goodness. He **argues goodness alone cannot be Eudaimonia**, *'those who maintain that, provided he is good, a man is happy on the rack...are talking nonsense'*. **Eudaimonia is the kind of life we're all striving for**, and goodness or virtue cannot by itself guarantee Eudaimonia; **for our lives to go well, we need to have external goods like freedom**, safety, a home, warmth as well as goods internal to our selves or our souls.

(Read Function Argument)

At the end of the function argument, Aristotle gives his clearest definition yet of the good life for humans; *'an activity of the soul in accordance with virtue (or if there are more than one kinds of virtue, in accordance with the best and most perfect kind).'* **For something to be good, and function well. It needed certain special qualities**, arête, which **can be translated as 'excellence'**.

Virtue is connected to function and goodness for Aristotle. In order **to be good, you need to fulfil your function well**, but in order to fulfil your function well **you need to excel in the right ways** – you need to possess virtues. In order to be a good human, you need to **excel in the characteristic activity of a human**, which is determined by the rational parts of our soul. The good life for humans, Eudaimonia, is therefore achieved through virtue (arête): **Excelling in the rational parts of the soul**.

- **Happiness, or flourishing, is something that we work towards over our whole lifetime**
- Flourishing, is **reached in part through the exercise of reason**, it is much easier for people to flourish if they live in a comfortable and safe society than if they live in a state of fear, or war, or hunger, or poverty. Without exercising our reason we will not flourish even if we do have an abundance of external goods.
- **Happiness, or flourishing isn't something we are born with, but is something we strive to**

achieve through habituation and training.

The Function Argument.

If we want to know how to be eudaimon, we must analyse how we can function well as humans. We refer to something as good if that thing has a recognised function and secondly is it fulfils its function really well. Thus *a good can-opener fulfils its function well because it has the appropriate arête (excellence or virtues) - It is sharp, safe, easy to handle etc.*

Aristotle believed that we have a function that goes above and beyond the one prescribed for us through any role we might have in society. This is our function as human beings, by understanding our function as humans, we would understand how we could be good, and this was the key to happiness. Aristotle has 3 aims in his function argument.

- To show that the Good for humans consists of us fulfilling our distinct function (ergon)
- To show that humans do actually have a distinct function
- To say precisely what this function is

Aristotle draws a clear connection between the instrumental goodness of a human, with the overall Good for a human. If we consider any class of people who have specific functions *e.g. flute players*, then the goodness of the flute player is determined by their performance of that function. The same is true for humans, our goodness as humans is determined by whether or not we fulfil our function well as humans.

We must perform well to become a good human, and in doing so we will be living the good life for a human. Aristotle gives two arguments to support this claim, although they are more or less rhetorical questions. Firstly, people with different occupations have a function, is it likely that all these occupations have a function while 'man has none'? Secondly, we can see that parts of a human body, our eyes, our hands, and feet, all have a function, so shouldn't we assume that a human being as a whole has a function?

- First criticism is that it appears that Aristotle is offering a very weak argument from analogy to support his conclusion. An analogy is at its strongest when the two things being compared are very similar to one another. When two things are alike in some respects, they are also alike in a further respect. Aristotle seemed to have selected a very small number of random things which have a function and concluded that like these things, humans have a function too.
- Aristotle is guilty here of a fallacy of composition, just because the parts of something share a common feature does not mean that the whole has that common feature.

Aristotle's best defence is that he isn't providing an argument here at all, but he is simply articulating his teleological assumptions, namely that everything is directed towards some purpose. Parts within human life can only be seen to have a meaningful function if the whole to which they contribute itself has a purpose.

- Scientists no longer need teleological explanations to account for the processes of the natural world, something only has a function if it is specifically assigned a function, and unless you believe in God then it is hard to see how humans have a function.

Alasdair MacIntyre argues we should understand moral good in terms of how they are embodied in many different 'social practices' such as teaching, football etc. Each of these practices has its own sets of virtues, its own goals, its own telos, and these goods are realised through our attempts to reach that standard of excellence. Our human 'function' is therefore identified through our engagement in a plurality of social practices and is not identified with any one single activity.

An alternative way of proceeding with Aristotle's project however is by understanding the human ergon not in the sense of 'function' but in the sense of a characteristic activity that distinguishes us from other creatures. Which begs the question, what is our specific ergon?

'There remains, then a practical life of the rational part, life determined by activity'. Aristotle

believed that it is our reason which distinguishes us from plants and animals. "*The function of man is an activity of the soul which follows or implies a rational principle*". When Aristotle talks about the 'soul' he is not talking about a separate spiritual side of our self. The soul was a kind of 'blueprint' or 'form' for a living being. So our function, is determined by the kind of soul that we have. Humans have a rational soul and so our function is to exercise the rational parts of our soul.

- P1. The good life for a human is determined by the life of a good human
- P2. Everything has a function (ergon).
- C1. Therefore humans must also have a ergon.
- P4. Our function is our characteristic activity determined by our soul.
- P5. Only humans have a rational soul
- P6. Our characteristic activity lies in the rational aspects of the soul
- C2. Therefore the function of a human is to exercise the rational aspects of our soul
- P8. To be a good X requires X fulfilling its function well through exercise of the appropriate arête.
- P9. Therefore to be a good human requires exercising those virtues through the rational aspect of the soul.
- C3. Therefore the good life for a human is determined by exercising those virtues through the rational aspects of the soul.

Pleasure and the Good

Aristotle wanted to avoid the claim made by other ancient philosophers that pleasure was the supreme good. Aristotle thought that seeking pleasure as the sole end is only a life fit for cattle, but not for humans who have rational souls and must excel in all parts of their soul if they wish to flourish. *An anecdotal example is that of George Best who failed to fulfil his real potential and turned into an alcoholic playboy.* In a hedonistic sense, he was happy, but in Aristotelian terms he was not happy – he wasn't eudaimon, he was no longer flourishing.

On the other hand, Aristotle believed pleasure to be an important feature in the development of virtue and nurturing of ethica arête. We start out trying to develop excellent dispositions, it is difficult but over time, we find that we begin to enjoy these actions and get pleasure. This makes us more inclined to do those types of actions in the future, so we become disposed to kindness, justice etc. Moreover, although Aristotle rules out indulging in physical pleasures, he also rules out as a vice (kaika) the avoidance of all bodily pleasures. Some sensual pleasures should be actively encouraged so long as any indulgence is avoided.

The middle way between the view that pleasure is the good, and the view that pleasure has no part to play in the good is the route taken by Aristotle. The hedonist is not actually saying anything concrete when they say we aim at pleasure, because pleasure is too vague a term, and is dependent on the activity being done. For Aristotle, pleasure supervenes on activities, it does not exist separately from any activity. Aristotle, like Mill, believed that some activities are superior to others.

A life of a good human = a good life for a human.

The Role of Education/Habituation

01 September 2015 12:24

Ethica arête or 'moral virtue' or 'excellence of character; describes a person who, because they react in the right way to the world, demonstrate a number of different traits.

"Moral virtues are engendered in us neither by nor contrary to nature; we are constituted by nature to receive them, but their full development in us is due to habit." Nature has a role to play insofar as we are born with certain pre-dispositions or potential, but **potential only becomes actual through exercise, practice, action and habit**. Habituation is a type of education we undergo through **repetition**. When developing a particular character trait, for example kindness, we may start slowly perhaps even unwillingly. But we can learn to **become kind by repeatedly acting in a kind way** - *'Like actions produce like dispositions.'*

Habituation is how we start to develop ethica arête. To be good and have ethica arete you must not just act in a good way, but you must also act as good people act. To be ethica arête, you must **do good acts in a certain way, with a certain attitude, and having a certain history of similar acts behind you**. Someone who has ethica arête has learnt by ethica arête to do virtuous acts, enjoy doing virtuous acts and have a **disposition to always act virtuously**.

The Doctrine of the Mean – Virtues and Vices

01 September 2015 12:26

For Aristotle, there are three types of disposition associated with the indulgence in our desires. The first is the hedonistic person who overindulges. The second is the ascetic person who turn their back on all pleasures. The third is someone able to avoid excess and deficiency of pleasure, and who is temperate. *'we have a bad disposition...if our tendency is too strong or too weak, and a good one if our tendency is moderate'*. Aristotle therefore offers a prescriptive guide to action like the other normative theories.

- **Mill's utilitarian ethics:** act in a way that maximises happiness and minimises pain.
- **Kant's deontological ethics:** act in a way that conforms with the categorical imperative.
- **Aristotle's virtue ethics:** Act in a way that finds the middle ground between over-reaction and under-reaction.
- If the doctrine of the mean is a recommendation for moderation, then should all people show the same degree of anger in all scenarios. Should everyone avoid an excess, or deficiency, of anger and should display only a moderate amount of anger? Sometimes a moderate response simply isn't an appropriate response. It is more reasonable to expect that there will be different displays of anger according to the situation.

"Virtue discovers the mean and chooses it... the virtue is a mean: but in respect of what is right and best, it is an extreme." The first part of the quote makes it clear that there is a certain skill to excellence of character, skill in discovering what the mean is and how this will vary from situation to situation. The second part of the quote is telling us that the mean is also an extreme. Instead of thinking of the mean as lying on a straight line, it may be more helpful to picture it as one corner of a triangle.

The mean is something that is neither too much, nor too little for us. Aristotle emphasises this last point by using the example of a coach considering how much protein two of his athletes should eat per day. Ten pounds is too much for most athletes, and two pounds is too little, but it doesn't follow that the trainer should give each athlete six pounds. The person with excellence of character, is able to determine the mean relative to the situation and sometimes that results in a mean that is itself an extreme.

For Aristotle, what characterises someone as virtuous is that they are able to *"feel or act towards the right person to the right extent at the right time for the right reason in the right way – that is not easy and not everyone can do it. Hence to do these things well is a rare, laudable and fine achievement."*

Practical wisdom (phronesis) and ethica arête combine to give us skills with which we can flourish. Practical wisdom uses these to drive our action towards exactly the right action and appropriate expression of that emotion. The doctrine of the mean is best understood as a description of people who, by making the most appropriate decision in each situation nurture the right kind of dispositions to equip them for future situations, and in doing so avoid inappropriate excessive or deficient responses. Need practical wisdom to judge when actions are right and when they are not right.

- Aristotle's effort to identify a wide range of emotions seems artificial. For example, righteous indignation is analysed this way.
 - The righteously indignant man is upset at the undeserved good fortune of others.
 - The jealous man is upset by the deserved fortune of others
 - The malicious man is pleased at the bad fortune of othersWhat the three men are upset or pleased by is different in each case, this undermines Aristotle's claim that the excellences and flaws are displays of the same feeling. Aristotle also admits that there is no word for some excellences or deficiencies, such as proper ambition.

- Finally, Aristotle points out that some emotions like spite and anger and some actions like murder or theft are always wrong. He says that there cannot be a mean to what is permanently in excess or deficiency; but this admission also chips away at the universality of the doctrine of the mean. Altogether, these problems undermine the empirical nature of the doctrine.

The strength of Aristotle's theory is the recognition that, if we want to be happy, we must develop our emotional skill set. We must get better at reading the situation we're in, at recognising the impulsive pressure of our emotions, and at acting in a way that is appropriate to our emotion and the situation.

Voluntary and Involuntary Actions and Moral Responsibility

01 September 2015 12:25

Aristotle asserts people are praised or blamed for voluntary but not for acts done contrary to intention. Therefore only in intended acts that excellences, and vices, are to be found. What we intended to do in any situation reveals our dispositions and desires, and thus our moral character; things we did accidentally, or which we did against our wishes, do not reveal our character.

Aristotle identifies and analyses two main types of actions, 'voluntary' (intended) and 'involuntary' (unintended), while also exploring a third type of 'non-voluntary' (contrary to intention) action. Our intended action can be properly judged. When we deliberately do something, we are striving to bring about a goal, or an end, so we reveal our current dispositions, as well as shaping our future dispositions. An action cannot be 'intended' when its cause lies outside us, or when we are acting out of ignorance. Because our dispositions are a result of numerous actions, we are responsible for the development of our character through our intentional acts.

Involuntary actions

There are two types of act that we might classify as 'contrary to intention', those done under compulsion and those that are done in ignorance. *A voyager is kidnapped and taken somewhere*, the voyager contributes nothing to the outcome and therefore take no responsibility for the act – strictly speaking, these are not proper actions at all.

However, there are actions done under compulsion which are more problematic, e.g. *dumping your cargo overboard in a storm*. When you set across the calm waters, you didn't have any intention of losing the cargo but strictly speaking, in the short term, yes, you did intend to lose the cargo. You made a decision about priorities and you had control of the limbs that chucked the cargo overboard. But, it is also true that you felt that you had no choice, and most people, including a jury would be sympathetic to your claim that you had no choice because you wanted to live.

Acts done under compulsion share the feature of being involuntary acts because they contain strong elements of force which direct the actions away from what we intend. Aristotle believes that, despite the compelling circumstances, if there is an element of choice: we are responsible for these actions and so can be judged, praised or blamed for them. What is important is that such mixed acts demand understanding and perhaps pardoning by those around us. So where there is no agency, there is no responsibility; and where there is agency, and the origins lie within you, there is responsibility, but you may be exonerated if the action is mixed. Aristotle also dismisses the claim that people can be forced by their desires, as being 'forced' by your desires is exactly what an intended action is all about.

Non-voluntary actions

There are all sorts of ways we can be materially ignorant: lack of knowledge, mistaken identity, misinterpretation, errors of judgement, or misunderstanding of a situation. What these examples share is that: our description of the situation at the time of action is different from the description we would give of that same situation once we were made aware of certain other features.

For Aristotle, whether we are responsible for our non-voluntary acts depends on whether the act was actually one that was contrary to our intention. We can discover by asking the question: 'do you regret doing that, and would you have acted differently if you had been in full possession of the facts?'. If the answer is yes, then we would say that your act was contrary to your intention not merely unintended.

Issues, Including:

01 September 2015 12:26

Competing or Clashing Virtues?

For any situation, there are many different responses that we could have, a range of virtues that we could display, a number of vices (excessive or deficient responses) that which is a dilemma for an Aristotelian virtue ethicist. *Imagine your neighbour has lent you their axe, they knock one night looking as though they are going to murder someone – what do you do?* On the one hand, you are an honest person and have demonstrated the virtue of truthfulness throughout your life. On the other hand, you are a kind person, and hate to think of other being injured.

- Aristotle can deal with this potential conflict of virtues by saying that the right thing to do would be to lie. There is, in fact, no conflict at all. This is because as Aristotle says, sometimes the mean itself can be an extreme.

However, take for example the movies *Amour* (2012), at the end of the film, the husband tells his non-responsive wife a story and then kills her by smothering her with a pillow. He then adorns the bed with flowers – his last act of love for her. The issue for a virtue ethicist is: What was the virtuous thing to do here? Competing virtues; the charitable, loving virtue that leads the husband to kill his wife and the virtue of justice which should prevent us from killing anyone.

Aristotle does not provide a hierarchy of virtues, but if he had, then justice would have been placed above charity. But is the husband's act an act of charity – euthanasia – and not a murder at all? His action seems to display not just charity but kindness and love, but on the other hand he could have displayed courage and justice by not killing her, and lived with the daily sharing of her suffering.

- Hursthouse claims, one of the strengths of virtue ethics approach is that it acknowledges regret as morally significant, even life-changing. The moral significance of the remainder is the result of the impact that clashing virtues have on the agent. Hursthouse contrast this nuanced view with utilitarian or Kantian ethics which fail to give any weight to moral remainders.

Does it give sufficient guidance about how to act?

If the mean was interpreted as a doctrine of moderation - 'act moderately in any situation' - then this may have been a clear rule about how to act. However, Aristotle did not take the mean to be moderation. Aristotle's doctrine of the mean instead provides a complex analysis of virtue. It describes how virtuous acts are in a mean between excessive and deficient response, and that the mean is relative to the situation. The mean response is the right response leading to the most appropriate behaviour, which may even sometimes entail an extreme response. The problem is, how do we know what the right behaviour is?

Life is complex, situations vary in subtle but significant ways, and no formula can accommodate these variations. It is up to us to make the judgment call, to reflect on this call and to absorb this experience into our character.

- Hursthouse has argued that through the virtues Aristotle has identified, he does offer guidance on how to act after all. Aristotle gives us specific examples of the virtues that we should strive for, and the *kaikas* (vices) we should avoid. For example, the virtue of truthfulness entails the v-rule 'do what is honest'. According to Hursthouse, these v-rules do, after all, provide clear guidance on action.

We can still reject these rules by arguing that these virtues are culturally specific. This criticism is one often aimed at virtue theorists. We compare the virtue ethics of Aristotle with that of Aquinas or with David Hume or the Victorians and we can see the list of virtues change. The lack of any external criteria means that virtues are culturally relative. Therefore meaning, there are no universal v-rules,

no prescriptions in virtue ethics that are equivalent to the maxim of the utilitarian's or the categorical imperative of Kant.

- However, Rachels argue that there are some virtues which all societies need, without which stable societies cannot be sustained. These foundational virtues include honesty, loyalty, generosity, courage. A very similar list to the one that Aristotle gave C4 Athens.

Is it guilty of circularity?

For example, if we want to know what the courageous thing to do is, then we should look towards people we know who have courage. And who are these people with courage? Well, they're the people who always act courageously.

- Aristotle however does have more to say about virtuous people. First, for Aristotle, virtuous people are those who are eudaimon. Virtuous people are excellent in a number of different ways: they don't just have ethica arête, they are also people with practical wisdom. Practical wisdom and ethica arête are bound up with each other, both of them are needed for us to make the right decisions throughout our life that enable us to flourish.

Mackie argues that Aristotle's account of Eudaimonia is dependent on his account of virtue and so also leads to circularity. Aristotle's function argument aims to show that the good life for humans is the life of a good human. So a virtuous person is someone who flourishes, and someone who flourishes is someone who is virtuous.

- Aristotle himself was aware of this circularity, but he saw it as a fact about virtue, not a problem with his argument. He doesn't need to give a definition of a 'virtuous person' which is free from circularity, because it would have been clear to him and his audience who these people were. The virtuous person is someone who has all the qualities that were valued by the middle classes in Athens.

However, Aristotle is accused of simply describing the values of their social class and age, and their lists of virtues are the preferred characteristics of that class and age. There just doesn't seem to be any accepted criteria for determining what a genuine virtue is, and what isn't.

Applied Ethics

18 February 2016 17:45

Crime and Punishment.

One of the problems with virtue ethics is that it does not attempt to establish a definitive list of virtues, one which is universal or objective in the way that the foundations of Kantian and utilitarian ethics claim it to be universal. The virtue of justice is, for Aristotle, a pivotal virtue encompassing ideas of fairness, of equality, of law-abidingness, together with the idea that a punishment should be proportional to the crime. It is this proportional aspect of justice that supporters of capital punishment emphasise when they talk about 'retributive justice'.

Aristotle himself does not discuss capital punishment but he does argue that 'proportionality' is not a simple concept. It involves the application of practical wisdom, and an understanding of the motives.

War.

Warfare has been thought of as a distinct practice, and there are associated virtues and responsibilities attached to this practice. A soldier is not only expected to be courageous and truthful but is also expected to develop military virtues including discipline, obedience to superiors, loyalty to comrades and patriotism to their country. But warfare is a dehumanising experience, and soldiers may be tempted or encouraged to develop dispositions that are clearly vicious e.g. to be cruel, or to spread fear. By treating people in this way, as mere obstacles or threats, that soldiers may feel better able to defeat or kill the enemy.

However, there is also an expectation in modern armies that their forces respect the Geneva conventions. Responsibility to these humanitarian conventions is an important feature within the application of virtue ethics to the morality of war. Aristotle does believe that some wars can be just. He asserts that we wage war in order to live in peace and this comment is echoed elsewhere in his philosophy. For Aristotle, the virtues are a means to reaching Eudaimonia, and a peaceful society is able to flourish as a whole because people in that society are able to flourish.

Simulated Killing.

McCormick concludes that, of all moral theories, virtue ethics is best able to articulate why it may be wrong to play violent video games, whatever their impact. First, that our moral intuitions tell us that there is 'something morally objectionable' with people playing a game that graphically mimics the murder of children – even if nobody is affected. Secondly, that neither utilitarianism, nor Kantian ethics, can provide compelling reasons why playing the game itself is wrong, only virtue ethics can.

'Engaging in simulated immoral acts erodes one's character and makes it more difficult for one to live a fulfilled eudemonic life.' McCormick argues that by indulging in the excessive, indulgent and wrongful acts of games like GTA, we are 'cultivating the wrong sort of character'. Actions that don't contribute to habituation of the virtues are an 'opportunity cost'. In other words, time spent doing one thing is a cost against time spent doing something more valuable. Imagine that empirical research has conclusively shown that there is no harmful impact on your character as a result of playing the games, thus time spent playing the games is 'morally neutral' time – the habits you are developing are therefore virtueless. Time spent reinforcing virtueless dispositions is time taken away from developing virtuous dispositions.

A virtue ethicist may conclude that violent gaming at best fails to develop any virtues, and at worst encourages a vice, neither of which would help the gamer flourish or lead a good life. Aristotle also believed without the cathartic effect of theatre we are liable to become possessed by our emotions, damaging the balance in our souls.

The treatment of animals.

Aristotle believed that there was a natural hierarchy of living things and, as part of his teleological view, one of the functions of things lower down the hierarchy was to serve the needs of those beings higher up the hierarchy. Moral philosophers, such as *Tom Regan* have argued that cruelty occurs both where there is unnecessary pain and where the person inflicting the pain either derives pleasure from that pain or is indifferent to it. For Regan, this means that people who inflict pain but regret it are not being cruel.

Some experiments are also not cruel, and therefore it is possible to be compassionate even while permitting animal experimentation or at least by not acting against animal experimentation. *Hursthouse* disagrees, arguing that cruelty is the infliction of any unnecessary pain, independently of how we feel about it. Hursthouse argues that generally they are not necessary. In cases where we know there is cruelty, we should react compassionately. This may involve avoiding buying products known to be the result of unnecessary animal experimentation; or it may involve actively campaigning against unnecessary animal experimentation. The virtuous person should also hope for, and look forward to, the day when no animal experimentation is carried out.

Deception and Lying.

Aristotle asks us to develop an honest character. It is by being honest together that we as a society will also be able to flourish. It is by being honest that we as individuals will ultimately flourish, people will trust us, people will look to us for information and advice. The virtue of honesty enables us to develop our practical wisdom: or rather that the vice of dishonesty undermines our practical wisdom. Dishonesty is a habit that enables us to escape easily from difficult situations.

The habit of lying means that we don't work hard to find alternative solutions to those tricky situations. We don't use our practical wisdom, which means we are not genuinely equipping ourselves for further tricky situations. If you are someone who is generally honest, then deceiving someone in a one-off situation isn't going to undermine your tendency and inclination to be honest.

Specification

01 September 2015 12:16

Ethical language: What is the status of ethical language?

Cognitivism: ethical language makes claims about reality which are true or false (fact-stating)

- moral realism: ethical language makes claims about mind-independent reality that are true
 - ethical naturalism (eg utilitarianism)
 - ethical non-naturalism (eg intuitionism)
- error theory: ethical language makes claims about mind-independent reality that are false (eg Mackie's argument from queerness).

Non-cognitivism: ethical language does not make claims about reality which are true or false (fact-stating)

- emotivism: ethical language expresses emotions (Hume and Ayer)
- prescriptivism: ethical language makes recommendations about action (Hare).

Cognitivism - Moral Realism

01 September 2015 12:26

Cognitivism

Cognitivism is the view that ethical language makes statements, and expresses beliefs, which can be true or false because they genuinely refer to something. This can be shortened by simply saying, moral statements have a 'truth value' or are 'truth-apt', they pick out certain features of the world which make them true, or false – they are 'fact-stating' or 'factually significant'.

Naturalism holds that ethical concepts can be understood and defined in non-ethical terms, referring to certain objective features of the world.

Moral Realism: Ethical Naturalism

Naturalism looks to the world in search of moral facts and value, moral terms can be understood and defined by objective, natural properties in the world. We can convert all our talk of morals into talk about something we can understand better, namely natural facts about the world and human beings. Naturalism in this sense is a reductive doctrine, it says that moral values can be reduced to, or explained in terms of, something else.

Theories of virtue ethics also generally fall into the category of 'naturalism', as virtues refer to natural facts about the way people behave. For example, according to Aristotle, our virtues are those character traits (which can be described in naturalistic terms) that enable us to flourish (also naturalistic) and the key to this lies in our capacity to reason (a further naturalistic term). For Aristotle, we can work out what we should do on the basis of experience. So a moral judgement such as '*this axe murderer is callous and vicious*' is true if he consistently hurts other people in extreme pointless ways. The most commonly identified naturalistic theory is utilitarianism.

The hedonistic utilitarian claims that moral judgements are simply judgements about how much pleasure (a natural fact), and for how many people, an action will produce. The key principle underpinning morality, according to Mill is that 'happiness is desirable and the only thing desirable as an end'.

- First, Mill argues that we need only to show that people do desire something in order to show that this is desirable.
- Second, Mill proposes that it is their happiness that people desire and their happiness is desirable.
- Third, Mill concludes that each of us desires happiness and that is the happiness of everyone that is the goal of morality.
- First step contains a fallacy Moore terms the 'naturalistic fallacy', Clearly visible does mean 'able to be seen' and audible means 'able to be heard' - but desirable does not mean 'able to be desired'. The fallacy is the mistake of identifying 'what is actually desired with what ought to be desired'.

The second step in the argument gives more detail as to what is desired, and again it refers to a natural property. It is 'happiness' which Mill identifies as the object that is desired and desirable. For Mill, 'happiness' did not refer to the general 'flourishing' of your life as Aristotle understood it – but to the securing of pleasure and the avoidance of pain. It is this that we strive for, and it is this that is the end, or goal of our action – what philosophers call the 'Good'.

- Guilty of the is/ought fallacy

Finally, Mill moves the conclusion that there is another, general, good that arises out of the sum of all our individual goods. This general good, Mill thinks is the good for the 'aggregate' of each us individuals. So it is not just our individual goods that refer to natural properties but it is the Good in general that refers to a natural property.

- Sidgwick argued 'an aggregate of actual desires, each directed towards a different part of the general happiness, does not constitute an actual desire for the general happiness existing in any individuals. We cannot add up individual desires to generate a kind of 'super-desire'. To claim this is to commit the fallacy of composition.
- Naturalism erodes the autonomy of ethics - Morality, according to naturalism, is just another aspect of this ordinary world. We can make observations about the ordinary world and then, somehow, draw moral conclusions from these observations. We can draw an ethical conclusion from factual premises; in short, derive an 'ought' from an 'is', prescriptive statements from descriptive ones.
- The Is/Ought question – An important distinction needs to be made between matters of fact and matters of value, the distinction is such that we cannot argue from one to the other. This is also known as *Hume's Law*. Hume argued we cannot infer anything about what ought to be the case from any number of facts about what is the case. Mill's proof is particularly susceptible to this criticism as he starts out by claiming that people happen to desire happiness, then he moves on to say therefore happiness is desirable and is good – in other words, that people ought to desire happiness. If Hume is right, then Mill cannot so easily take the step from psychological hedonism to ethical hedonism. A deductively valid argument cannot slip into its conclusion any information that isn't already in its premises. You cannot legitimately conclude - on factual grounds alone – anything about what ought to be the case. This is because ought, 'expresses some new relation or affirmation'. Hume's law can be restated as. It is invalid to derive an evaluative conclusion (ought) from premises that are purely descriptive (is). Hume's point is not that facts are irrelevant to values, rather, his point is that we need to make our values explicit when arguing, so that we can be clear what the argument really is.

Searle claimed there were exceptions where you could derive an ought from an is. E.g.. P: You promised to pay me back my £5. C: So you ought to pay up. Here the premise states a matter of fact, and the conclusion makes a value judgement about what you ought to do. A promise seems clearly to imply that you ought to keep it.

- There is a hidden premise of 'we ought to keep our promises' in this case.

Moral Realism: Ethical non-naturalism.

Moral judgements are intuitive or self-evident, and in so need no need of being justified by any kind of argument. Intuitionism claims that there are moral truths to be known, and that moral judgements are capable of being true or false. However, unlike naturalism, it thinks that moral predicates do not stand for natural properties but denote special non-natural properties which are unique and we should recognise them as such.

Consequential Intuitionism - G.E. Moore

As a consequentialist, Moore believes the question we should be asking is 'What is Good?'. The answer that Moore has reached by the end of *Principia Ethica* is that 'good' cannot be defined in natural terms, and in fact cannot be defined at all. Because the 'good' is indefinable it cannot be reduced to the 'greatest happiness' or to 'what people desire', or any other such non-moral good. For Moore, what is good is known intuitively – goodness may be real but it cannot be investigated by empirical means.

To clarify what he means by indefinable, Moore likens the word 'good' to 'yellow'. Saying yellow means light travelling at a particular frequency is wrong, 'yellow' refers to what we see when we see yellow objects, not to light-vibrations. 'Yellow' is clearly comprehensible to us but we are not able to define it, the same can be said for 'good'. Moral properties are unlike natural properties, moral judgements are evaluative rather than factual and so cannot be justified by purely empirical observation. Moral terms are self-evident and can only be known by intuition. "*There is no substantive disagreements on moral facts*".

The open question argument.

In order to show that the good cannot be defined, *Moore* offers an argument which has become known as the open question argument. Any theory that attempts to define 'good'; is saying something is equivalent to:

- 'Good' means X

For any such definition, it will always make sense to ask

- But is X really good?

So if a utilitarian says 'Good means maximising pleasure', it still makes sense to ask 'But is it really good to maximise pleasure'. Not only does this question make sense, but it is a question we would want to ask when some innocent person is being punished on utilitarian grounds. If 'good' can be defined as X, then it shouldn't make any sense to ask 'But is X really good?', just like it wouldn't make sense to say 'But is a unmarried man really a bachelor'. However, asking a utilitarian 'But is maximising happiness really good?' Is not the same as saying 'Is goof really good?'. Therefore the proposed definition must be inadequate.

- The question only appears to remain open because the meaning of words such as 'good' are unclear in ordinary usage. In other words, the reason we may wonder whether the promotion of pleasure really is good is only because we are still unclear in our minds about the proper signification of the term 'good'. So the naturalist would then argue that strictly speaking it does not make sense to ask whether an action that leads to the general happiness is in fact good.

The naturalistic fallacy.

Having established the good is indefinable, *Moore* goes on to highlight the fallacy that he believes occurs in many arguments given by moral philosophers. The basic form of fallacy is: a term that is indefinable cannot be defined, and any attempt to define the indefinable is clearly fallacious. Moore was very clear that Mill had committed the naturalistic fallacy.

- *Warnock* suggest Mill is not interested in defining what 'good' is, not is he interested in defining what 'desirable' is. Mill's project is purely an empirical one: he is simply describing for us what sorts of things are, as a matter of fact, considered good. Mill is just pointing out that people already pursue happiness as a worthwhile goal so they already believe it to be good. In which case, Mill is not committing the naturalistic fallacy.

Moore's argument is very similar to Hume's Law. Hume's argument is about the logical connection between the moral realm and the non-moral realm. Whereas, Moore's argument is about the linguistic or semantic connection between moral and non-moral terms. *'Any attempt to give a naturalistic account of what it is to do good, still leaves open the question of whether behaving in accordance with that account would be the morally good thing to do'*.

Moore's ideas and intuitions.

According to *Moore*, the good *'may all be said to consist in the love of beautiful things or of good persons'*. For Moore, we must strive to bring about these goods, and we must consider our actions in terms of their consequences: of whether they promote these good or damage them.

- This raises the more important question of who is to judge whose intuitions of the 'good' are the correct intuitions. For example, *Rudolf Hoss*, the commandant of *Auschwitz* wrote in his memoirs after the war that he felt what he had done was 'right'. Mill at least could give reasons against Hoss' intuition by pointing to the enormous suffering of the victims of the Holocaust, but Moore could not give reasons against the Nazis beyond saying 'their intuitions clashed with other people's intuitions'.

Deontological Intuitionism – Prichard

Prichard believed that values lie in what's right, rather than what is good, and should be located in the actions themselves rather than the consequences. Duty, Prichard thinks, is the ultimate moral value, but we cannot ever prove what something is our duty. Prichard believes that obligatoriness is only known through intuition not through reason. He thinks that, as a matter of fact, when we feel

obliged to do something this is not because we have worked out that it can be universalised, or that it brings about the greatest good. Rather our apprehension that something is our duty 'is immediate, in precisely the same sense in which a mathematical apprehension is immediate'. Ross argues we have certain 'prima facie' duties which we intuitively know from first impressions. This includes, Fidelity (duty to fulfil promises), reparations, gratitude, justice, beneficence, self-improvement. When duties clash you can use your judgement.

- What happens if we disagree with someone about whether a course of action is a duty or not?
For example, if we wish to persuade a Nazi officer that they had a duty to disobey an order which would increase the number of people being exterminated at Auschwitz. With mathematics, we never have to choose between two self-evident, but conflicting principles or axioms. Yet when it comes to obligations, there are moral dilemmas in which we do face such a conflict. For example in our confrontation with the axe murderer.

Cognitivism - Error Theory

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Error theory is an anti-realist theory which does not believe there are any such things as moral facts, or any referents at all to moral terms. Mackie opens his book with the bold claim that '*There is no objective moral values*'. According to Mackie, even in ordinary language we all have the tendency, when making moral judgements to include a claim to objectivity. This ingrained claim of ethical language to objectivity is a mistake, he is very clear that this mistake is not a linguistic or conceptual mistake.

Our moral judgements make a systematic error based on our belief in things that don't literally exist, a belief promoted by moral realism in whatever form it occurs. His first argument is his 'argument from relativity'. For Mackie, the wide variations in moral codes are more readily explained by reference to the ways of life that they reflect, rather than by reference to our perception of any objective moral values.

Mackie's second, and more important argument for his moral scepticism is the 'argument from queerness'. Mackie thinks that moral realists like Kant, Aristotle and Mill, have theories that also commit them to an unusual ontology namely the existence of these queer, objective moral properties. Mackie points out that in order for us to detect special moral qualities, we must have special faculties that enable us to detect and gain knowledge of these moral properties – for the intuitionists, this was our moral intuition, but other realists require us to possess a similar sort of 'moral sense'. So moral realists are not only committed to belief in these strange moral entities, but also end up committed to quite an elaborate epistemology.

Mackie argues that one of the essential, and unusual, ingredients of moral values is that they must provide a motivation to action. This is one of the key features that distinguishes a moral property – like goodness – from a non-moral property – redness -: It has an authority which compels us to behave in a certain way. Mackie is a strong adherent of 'moral internalism' which is the belief that all moral values, not just Kantian imperatives, have at their core the assumption of a strange, magnetic quality that motivates us to act. If Mackie's internalist account is correct then this 'motivational' property of moral values is very strange indeed, as it would mean that something in the world would generate motivation for action. But how can a part of the world be intrinsically motivating, which is what Mackie thinks the realists are saying.

For Mackie, moral properties are unlike any other object or property because they don't actually exist. Moral values are not out there to be discovered as the moral realists would claim, but they are invented by us. Mackie believes that we can account for the reaction that we have to moral values with a psychological explanation about how we have been brought up and the social institutions within which we exist. Complex social arrangements creates a moral theory which we then project onto the world as if it were true of the world which is where the error arises. Mackie was an anti-realist insofar as he rejected the claim that there were moral facts; but he was a cognitivist in that he thought ethical language was directed towards the world and attempting to describe the world.

Non-Cognitivism - Emotivism

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Non-Cognitivism

Non-cognitivism rejects moral realism and it also rejects Mackie's error theory, because non-cognitivism holds that ethical language is not fact-stating, moral terms do not pick out anything in the world, and so they are not truth-apt. Ethical language does not make moral statements or propositions about the world, but performs some other function entirely.

Hume's influence on emotivism.

Emotivism holds that ethical language does not make statements or assertions about the world; instead, our moral judgements should be seen as expressions of our feelings, possibly with the intent of influencing other people's behaviour.

For Hume, reason cannot provide us with the motive for action. Hume believes that value judgements cannot depend on sense perception, so we cannot see, hear, smell etc. good or evil. An empirical examination of a vicious act can never reveal to us anything we can term as 'vice'. There is nothing about the event we can observe, which constitutes it's being wrong. Hume argues that all our preferences including our moral ones must be based upon passions. Ethical judgements are grounded in experience, that is they are a matter of our own 'feelings' or 'desires'. While in this sense they are subjective or mind-dependent, Hume nonetheless tries to argue that they are objective insofar as they are rooted in facts about human nature. We do not choose these desires, we are just the kind of creature that has the feelings that we do, and it is these shared feelings that constitute morality. Our ethical nature is characterised by the capacity for sympathy, or the ability to feel with others.

Emotivism.

"The function of the ethical term is purely emotive. It is used to express feelings about certain objects, but not to make any assertions about them". - Ayer

Emotivism can be seen as a reaction against intuitionism. For Stevenson, what Moore thought of as 'goods' were simply an expression of his own feelings and attitudes, to which he had given an objective spin that simply wasn't justified. One of the strongest statements of emotivism as a moral theory came from Ayer.

'Good' and 'right' are what Ayer calls pseudo-concepts: they don't refer to anything at all. According to Ayer's verification principle, moral judgements are meaningless. He concludes that moral terms are simply expressions or exclamations of our emotions like going 'Boo!' or 'Hooray!' at things we like or don't like – occasionally, emotivism is known as the Boo/Hooray theory.

Emotivism claims that moral assertions express attitudes or feelings. 'Good' doesn't refer to anything in the world, but is only an expression reflecting something in me. Emotivism denies that moral expressions describe feelings or emotions any more than they describe other empirical facts. But on an emotivist account, moral terms express a feeling, much as does a frown or an angry tone of voice.

Stevenson argued that moral judgements which employed terms like 'good' and 'right' were not simply expressions of a feeling. They were also attempts to influence other people, to persuade them to feel as we feel and to have the same attitude that we have. So if we say '*Abortion is wrong*' we mean '*I disapprove of abortion and so should you*'. So Stevenson is able to give account of how moral terms motivate or guide action.

Emotivism opposes intuitionism by not regarding moral propositions as descriptive. They do not ascribe a special property to events. This means that they are not informative, not intended to

indicate facts, but are designed to influence other people's behaviour by conveying approval or disapproval. Consider the following propositions

- Boris is big
- Boris is bad

According to the emotivist, the intuitionist's mistake is to think there must be something in the world corresponding to the expression 'is bad', and so to imagine that there must be a natural property – badness – that Boris possesses. Badness is not really a property of people or actions at all. The real meaning of 'Boris is bad' is closer to 'Avoid Boris!' Or 'Boris, yuk!'; that is to say, it expresses disapproval and does not ascribe any objective property to him at all.

- One judgement that can be drawn from emotivism is that value judgements are not rational and so no rational agreement is possible on ethical matters and no knowledge can be had of them. If emotivism is correct, then there is no point in having a moral discussion, since two people cannot really contradict each other when they appear to be expressing a disagreement over some moral issue.

The immediate difficulty is that it appears to misunderstand the true character of moral judgements. When I claim that the 'abortion of a 20-week-old foetus is wrong' I intend to contradict your claim that the 'abortion of a 20-week-old foetus is permissible'. When we disagree over a moral issue we argue with reasons and it seems as if we are literally contradicting each other and not just expressing conflicting ethical attitudes or feelings. Emotivism makes this impossible.

Emotivism can allow for rational dispute over matters of fact like *for example, whether or not a 20-week-old foetus can feel pain, or can survive outside of the womb, and over the definition of like whether a foetus is a person or a potential person.* So over some issue, it may not be irrational to argue so long as our disagreement concerns something objective, such as a factual belief about the world, or concerns the meanings of the terms we are using.

- Despite this, ultimately, on an emotivist account, the criteria on which we base such arguments boil down to the expression of feelings. In the final analysis any reasons I may offer for why something is wrong can only reduce to some gut feeling for which no justification can be offered.
- Emotivism is also mistaken in claiming that moral discourse always involves itself in trying to change attitudes or influence action. It is possible to condemn someone's behaviour, without holding out an hope of influencing it. Moreover, moral discourse can be meaningful without any expression of an emotional state. There is a crucial difference between saying that something is right or wrong, and expressing a liking or disliking for it. If I do something because I ought to do it I will be prepared to act the same way if the same circumstances arise. But this is not true of feelings. Moral judgements in other words, refer beyond the particular case in a way that feelings or emotions do not.

Non-Cognitivism - Prescriptivism

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Prescriptivism.

Moral "*Words discussed have it as their distinctive function either to commend or in some other way to guide choices or actions*" - Hare.

Hare's prescriptivism can be seen as a development of emotivism, insofar as it further explores the uses and purposes that moral judgements have in our dialogue with other people. But it views emotivism as too simplistic: value judgements are not expressions of feelings, they have a much more important use, namely to tell other how to act.

Prescriptivism is a non-cognitivist theory and denies that values are types of facts, and denies that moral discourse is informative or descriptive or that moral judgements state moral facts. For Hare, naturalists make the mistake of attempting to derive value judgements from 'statements of fact', and by doing so they miss out on one of the essential features of a value judgement, namely that it expresses something.

On Hare's analysis, making a moral judgement like '*stealing is wrong*' comes close to issuing a command, or giving advice, or offering a recommendation, or prescribing. So according to prescriptivism when JS Mill claimed that 'happiness was desirable', what he really meant was not that 'happiness is something we are able to desire' but that 'happiness ought to be desired'. By using the moral language of desirability Mill was commending happiness as something we should strive to reach. Thus the prescriptive argues that ethical propositions are not expressions of the way the speaker feels, but exhortations to action.

For the prescriptivist, the essence of moral language is not to influence but to guide. If naturalist theories compared value judgements to statements of fact, and emotivist theories compared them to exclamations, then the prescriptivist compares them to commands. All moral judgements entail an imperative. For Hare, moral judgements are universal imperatives, and they differ from other commands in that they do not simply speak of the obligations of a particular person in a particular situation, but imply that anyone and everyone, in a relevantly similar situation, would be likewise obliged.

What is particular about the imperatives implied by our moral judgements is that these are imperatives that I am willing to apply universally. Thus Hare follows Kant in regarding universalisability as essential to the logic of ethical judgements, in addition to their prescription. The immediate advantage of such an approach over that of emotivism is that it enables us to avoid the conclusion that moral discourse is fundamentally non-rational. For Hare, prescriptive discourse is therefore concerned with answering questions about conduct, as contrasted to informative discourse which seeks information about matters of fact. In other words, the prescriptivist affirms that any imperative to action which can be universalised and consistently adhered to must count as an ethical principle.

- Warnock asks if it is really plausible to suppose that all moral discourse is primarily and essentially concerned with telling people what to do. Surely, as well as prescribing, we may deploy moral terms in order to undertake, implore, resolve, confess and so forth. Hare restricts his analysis to contexts in which one speaker addresses to another a moral judgement upon some course of action.

This objection however is based on a misunderstanding. For what the prescriptivist intends is to stress the interconnection between moral discourse and action. While moral utterances clearly do not always tell someone what to do, it is plausible to hold that the acceptance of a moral proposition consist in acting a certain way if the appropriate circumstances arise.

- If moral judgements are our personal prescriptions as to how we should behave, then what are the standards against which our personal prescriptions should be judged? For Hare, the only criterion seems to be: 'Is your judgement an imperative that you would universalise?'. There are cases in which this criterion becomes inadequate for thinking about morality. Prescriptivism appears to say that, so as long as people are consistent in putting forward horrific judgements such as *Hoss's claim that the 'murder of millions of Jews was right'*, then their consistency makes the judgement a moral one. To be consistent, *Hoss would have to say 'and if I were Jewish then I should be murdered too'*, and if he accepted that, then his judgment is a universal one and on Hare's account it must be seen as a moral judgement.
- Universalisability is not enough to save a moral argument – you might universalise a prescription that I disagree with and I might universalise a judgement that you disagree with and we want a successful moral theory to be able to show how we can have this disagreement. Cognitivists, because they think morality describes something in the world, do give us a foundation to argue from; but non-cognitivists, including prescriptivists, find it difficult to give independent grounds that we can both appeal to, and so we may end up 'agreeing to disagree', or drifting towards relativism.